

**Minutes of the 6th Meeting of
the Tuen Mun District Council**

Date: 11 November 2024 (Monday)

Time: 2:31 p.m.

Venue: Tuen Mun District Council (TMDC) Conference Room

Present

Mr KWAN Ke-lin, Michael, JP (Chairman)	District Officer (Tuen Mun), Home Affairs Department, and TMDC Chairman
The Hon LAU Ip-keung, Kenneth, SBS, MH, JP	TMDC Member
Mr CHAN Yau-hoi, BBS, MH, JP	TMDC Member
Mr TSUI Fan, MH	TMDC Member
Ms CHING Chi-hung, MH, JP	TMDC Member
Mr CHAN Manwell, MH	TMDC Member
Ms SO Ka-man	TMDC Member
Mr WAN Tin-chong, MH	TMDC Member
Mr TSANG Hin-hong, MH	TMDC Member
Mr KAM Man-fung	TMDC Member
Mr MO Shing-fung	TMDC Member
Mr YIP Man-pan, MH	TMDC Member
Ms LAI Ka-man	TMDC Member
Mr HO Jun-hang, Benton	TMDC Member
Mr LI Chiu-hung	TMDC Member
Mr LAM Tik-fai	TMDC Member
Ms CHAN Mang-yi, Vincci	TMDC Member
Mr CHAN Ho-ting, Mac	TMDC Member
Dr CHAN Kwai-wao	TMDC Member
Mr CHAN Tsim-heng	TMDC Member
Ms MAK Mei-yee, Pamela	TMDC Member
Mr CHUI King-hang	TMDC Member
Mr FUNG Pui-yin	TMDC Member
Mr FUNG Yuk-fung, MH	TMDC Member
Mr TSANG Hing-chung	TMDC Member
Mr YIP Kat-kong, Kenneth	TMDC Member
Mr IP Chun-yuen	TMDC Member
Mr CHENG Yin-kwan	TMDC Member
Mr TSOI Shing-hin	TMDC Member

Mr TSE Wing-hang	TMDC Member
Ms TSE Yuk-ling	TMDC Member
Mr KWONG Man-tik	TMDC Member
Mr CHUNG Kin-fung	TMDC Member
Mr LAU Chun-fai, Lawrence (Secretary)	Senior Executive Manager (District Council), Tuen Mun District Office, Home Affairs Department

By Invitation

Ms CHAN Wing-shiu, May	Commissioner for Labour, Labour Department
Miss FUNG Lai-hing, Karen	Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services) (Operation), Labour Department
Ms AU Shuk-yi, Aubrey	Head of Land Boundary Command, Customs and Excise Department
Mr TANG Cheuk-wai, Anthony	Senior Inspector, Man Kam To Division, Customs and Excise Department
Mr NG Edmond	Senior Superintendent (Centre for Food Safety) ¹ , Centre for Food Safety, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Dr CHONG Fu-kit, Ivan	Veterinary Officer (Import Inspection Unit), Centre for Food Safety, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Mr TANG Yiu-hang	Chief Health Inspector (Import/Export) ³ , Centre for Food Safety, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Mr YIU Ka-lap	Engineer, New Territories West (Distribution 2), Water Supplies Department
Ms LAM Yuk-ying	Resident Engineer, Binnies Hong Kong Limited

In Attendance

Miss CHEN Wai-tik, Wendy	Assistant District Officer (Tuen Mun) ¹ , Home Affairs Department
Mr CHAN Yik-lung, Eron	Assistant District Officer (Tuen Mun) ² , Home Affairs Department
Mr LAU Yu-hang, Henry	Senior Liaison Officer (1), Tuen Mun District Office, Home Affairs Department

Ms HUNG Mei, Eunice	Senior Liaison Officer (2), Tuen Mun District Office, Home Affairs Department
Ms CHAN Yin-ling, Cannes	Senior Liaison Officer (3), Tuen Mun District Office, Home Affairs Department
Miss FONG Yuen-wah, Irene	Senior Liaison Officer (4), Tuen Mun District Office, Home Affairs Department
Mr CHUNG Lok-chin	Chief Engineer, West 3, Civil Engineering and Development Department
Ms HON Hin-yan	Chief School Development Officer (Tuen Mun), Education Bureau
Mr FUNG Koon-yue	District Environmental Hygiene Superintendent (Tuen Mun), Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Mr CHAU Man-sang	Chief Health Inspector (Tuen Mun) ¹ , Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Mr NG Kwok-cheung	District Commander (Tuen Mun), Hong Kong Police Force
Ms YUEN Wai-yee	Assistant Police Community Relations Officer (Youth Engagement), Hong Kong Police Force
Ms KWOK Ho-ling	OC DIS TMDIST, Hong Kong Police Force
Mr WONG Chun-hung, Samuel	Chief Manager, Management (Tuen Mun and Yuen Long), Housing Department
Mr LEE Chi-keung, Kenneth	District Lands Officer (Tuen Mun), Lands Department
Ms CHANG Yuet-ming, Charlene	Administrative Assistant, Lands (District Lands Office, Tuen Mun), Lands Department
Ms TSENG Chieh, Elsa	District Leisure Manager (Tuen Mun), Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Mr AU Hei-fan, Raymond	District Planning Officer, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long West, Planning Department
Ms HO Yuen-ming, Agnes	District Social Welfare Officer (Tuen Mun), Social Welfare Department
Mr CHEUNG Chi-yeung, Fabian	Chief Transport Officer, New Territories North West, Transport Department
Miss CHAN Mei-ting, Emily (Assistant Secretary)	Executive Officer I (District Council) ¹ , Tuen Mun District Office, Home Affairs Department

I. Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Members present to the 6th meeting of the seventh term TMDC. He also extended welcome to government department representatives in attendance at the meeting.

II. Absence from Meeting

2. The Secretary reported that the Secretariat had received no applications for leave of absence from Members.

III. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 5th Meeting held on 9 September 2024

3. The Chairman stated that the draft minutes of the aforementioned meeting were sent to all attendees for review on 8 November 2024. Subsequently, the Secretariat did not receive any proposed amendments. No Member proposed any other amendments at the meeting; therefore, the Chairman declared the minutes confirmed.

IV. Meeting between Commissioner for Labour and Tuen Mun District Council Members

4. The Chairman welcomed Ms May CHAN, Commissioner for Labour, the Labour Department (LD), to the meeting to introduce the Department's work and listen to Members' views on issues of district concern. He also welcomed Miss Karen FUNG, Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services) (Operation), who accompanied Ms May CHAN to the meeting.

5. Ms May CHAN expressed her pleasure at visiting the TMDC for the first time to engage with Members and hear their opinions. She then introduced various aspects of the LD's work as follows:

- (i) The Department's work focused on two main areas, namely promoting employment for local employees and safeguarding employees' rights and benefits, and enhancing employees' awareness of occupational safety and health (OSH);
- (ii) During economic upturns, demand for labour increased and job opportunities multiplied, and vice versa. Currently, as local economy and tourism in Hong Kong recovered post-pandemic, the employment market had improved. The

unemployment rate remained low this year, with the latest figure (i.e. 2024 Q3) at 3.0%;

- (iii) Over the past few years, the LD received more than one million job vacancies annually from private sector organisations. The Department actively conducted job matching for job seekers, successfully assisting over 100 000 individuals in finding employment each year;
- (iv) The Department launched multiple employment schemes and provided subsidies for job seekers of different ages and backgrounds, including Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, Youth Employment and Training Programme, Work Orientation and Placement Scheme, and Racial Diversity Employment Programme;
- (v) The Department currently operated a total of 11 employment centres across various districts, providing comprehensive and free employment services and facilities, as well as personalised employment consultation services. In addition, there were Recruitment Centre for the Catering Industry, Recruitment Centre for the Retail Industry, and Construction Industry Recruitment Centre. If needed, job seekers residing in Tuen Mun could access these services at Tuen Mun Job Centre during office hours or via online employment services;
- (vi) The Department regularly held large job fairs and organised local recruitment events at its employment centres. Moreover, it also conducted thematic job fairs targeted at specific industries, ethnic minority job seekers, and middle-aged job seekers;
- (vii) The Department had established two resource centres named Youth Employment Start to provide one-stop comprehensive employment and self-employment support services for young persons aged between 15 and 29;
- (viii) To cope with challenges brought about by manpower shortage, the Government had enhanced the mechanism for importation of workers on the premise of safeguarding the employment priority for local workers. Apart from launching sector-specific labour importation schemes for construction sector, transport sector, and residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities, the LD had also implemented the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme since 4 September 2023, to enhance the coverage and operation of the Supplementary Labour

Scheme in the past, including suspending the general exclusion of 26 job categories as well as unskilled or low-skilled posts from labour importation for two years;

- (ix) The Labour Relations Division of the LD operated from 10 branch offices to provide free of charge consultation and voluntary conciliation service. In 2023, the LD handled approximately 12 000 labour dispute and claim cases, with over 70% of the cases conciliated by the Department being resolved;
- (x) The Labour Advisory Board reached a consensus in February this year to review the provisions concerning “continuous contract” under the Employment Ordinance, proposing to amend the counting unit to be based on aggregate working hours of four weeks, with a four-week working hour threshold at 68 hours, referred to as “4-68” requirement. The Government was currently undertaking legislative work, aiming to submit the relevant bill to the Legislative Council (LegCo) for scrutiny in the first half of 2025;
- (xi) The number of statutory holidays currently stood at 14 days per year, which would gradually increase to 17 days per year by 2030;
- (xii) To tie in with the abolition of the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) offsetting arrangement (the abolition of the offsetting arrangement) on 1 May 2025, the Government would roll out the 25-year Subsidy Scheme for Abolition of MPF Offsetting Arrangement (SSA) totalling over \$33 billion to help share out employers’ expenses upon the abolition of the offsetting arrangement, and to assist employers to adapt to the policy change. The Department was currently preparing for the implementation, including completing the information technology systems for SSA and determining its operational arrangements. The Department would continue extensive publicity and provide online calculation tools to assist employers and employees in calculating severance payment and long service payment upon the abolition of the offsetting arrangement, as well as the Government subsidies that employers could receive;
- (xiii) Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) had been in effect since May 2011 and had been raised five times to the current rate of \$40 per hour. The Chief Executive invited the Minimum Wage Commission (the Commission) in January 2023 to study how to enhance the review mechanism for the SMW rate. The Commission submitted its research report to the Government in October 2023. On 30 April 2024, the Chief Executive in Council accepted

the recommendations made by the Commission, including changing the review of the SMW from every two years to annually (Annual Review) and adopting a formula for implementing the Annual Review. In 2024 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that the Government would implement a new mechanism for the SMW Annual Review, with the first SMW rate derived under the new mechanism expected to come into effect on 1 May 2026;

- (xiv) The next SMW rate using the formula proposed by the Commission was approved by the Chief Executive in Council, together with a report submitted by the end of October 2024. The Government was currently reviewing the Commission's report, with the next rate expected to come into effect on 1 May 2025;
- (xv) Currently, there were over 360 000 foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) working in Hong Kong, predominantly from Philippines and Indonesia. The Department provided support for FDHs and employers, and had a dedicated FDH Portal available in 12 languages, offering information on the rights and responsibilities of FDHs and employers. The LD also maintained close contact with the governments of FDHs' countries of origin, their consulates in Hong Kong, FDH organisations, and employer organisations, widely promoting the latest information regarding FDHs;
- (xvi) There were 3 780 licensed employment agencies in Hong Kong, about half of which provided FDH placement services. The Department had consistently approved applications for licences and renewals for employment agencies in accordance with the law and the Code of Practice for Employment Agencies (CoP). After issuing licences, the LD personnel also conducted routine and surprise inspections of employment agencies to combat violations. The LD issued a revised CoP on 9 May 2024 to enhance the protection of the rights of job seekers and employers receiving employment agency services. If an employment agency violated the CoP, the LD might consider revoking or refusing to issue/renew its licence or issue warnings urging corrections;
- (xvii) The LD had reviewed the application and approval procedures for the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund (PWIF). After the PWIF Application Office received applications, ex-gratia payment from the PWIF would be released within three months for simple and straight-forward applications and not more than six months for 90% of non-disputed and substantiated applications. The Government was currently reviewing

coverage of ex-gratia severance payments under the PWIF and exploring an increase in the ceiling of ex-gratia payments;

- (xviii) The LD placed great emphasis on employees' OSH, with statistics indicating a downward trend in occupational injury cases. The number of fatal industrial accidents had hovered around 20 in recent years, with construction sector consistently experiencing a higher number of fatal industrial accidents compared to other industries. Therefore, the Department was intensifying inspection and prosecution specifically in construction sector while simultaneously enhancing publicity, education, and training efforts;
- (xix) The LD had launched a series of targeted measures to encourage various sectors, especially the construction industry, to pay attention to OSH. Relevant measures included increasing maximum fines under the Occupational Safety and Occupational Health Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2023, revising the Code of Practice for Bamboo Scaffolding Safety, formally implementing the remaining four elements of safety management system, continuing with the Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work, revising the Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work, and amending the Code of Practice for Safety and Health at Work in Confined Spaces; and
- (xx) The LD would continue to conduct patrols and surprise inspections as part of its enforcement actions. The Department had also been collaborating closely with the Development Bureau (DEVB), relevant government departments, and institutions to promote the adoption of the Smart Site Safety System in construction projects. During inspections of construction projects, the LD would assess the adoption of the system at participating worksites under the Smart Site Safety System Labelling Scheme.

6. Mr CHAN Yau-hoi expressed his concern regarding several recent fatal industrial accidents and suggested that the Department review the number of safety officers stationed at construction sites and enhance their training to prevent hazards and violations of safety guidelines at these sites. In addition, given the large population in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, he hoped the Department would consider setting up an office of the Employees' Compensation Division in Tuen Mun to facilitate assistance for workers with occupational injury issues, as workers currently had to seek help in Tsuen Wan office. He strongly supported the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged launched by the Department and noted

that he successfully hired staff for his office via the programme, thus believing it was worth promoting.

7. Mr CHUNG Kin-fung expressed concern about the issue of obtaining unlawful loan among FDHs and hoped that the Department could strengthen cooperation with the Police to prevent FDHs from being deceived, and to protect employers. Regarding the abolition of the offsetting arrangement set to take effect on 1 May 2025, he urged the Department to enhance related promotion, particularly the online calculation tool provided by the Department, to deepen employers' and employees' understanding of the abolition of the offsetting arrangement through simple and clear information. Concerning the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, he enquired whether Hong Kong residents who had not yet acquire permanent resident status in Hong Kong could also participate in this programme.

8. Mr Mac CHAN expressed his pleasure at the Government's efforts to optimise and improve the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, noting that young people might not decide to work in the Greater Bay Area immediately after graduation. Therefore, he strongly supported relaxing the age limit. He enquired about the number of young people who participated in the programme over the past year, including the industries and jobs categories involved. According to his understanding, other government departments, including the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau, had also launched similar funding scheme for youth entrepreneurship in the Greater Bay Area. He wanted to know how various Departments coordinated to ensure that resources were used more effectively, allowing for greater interaction and collaboration between young people in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area.

9. Ms May CHAN gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) She expressed sadness over the recent fatal industrial accidents and stated that the Department would take various measures to enhance OSH level, particularly in terms of promotional and educational work. The majority of accidents could be avoided with adequate safety measures and adherence to guidelines and codes. It was crucial for all relevant parties, including employers and workers, to raise their safety awareness and take necessary safety precautions;
- (ii) The scope of the Department's work was broader than ever, so it needed to consider overall staffing arrangement. During future reviews, the suggestion

to establish an office of the Employees' Compensation Division in Tuen Mun would also be taken into account;

- (iii) The Department would continue to promote the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, encouraging employers to hire the elderly and middle-aged while also promoting the Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme;
- (iv) Regarding the issue of FDHs' borrowing activities, the Department had been closely coordinating with various law enforcement agencies. At the same time, the Department had strengthened its promotion and education efforts for FDHs, urging them to manage their finances prudently;
- (v) In relation to the abolition of the offsetting arrangement, which would be implemented on 1 May 2025, the Department would launch a new round of promotional work to dispel misconceptions about the abolition of the offsetting arrangement. It would clearly communicate that terminating employees before the abolition of the offsetting arrangement would not save on severance or long service payment costs; and
- (vi) The Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme offered subsidies of up to 18 months to enterprises, encouraging them to hire eligible Hong Kong youth to work in Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area. The aim was to expand the interpersonal network of Hong Kong youth, enhance their understanding of the Mainland, and assist them in experiencing life and gaining work experience in the Mainland. The objectives of this programme differed from those of other departments' Greater Bay Area initiatives, and communication among departments would ensure a clear understanding of each programme's purpose and target participants, preventing any overlap in resource utilisation. As of September 2024, more than 200 organisations had provided over 1 700 job vacancies under the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, and the Department had received 260 applications for subsidy, primarily for the positions of associate professionals and professionals, with the majority in commercial services and financial sectors.

10. Mr TSE Wing-hang expressed his gratitude for the LD's past efforts, which had helped maintain the unemployment rate at a low level. Regarding the abolition of the offsetting arrangement, he agreed that the public might not fully understand the details of this arrangement, thus highlighting the need for enhanced promotion. He said that the LD was welcome to disseminate relevant information through Members'

networks. Concerning the employment situation in Tuen Mun, he mentioned that some local businesses had reported difficulties in recruiting workers for certain specific positions. He suggested that the Department consider tailoring its approach to fit local demand, such as organising more recruitment fairs.

11. Mr TSANG Hin-hong indicated that he had received numerous enquiries from residents regarding the proposal to amend the “continuous contract” provision to “4-68”, suggesting that the public did not seem to have a sufficient understanding of the revision. He recommended holding public briefing sessions and distributing more promotional materials. In addition, he agreed with the proposal to relax the age limit for participation in the Youth Employment and Training Programme and to increase opportunities for young people to have workplace attachment and work in the Greater Bay Area. Regarding the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, he believed that the Department could provide detailed information about the programme to target participants, including the preparation before travelling to the Greater Bay Area.

12. Mr FUNG Yuk-fung stated that the national 14th Five-Year Plan had established Hong Kong’s development positioning as the “Eight Centres”. He enquired whether the LD had relevant human resources planning and educational training in this regard. Regarding creation of employment opportunities for the youth, he hoped that the Department could create more high-quality job opportunities suitable for young people via policy support and resources allocation, particularly in high-tech and innovative industries. In addition, he hoped to promote legislation on standard working hours, providing appropriate allowances and leave as compensation for overtime work to protect employees’ rights. Lastly, he believed that strengthening support for women with dual roles was very important and asked whether the Department had policies and measures to provide them with a better employment environment and family living conditions.

13. Ms May CHAN gave a consolidated response to Members’ enquiries as follows:

- (i) The Department would continue to promote and publicise various measures and policies it had introduced, including asking assistance from Members;
- (ii) Regarding the employment situation in Tuen Mun, the Department had an employment centre in Tuen Mun that provided information on job vacancies for local residents. Depending on the allocation of human resources, the Department would organise local recruitment days at employment centres;

- (iii) The responsibilities for human resources planning and training primarily fell within the purview of the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB), while the LD was responsible for matters related to the workforce, such as maintaining close ties with the Employees Retraining Board and various trade unions;
- (iv) Considering factors such as current labour market, employment situation, work culture, and economic environment, currently, the Department did not plan to implement standard working hours. However, it would continue to implement other measures to improve workers' benefits that had been discussed by both employers and employees, such as amending the provisions concerning "continuous contracts" and the abolition of the offsetting arrangement; and
- (v) The Department had been promoting women employment to unleash female labour force, including organising themed recruitment fairs that offered positions more suitable for women, such as part-time and half-time jobs. It also encouraged employers to actively promote family-friendly work arrangements, such as flexible working hours.

14. Mr IP Chun-yuen expressed that the LD's work was commendable, especially regarding employees' rights. He suggested that the Department should digitise forms related to employees' compensation claims or establish offices that provided comprehensive services to better assist citizens with various needs. In addition, he noted that many young people took summer jobs but lacked experience when joining the workforce. He urged the Department to conduct more promotional activities regarding employee protections for them. Finally, he mentioned that the Chief Executive proposed in Policy Address that civil servants would be entitled to parental leave, and hoped that this measure would be extended to private sector to help increase the birth rate.

15. Ms TSE Yuk-ling stated that there had been 24 000 participants under the Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme mentioned by the Commissioner in just three to four months, indicating excellent results and encouraging many women to re-enter the employment market. In this regard, she hoped the Department would consider enhancing the benefits for half-time or part-time employees in addition to providing one-off cash allowance, as this would attract more women who needed to balance family care and work in the long term.

16. Mr KAM Man-fung expressed strong support for the concept of the Working Holiday Scheme, which allowed young people to work and live in other countries, thereby broadening their worldview and international perspective. Regarding the list of participating countries under the Working Holiday Scheme, he noted that currently most of them were from Europe and North America. He suggested including some developing countries, such as those in the Middle East that the Government actively promoted for cooperation, to provide more diverse options for young people.

17. Ms May CHAN gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The Department would consider Members' opinions regarding integration of office services when reviewing resources allocation in the future. The Department had made efforts to digitise forms and would explore the suggestion about gradual digitisation of more forms based on compliance with legal requirements;
- (ii) The Department had consistently provided information on job vacancies suitable for young people during summer holidays and would enhance promotion, reminding the youth of important considerations when seeking employment;
- (iii) The revision of the Employment Ordinance to provide parental leave was a lengthy process. The Department had always encouraged employers to offer employment benefits that were more favourable than statutory requirements. It would continue to promote family-friendly employment practices through initiatives such as Good Employer Charter;
- (iv) The Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme covered part-time work. As long as total working hours within a continuous 30-day period reached 76 hours, individuals would be eligible to participate in the programme; and
- (v) The Department acknowledged Members' suggestions about establishing Working Holiday Scheme with more countries. However, this involved considerations of security and other factors, and the Department needed to consult with the Security Bureau (SB), Immigration Department (IMMD), and Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF). Generally, the Working Holiday Scheme was a reciprocal arrangement, meaning that young people from the partner countries must be allowed to stay in Hong Kong, so further discussion with relevant departments would be necessary.

18. Mr CHUI King-hang noted that many talents were coming to Hong Kong to work and live through the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) and suggested that the Department provide them with more support, such as offering contact numbers for various departments and reminding them to be cautious of different types of scams. In addition, although this scheme supplemented the talents and skills needed in various sectors in Hong Kong, citizens remained concerned that it might impact the local labour market. He hoped the Commissioner could provide further clarification on this matter.

19. Ms CHING Chi-hung expressed that there were still concern in the community regarding the abolition of the offsetting arrangement that would take effect on 1 May 2025, urging the Department to increase its promotional efforts in advance. Furthermore, she mentioned that some residents reported they were unable to apply for relevant subsidies because their employers did not participate in the Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme. Therefore, she hoped the Department would step up publicity efforts targeting at employers. She also suggested considering providing adequate training and protection for the elderly re-entering the workforce.

20. Ms LAI Ka-man recommended that the Department introduce more FDHs from different nationalities, such as Nepalese, to meet the demand for FDHs in Hong Kong. To encourage women to join the employment market, she suggested adding a dedicated page for female workers on the Department's Interactive Employment Service Website to facilitate search for suitable job opportunities.

21. Ms May CHAN gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The TTPS fell under the purview of the LWB. She would relay the feedback to the Bureau and reiterated that local talent remained the primary backbone, noting that the number of foreign talents being brought in through various schemes was still far less than the projected shortfall indicated by manpower projection; and
- (ii) Understanding Members' significant concern regarding the implementation of the abolition of the offsetting arrangement, the Department would explore ways to effectively enhance employers' and employees' understanding of this arrangement.

Regarding the Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme, Ms May CHAN requested Miss Karen FUNG, Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services) (Operation), who was responsible for the scheme, to give a response.

22. Miss Karen FUNG of the LD briefly introduced the Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme and the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged. Individuals interested in participating in the Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme must register for the programme or, under special circumstances, complete registration and report their employment within one month of commencing employment.

23. Ms May CHAN gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) Regarding the aforementioned Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme and the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, she would remind frontline staff to explain the differences and related regulations of the two schemes more clearly to the public;
- (ii) The Chief Executive proposed the development of the Silver Economy in 2024 Policy Address, which included promoting Silver-hair Employment. An internal government team had been established to conduct research. It was believed that the research would also include Members' opinions;
- (iii) The Department had been studying the possibility of bringing in FDHs from more countries, but this depended on the intentions of relevant countries and security considerations, requiring consultation with the SB, IMMD, and HKPF. If appropriate, the LD would actively follow up with relevant consulates; and
- (iv) In consideration of equal opportunities, the Department would not create a dedicated page on the LD's Interactive Employment Service Website for job vacancies exclusively for women. However, job seekers could select search criteria for job vacancies and browse openings suitable for homemakers, such as part-time vacancies.

24. Mr YIP Man-pan stated that he had previously handled hundreds of cases related to the bankruptcy of a fitness company, including requests for assistance from coaches and cleaners, and noted that the LD staff were very cooperative and provided appropriate assistance at the time. He also pointed out that the Third Plenary Session

of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China had mentioned transforming Hong Kong into an international hub for high-calibre talents, and currently, there were many workers from the Mainland and other countries in Hong Kong. Although talent planning fell under the responsibility of policy bureaux, he wanted to take this opportunity to share his views, including a hope that a list of talents that would be needed in future could be developed as soon as possible, a timely review of the impact of expanding the list of eligible institutions for the TTPS would be made, and the Government actively invited international high-calibre talents to develop in Hong Kong.

25. Mr MO Shing-fung expressed significant concern regarding FDHs job-hopping and borrowing issues. He suggested increasing the costs associated with early termination of contracts, which should be shared jointly by employers and FDHs. Regarding borrowing issues, he recommended legislating to limit the amount that FDHs could borrow, ensuring that the amount was commensurate with their repayment ability. Furthermore, recruitment agencies should promote to FDHs the importance of avoiding illegal borrowing.

26. Mr KWONG Man-tik stated that elderly and middle-aged persons performed well at work and that promotion of the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged should be strengthened. He noted that the Department occasionally held various recruitment fairs and enquired whether there were channels for employers to receive support in recruitment or to collaborate with the Department.

27. Ms May CHAN gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) Regarding the earlier incident of a fitness company closing down, the Department had been making every effort to follow up on claims of affected employees. She appreciated Members and relevant trade unions for working collaboratively with the Department to assist the affected employees;
- (ii) Concerning Members' suggestions related to talent planning, she would relay the feedback to the LWB, believing that the Bureau was also working diligently on the related matter;
- (iii) The current situation of FDHs job-hopping had significantly improved. The LD would continue to strengthen information exchange with the IMMD, which would decisively reject work visa applications from FDHs suspected of job-

hopping. The Department would take Members' suggestions into account and would have a study and review in due course;

- (iv) Regarding the borrowing issue of FDHs, the Department would continue to remind them not to over-borrow through various publicity and educational activities;
- (v) In light of the recently launched Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme, the Department would also enhance the promotion of the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged; and
- (vi) The Department would consider factors such as the number of job vacancies provided by employers and staffing resources of employment centres when collaborating with employers to hold recruitment fairs, and Members were welcome to provide information about employers to the Department.

28. Mr FUNG Pui-yin stated that a subcontractor's worker died in an accident at the Tuen Mun Area 38 Fill Bank on 23 October 2024, after falling into the sea. He wanted to understand the ongoing investigation and follow-up regarding the incident and expressed concern about industrial safety in the area. In addition, currently there were only two occupational health clinics in Hong Kong, and residents of Tuen Mun West had a certain demand for this service. He enquired whether the Department planned to establish clinics in the Tuen Mun District or nearby area in the future. On another note, there had been recent reports of private swimming pools employing unlicensed lifeguards, and he asked about the Department's follow-up on this situation.

29. Mr CHAN Manwell stated that some workers expressed concern to him regarding the impact of imported labours on local employment market. According to a recent survey conducted by Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions among construction workers, 16.2% of workers reported being unemployed, and another 29.6% indicated that their incomes had decreased to varying degrees. Given the current economic downturn and the suspension of several large construction projects, workers hoped the Government would regularly review the policy on importing labours to improve the employment situation for local workers, enhance training, and increase remuneration.

30. Mr TSOI Shing-hin mentioned that some residents had enquired about potential conflicts with participating in the Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme if they declared and began receiving their MPF early at the age of 60 and later re-

entered the job market. In addition, many businesses wanted to hire middle-aged and older individuals, but they were unable to renew insurance for employees over the age of 70 during contract renewals.

31. Ms May CHAN gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) Regarding the accident that occurred at the Tuen Mun Area 38 Fill Bank on 23 October 2024, the investigation was underway and the Department would announce relevant information to the public in due course;
- (ii) The establishment of additional occupational health clinics was challenging, but the Department would closely monitor the waiting times for the services of existing clinics;
- (iii) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) was responsible for the regulation of licensed swimming pools, and the Department would relay the feedback to the FEHD;
- (iv) The importation of labours in construction industry was conducted through the Labour Importation Scheme for the Construction Sector. Applications for this scheme were approved by the DEVB, which would comprehensively consider relevant factors, including the employment situation of local workers and the number of ongoing projects, and applications would be processed in phases; and
- (v) As mentioned earlier, an internal government team had been established to study how to promote Silver-hair Employment, and a comprehensive review would be conducted.

32. Mr WAN Tin-chong stated that during his recent visit to the Tuen Mun industrial area, some business owners expressed to him that their companies were recruiting three to four hundred workers for manual labour tasks, with one-third of the workers requesting to be paid in cash, significantly increasing operating costs. He enquired whether the Department would have measures to improve this situation, as it could pose operational difficulties for small and medium enterprises. In addition, there had been recent reports indicating that the proportion of non-local university and postgraduate students remaining in Hong Kong for employment after graduation was low, and he believed that a better environment should be created to attract talents to stay and develop in Hong Kong.

33. Ms SO Ka-man expressed that the Department had launched many good measures and programmes, but they seemed to lack practical implementation. She suggested considering promotion through TMDC Members or care teams in the district, including hosting seminars or deploying promotional vehicles. Regarding the promotion of the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme to young people, she suggested that producing souvenirs to be distributed in schools might be more direct and effective. For summer employment, the Department could consider organising job fairs for the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, reassuring students and parents that the jobs would be safe.

34. Ms May CHAN gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The method of employee remuneration was primarily based on negotiations between employers and employees, and the Department acknowledged the situation reflected by the Member;
- (ii) Regarding the number of young talents remaining in Hong Kong for employment after graduation, the Department did not have relevant data on hand. She believed that employers would be willing to hire non-local graduates, and the Department would make such suggestion during meetings with employer associations and explore proactive assistance for non-local graduates to stay and work in Hong Kong;
- (iii) In terms of promoting the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, the Department had been targeting the youth through various channels and had set up promotional booths at universities since last year. Participants were also invited to make a short video to share their success stories for promotion at universities and on the Internet to attract more young people to participate in the programme; and
- (iv) The Department hoped to strengthen cooperation with Members and would explore how to effectively utilise local networks of all Members for promotional efforts.

35. The Chairman thanked Ms May CHAN for attending the meeting to interact and communicate with Members and requested her to consider Members' opinions.

V. Discussion Items

**(A) Update on Inbound Persons Illegally Bringing Regulated Food into Hong Kong
(TMDC Paper No. 52/2024)**

36. The Chairman welcomed Ms Aubrey AU, Head of Land Boundary Command, and Mr Anthony TANG, Senior Inspector, Man Kam To Division, of the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED); and Mr NG Edmond, Senior Superintendent (Centre for Food Safety)¹, Centre for Food Safety, Dr Ivan CHONG, Veterinary Officer (Import Inspection Unit), and Mr TANG Yiu-hang, Chief Health Inspector (Import/Export)³, Centre for Food Safety, of the FEHD to the meeting.

37. Ms Aubrey AU of the C&ED and Mr NG Edmond of the FEHD introduced the captioned matter to Members with the aid of PowerPoint slides (see Annex 1).

38. Ms CHING Chi-hung stated that due to convenience and lower prices, currently many citizens were purchasing foods in the Mainland, and the situation of carrying raw meat across the border was very serious, estimating that the number of prosecutions should only account for one-third of actual figures. She believed the C&ED should strengthen publicity, as many citizens were still unclear about which food items were regulated. The promotional materials should include more examples and images of different types of foods to facilitate citizens' understanding. She mentioned that with the approaching Chinese New Year, many citizens would bring orchids across the border, and the C&ED should pay more attention and carry out promotion in advance. In addition, she pointed out that all luggage was required to be checked when entering the Mainland from Hong Kong, whereas in Hong Kong, only random checks were conducted for inbound travellers from the Mainland, which inadvertently encouraged more citizens to defy the law.

39. Mr IP Chun-yuen indicated that currently, citizens only saw promotional materials related to regulated foods before customs clearance upon their return to Hong Kong, and the publicity effectiveness was insufficient. He suggested enhancing cooperation with related authorities at control points of the Mainland so that citizens could be exposed to relevant promotional materials before departing the Mainland, allowing them to discard regulated items early. Regarding the situation of bringing orchids across the border, he believed the related publicity was even more inadequate. Concerning airport arrivals, he recommended strengthening communication and coordination with airlines to remind passengers before boarding not to bring regulated foods into Hong Kong.

40. Mr LAM Tik-fai noted that the prosecution figures showed that recently there had been a clear increasing trend in illegally bringing regulated foods into Hong Kong. In light of the normalisation of Hong Kong people purchasing groceries and consuming in the Mainland, he enquired whether the Government would consider relaxing the regulations to allow citizens to bring a certain quantity of low-risk foods into Hong Kong for personal use. In addition, he suggested distributing promotional leaflets widely and arranging personnel to distribute such leaflets to passengers of cross-boundary vehicles.

41. Ms Aubrey AU of the C&ED gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The C&ED would further strengthen publicity efforts, including actively negotiating with the Mainland Customs to place promotional materials at departure halls. Currently, relevant posters had already been put up at Liantang Control Point;
- (ii) The C&ED hoped that Members would assist in conducting community education and publicity during their daily services to increase citizens' awareness of food safety and share with residents which items could be brought into or out of Hong Kong; and
- (iii) Orchids were regulated by the Agriculture Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), and orchids were not allowed to be imported into Hong Kong without a permit. If citizens wished to bring plants into Hong Kong, they should enquire with relevant departments before purchasing to avoid inadvertently violating the law.

42. Mr NG Edmond of the FEHD gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The Department aimed to clearly convey information to citizens when designing promotional leaflets, but due to space limitations, it was difficult to list all foods;
- (ii) He hoped to communicate the simplest message, i.e. fully cooked meats and eggs could be brought into Hong Kong;
- (iii) If the quantity was reasonable, currently citizens could bring seafood into Hong Kong for personal use without needing to apply to the FEHD; and

- (iv) Currently, foods regulated under the Imported Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations (Cap. 132AK) fell into high-risk categories, thus their import was particularly regulated to safeguard public health, and currently, the Government did not consider amending the regulations.

43. Ms Vincci CHAN stated that citizens were usually in a hurry when processing their immigration clearance and might not notice promotional materials such as pull-up banners. She suggested that the departments consider distributing simple educational materials to education sector and schools to remind parents through their children.

44. Mr WAN Tin-chong expressed that the departments could consider cooperating with the Mainland Customs so that when citizens underwent luggage inspections at Mainland control points, the Mainland Customs could assist in reminding violators. He suggested placing trash bins in arrival halls for citizens to discard regulated items. He noted that the previous legislation regulating the import of raw meat into Hong Kong was enacted to prevent the spread of swine fever and avian flu, which might be less applicable at the present time. Given the changes in citizens' lifestyles and shopping patterns, the Government could consider relaxing the regulations on certain types of regulated foods.

45. Mr CHAN Tsim-heng indicated that the leaflets prepared by the departments were very comprehensive, mentioning restrictions on tobacco, alcohol, weapons, and firearms, which he believed citizens were aware of. However, he hoped the departments could provide further clarification on the restriction on cash. He suggested that the departments promote information at different boundary control points, including those at airport and high speed rail stations, and try to collaborate with the Mainland subway operators for publicity. He expressed his willingness to assist the departments in promotion in the district.

46. Ms Aubrey AU of the C&ED gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The Department would communicate with education sector and explore how to establish promotional channels. Also, it would discuss Members' suggestion of placing trash bins at boundary control points; and
- (ii) Carrying of cash into Hong Kong was regulated by the Cross-boundary Movement of Physical Currency and Bearer Negotiable Instruments

Ordinance (Cap. 629), which was intended to prevent money laundering activities.

47. Mr NG Edmond of the FEHD gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The Department had uploaded a series of promotional leaflets and related information to the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) website for citizens to review, and Members were welcome to request the leaflets from the Department for promotion in local community; and
- (ii) Regarding the relaxation of regulations on high-risk foods, initially, the legislation only regulated game, poultry, and meat, which later extended to eggs due to concern about the risk of avian influenza. Since there were still outbreaks of avian influenza in certain regions of other countries from time to time, the risk remained considerably high.

48. Mr TSOI Shing-hin expressed concern about smuggling of cats and dogs and enquired whether the C&ED had carried out relevant enforcement actions in place. In addition, he noted that promotional leaflets prepared by the departments regarding regulated foods were very well-designed, and he would be willing to assist in distributing the leaflets to local community.

49. Ms Pamela MAK stated that many Hong Kong residents travelled to the Mainland for physical examination and medical treatment. She had heard of lung cancer patients purchasing cancer drugs in the Mainland at relatively lower prices. Since these drugs might not be registered in Hong Kong, she enquired whether bringing the drugs back to Hong Kong would be illegal.

50. Mr CHAN Yau-hoi remarked that the situation of illegally bringing regulated foods into Hong Kong was becoming increasingly severe, partly due to a previously more lenient attitude, and that making rectification would require extensive publicity efforts. Furthermore, he believed the departments should clearly define the standards for doneness of regulated foods in promotional materials to avoid disputes during strict enforcement.

51. Ms Aubrey AU of the C&ED gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) Regarding the smuggling of cats and dogs, the C&ED acted as a gatekeeper but needed to consult the AFCD for further information, and would contact Members later to provide additional details; and
- (ii) Drugs were regulated under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138), and citizens could provide the names of drugs to the Department of Health to enquire whether the drugs were regulated.

52. Mr NG Edmond of the FEHD gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The legislation regulating import of foods into Hong Kong had been always in place, and the Department and the C&ED had maintained a zero-tolerance approach to enforcement. However, the situation for the year was indeed serious, possibly due to citizens acting out of convenience or gambling on luck. Therefore, the Department and the C&ED hoped to disseminate relevant messages via this meeting; and
- (ii) He believed that the definition of "fully cooked" was the least controversial, citing that when cutting open a chicken, there should be no blood oozing out, and when meat was fully cooked, the colour would also change.

53. Mr Kenneth YIP expressed that current publicity was insufficient, and citizens usually did not have time to notice to promotional materials when processing their immigration clearance. He suggested distributing the leaflets at cross-boundary coach terminuses. In addition to items restricted from importation, the C&ED could also promote information regarding items restricted from exportation and items that needed to be declared.

54. Mr FUNG Pui-yin stated that various community organisations held carnivals from time to time and suggested that the departments consider setting up game booths at these events to engage citizens in a lively manner and help them recognise regulated foods.

55. Dr CHAN Kwai-wao first declared that he was an employee of China Travel Service (Hong Kong) Limited and expressed that publicity within tourism industry could be strengthened, as many local residents participated in one-day or short-term tours to the Mainland.

56. Ms Aubrey AU of the C&ED gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) The Department had been engaged in outbound customs clearance work, including deploying personnel and conducting special operations;
- (ii) Regarding the suggestion of setting up game booths at community carnivals, she thanked the Member for invitation and would relay the suggestion to relevant officers; and
- (iii) The Department would collaborate with the CFS to explore how to enhance publicity, including the suggestions made by Members about promotion at cross-boundary coach terminuses and via cooperation with tourism industry.

57. Mr NG Edmond of the FEHD added that they would place full bus body advertisement on Route B9, which travelled to and from the Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, tentatively until after the Chinese New Year next year, upon which the Department would review effectiveness to consider extending the duration or placing advertisements on more bus routes. The CFS would be willing to provide various opinions or participate in activities, and Members would be welcome to propose related collaboration opportunities at any time. Regarding promotional materials, Members or any organisations would be welcome to contact the Department to request for the leaflets.

58. Mr KWONG Man-tik stated that feedback from local community indicated that the current publicity at boundary control points had a certain effect. However, there was a page of the leaflet displaying illustrations of beverages and foods, which might lead citizens to mistakenly believe that all beverages and foods were prohibited. In fact, the illustrations referred specifically to prohibition of carrying cannabis-type products or products containing cannabidiol (CBD) into or out of Hong Kong. He believed the Department could disseminate such information more clearly. In addition, he understood that the restriction on raw meat importation was due to epidemic prevention concern, but he enquired whether, in the long run, consideration could be given to relaxing import restrictions if it could be proven that the raw meat was purchased at a licensed supermarket in the Mainland and was for personal use only.

59. Mr Benton HO expressed that the departments' publicity efforts were insufficient, and many citizens still did not clearly understand which foods or items could not be brought into Hong Kong. He believed that besides arrival halls, the

departments should promote information in more diverse locations to ensure citizens notice and remember relevant messages. Moreover, he suggested the departments should emphasise the penalties for violating the regulations to enhance deterrence, and provide references for the procedures to apply for an import/export license.

60. Ms SO Ka-man noted that she learnt that the C&ED had a virtual service ambassador on its website to answer citizens' enquiries about customs clearance. She suggested promoting this service more widely to the public. She also believed the system should directly answer whether a specific food or item could be brought into Hong Kong, rather than just citing relevant regulations. In terms of promotion through education sector, she suggested that the departments create interactive teaching software to educate students on this issue in an engaging way.

61. Mr CHAN Manwell stated that for the general public, distinguishing which categories of food could be brought into Hong Kong would be quite complex. On the other hand, with increasing integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the Government might consider harmonising the laws and standards between Hong Kong and the Mainland regarding import and export and quality inspection to facilitate citizens' daily lives.

62. Ms Aubrey AU of the C&ED indicated that the Department would consider the suggestions made by Members and would work with the CFS to jointly explore how to effectively enhance publicity and make it easier for citizens to understand relevant information.

63. Mr NG Edmond of the FEHD stated that they would carry out research with the C&ED on how to strengthen publicity and convey information to citizens through different channels. In addition, the CFS would periodically release the latest information on social media platforms, and Members would be welcome to browse. Regarding Members' suggestions to relax regulations on meat purchased with receipts from Mainland supermarkets, he pointed out that currently there were differences in regulatory systems between the Mainland and Hong Kong. However, he indicated that if opportunities arose in the future to review the relevant matter, it could be a topic for discussion.

64. The Chairman requested that the departments consider Members' opinions.

(B) Concerns and Prevention Measures for Underground Water Main Bursts in Tuen Mun District

(TMDC Paper No. 53/2024)**(Written Response from the Water Supplies Department)**

65. The Chairman welcomed Mr YIU Ka-lap, Engineer, New Territories West (Distribution 2) of the Water Supplies Department (WSD), and Ms LAM Yuk-ying, Resident Engineer of Binnies Hong Kong Limited to the meeting.

66. Mr TSANG Hing-chung, the first proposer of the paper, expressed gratitude to the WSD for providing a detailed written response to the captioned paper. He noted that this year there had been frequent incidents of underground water main bursts, with four to five occurrences already, each causing significant disruption, indicating that the situation required attention. He further stated that he understood the Department had been working hard to improve the issue relating to water mains and hoped to complete remaining improvement works as soon as possible to minimise the impacts of such incidents. Regarding the 11 Water Intelligent Network (WIN) projects currently underway in the Tuen Mun District, he enquired about the completion dates of these projects and whether the completion would mean that the WIN would fully cover the Tuen Mun District. In addition, he learnt that the Department was testing the use of pipe inspection robots for leak detection and wanted to enquire about the effectiveness of the test and whether it would be used at main burst hot spots in Tuen Mun.

67. Mr CHENG Yin-kwan expressed that water main bursts interrupted residents' daily lives and had a serious impact on traffic, thus he was very concerned about the situation. According to the Department's response, an improvement project for five-kilometre water mains was scheduled to start in 2025 and thereafter, and he enquired whether this project would involve main roads in the Tuen Mun District and whether there had been any obstacles or opposing opinions that might delay the commencement of the works. To reduce inconvenience caused to citizens by water main burst incidents, he stated that Members were willing to assist in explaining the benefits of water main improvement works to residents and hoped to start the projects earlier.

68. Mr LAM Tik-fai noted that according to the WSD's detailed response, the Department had completed and was currently undertaking water main improvement works totalling approximately 30 kilometres in length. He wanted to enquire whether this figure covered the entire length of water mains in the Tuen Mun District or what percentage it represented. Furthermore, apart from the locations listed in the written response, he asked whether the Department planned to carry out replacement works in other locations and the anticipated completion timeframe for those works.

69. Mr YIU Ka-lap of the WSD gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) Regarding the progress of the WIN project, the District Metering Areas (DMAs) in Tuen Mun had been listed in the annex, and most of them had already begun operation. The Department had started monitoring the healthiness of water mains, allocated water pressure, and water flow. New DMAs would be established at 11 locations, and a detailed timeline would be provided later;
- (ii) Regarding pipe inspection robots, the relevant technology could only be applied under certain specific conditions or circumstances. The Department would actively explore the feasibility of applying different leak detection technologies in the Tuen Mun District to monitor the health of water mains;
- (iii) The Department's goal was to review all water mains and select those with higher risks for replacement or improvement works. The number of water mains located at main roads was relatively small. The Department would assess the risk of water main burst or leak based on various integrated factors and prioritise improvement works for water mains deemed to be at higher risk; and
- (iv) Currently, total length of water mains in Hong Kong exceeded 8 000 kilometres, and the 30-kilometre water mains mentioned in the paper for the Tuen Mun District were part of the highest priority for replacement. The Department would continue to follow a risk-based strategy to include water mains with higher risk in new replacement projects.

70. Mr CHAN Yau-hoi stated that currently, the Department detected leakage with two methods, namely sonar survey and water flow monitoring system. He enquired about the data discovered regarding leakages and the effectiveness of measures taken for leak prevention. In addition, according to the written response by the Department, the improvement works near Kin Fat Street on Shek Pai Tau Road in Tuen Mun were currently labelled as "repair". However, there were still frequent occurrences of water main bursts in that area, so he questioned why it was only categorised as "repair" instead of a complete "replacement" of the water mains.

71. Mr LI Chiu-hung expressed that the monitoring function of WIN was operating effectively, and he wanted to know if it was possible to accurately locate

the position of water main bursts with this system, including a recent incident that occurred at Castle Peak Bay. Furthermore, he pointed out that the WSD often conducted works at various locations in the district, including emergency repairs, and he suggested that the Department promptly inform all Members about relevant situation so they could follow up.

72. Mr CHAN Tsim-heng mentioned that there was an incident of bursting of flushing water pipe on Leung Tak Street last week, and emergency repair works were completed swiftly within 12 hours. He noted that Leung Tak Street was also included in the DMAs under the WIN, suggesting that the system might had been effective. He also took this opportunity to thank the Transport Department (TD) for quickly making temporary route diversion arrangement on that day. He continued by mentioning that there were frequent water main bursts on Tin King Road, Wu Chui Road, and Tuen Mun Heung Sze Wui Road, and hoped that with the monitoring function of the WIN, similar incidents would no longer occur.

73. Mr YIU Ka-lap of the WSD gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) Currently, the WIN was used to monitor fresh water supply network and did not yet include salt water supply network. The incident of water main leakage mentioned by the Member all pertained to salt water supply, which was outside the monitoring scope of the WIN;
- (ii) Data collected by the WIN allowed the Department to understand water usage in the DMAs, and when anomalies occurred, it helped determine whether there were any leakages in those areas; and
- (iii) Frequent occurrences of leakages or bursts on Tin King Road, Wu Chui Road, and Tuen Mun Heung Sze Wui Road were primarily due to leaks in salt water network. The Department would follow up on these issues and enhance monitoring. Also, noise loggers were installed on Tuen Mun Heung Sze Wui Road to detect leakage, which would help reduce the risk of serious incidents.

74. Ms LAM Yuk-ying of Binnies Hong Kong Limited responded regarding the improvement works near Kin Fat Street on Shek Pai Tau Road, stating that due to heavy traffic at the intersection near Kin Fat Street on Shek Pai Tau Road, conducting the works during the day would severely impact traffic, according to the traffic count report. In addition, because there were a large number of trucks entering and leaving the industrial area, she suggested that the water main improvement works on this road

section be conducted at night by way of trenchless techniques to minimise impact on the public. This plan had been discussed with the TD and the HKPF and preliminary consent had been granted. Further consultations regarding temporary traffic diversion arrangements would be held with relevant Members, and the repair works were expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2025.

75. Mr WAN Tin-chong expressed that the WSD planned to replace 3 000 kilometres of water mains within 15 years and enquired whether current replacement works were progressing as scheduled. He strongly supported the development of the WIN and suggested adopting the concept of a smart city to study distribution of data from the WIN to nearby housing estates, the Police, and the TD, among other stakeholders. Furthermore, he mentioned that when different government departments or companies were conducting works, they might need to carry out excavation works first. He proposed that the Government should unify the handling of road excavation applications so that works at the same location could be carried out simultaneously to save time and costs.

76. Mr TSE Wing-hang stated that replacing 3 000 kilometres of water mains within 15 years was indeed a challenging task, and he enquired about typical lifespan of water mains. In addition, regarding the “risk-based” concept mentioned by the representative of the Department, he asked how a water main would be considered high risk.

77. Ms CHING Chi-hung pointed out that water mains in the Tuen Mun District had been plaguing with aging and bursting issues over time. She mentioned that in 2018, the WSD and contractors had informed Members that they would continue to repair water mains and adopt trenchless techniques, and she had noticed that some repair works were being completed. In this regard, she hoped that the WSD could provide regular updates on ongoing works and progress to assist Members in understanding the condition of underground water mains in Tuen Mun.

78. Mr CHAN Yau-hoi expressed a desire for the Department to reconsider “replacement” of the water mains near Kin Fat Street on Shek Pai Tau Road, as heavy vehicles often passed through the road section, leading to frequent water main burst incidents. He suggested replacing the water mains at such location with higher-quality ones to reduce the risk of bursting and the impact on residents’ lives and traffic.

79. Mr YIU Ka-lap of the WSD gave a consolidated response to Members’ enquiries as follows:

- (i) Regarding the suggestion to make the WIN data publicly available to different stakeholders, he would relay the idea to the relevant officers for consideration;
- (ii) The Highways Department was responsible for approving applications for road excavation permits, and the WSD would also consult and communicate with other departments before carrying out excavation works;
- (iii) Water mains in Hong Kong were generally made from various materials, and their lifespans could be influenced by various factors such as materials, design and intended use, making it difficult to generalise. Actual longevity of a water main would depend on a combination of factors including its materials, location, and erosion severity of surrounding soil. Under the “risk-based” strategy, the Department would take all these factors into account to assess the risk of a water main burst incident or leakage and to prioritise which sections would require improvement works; and
- (iv) The WSD would report on the progress of water main repair or main laying works in the Tuen Mun District at the District Facilities and Works Committee. For emergency repair works, the Department would inform the public about any water suspensions due to urgent works through the WSD’s website and WSD Mobile App.

80. Ms LAM Yuk-ying of Binnies Hong Kong Limited made a response to the water main repair works near Kin Fat Street on Shek Pai Tau Road, stating that close fit lining method was adopted for this water main improvement project, which involved insertion of a brand new plastic pipe into an existing water main, in which the inserted pipe would be reverted to its original size and form a lining in close contact with existing pipe barrel. This method could effectively repair the entire section of truck water main, rather than just separately repairing damaged parts.

81. The Chairman requested that the Department consider Members’ opinions.

VI. Items for Information

(A) Report by the Tuen Mun District, HKPF (TMDC Paper No. 54/2024)

82. Mr NG Kwok-cheung, District Commander (Tuen Mun), Hong Kong Police Force, reported on the crime situation in the district. In terms of crime trends, from January to September of this year, there were 4 411 crime reports received in the Tuen

Mun District, an increase of 1 310 cases compared to the same period in 2023, representing a rise of 42%. The detection rate from January to September 2024 was 29.3%, down from 34.3% during the same period in 2023, representing a decrease of 5%. Compared to the same period in 2023, three types of crime recorded significant increases. First, deception cases rose from 1 258 to 2 163, an increase of over 70%, followed by miscellaneous theft cases, increasing from 353 to 438, an increase of 24%; and lastly, shop theft cases rose from 435 to 482, an increase of about 10%. As for crimes with decreasing figures, first, cases of theft from vehicles dropped from 45 to 22; second, burglary cases decreased from 42 to 24; and third, missing vehicle cases fell from 43 to 30. In addition, the top three major crimes from January to September 2024 were deception, shop theft, and miscellaneous theft, which accounted for over 70% of the total number of crime reports in the TMDIST. He added that this year, the total losses related to deception cases had exceeded \$670 million, whereas the total losses for the whole year of 2023 were only about \$300 million.

83. Mr TSANG Hing-chung expressed concern about the increasingly severe situation of youngsters abusing an emerging drug called “space oil”, which was rapidly causing harm to the youth. He noted that schools were also very concerned about this issue. Currently, “space oil” was only classified as a controlled drug, and he believed it should be legislated as a dangerous drug as soon as possible. In addition, he enquired about the number of arrests and trend in the Tuen Mun District related to abuse of “space oil”.

84. Mr CHAN Tsim-heng stated that Mr CHUI King-hang had to leave early due to the duty related to “Meet-the-Public Scheme”, so he would speak on his behalf. Mr CHAN Tsim-heng quoted that Mr CHUI King-hang mentioned that nowadays, scams were pervasive and scammers employed various forms of fraudulent tricks; therefore, he thanked the TMDIST for actively conducting anti-scam promotion and collaborating with Members and community organisations to bring anti-scam messages to the community through various promotional activities, including educating students in schools about scam prevention and dispatching anti-scam promotional vehicles to engage with residents. Also, Mr CHUI King-hang appreciated the Police for their meticulous work, dedication, and prompt response, and expressed a hope that the TMDIST would continue to maintain close cooperation with various sectors in Tuen Mun to strengthen anti-scam promotion and combat crime.

85. Mr TSE Wing-hang noted recent surge in scam cases and enquired about the Police’s strategies to prevent similar incidents from reoccurring. He also mentioned that recently in San Hui area, there had been several traffic accidents and a case

threatening to jump. He praised the Police and the Hong Kong Fire Services Department for their swift responses and professional attitude during rescue operations.

86. Mr NG Kwok-cheung, District Commander (Tuen Mun), expressed gratitude to all Members for their recognition of the services provided by the TMDIST, and gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) "Space oil" (etomidate) was an anaesthetic and sedative drug that was currently classified as a Part I poison. "Space oil" did have legitimate medical uses, and citizens could purchase it with a doctor's prescription. The side effects of consuming "space oil" included muscle weakness, seizure, and vomiting. Currently, there were approximately 60 reported cases related to abuse of "space oil" across the territory, with only three cases in the Tuen Mun District, in which three individuals were arrested, including a 14-year-old secondary female student. The situation concerning abuse of "space oil" in the Tuen Mun District was not considered to be very severe at this time;
- (ii) In combating "space oil"-related crimes, the Police primarily relied on intelligence, such as conducting online patrols and conducted arrest operation when appropriate; and
- (iii) The Police were actively conducting comprehensive anti-scam promotional activities, including collaborating with the Fight Crime Committee and Members to promote scam prevention at Light Rail stops. In addition, "Anti-Scam Month" campaign was held in August and recently, anti-deception minibus had been launched on Hong Kong Island. "Scameter" was the most effective method for the public to avoid scams. Citizens could check with the application before making payment transactions and identify scams and online traps. The Police would continue to promote the "Scameter" mobile application and organise a prize-draw in the future.

87. Mr IP Chun-yuen expressed gratitude for the efforts of the TMDIST in anti-scam work. He mentioned that he was recently interviewed by a newspaper regarding the "money borrowing scams" happening in the areas of Lung Mun OASIS, Glorious Garden, and town centre. He pointed out that many residents had encountered such situations and hoped the Police would follow up. In addition, he noted that the number of pickpocketing cases had risen by 200%, with recent reports in the areas of town centre, Yau Oi, and On Ting. Some victims did not report the thefts due to the small amounts lost, but the actual situation was quite serious.

88. Mr Kenneth YIP expressed appreciation for the tireless efforts of the TMDIST in anti-scam work. He noted that the number of deception cases had increased by 70% compared to 2023, with online shopping and telephone scams accounting for nearly half. He wanted to know the main group falling victim to these scams and related information, and suggested that the Police implement promotional and educational initiatives, such as seminars and street booths, targeting different age groups or other types of groups.

89. Ms Pamela MAK expressed gratitude to the Police for their swift arrest actions regarding a recent homicide that occurred in Yau Oi Estate. Reports indicated that the suspect had argued with a non-ethnic Chinese before the incident, which was stopped by restaurant staff. She mentioned that if the case had been identified and reported in a timely manner, it might have prevented subsequent conflicts between the suspect and the victim that led to the death. In this regard, she enquired about what citizens should do if they encountered similar situations involving drunkenness, and whether they could contact the Police for assistance.

90. Mr NG Kwok-cheung, District Commander (Tuen Mun), gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) "Money borrowing scam" were not classified as deception cases, but rather as begging activities. However, upon reviewing the Police's records, there had been no reports from citizens regarding this issue. He believed that most of the suspects involved were Mainland tourists or two-way permit holders. He urged citizens to report any related situations to the Police promptly; otherwise, it would be difficult for the Police's investigation;
- (ii) Regarding pickpocketing cases, most of the pickpockets were from the Mainland, with a small number being Vietnamese. They often hovered at bank entrances and watched for citizens withdrawing large amounts of cash and then followed them. He believed that the most effective prevention was to solve the cases quickly, and the detection rate for pickpocketing cases was 43.5%. After being tried in Hong Kong, the personal information of the arrested Mainland offenders would be forwarded to the Mainland's Police, and they would not be issued visas for a period of time, which would help reduce pickpocketing cases;
- (iii) In terms of online shopping scams, the ages of victims were primarily between 21 and 40 years old, accounting for over 50% of all online scam cases, with a

male-to-female ratio of about 4:6. For telephone scams, most victims were aged between 41 and 60, making up 43.2% victims of all telephone scam cases. “Impersonating customer service” was the most common trick where victims were misled into providing personal information, bank accounts, and passwords under the guise of cancelling subscription plans. The Police would continue to conduct anti-scam promotional activities targeting these types of cases; and

- (iv) Regarding the homicide case in Yau Oi Estate, the arrested suspect had an argument with a South Asian while dining at a restaurant but did not engage in physical fighting, which was immediately stopped by restaurant staff. Upon leaving the restaurant, the suspect encountered the victim and had a dispute and fight over a stare. The Police recommend that citizens contact the Police immediately if they encountered such situations, and the Police would dispatch officers to handle the matter right away. If the case was handled appropriately, it might help prevent further crimes from occurring.

91. Mr LI Chiu-hung expressed gratitude to the Police for quickly identifying and arresting the suspect in the incident happening in Yau Oi Estate. He added that the press conference that the Police promptly held later on to explain the details of the incident helped alleviate public concern. He suggested that the Police continue to strengthen patrols at restaurants in the evenings and conduct inspection exercise targeting drug abuse.

92. Dr CHAN Kwai-wao stated that he had received praise from residents of The Bloomsway at So Kwun Wat regarding the Police’s handling of burglary cases that occurred on 20 and 26 October 2024. He had previously accompanied the Police to The Bloomsway on 31 October 2024, alongside the chairman of the owners’ corporation and the property management company of The Bloomsway, to have a site inspection and review how to improve security in the housing estate. On the same night, the Police arrested the suspects and recovered stolen property. Furthermore, regarding “space oil”, he suggested that if the Police prepared related promotional materials in the future, they could allow Members to assist in distribution within the community.

93. Mr CHAN Manwell expressed concern regarding item seven of the report submitted by the Police, which indicated a slight increase in the number of youths arrested for crimes from January to September 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, particularly involving deception, rape, and indecent assault cases. He noted that there had been dispute cases in the Tuen Mun District over the past year or two,

and he feared that this might lead the public to mistakenly believe that individuals with triad backgrounds and rouges were based in Tuen Mun. Finally, he expressed his appreciation and recognition for the ongoing efforts and achievements of the Police.

94. Mr NG Kwok-cheung, District Commander (Tuen Mun), gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) Regarding drug abuse problem, the Police would enhance targeted law enforcement. Besides, promotional materials would be distributed to the Secretariat of the TMDC later, and Members could also directly obtain such materials from the Police Community Relations Office;
- (ii) The Police would continue to conduct night patrols. In response to continuous rise in burglary cases across the territory, the Police would deploy more resources for anti-burglary patrols;
- (iii) The rise in youth crime was primarily attributed to incidents of wounding and serious assault, deception, and theft. In terms of deception cases, youths were often arrested for selling or lending their bank accounts to criminals for illegal activities. Regarding sexual offenses, the cases involved were relatively minor. Most wounding and serious assault cases typically occurred on school campuses due to bullying and disputes among schoolmates. About 30% of the youth involved suffered from autism, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or had below-average intelligence, making it difficult for them to control their emotions. If any incidents occurred in schools, the Police's School Liaison Officers would provide close support and assistance; and
- (iv) Compared to other districts, the number of triad-related crimes in the Tuen Mun District was relatively low. Nevertheless, the Police would not tolerate any illegal activities by triad members and would continue to enforce the law rigorously.

95. Mr TSANG Hin-hong expressed that the Police's efforts in combating pickpocketing in the town centre, Yau Oi, and On Ting areas had been very effective, with suspects being quickly apprehended. Residents had stated that the Police's actions helped alleviate their concern, and they would remind themselves to be caution with their personal belongings. Regarding anti-scam work, he noted that the Police continued to conduct various anti-scam promotional activities in multiple districts to raise the public awareness of scam, which had received high praise and recognition.

Concerning the incident happening in Yau Oi Estate, he believed it was an isolated case and appreciated the Police for swiftly apprehending the suspects. Lastly, he mentioned that he had recently received requests for help from residents whose family members were abducted while travelling to other countries, and he suggested that the Police increase publicity and remind families in similar situations to seek assistance from relevant departments.

96. Mr CHENG Yin-kwan stated that he had received multiple reports from residents about burglary incidents in housing estates and they were concerned about being burgled, especially those in hillside housing estates along Castle Peak Road and Tuen Mun Road. According to his knowledge, there had been burglary cases this year in Pine Villas and Dragon Inn Court. He personally visited various housing estates to understand the situation, and many housing estates had proactively taken measures to enhance security, including installing barbed wire fencing, improving lighting systems, and adding sensors. In this regard, he enquired whether the Police could provide more relevant information, suggestions, and support to these housing estates.

97. Ms CHING Chi-hung affirmed the crime prevention and anti-scam promotional work by the TMDIST, which had gained recognition and support from the public. With the approaching Chinese New Year, she suggested organising more winter precaution and fight crime promotional activities, and she would also encourage the community to use the “Scameter”. In addition, she mentioned encountering a citizen who had a dispute with a shopkeeper in a stationery store after being followed, which was believed to be due to prior theft incidents in the store. In such regard, she asked the Police whether theft cases were more frequent in major supermarkets or small-scale shops.

98. Mr CHUNG Kin-fung indicated that, apart from deception cases, the numbers of miscellaneous theft and shoplifting cases had also risen sharply, which was believed to be related to the general economic conditions in Hong Kong. However, he was more concerned about violent crimes, including homicide, assault, and rape. Compared to the same period in 2023, violent crime reports in the Tuen Mun District had increased by nearly 200, which was believed to be of great concern to residents. He suggested that the Police carry out high-profile patrols to reduce the incentives for crime. Given the increase in wounding and serious assault cases involving triads, he recommended that the Police take a strong stance against triad-related crimes to increase public confidence in public order.

99. Mr NG Kwok-cheung, District Commander (Tuen Mun), gave a consolidated response to Members' enquiries as follows:

- (i) Regarding burglary prevention, experts from the Police's Crime Prevention Bureau would provide advice on anti-burglary measures and residents were welcome to contact the Police for guidance. Currently, the Police deployed more resources for burglary prevention work in rural areas without management company. Funding application had been submitted to the Fight Crime Committee for purchasing lighting and anti-burglary or security gadgets for distribution to rural residents;
- (ii) Shoplifting cases primarily occurred in supermarkets, with a total of 482 cases reported from January to September 2024, of which 278 cases occurred in supermarkets, followed by pharmacies, convenience stores, and sportswear shops;
- (iii) In terms of violent crime, the increase in case number mainly did not stem from fighting but was attributed to 110 extortion cases newly happening, where most victims were blackmailed online after engaging in nude chats. He continued that criminal intimidation, reports of which rose from 40 to 70, was the second major contributor to the number of violent crime, and most of the cases were triggered by domestic disputes or arguments. Thirdly, child abuse cases increased by 36. In total, these three types of crimes saw an increase of 174 cases; and
- (iv) The Police had conducted multiple short-term undercover operations in 2024, actively targeting illegal premises such as gambling dens and drug dens. Therefore, triad involvement in wounding and serious assault cases was indeed relatively insignificant. As always, the primary objective of the Police's operations focused on combating triad activities, and it would continue to make every effort to combat triad gangs in the district.

VII. In-house Matters

(A) Members Joining or Resigning from Committees and Working Groups under TMDC

100. The Secretary reported that Mr CHAN Manwell withdrew from the Working Group on Boosting Local Economy on 7 October 2024, and Mr TSANG Hing-chung withdrew from the Traffic and Transport Committee on 16 October 2024.

(B) Schedule of Meetings of TMDC and its Committees in 2025 and Duty Roster of DC Members under the “Meet-the-Public Scheme” (TMDC Paper No. 55/2024)

101. The Chairman requested Members to peruse the captioned paper, and reminded them to pay attention to the dates of meetings when arranging their work.

(C) Reports by Committees (TMDC Paper Nos. 56 to 60/2024)

102. The Chairman requested Members to peruse the five captioned reports. As Members had no other comments, the Chairman announced that the reports were endorsed.

(D) Reports by Working Groups (TMDC Paper No. 61/2024)

103. The Chairman requested Members to peruse the captioned report. As Members had no other comments, the Chairman announced that the report was endorsed.

VIII. Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting

104. The Chairman announced the meeting closed at 6:46 p.m. The next meeting would be held on 13 January 2025.

Tuen Mun District Council Secretariat

Date: December 2024

File Ref: HADTMDC/13/25/DC/24