

Family Council

Minutes of 18th Meeting held on 23 May 2013

Date: 23 May 2013 (Thursday)
Time: 2:30 p.m.
Venue: Room 7, G/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

Attendance

Chairman

Prof SHEK Tan-lei, Daniel

Official Members

Ms Florence HUI, Secretary for Home Affairs (Acting)

Ms Doris CHEUNG, Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare)¹ (*attended on behalf of Secretary for Labour and Welfare*)

Dr Catherine CHAN, Deputy Secretary for Education (5) (*attended on
behalf of Secretary for Education*)

Prof WONG Chack-kie, Member (2)/Central Policy Unit (CPU)
(*attended on behalf of Head/CPU*)

Ex officio Members

Mr CHAN Chun-bun, Bunny, Chairperson of the Commission on Youth

Mrs LAU KUN Lai-kuen, Stella, Chairperson of the Women's
Commission

Non-official Members

Prof AU Kit-fong, Terry

Mrs CHU YEUNG Pak-yu, Patricia

Dr KOONG May-kay, Maggie

Prof LAM Tai-hing

Ms LAW Suk-kwan, Lilian

Mr LEE Luen-fai
Dr LI Sau-hung, Eddy
Miss TANG Pui-yee
Miss WONG Siu-ling, Gabriella
Ms YAU Oi-yuen, Irene
Mr YIU Tze-leung, Ivan

In attendance

Mr Raymond YOUNG, Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs
Ms Gracie FOO, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)
Ms Jessica CHENG, Chief Executive Officer (Family Council), Home
Affairs Bureau

For agenda item 5

Dr David WONG, Senior Researcher (4), Central Policy Unit

For agenda item 6

Ms Kitty CHUNG, Chief Executive Officer (1) 2, Home Affairs Bureau
Mr Nathan YAM, Senior Executive Officer (1) 5, Home Affairs Bureau

Absent with apologies

Prof CHAN Cheung-ming, Chairperson of the Elderly Commission
Ms LOO Shirley Marie Therese
Dr TSUI Luen-on, Gordon
Ms WONG Pik-kiu, Peggy

Secretary

Ms Aubrey FUNG, Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
(Civic Affairs) 2

Welcome Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all to the 18th meeting of the Family Council (the Council). Before proceeding to the discussion of agenda items, he extended his warm welcome to the following seven new Members of the Council –

- (a) Prof AU Kit-fong, Terry
- (b) Mrs CHU YEUNG Pak-yu, Patricia
- (c) Prof LAM Tai-hing
- (d) Mr LEE Luen-fai
- (e) Miss TANG Pui-yee
- (f) Dr TSUI Luen-on, Gordon¹
- (g) Miss WONG Siu-ling, Gabriella

With effect from 1 April this year, the Council was reconstituted with enhanced advisory functions. The Chairman looked forward to Members' continuous support in promoting family core values, engendering a culture of loving families and creating a pro-family environment.

Item 1 – Confirmation of Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Family Council

2. The minutes of the 17th meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Item 2 – Matters Arising from Last Meeting

3. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Secretariat had solicited inputs from relevant Bureaux/departments (B/Ds) on matters arising from last meeting. With inputs of B/Ds, the Secretariat had prepared a progress report which had been circulated to Members for information and consideration.

¹ Dr Tsui had sent his apology for not attending the meeting.

4. Members noted the progress report.

Item 3 – Reconstitution of the Sub-committees and Work Plan of the Family Council in 2013/14 (Paper FC 6/2013)

5. Upon invitation of the Chairman, Secretary to the Council briefed Members on the reconstitution of the sub-committees and work plan of the Council in 2013/14 as follows –

- (a) the existing terms of reference would be adopted;
- (b) the modus openadi would be revised having regard to the reconstitution of the Council and operational experience; and
- (c) the sub-committees would be reconstituted to form two sub-committees, namely Sub-committee on the Promotion of Family Core Values and Family Education and Sub-committee on Family Support.

6. The Secretary also briefed Members on the work plan of the Council in 2013/14. With Members' endorsement, follow-up actions would be taken by the Secretariat as appropriate.

Item 4 – 2013/14 Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme (Paper FC 7/2013)

7. Chief Executive Officer (Family Council) briefed Members on the proposed work plan of the 2013/14 Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme (Award Scheme), in particular the composition of the Organising Committee (OC), assessment framework, outreaching and publicity strategies, timeframe as well as the estimated cost. Members expressed the following views –

- (a) with a view to measuring the cost-effectiveness of the Award Scheme and its impact, the Secretariat might consider devising a vigorous evaluation plan. Evidence-based approach was desirable in evaluating the performance of the winning companies/organisations before and after participation in the Award Scheme in a host of aspects, including staff retention rate, brand-building capacity and financial performance, etc. ;
- (b) in the light of past experience, the OC comprising members from a good mix of organisations (such as chambers of commerce and professional bodies) provided remarkable exposure of the Award Scheme. It was proved to be successful in boosting the participation rate. To further enhance the publicity work of the Award Scheme, it was worthwhile for the Secretariat to invite more organisations to join the OC; and
- (c) evidenced by more than 1 000 companies signing up for the Award Scheme in 2011, it had achieved the objective of raising awareness of the importance of family-friendly practices amongst employers, given that this was only the first time the Award Scheme was launched. This notwithstanding, the “quality” aspect should not be overlooked (e.g. sustainability of the family-friendly employment practices, number of companies/organisations to be awarded), apart from boosting the number of entries when the Award Scheme was developed further.

8. The Chairman thanked Members’ views, and remarked that the Sub-Committee on the Promotion of Family Core Values and Family Education would follow up on Members’ suggestions in enhancing the framework and mapping out the way forward of the Award Scheme. Members were also welcome to make further suggestions on the list of organisations to be included in the OC.

9. Members endorsed the paper.

Item 5 – Presentation by the Central Policy Unit on the Population Policies on Encouraging Marriage and Childbirth (Paper FC 8/2013)

10. The Chairman invited Member (2) and Senior Researcher (4) of the Central Policy Unit (CPU) to take Members through the powerpoint presentation on the population policy to encourage marriage and childbirth. In gist, the presentation covered the following three major areas –

- (a) phenomena of low fertility rate in Hong Kong – Hong Kong had a declining fertility over the past thirty years. When compared with the total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.93 childbirth per woman in 1981, TFR was 1.2 in 2011;
- (b) obstacles on marriage and childbirth – obstacles including aspiration of women, financial burden, imbalance in work and family life were set out; and
- (c) international experience to promote marriage and childbirth – their relevance to Hong Kong situation were examined.

11. Members expressed their views on the presentation, which were summarized as follows –

- (a) irrespective of different clusters (e.g. couple with low fertility, delayed marriage couples, singleton, etc), it was observed that motivation to marriage and childbirth was, to a certain extent, affected by the level of income. Based on this observation, it was important for the Government to identify their common core problems and examine whether inadequate housing was the main obstacle as commonly perceived. Besides, the Government should critically examine the impact of the birth of babies in Hong Kong to

Mainland parents (i.e. Type II babies) on the replacement rate of 2 babies required per woman²;

- (b) given that different sectors of the community had different perception and attitude towards the issue of marriage and childbirth, an integrated approach was desirable to examine the related issues;
- (c) apart from adopting an integrated approach, the Government should also examine the demographic issues from a holistic perspective, taking (a) the utilization of ageing population and (b) the relationship between marriage and childbirth into account in view of the increasing prevalence of childbirth outside marriage. In formulating measures to promote marriage and childbirth, the Government should consider the appropriateness of intervention and effective point of intervention;
- (d) noting that limited resources were devoted to provision for pre-primary education (accounted for 0.14% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2012-13) when compared with that of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (1% of GDP) and limited number of Creche Centres in the territory, the Government should proactively review the provision of childcare services to strengthen supporting facilities before consideration was given to encourage childbirth. Besides, it was observed that the statutory provision of maternity leave (10 weeks) was one of the lowest in developed countries;
- (e) prevalence of gender stereotype (i.e. mother taking care of family responsibilities, especially on parenting) might, to a certain extent, create obstacle to marriage and childbirth as it would bring adverse influence on family functioning on one hand and create undue pressure to women on the

² According to the Census and Statistics Department, 2.1 babies are required per women for replacement purpose.

other hand. A cultural change through public education in inculcating proper values and concepts on gender equality as well as sharing of family responsibilities was considered essential;

- (f) with reference to experience of Singapore and taking the situation of Hong Kong into account, setting up of social development networks to provide singles with opportunities for social interaction might not be applicable;
- (g) Hong Kong people should also take the opportunity to revisit and reconsider the fundamental questions on the roles and responsibilities of marriage and parenting. Given that Hong Kong was an economic-driven society, there was a tendency to over-emphasize financial achievements, with the essence of the basic family core values being overlooked at times. To advocate a cultural change in the society, the Government should proactively step up promotion work in engendering a culture of loving family;
- (h) given that encouraging marriage and childbirth were controversial subjects which might be regarded by some to be a private family matter and not a public policy concern, the Government should consider its role on these issues carefully; and
- (i) data collected from recent surveys and studies indicated that increasing number of youth felt dissatisfied and insecure on the future. To understand the causes leading to their dissatisfaction and insecurity, the Government should organise focus groups to gather their views and opinions which were considered crucial in deciding the way forward.

12. In response to remarks made by Members, Member (2) of CPU responded that, taking the experience of Singapore into account,

inadequate housing seemed to be an obstacle to marriage and childbirth as empirical evidence showed that TFR was inversely related to property price. However, role of the Government in inducing fertility through provision of housing incentives should be carefully considered and examined. Member (2) of CPU would relay the comments of Members to the Steering Committee on the Population Policy (SCPP) for reference.

13. The Chairman thanked CPU for its presentation and Members for their comments. He also took the opportunity to inform Members that he and some Members were invited to the focus group meeting on public engagement on population policy organised by the Secretariat of the SCPP on 25 May. He would keep the Council informed of further development in case the focus group discussion touched on areas which carried implications to the work of the Council.

Item 6 – Presentation by the Secretariat of the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education on the “Respect and Inclusiveness” Campaign (Paper FC 9/2013)

14. Upon invitation of the Chairman, CEO(1)2 of HAB took Members through the powerpoint presentation. Before the presentation, CEO(1)2 briefed Members that the objective of the presentation was to cultivate a closer collaboration amongst different advisory bodies with a view to maximizing synergistic impact, particularly on promotion work. In gist, the presentation covered publicity programmes under the Campaign. The Chairman invited Members’ views on the presentation, with Members’ comments as follows –

- (a) the Campaign was considered effective in promoting “respect and inclusiveness”. In planning programmes for further promotion, the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) might explore the possibility of extending the coverage to service sectors, incorporating the perspectives of service providers and users alike;

- (b) education should start from an early age in order to effectively promote civic awareness and develop positive values amongst the people of Hong Kong;
- (c) though it might be difficult to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the Campaign in view of the complications involved in measuring behavioural change, it was worthwhile to collect relevant data for future planning and tracking purposes; and
- (d) “respect and inclusiveness” was an important element in fostering family relationships. In planning future programmes to further promulgate the messages, CPCE might consider including different sub-themes (such as conflict management) for different target groups.

15. CEO(1)2 noted members’ views which would be relayed to CPCE. She also supplemented that the Campaign covered young children, for example through “The Clay Family”³ (“小泥子”) and the four new videos on “respect and inclusiveness” shown during guided tours organised by the Civic Education Resource Centre⁴ The Chairman thanked the Secretariat of the CPCE for the presentation.

Item 7 – Any Other Business

16. In response to Mrs Patricia CHU’s enquiry on the work plan for preparation of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014, the Secretariat informed the meeting that the “International Day of Family” was selected by the Hong Kong Post as the stamp theme to be issued in May 2014. To celebrate the occasion, the Secretariat would plan a series of territory-wide publicity programmes. In addition, the Secretariat would explore the possibility of co-organising the “Family Summit” with the Council of Social

³ Publication issued by CPCE to promote civic education, with target readers at age 4 to 7.

⁴ Civic Education Resource Centre provides guided tours to organisations and schools, including primary schools.

Service and other relevant stakeholders on 15 May 2014 (International Day of Family) with a view to achieving synergy and to foster better understanding of family-related issues. Detailed proposals would be submitted to the Council for consideration in due course.

(Action: Council Secretariat)

17. Prof LAM Tai-hing was pleased to note that one of the major focuses of the Council was to initiate research to promote better understanding of matters relating to family. He informed the meeting that The University of Hong Kong (the HKU), in collaboration with The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, had launched the “FAMILY: A Jockey Club Initiative for a Harmonious Society” Project since 2007. To facilitate knowledge sharing, the HKU stood ready to share the data collected from the household surveys through highly accessible interfaces.

18. The Chairman took the opportunity to brief Members on the discussion with Hon Fernando Cheung and representatives of the Alliance for Children’s Commission on 17 April 2013 regarding children-related issues. The views expressed by the representatives during the meeting were summarized as follows –

- (a) a dedicated Children’s Commission should be set up to look after child policy and the well-being as well as interests of children;
- (b) children-related issues could not be dealt with in a timely manner vis-à-vis the current modus operandi of the Children’s Rights Forum;
- (c) interests of children were not sufficiently represented and reflected in the Family Council; and
- (d) children’s views and perspectives should be given due weight in the development of policies and programmes,

taking into account that the needs of children were unique and different from that of adults.

19. The Chairman informed Members that the Secretariat was planning to invite the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau to brief the Council on their work in promoting the rights and well-being of children. The Secretariat would keep the Council informed of progress, as and when appropriate.

(Action: Council Secretariat
and Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau)

20. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

**Family Council Secretariat
July 2013**