

**Family Council**  
**Confirmed Notes of 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting**

**Date: 14 December 2007 (Friday)**

**Time: 4:00 pm**

**Venue: Conference Room (Room 1220), West Wing, Central Government's Office, Central**

**Attendance**

**Official Members**

Mr Henry TANG, Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) (Chairman)

Mr TSANG Tak-sing, Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA)

Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Raymond WONG, Permanent Secretary for Education

Prof LAU Siu-kai, Head/Central Policy Unit

**Non-official Members**

Ms CHAU Chuen-heung

Mr CHOW Yung, Robert

Ms KAO Ching-chi, Sophia

Mrs KWAN HO Shiu-fong, Cecilia

Ms LAI Fung-ye, Angelina

Mr Joseph LEE

Dr LEE Wai-yung

Dr the Hon LEONG Che-hung, Edward

Mrs Justina LEUNG NGAI Mou-yin

Dr PANG King-chee

Ms TAO Chee-ying, Theresa

Prof WONG Po-choi

Mr WONG Ying-wai, Wilfred

**Absence with apologies**

Mr Lincoln LEUNG

Prof Daniel SHEK

Dr WONG Chung-kwong

In attendance

Mr Paul TANG, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
Ms Betty IP, Deputy Secretary for Education (4)  
Mr Donald TONG, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)  
Miss Christine CHOW, Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (2)1  
Ms Vivian SHUM, Administrative Assistant to CS  
Ms Martha LO, Press Secretary to SHA

Secretary

Mrs Alice CHEUNG, Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (2)

**Welcoming remarks**

The Chairman welcomed all to the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Family Council (the Council).

**Membership, Terms of Reference and Modus Operandi of the Family Council (Paper FC 1/2007)**

2. A member enquired if the Chairmen of the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Youth Commission were appointed in their ex-officio capacity. In response, the Chairman confirmed that they were appointed on an ad personam basis, but pointed out that their capacity as Chairmen of the three Commissions would no doubt help act as a bridge between the Council and the Commissions.

3. A few members expressed concern over item (d) of the terms of reference of the Council which stated that the Council would, among other things, "*oversee the work of the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Youth Commission*", pointing out that without a clear structure and mechanism, it would not be practicable to subsume the work of the three Commissions under the Council immediately. A member suggested that the Commissions would need a steer from the Council in respect of work concerning family matters. In the light of the objective of establishing the Council as set out in the Policy Address, the Chairman explained that the ultimate target was to enable the Council to oversee the work of the three Commissions in 16 months' time, i.e. by April 2009. Taking into account members' views, the Chairman agreed that the word

“*oversee* (督導)” in item (d) of the terms of reference should be amended to “*rationalize* (理順)” over this transitional period and the terms of reference might be further refined after the Council had sorted out its working relationship with the three Commissions.

(Post-meeting note : A revised terms of reference is at Annex.)

4. A few members further enquired if it was the policy intention for the Council to actually take care of the planning and implementation of programmes and activities, given the strategic nature of the Council. Other members enquired if the Council would be responsible for resource allocation. Members were advised that no additional resources were allocated to the Council but the Administration would examine ways and means to implement the recommendations and programmes/activities/studies initiated by the Council. Members further discussed and agreed that in planning programmes and activities for particular age and/or gender sectors, public expectation and engagement needed to be thoroughly and carefully considered and planned.

5. A member enquired if 16 months was too short for the Council to achieve item (e) of the terms of reference to initiate/commission research to promote better understanding of matters related to the family as necessary. In response, the Chairman clarified that while the ultimate structure of the Council and the three Commissions had to be mapped out for implementation by the end of the 16 months’ time, it did not mean that all research work had to be completed by then. Apart from initiating research on need basis, the Council could also make reference to other research done or currently undertaken by other bodies. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Head of Central Policy Unit briefed the Council on research completed/being conducted on family related issues by the Central Policy Unit and advised some of the research findings could be made available to the Council in confidence.

(Action : Central Policy Unit)

6. The meeting endorsed the proposed modus operandi of the Family Council without comments.

**Declaration of Interests by Members of the Family Council (Paper FC 2/2007)**

7. The Chairman invited members to note the request for them to declare and register interests for record and retention by the secretariat, and to note that such records would be disclosed to members of the public upon request.

**Proposed Issues to be Discussed by the Family Council (Paper FC 3/2007)**

8. Members noted that the three Commissions were invited to present their on-going work and work plan at the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Council, for information and discussion as desirable/necessary. A member suggested and the Chairman agreed that apart from the three Commissions, it would also be desirable if the Committee on Home-School Co-operation could be invited to present reports on its work to the Council for reference.

(Action : Secretariats of the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission, the Commission on Youth, and the Committee on Home-School Co-operation)

9. Members discussed the priority of issues to be focused by the Council. Below was the gist of discussions –

- (a) Members noted the transformation of people's perception of families and family lives over the past decades. It was important that as a first step, the Council identified the core family values.
- (b) In parallel with the identification of core family values, factors that helped to sustain or cause to undermine such values should be located. These included stable marriage relationships, healthy parenting and aspirations for quality family lives as they are the foundation of families and community. Towards this end, the Council should also focus its attention on ways to enhance the effectiveness and co-ordination of family education.

- (c) Given the tight work schedule in a 16 months' span, Members agreed that it was important that the Council identified "quick-wins". Towards this end, the target of engaging the business sectors to put in place a pro-family environment including work environment conducive to the development of quality and healthy family lives should be accorded high priority.
  - (d) As Government policies had an important and direct impact on families, priority should also be accorded to fostering family perspectives among policy makers and to review policies in these aspects.
10. Taking into account members' discussions, the Chairman concluded that the following issues should receive priority (in descending order of priority) in the coming meetings of the Council –
- (a) Identification of core family values.
  - (b) Identification of ways to create a pro-family environment including work environment, implant a family perspective in service professionals and workers, promote family-friendly employment practices, and promote better work-life balance.
  - (c) Identification of ways to enhance the effectiveness and co-ordination of family education, strengthen parental education, and map out the respective roles of women and men in family lives.
  - (d) Fostering a family perspective among policy-makers, for example, by introducing family impact assessment in policy formulation in long run.
  - (e) Mapping out the future structure of the Family Council and the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth.
  - (f) Making reference to family-related studies done by others and initiating research on such studies as necessary, including research on the impact of cross-boundary marriages, employment and schooling on families, the needs of families with new arrivals and the need for special support services and measures.

11. The Chairman noted that community engagement should be thoroughly considered in taking forward the above tasks.

12. A member drew the meeting's attention to examples of informative websites on family matters in Singapore. Members agreed that subject to the collation and compilation of a database on family issues, a similar website for the Family Council should be set up in due course.

(Action : Family Council secretariat)

13. Members noted that the former Steering Committee on Study of Family Commission set up under the former Health, Welfare and Food Bureau had collated and compiled useful papers and materials on the family core values, overseas' experience and relevant information on family related matters. Upon the request of members, the Chairman asked the secretariat to liaise with the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) to obtain copies of such materials for members' reference.

(Action : Family Council secretariat, LWB)

### **Date of next meeting**

14. The Chairman invited the secretariat to work out a tentative meeting schedule for the coming year for members' reference.

(Action : Family Council secretariat, CS's Office)

15. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5 p.m.

**Family Council Secretariat  
December 2007**

**Revised Terms of Reference for the Family Council  
during the transition period**

- (a) To advocate for cherishing the family as a main driver for social harmony; and to promote a family-based support network to forge closer and harmonious relationships amongst family members.
- (b) To advise the Government on the formulation of policies and strategies for supporting and strengthening the family and on development of related programmes/activities; and to monitor their implementation.
- (c) To advise the Government on the integration of family policies and related programmes across different bureaux and departments for individual age and gender sectors to ensure effective coordination.
- (d) To plan/implement programmes and activities for particular age and/or gender sectors; and rationalize the work of the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth.
- (e) To initiate research to promote better understanding of matters related to the family as necessary.

- 甲、 提倡重視家庭觀念，作為促進社會和諧的原動力；並推廣以家庭為核心的支援網絡，以鞏固親密和睦的家庭關係。
- 乙、 就制定全面的支援和強化家庭政策及策略，以及就發展相關計劃／活動的事宜，向政府提意見；並監察有關的推行情況。
- 丙、 就如何整合政府各政策局及部門就有關不同年齡組別和性別的家庭政策及相關計劃，向政府提意見，以確保互相之間的協調。
- 丁、 籌劃／推行為特定年齡組別及／或性別而設的計劃和活動；以及理順安老事務委員會、婦女事務委員會及青年事務委員會的工作。
- 戊、 在有需要時，就加強社會對有關家庭事務的認識進行研究。