

Family Council
Minutes of 17th Meeting held on 7 March 2013

Date: 7 March 2013 (Thursday)
Time: 3:30 p.m.
Venue: Room 2509, 25/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

Attendance

Official Members

Mrs Carrie LAM, Chief Secretary for Administration (Chairman)
Mr TSANG Tak-sing, Secretary for Home Affairs
Mr Matthew CHEUNG, Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Mrs Michelle WONG, Deputy Secretary for Education (*attended on behalf of Secretary for Education*)
Prof WONG Chack-kie, Member (2)/Central Policy Unit

Ex officio Member

Prof CHAN Cheung-ming, Chairperson of the Elderly Commission

Non-official Members

Mr CHOW Yung, Robert
Dr KOONG May-kay, Maggie
Ms LAI Fung-yee, Angelina
Ms LAW Suk-kwan, Lilian
Dr LEE Wai-yung
Dr PANG King-chee
Prof SHEK Tan-lei, Daniel
Dr WONG Chung-kwong
Ms WONG Pik-kiu, Peggy
Prof WONG Po-choi
Ms YAU Oi-yuen, Irene
Mr YIU Tze-leung

Secretary

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

In attendance

Mr Raymond YOUNG, Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs

Mr Bruno LUK, Administrative Assistant to Chief Secretary for
Administration

Mr Gilford LAW, Press Secretary to Chief Secretary for Administration

Ms Jessica CHENG, Chief Executive Officer (Family Council), Home
Affairs Bureau

Absent with apologies

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

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

Dr LI Sau-hung, Eddy

Ms LOO Shirley Marie Therese

Welcome Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all to the 17th meeting of the Family Council (the Council). Before proceeding to the discussion of agenda items, she informed Members that the Council would be reconstituted with a new non-official Chairman with effect from 1 April 2013. The appointment of a non-official Chairman would enable the Council to render more independent and impartial advice to the Government, in particular the application of family perspectives during the policy formulation process. The new arrangement would not undermine the importance as well as functions of the Council.

2. To maintain high-level interface on family-related issues both at policy and operational levels, the Chairman said that the incumbent official Members would continue to serve on the Council.

As in the past, the Council was welcomed to propose any new family-related initiatives and measures to the Government.

Item 1 – Confirmation of Minutes of the 16th meeting of the Family Council

3. The minutes of the 16th meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Item 2 – Matters Arising from Last Meeting

4. Secretary to the Council informed the meeting that the progress report on matters arising from last meeting had been circulated to Members for information. She also drew Members' attention to the salient points of the progress report.

5. The Chairman took the opportunity to brief Members on the revamp of the Steering Committee on Population Policy (SCPP). She informed Members that the Chief Executive attached great importance to population policy. The SCPP was revamped in late 2012 with an expanded membership of non-official members from a wide range of sectors, such as academic, human resources management, business, social service, health-care and education sectors. The SCPP was tasked to identify and examine demographic issues and challenges. On family-related matters, the Central Policy Unit would be responsible for conducting studies on measures to encourage marriage and childbirth, while the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) would focus on the support measures related to ageing population, including portability of government-funded benefits. SCPP shared the importance of public participation in its work and would set out a public engagement strategy in due course. It would seek the views of the Council on family-related policies as appropriate.

(Action: Secretariat of SCPP)

6. Members noted the progress report without discussion.

Item 3 – Family Perspectives in Policy Formulation (Paper FC 1/2013)

7. Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs briefed Members on the enhanced approach to consider family perspectives in the policy-making process. He highlighted that with effect from 1 April 2013, the assessment of family implications would become a mandatory requirement in all policy submissions. Besides, Bureaux and departments (B/Ds) were encouraged to consult the Council on new policies with family implications.

8. Members expressed their views on the paper, which were summarized as follows –

- (a) given the importance of family to the society, the introduction of a mandatory assessment of family implications in all policy submissions was considered a major achievement of the Council. To maximize its impact, the Government should also examine family implications during the process of policy review as well. It was also advisable for the Council to take a more proactive role in inviting B/Ds to present its policies and consult the Council on the family implications involved. For example, the Council might consider inviting the Housing Department (HD) to present its “Well-off Tenants Policies” in due course;

(Action: HD)

- (b) B/Ds were invited to evaluate their policies from the perspectives of the family core values, including “Love and Care”, “Respect and Responsibility” as well as “Communication and Harmony” as identified by the Council. To make the assessment tools more concrete, it was

advisable to consider incorporating some measurable parameters, such as “family-friendliness”, “provision of family education” as well as “effectiveness of combating cross-generational poverty”;

- (c) although the Council had already been serving as a platform to address sectoral-specific issues from family perspectives, the possibility of setting up an independent commission to address children-related issues from children’s perspective should not be ruled out. That said, some Members remarked that children-related issues should best be understood in the context of family dynamics by taking into account all relevant considerations. Meanwhile, some Members suggested that the matter be examined in the new term with inputs from relevant bureaux;

(Action: Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau)

- (d) engagement of stakeholders was essential. The Council might consider making reference to other relevant studies and researches in fine-tuning the assessment framework, such as the study on the “Family Impact Assessment” currently conducted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service in collaboration with the Chinese University of Hong Kong;
- (e) when compared with the existing arrangement, the enhanced approach of including a mandatory assessment of family implications represented a major breakthrough. For the purpose of knowledge sharing, the Council should make good use of the data collected by building up a sustainable and evidence-based database. On the basis of the data collected, the Council should also explore how to disseminate the best practice to other organizations as well;
- (f) as the Council had been serving as a platform to advise B/Ds on the application of family perspectives with the benefit of

professionals and experts in relevant fields, the enhanced approach was a good starting point in aligning different policies with family perspectives. That said, a comprehensive and coherent checklist was required for the assessment purpose. In the light of implementation experience, the Council should take proactive steps in reviewing the assessment framework and take stock of family-related policies, findings of further researches as well as demographic changes relating to families;

- (g) it was noted that the problem of mental health was not unique to Hong Kong and was indeed a world-wide phenomenon. In this connection, medical and health care dimensions were important in understanding family perspective and should be incorporated in the assessment process;
- (h) as Hong Kong was an economy-driven society, people tended to over-emphasize financial achievements and work long hours, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, irrespective of professions. It might not be easy to educate people on the importance of a quality family life. In this regard, the Council should proactively advocate a cultural change on people's attitude to work and family; and
- (i) given the increasing number of Mainland-Hong Kong families, the Government should take their special circumstances into account in understanding the scope of family. For this type of families, it was not uncommon that the parents were not residing in Hong Kong and as such, the relatives (e.g. grandparents) of the children took up the guardianship role. In examining family implications of relevant policies, the Government should address their concerns as well.

9. The Chairman thanked Members for their useful views. She shared Members' views that a proactive approach should be

adopted in inviting B/Ds to consult the Council on new policies with family implications. However, she appealed to Members' understanding that the consultation requirement could not be made mandatory at this stage because of the time-criticalness and sensitive nature of some policies prior to public announcement. As a related issue, the Chairman informed Members that the Secretariat of SCPP would consult the Council on various family-related policies as and when ready. To reassure Members' concern, Secretary for Labour and Welfare emphasised that LWB would seek to consult the Council on family-related issues under its policy portfolio, e.g. standard working hours and paternity leave, etc. when the conditions were ripe.

(Action: Secretariat of SCPP and LWB)

10. In response to some Members' views on the need for a dedicated Children's Commission, Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) remarked that the Family Council provided a cross-sector and cross-bureau platform for examining family-related policies. A fragmented approach in understanding family-related issues might not be desirable. Both the Chairman and SHA reassured Members that the interests of all family members, irrespective of age and gender, would be taken into account by the Council.

11. Members noted the paper. Follow-up actions would be taken up by relevant B/Ds as appropriate.

Item 4 – The Reconstituted Family Council (Paper FC 2/2013)

12. Secretary to the Council briefed Members on the composition of the reconstituted Council. The Chairman informed Members that the Chief Executive had appointed Professor Daniel Shek as the new non-official Chairman of the Council from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2015.

13. Members showed unanimous support to the reconstitution as well as the appointment of Professor Daniel Shek as the new

non-official Chairman. Members expressed the following views –

- (a) to better co-ordinate family-related issues for the new term, the Government might consider setting up a dedicated Family Office to oversee the co-ordination and implementation of family-related policies and programmes; and
- (b) the reconstitution was a new milestone of the Council. To further promulgate the importance of family core values and share insights with relevant stakeholders, the reconstituted Council might consider organizing a “Family Summit”.

14. The Chairman noted Members’ views, and remarked that the reconstituted Council would duly consider Members’ suggestions in mapping out its work plan. As regards Members’ suggestion in organizing a “Family Summit”, noting that the Government would organize a few summits in 2013, e.g. the Summit on District Administration, careful consideration should be exercised as to whether and how a “Family Summit” should be organized.

15. Members noted the paper.

Item 5 – Progress of Work of the Subcommittees under the Family Council (Paper FC 3/2013)

16. The Chairman invited the Convenors of the three Subcommittees to report work progress.

17. Regarding the work progress on the promotion of family core values, Mr CHOW Yung, Robert reported that the Council had made good efforts in launching various campaigns in the past years, including the “Family-friendly Employers Award Scheme” and the “Love and Respect Thy Elders” Campaign. He expressed his gratitude for the support from fellow Members. The Council should continue its advocacy work in a sustainable manner.

18. On the Subcommittee on Family Support, Prof Daniel Shek reported that the Subcommittee had monitored the implementation of the “Pilot Scheme on Family Mediation Service 2012” as well as the progress of “The Study of the Phenomenon of Divorce” and “Family Survey 2013”. The Subcommittee also gave its advice on the application of family perspectives involved in the Youth Hostel Scheme.

19. On the Subcommittee on Family Education, Prof WONG Po-choi reported that the final report of the “Consultancy Study on Family Education” had been endorsed. Relevant B/Ds would follow up on the proposed measures.

20. The meeting noted the progress reports made by the Convenors of the three Subcommittees.

Item 6 – Any Other Business

21. The Chairman thanked Members for their valuable contributions rendered to the Council over the past years, in particular the following six outgoing Members who had been serving on the Council since its establishment in December 2007 –

- Mr CHOW Yung, Robert
- Ms LAI Fung-yee, Angelina
- Dr LEE Wai-yung
- Dr PANG King-chee
- Dr WONG CHUNG-kwong
- Dr WONG Po-choi

22. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Family Council Secretariat
April 2013