

Family Council
Notes of 6th Meeting

Date: 19 March 2009 (Thursday)

Time: 3 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room (Room 1220), CGO, West Wing

Attendance

Official Members

Mr Henry TANG, Chief Secretary for Administration (Chairman)

Mr TSANG Tak-sing, Secretary for Home Affairs

Mr Raymond WONG, JP, Permanent Secretary for Education
(on behalf of SED)

Mr Paul TANG, JP, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(on behalf of SLW)

Prof LEE Ming Kwan, Member (2) /Central Policy Unit
(on behalf of H/CPU)

Non-official Members

1. Ms CHAU Chuen-heung (周轉香女士)
2. Ms KAO Ching-chi, Sophia (高靜芝女士)
3. Mrs KWAN HO Shiu-fong, Cecilia (關何少芳女士)
4. Ms LAI Fung-yee, Angelina (黎鳳儀女士)
5. Mr Joseph LEE (李宗德先生)
6. Dr LEE Wai-yung (李維榕教授)
7. Dr the Hon LEONG Che-hung, Edward (梁智鴻議員)
8. Dr PANG King-chee (彭敬慈博士)
9. Prof SHEK Tan-lei, Daniel (石丹理教授)
10. Ms TAO Chee-ying, Theresa (杜子瑩女士)
11. Dr WONG Chung-kwong (黃重光醫生)
12. Prof WONG Po-choi (黃寶財教授)
13. Mr CHOW Yung, Robert (周融先生)

Absence with apologies

Mr LEONG Kwok-kuen, Lincoln (梁國權先生)

Mrs Justina LEUNG NGAI Mou-yin (梁魏懋賢女士)

Mr WONG Ying-wai, Wilfred (王英偉先生)

Secretary

Miss Christine CHOW, Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Civic Affairs)²

In attendance

Ms Grace LUI, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)

Ms Vivian SUM, Administrative Assistant to Chief Secretary for Administration

Mr Darryl CHAN, Press Secretary to Chief Secretary for Administration

Mr LAU Cheuk Kwan, Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (2)³

Ms Grace PAT, Senior Executive Officer (2)/ HAB

Welcoming remarks

The Chairman welcomed all to the 6th meeting of the Family Council.

Item 1 – Confirmation of minutes of the 5th meeting of the Family Council

2. The minutes of the 5th meeting of the Council were confirmed without amendments.

Item 2 – Proposed work plan for the Family Council (Paper FC 1/2009)

3. The Chairman thanked Members for the support and contributions to the successful launching of the campaign to promote family core values. To sustain the efforts, he appreciated the comprehensive publicity plan worked out by the secretariat and the Sub-committee on the Promotion of Family Core Values.

4. In view of the increasing expectation from the community for the Family Council to come up with advice to the Government on new and/or

improved approaches/measures to strengthen the family as a unit, the Chairman suggested that the Council should, apart from the existing Sub-committee on the Promotion of Family Core Values, set up two additional sub-committees to examine issues related to family support and family education in more detail.

5. Members discussed the proposed names and terms of reference of the sub-committees. In a gist, the general view was that the sub-committees should take into account the work undertaken by other relevant organizations, map out macro strategies and framework to foster a cultural change, for example, amongst the parents, employers and the community at large towards family support and education, but should not delve into service delivery as this would be better handled by the relevant delivery departments and agents. Members also agreed that research should be conducted on family characteristics and related topics as suggested by the sub-committees.

6. In response to enquiries over the working relationship between the Family Council and the other advisory bodies, the Chairman responded that they were welcomed to propose issues for discussion at the Family Council as and when necessary. While they should continue to perform their roles in relevant sector-specific areas, they could form a closer alliance with the Family Council and make more concerted efforts to help enhance support services for families having regard to the advice of the Family Council pertaining to family core values and family-based programmes and other family-related matters, in order to achieve greater synergy of work between the Family Council and the Commissions. The Commissions would help identify deliverables to meet objectives on family-related matters set by the Family Council as appropriate. Should the Council wish to initiate collaborative projects to foster family core values and family support and education measures, the Government and the Commissions would render full support to the Council and devise relevant projects where resources permit.

7. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman invited the secretary to work out with Members participation in the sub-committees.

Item 3 – Family perspectives in the policy-making process (Paper FC 2/2009)

8. Members noted the Government’s commitment to include the family as a factor to consider in its policy-making process.

Item 4 – Support measures for families under stress in the financial tsunami – presentation by the Central Policy Unit (Paper FC 3/2009)

9. At the invitation of the Chairman, CPU shared with Members the views gathered at the workshop on 「如何支援金融海嘯壓力下的香港家庭」 held on 5 March 2009.

10. Members suggested possible ways to support middle-class families in need -

- (a) More publicity efforts should be made to promulgate the financial assistance and other support measures for students and their families in need. In response, EDB said that parents and students could apply for fee assistance if they encountered financial difficulties. EDB would remind schools of the availability of funds to help students facing financial difficulties;

(Post-meeting note: EDB has written to the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) School Council inviting it to remind its member schools to provide assistance for students whose families encounter financial difficulties due to the present economic downturn. Separately, the English Schools Foundation (ESF) has implemented a hardship scheme to provide financial assistance to those families who have encountered “sudden and

unexpected” change of circumstances. EDB has impressed upon ESF to exercise more flexibility in the disbursement of the grant with a view to providing timely financial assistance to those needy families.

As for government and aided schools, they are offering 12-year free education for all students. Under the prevailing policy of EDB, schools should exempt parents with financial difficulties to pay other expenses such as tong fai, the pre-approved fees, etc.

In response to the need to support families in the midst of the present economic downturn, the Committee on Home-school Cooperation (CHSC) has arranged various programmes for parents including “Fight with the Financial Crisis - SMS”, “Love Gift Box - Spirit of Love and Life”, “Parent Talks 2009: 4Qs” etc. from February to May 2009. The programmes serve to equip parents with the capacities to cope with adverse situation especially in the face of the current financial crisis. The CHSC will continue to organize more sharing sessions and development programmes with the District Federations of Parent Teacher Associations in which expertise from financial, social service, health sectors will be invited to share with parents on financial management, family coherence and positive life values in the coming few months.)

- (b) More publicity should be done to make known to the community the wide array of readily available support services for families in need;
- (c) Consideration could be given to launching more joint projects with the parent-teacher associations and relevant organizations (e.g. the Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong) on family education and family support;
- (d) Consideration could be given to providing funding support to needy middle-class families through, for example, the

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund;

(Post-meeting note: The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) provides seed money to support community projects which seek to develop social capital in Hong Kong. So far it has funded over 200 projects involving over 500,000 participants from different background.

Among the latest batch of funded projects (14th batch announced in March 2009) are projects which aim specifically at strengthening the support network for middle-class people and enhancing the community's capacity in coping with adversity.

To further address the needs of individuals and families affected by the financial tsunami, the CIIF Committee has adopted the theme of "Power of resilience in times of adversity" (「『逆』更要互助自強」) for the on-going round of application. Applicants are encouraged to submit innovative proposals which can help middle-class families establish support networks and regain confidence to overcome the economic challenges.)

11. The Chairman thanked Members for their valuable advice and asked CPU to further examine possible measures to better support the middle-class families.

Item 5 – Any Other Business

12. The Chairman informed Members that in the latter half of 2008, the Labour Department (LD) had published on a weekly basis 20 supplements in a newspaper to showcase exemplary examples in the implementation of family-friendly employment practices (FFEP) as well as other good people management practices. LD had consolidated the supplements into a booklet for distribution in February 2009 to encourage the wider adoption of such practices. Copies of the booklet were tabled for Members' reference. Members noted that LD would produce a video on FFEP to further encourage employers to adopt FFEP, and that

LD would continue to promote FFEP as a part of enlightened employment practices through various promotional activities and channels. Members also noted that the Women's Commission was working with LD to collect cases of good practices of FFEP amongst the enterprises and would publish another booklet for distribution in mid-2009 to facilitate experience sharing.

13. The Chairman informed Members that the Administration was invited to attend the Legislative Council Welfare Services Panel meeting on 11 May 2009 to report progress of work of the Family Council. The Family Council secretariat would compile an information paper for distribution to the Panel.

14. The next Council meeting would be held on 30 June 2009 (Tuesday) at 3 p.m. at the same venue. The CPU would share its findings on measures in support of families in Asian and overseas countries.

15. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:30 p.m.

Family Council Secretariat
April 2009