

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. ESC87/17-18

(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/F/3/2

Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee

**Minutes of the 6th meeting
held in Conference Room 1 of Legislative Council Complex
on Wednesday, 20 December 2017, at 8:30 am**

Members present:

Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP (Chairman)

Hon Alvin YEUNG (Deputy Chairman)

Hon James TO Kun-sun

Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP

Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP

Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP

Hon WU Chi-wai, MH

Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP

Hon CHAN Chi-chuen

Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP

Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung

Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP

Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH

Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP

Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP

Hon CHU Hoi-dick

Hon HO Kai-ming

Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding

Hon SHIU Ka-fai

Hon SHIU Ka-chun

Dr Hon Pierre CHAN

Hon CHAN Chun-ying

Hon KWONG Chun-yu

Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho

Members absent:

Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan

Public Officers attending:

Ms Carol YUEN Siu-wai, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1
Mr Eddie MAK Tak-wai, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1
Mrs Vicki Kwok, JP	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Mr Andy CHAN	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Environmental Protection Department

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Connie SZETO	Chief Council Secretary (1)4
-----------------	------------------------------

Staff in attendance:

Mr Keith WONG	Council Secretary (1)4
Ms Alice CHEUNG	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1
Miss Yannes HO	Legislative Assistant (1)6
Ms Haley CHEUNG	Legislative Assistant (1)9

Action

The Chairman drew members' attention to the information paper ECI(2017-18)12, which set out the latest changes in the directorate establishment approved since 2002 and the changes to the directorate establishment in relation to the seven items on the agenda. She then

Action

reminded members that in accordance with Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure ("RoP"), they should disclose the nature of any direct or indirect pecuniary interest relating to the item under discussion at the meeting before they spoke on the item. She also drew members' attention to RoP 84 on voting in case of direct pecuniary interest.

EC(2017-18)11 Proposed creation of one permanent post of Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (D2) to lead the Waste Reduction and Recycling Division in the Environmental Protection Department with effect from the date of approval by the Finance Committee for providing dedicated staffing support at the directorate level on a permanent basis, to implement the on-going measures and formulate new initiatives to promote waste reduction and recycling

2. The Chairman remarked that the staffing proposal was to create one permanent post of Assistant Director of Environmental Protection ("ADEP") (D2) (designated as ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling)) to lead the Waste Reduction and Recycling Division ("WRD") in the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") with effect from the date of approval by the Finance Committee for providing dedicated staffing support at the directorate level on a permanent basis, to implement the on-going measures and formulate new initiatives to promote waste reduction and recycling.

3. The Chairman pointed out that the Panel on Environmental Affairs was consulted by the Administration on the proposal on 24 April 2017. Members in general raised no objection to the Administration's submission of the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration. Members asked at the meeting about the scope of responsibilities and key performance indicators for the proposed post. In addition, Members urged the Administration to adopt measures to support recycling, including stepping up publicity and education, providing incentives to encourage members of the public to practise recycling and reuse at source, offering more measures or equipment to support recycling and reuse of waste plastics and other wastes, strengthening promotion of local recycled products with a view to developing the market, and assisting the recycling trade in applying for funding under the Recycling Fund to upgrade their operational standards and productivity.

Action

Staffing establishment of the Waste Reduction and Recycling Division

4. Mr CHAN Chun-ying pointed out that a three-year supernumerary ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) post, created by EPD in 2014, lapsed on 6 June 2017. He enquired how EPD deployed manpower to lead WRD when the office of ADEP was vacant. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok and Mr WONG Ting-kwong expressed support for the creation of the permanent post of ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling), as it would help the Government in promoting waste reduction and recycling in the long run.

5. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen pointed out that the supernumerary ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) post lapsed in June 2017. However, the Administration did not consult the Panel on Environmental Affairs about the proposal until April 2017, and only submitting it to the Establishment Subcommittee almost six months after the post lapsed. He enquired why the Government had not put forth the proposal earlier, which resulted in a time gap that adversely affected its work on waste reduction and recycling.

6. Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2) ("DDEP(2)") replied that it took time for the Government to review the overall manpower arrangements of EPD. After the supernumerary ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) post lapsed in June 2017, the Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Reduction and Recycling) took over the duties to support WRD. As it was expected that WRD would face increasingly heavy workloads, the Government considered that the post should be filled by a directorate officer to lead the tasks. Therefore, it hoped that the Legislative Council would approve the proposal as soon as possible. In response to Mr CHAN Chun-ying's further enquiry, DDEP(2) added that EPD would fill the proposed post through internal promotion of Environmental Protection Officer grade staff.

7. Mr CHAN Chun-ying, Mr WU Chi-wai and Dr Fernando CHEUNG enquired about the details of EPD's assignment of non-directorate staff to support WRD as outlined in paragraph 21 of the paper. Mr CHAN also enquired whether the manpower support given to ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) would be similar to that given to other ADEPs.

8. Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Reduction and Recycling) replied that EPD set up WRD in April 2014 through temporary redeployment of 33 permanent non-directorate civil service staff and creation of 22 time-limited non-directorate civil service posts for three

Action

years. In April 2017, apart from creating 11 new non-directorate civil service posts upon the lapse of the 22 time-limited posts, EPD also employed temporary staff to fill some of the remaining vacancies, so as to fulfil the manpower requirement as far as possible. DDEP(2) supplemented that as the portfolios of various ADEPs in EPD were not the same, the staffing support given to them could hardly be compared directly.

Enhancing waste paper and waste plastics recycling

9. Mr CHAN Chun-ying and Mr WONG Ting-kwong were concerned that the Mainland would further tighten the requirements for import recyclables from early 2018 onwards. Recyclables that were not clean or not properly sorted as per the prescribed standards would not be allowed to be imported into the Mainland. They expressed worries that recyclables recovered locally could not be imported into the Mainland as a result of the said arrangement, which might place further burden on landfills as large quantity of recyclable materials would be disposed of in the landfills. They requested the Administration to explain how the holder of the proposed post would lead WRD to deal with such problems.

10. DDEP(2) said that after reviewing the effectiveness of past efforts in recycling, EPD considered that there was room for improvement in domestic waste reduction at source and recycling. In this regard, the Government had already rolled out a new round of promotional campaign to educate and encourage members of the public to practise clean recycling for five recyclables, namely paperboard, newspaper, office paper, and waste plastic containers for beverages or personal care products. Properly cleaned and sorted paper and plastic recyclables that met the Mainland's new import requirements could still be exported to the Mainland instead of being disposed of at landfills. In addition, the Government planned to strengthen support for recycling lower value recyclables in the community by introducing a waste plastic bottles recycling campaign and collecting recyclables at Community Green Stations, Community Recycling Centres and various residential estates in the districts, as well as stepping up promotional and public education efforts on proper waste separation at source to minimize the time and cost required in handling recyclables. The holder of the proposed post would continue to implement all relevant measures.

11. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed worries that the Government's enhanced promotional efforts on the recycling of three types of waste paper and two types of plastic containers would mislead the public into thinking that materials other than these waste paper and plastic containers were

Action

non-recyclable, which would contradict the Government's policy of promoting waste reduction and recycling.

12. DDEP(2) explained that the Government envisaged to improve the quality of domestic recyclables by focusing on promoting proper waste separation and clean recycling among members of the public. Currently, most of the recovered waste paper and waste plastics came from the commercial and industrial sectors, accounting for around 70% of the total quantity of recyclables. As these recyclables contained a single type of waste materials in relatively large quantity from concentrated sources, recyclers would be able to directly deal with them more easily.

13. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen considered that the implementation of a mandatory waste separation at source scheme was the prerequisite for the Government to achieve effective waste recycling. He enquired whether the work of ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) would include exploring the feasibility of implementing mandatory waste separation at source in Hong Kong.

14. DDEP(2) replied that the Government's policy objective was to implement the "municipal solid waste charging scheme" first. After formally implementing the scheme, the Government would gauge public acceptance of other waste management regulations to consider if the conditions would be right for further introducing a scheme on mandatory waste separation at source. She added that, regarding those cities with mandatory waste separation at source, some of them did implement municipal solid waste charging first, before subsequently making waste separation at source mandatory.

15. Mr SHIU Ka-chun urged that the Government should stop selling bottled water from vending machines at Government venues, and that more drinking water fountains should be installed to reduce people's reliance on bottled water. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan suggested that the Government should introduce an incentive scheme for recycling at residential estates to encourage members of the public to separate waste at source for recycling.

16. DDEP(2) said that the Government planned to phase out the sale of bottled water in one litre or less from vending machines at Government venues. EPD also encouraged various departments to install drinking water fountains when constructing new government buildings or refurbishing old ones. The Government would consider the suggestion relating to incentives for recycling.

Action

Enhancing support for the local recycling industry

17. Mr Holden CHOW commented that the Government should take the lead in using more recycled materials to increase demand for these materials in Hong Kong, so as to effectively promote the development of the local recycling industry. Noting from the Government's paper that it planned to expand the green procurement list to cover more items, he enquired how the Government would implement this measure.

18. DDEP(2) shared members' views. In this respect, the Government had expanded the green procurement list to cover 150 items of products and services with updated technical specifications, including encouraging Government bureaux and departments to use recycled materials such as B5 diesel, as well as using eco-pavers and reclaimed asphalts in public works, with a view to promoting the development of a local market for recycled products.

19. Mr SHIU Ka-chun suggested that the Government consider using public money to conduct research on the enhancement of recycling technology in Hong Kong, including the technology to crush and turn waste plastics into other raw materials for the local industrial sector. Mr KWONG Chun-yu commented that, in the long run, the Government should develop an industry chain for the local recycling industry, enabling the trade to recycle wastes locally within its capacity, so as to reduce the export of waste to the Mainland.

20. DDEP(2) advised that the Recycling Fund had already provided the local recycling industry with funding for procurement of equipment used for crushing waste plastics and processing them into raw materials to be exported to the Mainland. In the long term, the Government envisaged to upgrade the recycling capacity of the recycling industry in Hong Kong by gradually promoting its development, including the provision of such infrastructural support as land in the EcoPark and other sites. It was also expected that this would facilitate the absorption of recycled materials locally, thereby reducing the export of wastes.

21. Noting from the Government's paper that it planned to provide infrastructural support for the recycling industry, including making available land in the EcoPark and berths in Public Cargo Working Areas, Mr Jeremy TAM enquired about the details and reasons for allocating berths in Public Cargo Working Areas to the recycling industry.

Action

22. DDEP(2) and Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Reduction and Recycling) advised that the Government wished to promote local paper recycling in the long run, and had therefore planned to supply paper manufacturers with land in the EcoPark in the first half of 2018 for construction of paper recycling or paper factories. The plot would be around 2 hectares in size and several local operators had already expressed interest in bidding the land. Moreover, as the waste paper recycling industry had indicated to the Government the need for more space for waste paper processing, and that waste paper was mostly shipped to the Mainland by barges, the Government specifically planned to provide the recycling industry with berths in Public Cargo Working Areas for their exclusive use in response to their needs.

Preventing influx of wastes from abroad

23. Mr CHU Hoi-dick pointed out that some of the wastes and recyclables processed by the local recycling industry were non-recyclable domestic wastes imported from abroad (commonly known as "foreign rubbish"). They were eventually disposed of in landfills. He requested the Administration to explain how it would control the influx of foreign rubbish while promoting the development of local recycling industry. Furthermore, he pointed out that a container vessel was detained by the Administration in 2016 for allegedly trying to import more than 100 containers suspected of holding metal slag. He enquired about the latest development of the incident and whether the consignment concerned was still in Hong Kong.

24. DDEP(2) advised that under the Waste Disposal Ordinance (Cap. 354), the import and export of non-hazardous wastes for recycling purpose was allowed, but the import of foreign rubbish for disposal in Hong Kong was illegal. Given the Mainland's tightened restrictions on the import of recyclables and the imminent implementation of the Municipal Solid Waste Charging Scheme in Hong Kong would increase recyclers' costs of importing non-recyclable materials to Hong Kong for disposal, it was believed that recyclers would not easily import wastes which could not be recycled or re-exported then. In respect of the incident concerning the alleged import of metal slag brought up by Mr CHU Hoi-dick, the Administration would provide supplementary information.

[Post-meeting note: The supplementary information provided by the Administration was circulated to members on 5 January 2018 vide LC Paper No. ESC50/17-18(01).]

Action

25. In response to Mr WU Chi-wai's enquiry about the Administration's regulation and enforcement efforts concerning the import of foreign rubbish, DDEP(2) explained that the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department and EPD would monitor and conduct random inspections on container shipments of imported recyclables based on a risk assessment approach, as well as tracking containers reported as entering Hong Kong for re-export purpose, so as to ensure that the relevant recyclables were shipped out of Hong Kong in the end. Moreover, the Government would also review from time to time the existing measures and legislation to ensure effective regulation of the import of waste to Hong Kong.

26. Pointing out that the yearly quantity of recovered recyclable plastics was 93 900 tonnes in total as shown in the "Monitoring of Solid Waste in Hong Kong — Waste Statistics for 2015", Mr CHU Hoi-dick enquired whether the figure included plastic wastes which were reported to enter Hong Kong for re-exporting. Furthermore, he requested the Administration to publish the relevant waste statistics for 2016 as soon as possible.

27. DDEP(2) advised that the "Monitoring of Solid Waste in Hong Kong" only contained yearly figures of recyclable plastics recovered locally. As regards waste plastics re-exported via Hong Kong, the figures of imported and exported plastics between 2012 and 2015 more or less stayed at around 3 million tonnes each year, indicating that most of the plastics for ex-export purpose were shipped out in the end, leaving only a minor portion of such materials for processing by the local recycling industry. She added that the Government would publish the "Monitoring of Solid Waste in Hong Kong — Waste Statistics for 2016" as soon as practicable.

Performance indicators for the proposed post

28. Mr WU Chi-wai and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen pointed out that, despite having laid down numerous work plans for WRD, EPD had not set any clear performance indicators for the proposed post, rendering it difficult for the public to evaluate and quantify the achievements to be made by the proposed post. Mr WU, Mr CHAN and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan requested the Administration to provide a set of indicators for evaluating the effectiveness in promoting waste reduction and recycling by the proposed post in the future. Furthermore, Mr WU also requested the Administration to provide a list of work on promoting waste reduction and recycling completed by the supernumerary ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) post during its term between 2014 and 2017.

Action

29. DDEP(2) advised that the Government published the "Hong Kong Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013-2022" in 2013 to encourage waste reduction at source, enhance reuse and recovery of resources, as well as promoting clean recycling. After taking office in 2014, the holder of the supernumerary ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) post had already commenced the tasks step by step. The holder of the permanent ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) post, after coming into office, would continue promoting and implementing various new policies and plans for waste reduction and recycling. The Government would provide supplementary information to illustrate the work targets of the proposed post and the tasks achieved by the supernumerary ADEP (Waste Reduction & Recycling) post.

[Post-meeting note: The supplementary information provided by the Administration was circulated to members on 5 January 2018 vide LC Paper No. ESC50/17-18(01).]

Organization structure of the Environmental Protection Department

30. Mr WU Chi-wai, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr Martin LIAO noted from the Government's paper that WRD was led by DDEP(2), while the Waste Management Policy Division and Waste Management (Special Duties) Division were led by the Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (4) ("DDEP(4)"). Given the similar nature of waste reduction and recycling and waste management, they enquired whether the Government had considered putting WRD under the charge of DDEP(4) instead.

31. DDEP(2) explained that waste management came under the purview of DDEP(2) before the post of DDEP(4) was created in EPD. Therefore, WRD had been led by DDEP(2) since its establishment. In 2015, in response to the need for additional and dedicated manpower for formulating plans for tasks relating to "producer responsibility schemes" and the "Municipal Solid Waste Charging Scheme", DDEP(4) post was created for leading the Waste Management Policy Division and the Waste Management (Special Duties) Division. Under this arrangement, DDEP(2) and DDEP(4) had been maintaining close contact in regard to waste management. She added that a "Municipal Solid Waste Reduction Office" would be set up following the implementation of the "Municipal Solid Waste Charging Scheme", and EPD would then reorganize and reshuffle the division of tasks concerning waste management, waste reduction and recycling within EPD in order to yield optimal effects.

Action

32. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok and Mr Holden CHOW pointed out that, owing to the large amount of recyclables exported from Hong Kong to the Mainland for processing each year, the development of recycling industry in Hong Kong depended on close collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland in relation to environmental protection. They enquired whether issues concerning cross-boundary collaboration were handled by the Cross-Boundary & International Division led by the Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (3).

33. DDEP(2) explained that WRD had been keeping close contact with the Ministry of Environmental Protection in the Mainland and the Department of Environmental Protection of Guangdong Province in a bid to understand the Mainland's introduction of new requirements for import recyclables. She added that the Cross-Boundary & International Division was responsible for communicating regularly with Mainland authorities in respect of policy issues concerning cross-boundary cooperation on environmental protection, such as emission reduction agreement. If the subject concerned was a specific issue, cross-boundary collaboration would generally be done directly by the relevant division under EPD with the related authorities/department.

[At 10:18 am, the Chairman said that she decided not to extend the meeting because the Panel on Health Services, Panel on Education and Panel on Welfare Services would hold a joint meeting at 10:30 am.]

Meeting arrangement

34. At 10:28 am, the Chairman said that as some members were still waiting for their turn to ask questions, the Subcommittee would continue to discuss this item at the meeting on 10 January 2018.

35. The meeting ended at 10:28 am.