

**Confirmed Minutes of the 44th Meeting
of the Waste Management Subcommittee
on 26 March 2024 at 9:00 a.m.**

Present:

Prof Dan TSANG (Chairman)
Ms Carmen CHAN, BBS, JP
Dr Sylvia CHAN, MH
Ms Ada FUNG, BBS
Mr Eric HO
Ms Linda HO
Mr Alex KWAN
Prof Dennis LEUNG
Ms Christina TANG
Dr Raymond YAU
Dr William YU

Absent with Apologies:

Prof Alexis LAU, JP
Mr Simon NG
Ms Karen CHEK (Secretary)

In Attendance:

Mr Bruno LUK, JP	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Reduction), Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Ms Theresa WU	Assistant Director (Municipal Solid Waste Charging), EPD
Ms Joanne YUNG	Assistant Director (Special Duties), EPD
Miss Sally SHEK	Executive Officer (CBD) 1, Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB)
Miss Avynn WONG	Executive Officer (CBD) 2, EEB

Action

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and informed Members that Dr Wong Kwok-yan had resigned from the Waste Management Subcommittee and apologies of absence had been received from Prof Aleixs Lau and Mr Simon Ng.

Item 1 : Matters arising

2. The Chairman advised Members that the minutes of the last meeting held on 10 October 2023 were confirmed by circulation on 8 December 2023. There was no matter arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Item 2 : Arrangements of the Demonstration Scheme and Progress of the Preparatory Work for the Implementation of Municipal Solid Waste Charging (ACE-WM Paper 1/2024)

3. The Chairman indicated that the paper reported the arrangements of the Demonstration Scheme and the latest progress of other preparatory work for the implementation of municipal solid waste (MSW) charging.

4. There was no declaration of interest by Members.

5. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr Bruno Luk briefed Members on the purpose and implementation details of the Demonstration Scheme as well as the progress of EPD's waste management work.

Coverage of the Demonstration Scheme

6. A Member opined that the sample size of the Demonstration Scheme might not be representative and suggested increasing the sample size to cover more districts and rural village houses. Another Member considered that schools should also be included in the scheme as students had huge impacts on their parents and could drive changes in the families. To understand the implementation of disposal of oversized waste such as furniture, another Member added that housing estates should also be included.

7. Mr Bruno Luk explained that the number of premises in the Demonstration Scheme was confined to a controllable size so that a thorough review with in-depth surveys and analysis of the implementation details could be conducted with all the parties concerned including the residents, property management companies (PMCs) and cleansing staff. He indicated that those premises with higher chance of encountering complications during the implementation phase were shortlisted for inclusion in the Demonstration Scheme.

8. Given the short duration of the Demonstration Scheme, a Member was worried that there might not be any disposal of oversized waste such as furniture. In the absence of any charging element, he doubted whether the scheme could reflect the actual situations upon the implementation of MSW charging. Mr Bruno Luk was of the view that the public could take the opportunity to get hands-on experience to assess the average amount of designated bags (DBs) or labels that a household or business would require and the costs involved.

Recycling Facilities

9. A Member was of the view that incentives such as gift redemption at the GREEN@COMMUNITY's Recycling Stores was more effective than charging for disposal of wastes. Mr Bruno Luk replied that currently, GREEN\$ which could be

used to redeem gifts could be earned when recycling at GREEN@COMMUNITY facilities or smart recycling bins. He said that EPD would consider the use of incentives where appropriate.

10. A Member opined that it was not easy for the public to recycle food waste and suggested the expansion of the coverage of food waste collection points. Another Member further suggested the installation of food waste recycling bins in office buildings and government premises. Mr Bruno Luk advised that EPD had been actively implementing various food waste collection initiatives. For example, food waste smart recycling bins had been installed in 13 public rental housing (PRH) estates and would be expanded to all PRH estates this year. He supplemented that the priority was to set up food waste recycling bins at public and private premises with larger amount of food waste such as wet markets and wholesale markets.

11. A Member pointed out that Government contracts were usually awarded to the lowest bidder whose service was less desirable. She highlighted that any mishandling of the recyclables collected could hamper the public's confidence in recycling and subsequently discourage recycling habits. Having regard to the recommendations of the Ombudsman in 2022, Mr Bruno Luk informed Members that EPD had phased out kerbside recycling bins in urban areas in view of their low efficacy. He added that the Government would consider not only the contract price, but also other factors in the evaluation of tenders.

12. Given that the public would be more motivated to practise recycling with the imminent implementation of MSW charging, a Member held the view that it was not necessary to phase out kerbside recycling bins entirely and EPD should instead enlarge the size of the bins. Based on EPD's experiences, Mr Bruno Luk indicated that the quality of recyclables collected in recycling facilities under proper management or supervision was better than those collected through kerbside recycling bins. In light of the aforesaid, two other Members proposed that EPD should further expand the coverage of the GREEN@COMMUNITY recycling network. Another Member added that more collection points, such as Recycling Stations/Spots, should be provided for the collection of yard waste at the district level on a regular basis.

13. The Chairman shared with the meeting that undesirable quality of the recyclables collected was a prominent issue even in other matured economies such as Germany and Singapore. He thus suggested that EPD should target at maximising the quantity of recyclables and should not be too concerned about the quality at the current stage. Appreciating that there might not be enough space to place more recycling bins at one location, the Chairman suggested that the frequency for clearing the recycling bins should be increased as the public would be dissatisfied to find the bins full.

14. Pointing out that the recyclables collected in GREEN@COMMUNITY had increased tremendously, a Member suggested that EPD should review the capacity

and operation to alleviate the workload of the Recycling Stores. For example, instead of tasking the same operator to run both the Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots in the same district, EPD should consider engaging a different operator for sharing the workload. Alternatively, to help resolve the space constraints of Recycling Stores, central arrangements could be made for the collection of recyclables from the Recycling Spots for direct delivery to the downstream recyclers. Mr Bruno Luk thanked the Member for her sharing and said that EPD would review the operation of the GREEN@COMMUNITY facilities holistically.

15. A Member enquired and Mr Bruno Luk responded that the capacity of the existing downstream recycling infrastructure including I-PARK, O-PARK and recycling operators was adequate for handling MSW and recyclables. Considering the lengthy process required for the construction of new recycling infrastructures, the Chairman reminded that EPD should keep in view of the adequacy and capacity of such infrastructures for timely actions. The Chairman furthered that the Government should foster the development of the recycling industry through MSW charging in the long run.

Publicity

16. On publicity, a Member suggested and echoed by two Members that the Government should focus on the positive messages regarding the objective and benefits of waste reduction such as saving money instead of on the fees to be charged. Another Member added that the concept of civic responsibility should be incorporated. Mr Bruno Luk responded that EPD would review and adjust the publicity strategy as appropriate.

17. A Member opined that EPD should provide more practical tips to facilitate the public to recycle at ease such as tips for handling food waste overnight. Mr Bruno Luk indicated that EPD had published on the website various best practice guides for different target groups. He added that EPD would step up the promotion of recycling tips in an easy-to-understand manner. Another Member shared that some members of the public were unclear about the implementation of "one bag for dual-use". Mr Luk indicated that promotional videos had been published to explain about the "one bag for dual-use" arrangement which referred to using DBs in lieu of plastic shopping bags.

18. A Member suggested and echoed by the Chairman that EPD should quantify and publicise the percentage of the current and targeted coverage of various recycling facilities in housing estates and other premises. The Member added that EPD should aim at achieving and conveying to the public that recycling facilities would be available within a 5-minute walk from home. The Chairman and another Member encouraged EPD to illustrate clearly the expansion plan of potential or upcoming recycling points so as to alleviate the public's concern on the availability of recycling facilities. Mr Bruno Luk advised that currently, about 80% of the

citizens could reach some sort of recycling facilities within a 10-minute walk. He said that EPD would continue to expand the coverage of the recycling network.

19. To provide the public with a holistic view of the matter, a Member added that EPD should portray a comprehensive story of the Government's extensive waste management work covering the reasons and objectives for various measures, the public's role in various waste reduction and recycling measures, the subsequent treatment of the recyclables as well as the various waste-related legislations.

20. A Member considered that the Government should make good use of the media channels, such as TV drama series or shows, which could likely reach the target audience who might practise recycling or disposal tasks at home such as housewives or the elderly. He supplemented that EPD should reach out to the public direct through face-to-face promotion at the community level. Mr Bruno Luk thanked the Member for his suggestions and said that EPD would incorporate educational messages on recycling in TV shows. He added that the Community Care Teams had been engaged to help promote MSW charging to the public at district level.

21. Highlighting that many tertiary students from other places were unaware of the implementation of MSW charging, a Member suggested that the Government should strengthen the publicity efforts in tertiary institutions as well. Mr Bruno Luk responded that EPD would step up the publicity work in tertiary education.

22. A Member considered that the Government should engage students through organising competitions on creative suggestions to incentivise waste reduction and recycling. With regard to EPD's "We-recycle@School" promotion campaign, another Member opined that focus should be placed on waste reduction as some schools might not have the capacity to handle the recyclables brought back by students. As waste reduction always went hand-in-hand with waste recycling, Mr Bruno Luk said that EPD would provide guidance to the school to promote both.

Response to Public's Views

23. In response to a Member's query, Mr Bruno Luk said that the general public was usually concerned about the disposal of oversized waste which could not be fitted in a DB whereas PMC and front-line cleansing staff were concerned about the handling of non-compliant cases, the consequences for not wrapping the non-compliant waste in DBs and the increased operation cost etc. Another Member remarked that it would defeat the purpose of MSW charging if the PMC or cleansing contractors had to wrap all wastes in DBs on behalf of the residents.

24. A Member shared that some schools, especially those facing admission problems, were concerned about the additional expenditure to be incurred. Mr Bruno Luk remarked that practising waste recycling could help reduce the amount of MSW being disposed of and hence the MSW charges.

25. A Member opined that the implementation of MSW charging was long overdue considering that the Government had been working on it for over a decade and the per capita MSW disposal rate of Hong Kong was a few times higher than the neighbouring cities. The Member was concerned whether the Government would withdraw or postpone the implementation of MSW charging in case the Demonstration Scheme did not give encouraging results. While keen to pursue MSW charging, Mr Bruno Luk said that the Government would review the outcome of the Demonstration Scheme and consider all possible options such as implementation by phases. Notwithstanding the criticism and opposing views in the society, another Member held the view that the Government should press ahead with the implementation as planned given that MSW charging was one of the most significant environmental policies that could drive positive behavioural changes to people.

26. A Member viewed that the Government should properly manage the public expectation and convey clearly the message if MSW charging was to be implemented to avoid any attempt to sabotage the Demonstration Scheme in the hopes of calling off the policy. Mr Bruno Luk replied that the Government would consider suitable implementation arrangements after reviewing the outcome of the Demonstration Scheme.

27. To avoid any miscommunication and negative public sentiments, the Chairman and a Member reminded that the Government should respond timely and proactively to any potential problems and should not wait until the end of the Demonstration Scheme for follow up actions. Mr Bruno Luk said that EPD would act promptly as appropriate after obtaining the initial feedback from the scheme.

Enforcement and Compliance

28. A Member was concerned about the non-compliant cases such as pouring food waste into the toilet which would cause blocked drains or disposing of waste through the refuse chutes which would be untraceable. Another Member added that some people might choose to deliver their online purchases to the work place to avoid paying for the disposal of the packaging. Sharing with Members the experience of Taiwan, Mr Bruno Luk said that non-compliant cases were expected in the beginning as it would take time for the public to develop new habits for waste reduction and recycling.

29. Two Members echoed that the key was to help the public acquire recycling habits by making it easy and convenient for them. One of the two Members considered that the Government should strengthen the support measures such as through discouraging overpackaging by the suppliers and providing convenient recycling means before implementing MSW charging. Mr Bruno Luk responded that EPD had been working on a number of waste reduction and recycling schemes.

He added that practical guides on packaging reduction had been published on the website to encourage different sectors to avoid unnecessary packaging.

Other Impacts

30. A Member suggested that the Government should take care of the mental health of the public since MSW charging might cause household conflicts as well as additional stress and workload to the daily mundane tasks of many. Another Member echoed and further proposed that there should be inter-departmental collaboration covering other potential impacts such as social welfare, education, enforcement and drainage aspects in the implementation of MSW charging.

Conclusion

31. The Chairman thanked the subject team for the detailed presentation. He invited the Government representatives to consider the suggestions of Members and to update Members of the progress of the Demonstration Scheme. EPD

(Four Members left the meeting during the discussion of the item.)

Item 3 : Any other business

32. There was no other business for discussion at the meeting.

Item 4 : Date of next meeting

33. Members would be advised on the date and agenda for the next meeting in due course.

34. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:10 a.m.

**Waste Management Subcommittee Secretariat
July 2024**