

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY SUB-COMMITTEE

Paper 07/03

First Workshop on a Sustainable Development Strategy for Hong Kong and the Way Forward

Purpose

This paper seeks members' advice on the way forward with the formulation of a sustainable development (SD) strategy for Hong Kong in the light of the outcome of the First Workshop on a Sustainable Development Strategy for Hong Kong held on 8 November.

Proposal

2. We propose that Members recommend to the full Council that –
 - (a) the engagement process, incorporating appropriate changes suggested at the workshop, be initiated and two or three Priority Areas from those listed at paragraph 10 below be selected as issues for the first “round” of the strategy formulation; and
 - (b) Support Groups be formed to assist in collecting and presenting information on the selected Priority Areas to the public.

Outcome of the First Workshop

3. At the first SD strategy workshop, we invited participants to comment on whether the proposed engagement process was appropriate for the purpose of engaging the public in the formulation of an SD strategy for Hong Kong. In particular, we asked for views on the three key elements of the process, namely: the selection of Priority Areas, the evolution of the strategy and the reporting of findings to the Council.

General Points

4. Several key messages emerged from the workshop. In general, participants agreed that the Council should work to **institutionalise an engagement process** that would help build consensus, facilitate trust-based engagement within the community and establish a legitimate decision-making process. This process should seek to include the wider public, not just the “elite” and long-established stakeholder groups. The workshop participants also concluded that the process should have a **high degree of senior level Government involvement** in order to guarantee the Government’s commitment to implementing the outcomes of the process. Furthermore, the workshop participants expressed a view that the Council should make an early start and demonstrate a capacity to implement the strategy, so as to build public confidence in the process.

5. The importance of **involving the younger generations** in the process was also emphasised. Workshop participants considered that, given their strong stake in the future and the fact that they might have different aspirations from those of this generation, young people’s views would be important in defining key sustainability issues. As a further concern, the need to **involve neighbouring cities and regions** in the process was stressed in view of Hong Kong’s national and regional roles.

The Engagement Process

6. Regarding the selection of Priority Areas, the workshop concluded that although there were a number of ways of doing this, it would be acceptable for the Government, which was a key stakeholder in its own right, to propose the Priority Areas for the initial “round” of strategy formulation. No specific conclusion was reached regarding the method of selecting Priority Areas in the subsequent rounds, but it was mentioned that this should be a subject for further discussion by the community at the appropriate time.

7. Notwithstanding the above, there was broad consensus that the Council should not be too ambitious initially, but should take a measured approach, focusing on areas that could be well understood by and produce positive feedback from the community. Subjects that were familiar and relatively easy to explain should be suitable. Tackling controversial or complex issues early on might discourage members of the public from

participating further in the process. The Workshop advised that the Council begin the process by addressing two or three Priority Areas and then build up towards approaching more “difficult” issues in later phases of a roll-forward programme in formulating the SD Strategy.

8. In general, the idea of having support groups to help collect and present information on selected Priority Areas was endorsed. Workshop participants cautioned that these groups should not be too large, and also commented that the membership of such groups should be impartial and expert. The groups should not be simply passive, “traditional” advisory bodies, but should be actively engaged in building the strategy and communicating with the public. Rather than calling them Strategy “Support” Groups, names such as “Strategy Research” or “Strategy Development” Groups could be considered, to avoid the implication that the role of these groups was simply to support Government strategy.

9. A detailed Workshop Report, which summarises these and other views put forward by participants is at **Annex A** for Members’ reference.

Selection of Priority Areas

10. Following the Workshop, in order to begin the process of selecting Priority Areas, the four Official Members of the Council were each invited to propose two possible Priority Areas that could be included in the first “round” of the SD Strategy. Members are invited to advise which two or three of these should be recommended to the full Council –

- (a) Renewable Energy
- (b) Solid Waste Disposal
- (c) Housing Development Density and Building Design
- (d) NT– or Urban-oriented Development Planning
- (e) Fisheries Policy

A fuller explanation of these proposed Priority Areas is at **Annex B**.

Formation of Support Groups

11. As a key element of the proposed engagement process, a Support Group would be formed to gather background information and key issues relevant to each selected Priority Area. These groups would prepare “Invitation and Response” documents for consideration by the public and the Government, and would play a key role in collecting and analysing community views on the respective Priority Areas. Subject to the Council’s decision on which Priority Areas should be included in the first “round” of strategy formulation, the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) will, in consultation with this Sub-committee, identify potential invitees for the appropriate initial groups.

Timetable

12. A tentative timetable for the remaining steps in drawing up the SD strategy is at **Annex C** for Members’ review.

Next Steps

13. Subject to Members’ agreement, the SDU will prepare a report with appropriate recommendations as to the selection of Priority Areas and formation of Support Groups for consideration by the Council at its meeting on 16 December 2003.

Council Secretariat
December 2003