

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY SUB-COMMITTEE

Paper 06/05

Selection of Priority Areas for the Engagement Process (II)

Purpose

This paper invites Members' views on new Priority Areas further to the discussion with government bureaux on 12 September.

Engagement Process (II)

2. The second engagement process began with the public stakeholder forum on 28 July to invite views on new Priority Areas. Members discussed the outcome of the forum at the SSC meeting on 4 August, noting that most stakeholders at the forum had suggested the issues of *Air Quality* and *Population Policy* for priority consideration.

3. Members noted that stakeholders had also commented that other issues needed addressing in relation to these areas. Accordingly, Members suggested expanding the scope of these issues under the broader, "working" headings of *A Healthy Living Environment* and *Population and Human Development*.

4. Before reaching a conclusion on which Priority Areas to tackle, Members advised that they would prefer first to discuss with relevant government bureaux which issues might have the most potential for wide-ranging public engagement. The full Council, at its meeting on 9 August noted this advice and invited the SSC to proceed accordingly.

Discussion with Government Bureaux

5. During the discussion on 12 September, Members emphasized the importance of taking the results of the stakeholder forum into account. It was noted that, of 19 groups, 12 stakeholder groups had placed Air

Quality as the top priority. It was also noted, however, that Air Quality was already a well-understood problem that was subject to a range of initiatives by the Government and other sectors. Taking up this issue in the context of the engagement process would not necessarily lead to significant additional progress in tackling the problem.

6. It was also noted at the meeting that many stakeholder groups had raised the issue of Population Policy, and there was a view that this issue also merited attention by the Council. In this regard, approaching this issue through the engagement process could lead not only to a greater understanding of this issue and related matters, but could also promote the fact that SD was not just concerned with the natural environment, but was also related to issues with broader social implications.

7. Members also raised the question of tackling a wider range of sustainability issues in the Engagement Process (II). Relevant bureaux were generally receptive to issues such as education, manpower and public health being addressed in the context of a wider-reaching Priority Area such as “Population and Human Development”.

Considerations and Options

8. The first engagement process involved the public in developing sustainable policies in the Pilot Areas. It resulted in identifiable targets and initiatives as set out in the Government’s First SD Strategy. Stakeholders are likely to expect that the Council will now improve on the initial process by tackling wider-ranging sustainability issues and by involving the public in more extensive engagement.

9. When considering the new Priority Areas, Members may wish to consider which areas would help to achieve the goals of -

- Attracting the community’s interest in the relevant topic or topics
- Developing clear objectives, targets and initiatives that would make a positive impact on Hong Kong’s SD
- Engaging the community in a debate that would be accessible to people from all backgrounds in society.

10. With these points in mind, we put forward the following, non-exclusive options for Members' consideration -

1. Tackle *Air Quality* or the broader issue of *A Healthy Living Environment* as the next Priority Area, limiting the scope to what might effectively be achieved within Hong Kong, or
2. Address *Population* or the broader issue of *Population and Human Development* as a single, broad Priority Area, which would also promote the "social" aspect of SD, or
3. Take *Population (and Human Development)* as the next Priority Area, **and** address issues related to Hong Kong's Air Quality separately at the Council level.

11. Some Members have previously suggested that a further option might be to draw up a comprehensive framework for a broader SD Strategy rather than address individual Priority Areas. This would require us to explain why we were deviating from the approach outlined at the stakeholder forum in July.

Next Steps

12. The next meeting of the full Council is due to take place in mid-November. Depending on the Council's views, we would then propose the formation of a Support Group to prepare an IR document and plan the execution of the engagement process.

Views Sought

13. Members are invited to comment on the above issues, in particular the options set out in paragraph 10 above.

30 September 2005
Council Secretariat