

**Elderly Commission**  
**Minutes of the 36<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

Room 2005, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central

2:30 p.m., 17 February 2004 (Tuesday)

**Present:**

**Chairman**

The Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

**Vice-Chairman**

Dr E K YEOH, JP

Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

**Members**

Mrs LAM PEI Yu-dja, Peggy, GBS, JP

Mr WAN Man-ye, BBS, JP

Prof CHAN Cheung-ming, Alfred, JP

Mr LAI Kam-cheung, Michael, JP

Dr NG Yau-yung

Dr LUM Shun-sui, Susie

Ms WONG Yiu-ming, Anita

Mr CHAN Iu-seng, Star, BBS

Dr LAM Ching-choi, JP

Mr TANG Kwok-wai, Paul, JP

Director of Social Welfare

Mr LAU Kai-hung, JP

Representative of Director of Housing

Dr CHAN Wai-man, JP

Representative of Director of Health

Mr Byron LAM

Representative of Secretary for Education and Manpower

Dr Daisy DAI

Representative of Chief Executive, Hospital Authority

**Secretary**

Mrs Brenda FUNG

Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

**In Attendance:**

Mr Patrick NIP, JP	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food
Mr FUNG Kin-yip, Eugene	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Mrs Kathy NG	Assistant Director of Social Welfare
Mrs YUK KWOK Lai-sum	Chief Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department
Ms LUNG Siu-kit	Chief Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department
Mrs CHANG LAM Sook-ye	Senior Social Work Officer, Social Welfare Department
Dr LI Mun-pik, Teresa	Senior Medical and Health Officer, Department of Health
Mr HUNG Leung-bun, John	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Mr HUEN Chi-wai, Freeman	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Mr. WONG Chor-fung, David	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Mr KWOK Fung-king	Chief Executive Officer, Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Ms CHAN Oi-fun, Rainbow	Senior Executive Officer, Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

**Absent with Apologies:**

Prof Iris CHI, JP  
Dr WU Wai-yung, Raymond, GBS, JP  
Mr WONG Hong-yuen, Peter, GBS, JP

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The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

2. Amendments proposed by Mr Peter WONG and the Department of Health (DH) on the draft minutes of last meeting were tabled at the meeting. The amended minutes were endorsed.

## **Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising**

3. There were no outstanding matters arising from the 35<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **Agenda Item 3: Briefing on the 2004 Policy Address**

4. The Secretariat had distributed to Members copies of the 2004 Policy Agenda and Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services paper “Policy Initiatives of Health, Welfare and Food Bureau”. Mr Patrick NIP, Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food briefed Members on the part concerning “Care for Elders” in the Policy Agenda.

5. The Chairman said that with the introduction of the Central Waiting List for subsidized long term care services for the elderly (CWL), new applicants were required to undergo the Standardised Care Need Assessment to confirm their care needs first. For applicants assessed to be only slightly impaired or without impairment, they would not be eligible for waitlisting on the CWL. Some elders had reflected to him their concern about such an arrangement. He said that the Government should step up promotion of the CWL and better explain the details to applicants so as to put the mind of elders and their family members at ease. Mrs Kathy NG, Assistant Director of Social Welfare, said that prior to the implementation of the CWL, the Department had separately met representatives of service providers and users to explain the new arrangements and the response had been positive. The Department had also briefed front-line staff and service providers on the new mechanism and the community support services available for elders. In addition, the Department had produced for public information leaflets entitled “A Guide to the Central Waiting List for Subsidized Long Term Care Services for the Elderly”. In handling new applications, front-line staff would also explain to elders and their family members the detailed arrangements relating to the CWL.

6. As regards the waiting time for residential care services, Mrs NG replied that the current average waiting time for a place in subvented residential care homes was 30 months. She remarked that if Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) places were also taken into account, the average waiting time would be 24 months. With recent increase in EBPS places, an elder might only have to wait for one to two months to be placed in an EBPS home. For elders with urgent needs, front-line staff would arrange priority allocation of long term care services, including residential or community care service, on a case-by-case basis.

7. The meeting also discussed the difficulties faced by elders living in self-owned flats which were dilapidated. These buildings were out of repair and the living and hygienic conditions poor. The elderly owners were however unable to improve the conditions because of low income. Nor could they find buyers or secure reverse mortgage because of the poor conditions of the flats and the fact that the buildings were not targeted for urban redevelopment. Members proposed that the Government should assist the elderly owners in need in upgrading the facilities of their self-occupied properties, such as funding the repair and maintenance of their buildings. Members suggested that the Elderly Commission (EC) should give more thought to this complex issue in consultation with Government departments and other concerned parties.

8. Mr LAU Kai-hung, Deputy Director of Housing, added that the Housing Authority had revised its policy by allowing elderly who owned properties to apply for elder public housing immediately after the sale of their properties, instead of 24 months after the sale as required in the past. The waiting time for allocation of elderly public housing had now been reduced to less than one year. Moreover, elders with properties may also be eligible for compassionate rehousing on a case by case basis.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Visit to Universities of the Third Age (U3A) in Australia**

(Discussion Paper No. EC/D/01-04)

9. The Chairman said that the Task Group on Active Ageing (TGAA) was studying active ageing issues and one of the priority subjects was lifelong learning. Three EC Members, namely Mr Peter WONG, Prof Alfred CHAN and Ms Anita WONG, joined a study visit organised by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) on U3As in Brisbane and Melbourne at the end of 2003. They would share with other Members the preliminary observations from the visit and on application of the U3A concept in Hong Kong. As Mr Peter WONG, leader of the delegation, was out of town, Prof CHAN would brief Members on the contents of Discussion Paper No. EC/D/01-04. Prof CHAN presented the observations of the delegation members with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation. The meeting also noted Prof CHI's views on the initial observations tabled at the meeting. Ms Anita WONG supplemented that the successful implementation of U3A in Australia was attributable to the following factors:

- (1) Local support for volunteerism and empowerment of elders.
- (2) Some local governments showed their support by charging low rents or funding non-recurrent items of expenditure such as the purchase of computers;  
and
- (3) The support provided by formal educational institutions (e.g. opening classrooms and libraries to elderly students or allowing them to sit-in classes) which was also conducive to inter-generational solidarity.

10. Dr E K YEOH, Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, said that the concept of U3A was worthy of support and the following points should be taken into consideration:

- (1) The relevance of U3A in the local context;
- (2) The role of the Government;
- (3) Possible obstacles to the promotion of U3A in Hong Kong; and
- (4) The complementary role of existing facilities.

He suggested that the Government could play the role of supporter giving encouragement and impetus to the programme. Elders were assets of society and while elder learning courses were organized for them, elders could also be encouraged to contribute to the community, for example, in the area of intergenerational solidarity.

11. Members made the following comments:

- (1) EC should first determine whether the vision and mission of U3A were to promote active ageing or to provide formal education. Currently many organisations provided elder learning under a “top-down” approach. As the new cohorts of elders would be better educated, if U3A was to be introduced primarily for promoting active ageing, then a “bottom-up” approach should be employed. The initiatives should come from elders themselves with as few pre-set restrictions as possible.
- (2) For the “bottom-up” approach, reference could be made to the project “Bird Watching – Learning From Nature” funded by the Community Partnership Scheme. Under this project, elders were trained as tutors in bird-watching for other elders and members of the public.

- (3) At present, local elder learning programmes were provided by various sectors including non-government organisations (NGOs), universities and radio station. Pooling of resources and expertise could be effected through the coordination of these programmes and EC could play the role of a facilitator.
- (4) In fact, Hong Kong had the basics for the introduction of U3A. However, support and coordination in other respects were still required. These included encouraging district organisations to recruit more volunteers from the pool of early retirees or prospective retirees, and promoting teacher training.
- (5) To make the optimal use of resources available, liaison with secondary schools and universities should be strengthened, and opportunities be explored to facilitate intergenerational exchange. Schools should also be encouraged to make their facilities accessible to elder students. In this connection, it was suggested that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) consider providing data on the lending of school facilities to outsiders.

12. In response to Members' enquiries, Mr Byron LAM, Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower, said that:

- (1) EMB supported the effective use of resources and encouraged schools to make available their facilities to other organisations, but it was up to the schools to decide whether they would allow use of their facilities by outsiders. He would find out whether EMB had kept data on this subject.
- (2) To subsidise adults wishing to pursue continuing education, the Continuing Education Fund was set up for eligible applicants with a reimbursement

ceiling of HK\$10,000 each. As the establishment of the Fund was aiming at training the necessary manpower to support the economic restructuring, only applications made by those aged between 18 and 60 would be considered.

- (3) Elders who intended to pursue further studies might take elementary primary or secondary school courses offered by evening schools operating on behalf of the Government, and needy students might also apply for fee remission. In addition, they might consider taking courses funded by the Adult Education Subvention Scheme. As for elders who were interested in pursuing tertiary education, they might apply to tertiary institutions for enrollment in the courses concerned. If necessary, applicants might also apply for student loan to pay their tuition fees.

(Post-meeting note: EMB advised that data on lending of school facilities to outsiders was not available because schools were not required to report such information. As for the guidelines on the lending of school facilities to outsiders, the relevant information was available from the following web sites:

in Chinese: <http://www.emb.gov.hk/circular/data/embc/EMBC03005C.pdf>

in English: <http://www.emb.gov.hk/circular/data/embc/EMBC03005E.pdf> )

13. Dr CHAN Wai-man, Assistant Director of Health, added that as far as the availability of resources was concerned, the Elderly Health Services run by DH had since last year produced some ‘DIY’ health education kits for use by volunteers and elders. This was done to tie in with the introduction of “self-help” health educational activities after the restructuring of community support services for the elderly.

14. A report compiled by the HKCSS delegation was also tabled. The meeting agreed that TGAA would follow up on the promotion of U3A in Hong Kong and report back in due course.

(Action: TGAA)

**Agenda Item 5: Update on Revamping of the Elderly Commission Web Site and Related Measures to Enhance Transparency**

(Discussion Paper No. EC/D/02-04)

15. Mrs Brenda FUNG took Members through Discussion Paper No. EC/D/02-04. Members agreed to the proposals put forward in the Discussion Paper to revamp the EC web site and posting on the web site agreed minutes of EC meetings.

**Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business**

16. Members did not raise other subjects for discussion.

**Date of Next Meeting**

17. The next EC meeting would be held on 4 May 2004 (Tuesday).

**Time of Adjournment**

18. The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

24 February 2004