

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)1467/20-21  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 11 January 2021, at 10:45 am**  
**in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

**Members present** : Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP (Chairman)  
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP  
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP  
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP  
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH  
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding  
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH  
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN  
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP  
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH  
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai  
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP

**Public Officers attending** : Item III

Mr HO Kai-ming, JP  
Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr TAN Tick-yee  
Assistant Director (Elderly)  
Social Welfare Department

Item IV

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP  
Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr David LEUNG, JP  
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr Patrick WONG Chi-kwong  
Assistant Commissioner/Management and Paratransit  
Transport Department

**Clerk in attendance** : Miss Lilian MOK  
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

**Staff in attendance** : Ms Catherina YU  
Senior Council Secretary (2) 4

Mr Roger CHUNG  
Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Alison HUI  
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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Action

**I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting**

Members noted that no information papers had been issued since the last meeting.

**II. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)598/20-21(01) and (02)]

2. Members agreed to discuss at the next meeting scheduled for 8 February 2021 the following items:

(a) Welfare services under the Coronavirus Disease 2019

epidemic; and

- (b) Long-term planning for provision of child care services.

*(Post-meeting note: At the request of the Administration, the Chairman agreed that two additional discussion items entitled "Proposal of retaining one supernumerary post of Assistant Director of Social Welfare" and "Additional measures to assist financial needy individuals and families" be added to the agenda for the above meeting and the discussion on item (b) be deferred to the meeting scheduled for 8 March 2021.)*

List of outstanding items for discussion

3. The Chairman advised that the Administration and the Secretariat had reviewed the "List of outstanding items for discussion" ("the List") (LC Paper No. CB(2)598/20-21(01)) and re-categorized the items therein based on their key contents. The Deputy Chairman suggested that the Panel should continue to follow up on item 23 entitled "Charitable fund-raising activities" which was one of the seven items proposed to be removed from the List. He was of the view that while the Law Reform Commission would report annually to the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services on the progress of implementation of its recommendations on the monitoring of charitable fund-raising activities by the Government, the Panel had been serving as the primary platform for a focused discussion on the matter. At the Chairman's request, the Clerk would follow up on the Deputy Chairman's suggestion.

Clerk

*(Post-meeting note: The Chairman considered and agreed to the Deputy Chairman's suggestion as detailed in his letter dated 19 January 2021 that the Panel was to continue to follow up on item 23 of the List above. Except for this, no other comments had been received from members by the deadline on 20 January 2021.)*

**III. Measures to enhance community and residential care services for the elderly**

[LC Paper Nos. 598/20-21(03) and (04)]

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("USLW") briefed members on the community and residential care services for the elderly provided by the Administration as well as the relevant enhancement measures.

Enhancing the provision of elderly services

5. The Deputy Chairman and Mr Michael TIEN expressed concern that many residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") at Category EA2 under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme ("EBPS") ("EA2 homes") were unable to upgrade their EA2 places to EA1 level as EA1 homes were subject to higher staffing and space standards. Mr TIEN strongly urged the Administration to draw up plans for upgrading the existing EA2 places to EA1 level and asked whether the 1 700 additional EA1 places available in the 2020-2021 financial year under EBPS were in fact EA2 places before upgrading.

6. Assistant Director (Elderly) ("AD(Elderly)") responded that the 1 700 additional places were brand new EA1 places. Depending on RCHE operators' plan and business viability to upgrade their EA2 places to EA1 level, the Administration had committed to reviewing EBPS from time to time. At the request of the Chairman and Mr Michael TIEN, AD(Elderly) undertook to provide information on the number of EA2 places in private RCHEs under EBPS and the Administration's plan for upgrading EA2 places to EA1 level.

Admin

7. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about the provision of residential care services ("RCS") and community care services ("CCS") for the elderly, AD(Elderly) said that there were around 29 000 subsidized RCS places and the total number of service quota of CCS, including centre-based day care services and home-based care services ("HCS"), was around 15 000. In April 2021, 1 500 additional HCS places would be provided. The Administration was also conducting a review of the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance (Cap. 459) and the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance (Cap. 613) to enhance the quality and provision of RCS for the elderly.

8. Mr Wilson OR noted with concern that as at end-December 2020, there were 37 525 elderly persons on the Central Waiting List for RCS ("CWL") and the average waiting time for RCS in subvented homes was as long as about 41 months. USLW advised that the Administration had implemented medium and long-term strategies for increasing the supply of welfare facilities including RCHEs to shorten the waiting time for RCS. In addition to allocating \$20 billion to purchase premises in private property market for the provision of welfare facilities ("purchase exercise"), consideration would be given to reserving about 5% of the total domestic gross floor area in suitable future public housing developments for welfare

uses. The Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses ("the Special Sites Scheme") and EBPS would also provide additional RCS places for the elderly.

9. Riding on the downward movement of private property prices during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") epidemic, Mr LAU Kwok-fan urged the Administration to speed up the progress of the purchase exercise and encourage more private land owners to participate in the new phase of the Special Sites Scheme. AD(Elderly) advised that the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") and Government Property Agency ("GPA") were responsible for the purchase exercise. Open invitations of sale proposals from owners of potentially suitable non-domestic premises in six districts were placed on GPA's website in end-September and end-December 2020. The purchase exercise was underway with a view to purchasing the first batch of premises in 2021.

10. USLW supplemented that when assessing the sale proposals submitted by property owners, the Administration's considerations were whether the locations and floor areas of the premises were suitable for accommodating relevant welfare facilities. He advised members that the Administration had completed the consultation on the lists of welfare facilities proposed in the relevant districts. Members would be updated on the progress of the purchase exercise in due course. Nevertheless, no RCS place would be provided under the exercise.

11. Given the shortage of suitable premises for RCHEs and inadequate manpower supply for elderly services in Hong Kong, Mr LAU Kwok-fan further urged the Administration to encourage RCHE operators to establish RCHEs in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area") and recruit local residents as care workers. Consideration could be given to purchasing RCS places from these care homes for Hong Kong elderly persons. The Chairman enquired whether the Administration had started any work in this regard.

12. USLW responded that while exploring the possibility of providing RCS in the Greater Bay Area for elderly persons on CWL, their views and concerns about medical support, cultural differences, etc. would be carefully considered. The Chairman remarked that the RCHEs to be established in the Greater Bay Area should model on their counterparts in Hong Kong and the travelling time between these RCHEs and Hong Kong should not be long.

Long-term planning for provision of elderly services

13. In light of the emerging problems of ageing population, the Deputy Chairman considered that the Administration should prepare an overall planning to estimate the manpower and financial resources required for the growing demand for RCS for the elderly against the backdrop of the ever-increasing recurrent expenditure on elderly services in the next five years.

14. USLW advised that the Administration would continue to implement the recommendations set out in the Elderly Services Programme Plan ("ESPP") issued by the Elderly Commission in June 2017 and the various pilot schemes on RCS and CCS for elderly persons. The Chairman, the Deputy Chairman and Mr Wilson OR requested the Administration to brief the Panel on the implementation progress of the recommendations in ESPP in the first or second quarter of 2021.

Manpower supply for the elderly service sector

15. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung was concerned about whether the existing manpower for elderly care services would be able to cope with the increasing provision of RCS. Mr Holden CHOW and Mr LUK Chung-hung shared a similar view that the Administration should provide relevant training to those who had become unemployed due to the COVID-19 epidemic to address the growing demand for manpower in the elderly service sector.

16. USLW responded that the Employees Retraining Board had introduced the First-Hire-Then-Train ("FHTT") Scheme since 2015-2016 to encourage the latent workforce to enter the employment market and alleviate manpower shortage in the employment market. In the 2020 Policy Address, the Government announced that it would consider adjusting the training and working hour arrangements under the FHTT Scheme to attract job seekers to join the care sector. The Administration had also implemented the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services ("the Navigation Scheme") to encourage young people to join the elderly service sector. AD(Elderly) supplemented that the Navigation Scheme would provide a total of 1 200 training places within five years starting from 2020-2021. Enhancement measures for the Navigation Scheme, which included expanding the age range of trainees, reducing the working hours per week for trainees and raising their salaries and training subsidies, had also been rolled out.

17. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the monthly salaries of the care workers participating in the FHTT Scheme and the trainees of the Navigation Scheme, USLW responded that, according to the data collected by SWD, the average monthly emoluments of personal care workers, home helpers and ward attendants working for subsidized services had been increased by 7.4% to 11.4% in 2019, amounting to \$17,819, \$17,325 and \$14,856 respectively. The salaries of the trainees working as care workers (entry-level post) and health workers (promotional post) under the Navigation Scheme were \$14,150 and \$17,090 respectively in 2020-2021.

Support for elderly persons during the COVID-19 epidemic

18. Dr CHENG Chung-tai expressed grave concern about the functional ability of elderly persons since the suspension of the home-based care services during the COVID-19 epidemic and criticized that the Hospital Authority's policy which required persons staying in hospitals for more than two hours or visiting hospitals regularly to have a COVID-19 negative test weekly was a burden on elderly persons and their family members economically and emotionally. He further called on the Administration to consult medical experts and subject to their advice, relax the existing visitation arrangements in RCHEs. The Chairman suggested giving consideration to subsidize RCHEs to purchase protective equipment to facilitate family members to visit RCHE residents.

19. USLW advised that the existing visitation arrangements in RCHEs sought to protect the elderly from the risk of contracting COVID-19. The Administration was considering implementing measures to facilitate family members to visit RCHE residents when the epidemic situation had started to ease gradually. It would discuss with RCHE operators on the use of protective equipment by visitors and RCHE residents. As regards COVID-19 testing, elderly residents might undergo free testing under the testing scheme for residents/service users of residential care homes ("RCHs") if required.

20. Expressing concern about the emergence of confirmed cases in RCHEs, the Chairman took the view that RCHE staff and residents who were discharged from hospitals should undergo compulsory COVID-19 test. USLW responded that staff members working in RCHs, nursing homes, day service units attached to the premises of RCHs were required to undergo compulsory COVID-19 testing once every 10 days. The Administration would consider the suggestion of arranging COVID-19 testing for RCHE residents when they were discharged from hospitals.

Outreaching medical services for residents of residential care homes for the elderly

Admin 21. Noting that the long waiting time of elderly patients with terminal illness in RCHEs for services provided by the Community Geriatric Assessment Team ("CGAT") of the Hospital Authority ("HA") was mainly due to a lack of resources, Mr Michael TIEN enquired about the annual estimates of expenditure for HA to strengthen CGAT service so that elderly persons in need would be able to receive regular outreach medical and after-care services. USLW undertook to seek the requisite information from HA for members' information.

Admin 22. In response to Mr Michael TIEN's further enquiry as to whether the Administration would consider regularizing the Pilot Scheme on Multi-disciplinary Outreaching Support Teams for the Elderly to provide outreach services for residents in private RCHEs in the long run, AD(Elderly) said that the Administration would keep in view the implementation of the scheme and consider the way forward nearer the end of its pilot period in early 2023. At the request of Mr TIEN, AD(Elderly) undertook to provide information on the Administration's plan for the regularization of the scheme.

Support for elderly patients discharged from hospitals

23. Mr Wilson OR reflected the social welfare sector's view that the Pilot Scheme on Support for Elderly Persons Discharged from Public Hospitals after Treatment ("Pilot Scheme on Discharged Support for Elderly Persons") launched by the Community Care Fund should cover all discharged elderly patients in need and the service period should be extended to not less than six months. The sector also considered it desirable for the Pilot Scheme on Discharged Support for Elderly Persons to amalgamate with HA's Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients ("IDSP") to better utilize resources.

24. AD(Elderly) responded that targeting at elderly persons with temporary loss of self-care ability due to illness and in need of temporary residential care and/or community care and support services after discharged from hospitals and not covered under IDSP, the Commission on Poverty had endorsed the extension of the Pilot Scheme on Discharged Support for Elderly Persons for 32 months from February 2021 to September 2023. The service period for each participant was no more than four months and might be extended subject to individual circumstances. The Administration had commissioned a consultant to study the

effectiveness of and the way forward for the Pilot Scheme on Discharged Support for Elderly Persons.

Use of gerontechnological products

25. Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care ("I&T Fund") would subsidize elderly persons using HCS to rent gerontechnological products like those for making soft meals. Mr LUK Chung-hung considered it necessary for eligible elderly persons to apply for I&T Fund in order to promote gerontechnology for improving the quality of life of elderly persons and facilitating them to age in the community.

26. USLW responded that the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust had set up the Gerontech Education and Rental Service Centre in Shatin to provide rental services of gerontechnological products for elderly persons in the district under a pilot scheme administered by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. The rental services might be extended to other districts depending on the effectiveness of the pilot scheme. AD(Elderly) supplemented that \$75 million had been allocated to subsidize RCHEs, day care service units and HCS teams for providing soft meals for elderly persons in need.

Motions

27. Mr Michael TIEN moved his first motion as set out below:

*Motion 1*

"鑒於由醫管局提供的社區老人評估服務供應極為不足，有院舍輪候超過8年仍未獲提供服務，本委員會促請政府增撥資源，相關部門共同協作，令所有院舍在本財政年度能夠使用此服務。"

(Translation)

"Given that there is an acute shortage of the Community Geriatric Assessment Service provided by the Hospital Authority, and some residential care homes have been waiting for more than eight years but have yet to be provided with the service, this Panel urges the Government to allocate additional resources and foster collaboration among relevant departments in order that all residential care homes

can use the service in the current financial year."

28. The Chairman put the motion to vote. Mr Michael TIEN claimed a division. All members present including Mr YIU Si-wing, Mr Michael TIEN, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung, Mr POON Siu-ping, Mr Wilson OR, Mr LUK Chung-hung, Dr CHENG Chung-tai and Mr Vincent CHENG voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

29. Mr Michael TIEN moved his second motion as set out below:

*Motion 2*

"甲一級和甲二級院舍服務人手及設施相距甚遠，長者對甲一院舍的需求遠較甲二院舍殷切，惟本港仍有不少院舍處於甲二水平。有鑒於此，本委員會促請政府3個月內提交建議，增撥資源，從速協助大部分甲二級院舍提升為甲一，讓長者安享晚年。"

(Translation)

"Given the significant difference in manpower provision and facilities between private homes at Category EA1 ("EA1 homes") and private homes at Category EA2 ("EA2 homes"), the elderly's demand for EA1 homes is much greater than that for EA2 homes. However, many residential care homes for the elderly in Hong Kong are still at EA2 level. In view of this, this Panel urges the Government to put forward a proposal within three months for providing additional resources to facilitate the upgrading of most of the EA2 homes to EA1 homes expeditiously so as to enable the elderly to enjoy life in their twilight years."

30. The Chairman put the motion to vote. As all members present voted for the motion, the Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

31. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung moved the following motion which was seconded by Mr Wilson OR and Mr Vincent CHENG:

"就改善長者社區及院舍照顧服務的措施，本委員會促請政府：

1. 就不同社區照顧服務的輪候情況及實際需要增撥資源及制定短、中、長期目標，如短期及中期目標應增加社區

照顧服務名額及人手，縮短輪候時間，向基層長者及殘疾人士提供家居清潔、陪診、送飯、暫託、暫宿等服務，加強長者及殘疾人士在社區生活的支援；長期目標應按各區服務的輪候情況及實際需要增撥資源，當中包括但不限於：長者日間護理中心、綜合家居照顧服務、改善家居及社區照顧服務、嚴重殘疾人士家居照顧服務等；

2. 增加津助長者及殘疾人士的院舍數量及其服務名額以縮短輪候時間，落實院舍條例有關增加寢室空間的建議及作出嚴厲執法，增加突擊巡查私營安老院舍及資助院舍的人手及次數等；
3. 增加恆常的津助社區照顧服務資源，包括增撥資源投放及服務名額及擴展恆常家居照顧及日間照顧服務能同時使用等；
4. 考慮將現時支援在公立醫院接受治療後離院的長者試驗計劃的資源撥入現有的離院長者綜合支援計劃，並檢討及完善現有醫管局支援計劃的情況。"

(Translation)

"On measures to enhance community and residential care services for the elderly, this Panel urges the Government to:

1. allocate additional resources and formulate short, medium and long-term goals for various community care services ("CCS") based on the waitlisting situation of and actual needs for such services, e.g. the short and medium-term goals should be to increase the number of CCS places and manpower provision, shorten the waiting time, and provide grass-roots elderly and persons with disabilities ("PWDs") with services such as household cleaning, escort for medical consultations, meal delivery, respite service and residential respite service, so as to enhance support for the elderly and PWDs living in the community; the long-term goals should be to provide additional resources based on the waitlisting situation of and actual needs for CCS in various districts, including but not limited to day care centres for the elderly, Integrated Home Care Services, Enhanced Home and Community Care Services, Home Care

Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities, etc.;

2. increase the number of and service places for subvented residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") and residential care homes for persons with disabilities ("RCHDs") with a view to shortening the waiting time for such services, implement the amendments to the ordinances on residential care homes ("RCHs") to increase bedroom space, take stringent enforcement actions, and deploy extra manpower to conduct and increase the frequency of surprise inspections on private RCHEs and subvented RCHs, etc.;
3. increase recurrent resources for subvented CCS, including increasing resource allocation and service places as well as expanding regular home care and day care services to allow their concurrent provision; and
4. consider deploying the resources currently allocated to the Pilot Scheme on Support for Elderly Persons Discharged from Public Hospitals after Treatment to the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients, as well as review and improve the existing support programmes implemented by the Hospital Authority."

32. The Chairman put the motion to vote. As all members present voted for the motion, the Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

#### **IV. Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)598/20-21(05) to (06), CB(2)144/20-21(02), CB(2)257/20-21(01), CB(2)631/20-21(01) and CB(2)651/20-21(01)]

33. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") briefed members on the review progress and latest development of the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities ("the Fare Concession Scheme").

#### Lowering the eligible age from 65 to 60

34. Noting that the proposal of extending the coverage of the Fare Concession Scheme to include persons aged between 60 and 64 ("the new

beneficiaries") ("the new initiative") would not take effect until the first quarter of 2022, members including Mr LEUNG Che-cheung, Mr POON Siu-ping, Mr Holden CHOW, Mr Wilson OR, Mr LUK Chung-hung, Mr Vincent CHENG and Mr KWOK Wai-keung expressed dissatisfaction that since its announcement in January 2020, the Administration took a long time of two years to take forward the new initiative. They urged the Administration to expedite the new initiative to help relieve the financial burden of the new beneficiaries amidst the prevailing economic downturn. Dr CHENG Chung-tai enquired whether the Administration would progressively make it mandatory for the 1.32 million existing beneficiaries aged 65 and above to use personalized Octopus cards ("P-Cards") and had discussed with specified public transport operators ("PTOs") how the new initiative would be implemented.

35. SLW advised that the Administration would follow up with the Octopus Card Limited and PTOs on the new initiative expeditiously. It was expected that the new initiative might be implemented as early as in the first quarter of 2022. Upon completion of issuing P-Cards tailor-made for the Fare Concession Scheme to the new beneficiaries, the Administration would extend the mandatory use of the tailor-made P-Cards to the 1.32 million existing beneficiaries aged 65 and above within the following two years in order to cease the access of anonymous Elder Octopus Cards ("A-Cards") to the Fare Concession Scheme in the future. SLW further advised that since the application for tailor-made P-Cards was expected to start from the third quarter of 2021, the new beneficiaries would be given ample time to submit their applications.

36. Mr Vincent CHENG expressed concern about the long lead time of around 13 months to issue P-Cards to the new beneficiaries. SLW explained that adequate time was reserved for the some 600 000 new beneficiaries to submit applications for the tailor-made P-Cards in an orderly manner. Having regard also to the technical and logistical complexities in developing the required systems and for processing and issuing the large number of the tailor-made P-Cards which would contain basic personal information and photos, the entire process of issuing the tailor-made P-Cards to the new beneficiaries might last around 13 months. On the other hand, the issuing of the tailor-made P-Cards to over 1.3 million existing beneficiaries aged 65 and above would be completed within two years.

37. Mr Michael TIEN said that according to his understanding, modifying the software and hardware configurations for the new initiative could be completed within three months and if both legislative and

administrative procedures including seeking approval from the Finance Committee for the relevant funding could be proceeded in parallel, the new initiative could be implemented in July 2021. He asked whether the Administration would be able to implement the new initiative in advance of completing the entire card issuance programme. Mr LUK Chung-hung enquired about the measures to encourage the new beneficiaries to submit their applications at an earlier stage to facilitate processing.

38. SLW advised that some of the necessary procedures had to be gone through step by step to ensure a smooth implementation of the new initiative. For example, it would respectively take around six to seven months to conduct testings of and issuance of the tailor-made P-Cards. Otherwise, considerable confusion might arise from implementation. While the new initiative would take effect on a specified date, the Administration would explore ways and means of increasing processing capacity and achieving efficiency. The new beneficiaries who possessed existing P-Cards that were not tailor-made for the Fare Concession Scheme would also be required to apply for the new tailor-made P-Cards in order to enjoy the concessionary fare.

39. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung enquired whether the Administration had explored adopting other electronic payment systems for the new initiative and taking this opportunity to introduce a "real-name registration" system to combat and prevent abuses of the concession. Mr Holden CHOW echoed the view. SLW responded that the consultant commissioned to review the Fare Concession Scheme had studied the use of various electronic payment systems and their capability to verify the identity of the beneficiary. It was noted from the review that the adoption of alternative payment systems depended on their operational implications and prevalence in the local market. In respect of public transport fare payment, the Octopus Card system had been well-established in the market and was considered more user friendly by many elderly persons when compared with other payment systems.

40. Dr CHENG Chung-tai expressed concern that as many persons aged between 60 and 64 were still in employment and travelling frequently by public transport during peak hours, the new initiative might place additional pressure on the traffic system. SLW responded that according to the findings of the consultancy study, most of the existing beneficiaries of the Fare Concession Scheme avoided using public transport during peak hours. As the consultant found no evidence to suggest that the beneficiaries of the Fare Concession Scheme were unduly competing for critical transport capacity during rush hours, the consultant did not recommend any

restriction on the concessionary in the rush hours.

41. While supporting the new initiative, the Deputy Chairman expressed concern about the Administration's long-term financial commitment under the Fare Concession Scheme. He suggested that the mandatory use of P-Cards tailor-made for the Fare Concession Scheme should firstly be introduced to the existing beneficiaries aged 65 and above to prevent fare abuse by ineligible passengers and ensure proper use of public fund. SLW responded that the Administration's plan was to implement the new initiative as early as practicable so that persons aged between 60 and 64 would be able to travel at a flat \$2 concessionary fare. As such, the issuing of tailor-made P-Cards to the new beneficiaries would be accorded priority. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, SLW advised that the recurrent expenditure for reimbursing PTOs reached \$1,300 million in 2019-2020.

#### Enhancement of anti-abuse measures

42. The Deputy Chairman and Mr POON Siu-ping noted with concern that while A-Card holders outnumbered elderly persons aged 65 or above, there were only around 100 suspected abuse cases found and some 20 cases convicted annually in the past few years. There might probably be significant abuses of the Fare Concession Scheme. The Deputy Chairman and Mr Wilson OR suggested enhancing publicity and enforcement efforts as well as raising the penalty level to combat the abuses. Mr LUK Chung-hung and Mr Holden CHOW considered it necessary to strengthen manpower to step up ticket inspection and passenger identity verification. Mr KWOK Wai-keung held the view that PTOs lacked incentives to proactively enforce inspection and verify the identity of the beneficiaries.

43. SLW responded that according to the consultant, ineligible passengers in many abuse cases were using A-Cards which they could purchase without having to produce age or identity proof. In light of a higher risk of being detected and prosecuted, there was absolute and urgent need for the beneficiaries to use tailor-made P-Cards to facilitate monitoring and inspection and create a much greater deterrent effect on ineligible passengers.

44. SLW further advised that the Transport Department had asked all PTOs under the Fare Concession Scheme to step up ticket inspection and passenger identification and to strictly enforce the penalty as set out in the relevant legislation and by-laws. Since the operation conditions and anti-abuse measures varied across PTOs, the use of tailor-made P-Cards would facilitate inspection and enforcement actions. In addition, the

Administration would launch publicity programmes to enhance public awareness that ineligible passenger who abused the concession might be prosecuted and if convicted, fined accordingly. In response to Mr LUK Chung-hung's enquiry about the drop in the number of suspected abuse cases in 2019, SLW explained that this might be due to the fact that the monitoring surveys conducted in MTR had been severely disrupted by the social incidents in the second half of the year.

*(At 12:32 pm, the Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes beyond the appointed ending time to allow sufficient time for discussion.)*

#### Regular review mechanism

45. Mr Michael TIEN expressed support for the Administration's plan to review the flat \$2 fare once every five years and further suggested adjusting the level of the flat rate proportional to the level of increase in the public transport expenses. Mr Wilson OR and Mr POON Siu-ping sought justifications for the 5-year interval and details of the review on the reimbursement arrangements for PTOs.

46. SLW advised that having considered the continuing increase in transportation fares, the Fare Concession Scheme would pose long-term financial burden on the Government, the consultant recommended the establishment of a mechanism to review regularly the reimbursement arrangement for various PTOs and fare setting. To avoid causing frequent disturbances to the public, the Administration planned to review the \$2 flat rate every five years.

#### Extension of the Fare Concession Scheme to cover tramways

47. Expressing concern that Hong Kong Tramways had encountered difficulties in business operation since the introduction of the Fare Concession Scheme which narrowed down the fare differences between tramways and other public transport modes, Mr KWOK Wai-keung held the view that the Administration should consider providing full-fare concession for elderly passengers for the purposes of conservation of transportation heritage and job retention under the COVID-19 epidemic. He also enquired about the possible extension of the Fare Concession Scheme to cover tramways. SLW advised that Hong Kong Tramways had not joined the Fare Concession Scheme so far primarily because their elderly fares were lower than the flat \$2 fare. Nevertheless, the Administration would discuss with Hong Kong Tramways about its participation in the Fare Concession Scheme in future subject to their

meeting all the requirements set.

Motions

48. Mr Michael TIEN moved the following motion:

"政府去年1月已公布政府長者及合資格殘疾人士公共交通票價優惠計劃("2元乘車優惠計劃")受惠門檻將降至60歲，惟至今未落實。本委員會促請政府本周內通知八達通公司修改軟件，然後指示運輸機構更新閘機，立刻落實政策。此外，政府須每5年檢討一次2元乘車優惠計劃，按公共交通開支變動比例，調整優惠金額。"

(Translation)

"The Government had announced in January last year that the age threshold for the beneficiaries under the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities ("2 transport fare concession scheme") would be lowered to 60 but this has yet to be implemented so far. This Panel urges the Government to notify within this week the Octopus Cards Limited to modify its software, and then instruct public transport companies to update their gate machines, in order to immediately implement the policy. Moreover, the Government is required to review the \$2 transport fare concession scheme once every five years and make adjustment to the rate of the concessionary fare proportional to the changes in the public transport expenses."

49. The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

50. Mr Wilson OR moved the following motion which was seconded by Mr LEUNG Che-cheung and Mr Vincent CHENG:

"本委員會促請政府盡快落實推行60至64歲兩元乘車優惠，包括於今年首季內開展申領及登記程序，以便於財政預算案撥款獲通過後，並於今年年中或以前正式落實計劃；另外，針對現時65歲或以上長者八達通卡出現濫用兩元乘車優惠情況，建議當局透過行政措施及加強執法，以杜絕濫用問題。"

(Translation)

"This Panel urges the Government to expeditiously implement the \$2 transport fare concession for persons aged between 60 and 64, including launching the application and registration processes within the first quarter of this year in order that the scheme can be implemented formally by the middle of this year after the approval of funding allocated under the Budget; in addition, in view of the current abuse of the \$2 transport fare concession offered to persons aged 65 or above using Elder Octopus Cards, it is suggested that the Government adopt administrative measures and strengthen law enforcement to eradicate the abuse."

51. The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

**V. Any other business**

52. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
13 September 2021