

Minutes of the Thirty-first Meeting of the Children's Rights Forum

Date : 3 November 2017 (Friday)
Time : 5:15 p.m.
Venue : Function Room 4, 2/F,
Kennedy Town Community Complex,
12 Rock Hill Street, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong

Attendance:

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) Miss Rosanna LAW, JP
(Chairperson) | Deputy Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs |
| 2) Mr D. C. CHEUNG | Principal Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs |
| 3) Miss Ellen CHOW | Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs |

Non-government organisations

Representatives

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) Against Child Abuse | Ms LEE Yu-po |
| 2) Centre for Governance and Citizenship The Education University of Hong Kong | Dr Gail YUEN |
| 3) Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF | Ms Sofia FUNG
Ms Wing LEE |
| 4) Hong Kong Society for Protection of Children | Mr Wilson YEUNG |
| 5) Kids' Dream | HO Chi-chung
TSANG Tsz-man |
| 6) Playright Children's Play Association | Ms Kathy WONG
Ms Florence CHIU |
| 7) The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong | Mr Francis MA

<u>HK Junior CEs</u>
CHAN Chin-tung
CHAN Chiu-wing |
| 8) TREATS | Mr Aman YEE
Mr LAW Po-wah |

- 9) 彩雲關懷社區服務協會 Mr Sam AU YEUNG

Attendance by Invitation:

Discussion Item

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|---|
| 1) | Ms Louisa NGAI | Senior Landscape Architect/3,
Architectural Services Department |
| 2) | Mr CHAN Chun-ho | Landscape Architect/2,
Architectural Services Department |
| 3) | Mr CHUNG Pui-shun | Landscape Architect/4,
Architectural Services Department |
| 4) | Ms Pat WONG | Senior Leisure Manager (Land-based Venues),
Leisure and Cultural Services Department |
| 5) | Mr WONG Ying-ming | District Leisure Manager (Tuen Mun),
Leisure and Cultural Services Department |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed representatives of non-government organisations (NGOs) and children representatives to the meeting.

2. Discussion item

Inclusive Playground (Paper No. CRF 3/2017)

- 2.1 2.1.1 The Chairperson invited representatives of the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) to brief the meeting on the Inclusive Playground (IP) at Tuen Mun Park.
- 2.1.2 Ms NGAI, Mr CHAN and Mr CHUNG gave a brief account of the paper (Paper No. CRF 3/2017) as follows:
- 2.1.3 Ms NGAI first introduced the site context of Tuen Mun Park. The IP at Tuen Mun Park was set against a tranquil environment adjacent to the Tuen Mun River. Its design concept mainly came from the winning schemes of the Inclusive Play Space Design Ideas Competition jointly organised by the Playright Children's Play Association, the Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF and the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects in 2015, the elements in Play for All Guidelines, the site condition and the comments collected from over 30 organisations at two workshops held in 2016. Based on the design schemes entered by competition participants, the IP at Tuen Mun Park was divided into the

southern and northern portions. The themes of “reptile run” and “water-lily park” in the winning schemes of the secondary school students and professionals categories of the above-mentioned competition were adopted for the two portions respectively.

2.1.4 Mr CHUNG then introduced the play equipment in the southern playground. In line with the design theme of “reptile run”, the southern playground was equipped with various facilities to cater for the sensory, social and physical needs of children, and was divided into four zones with unique characteristics as follows:

- (i) Spinning Zone: a rotating climber that could accommodate more children and a merry-go-round for wheelchair users were provided;
- (ii) Egg Hunter: a sand pit was provided to encourage children with or without disabilities to play and create together;
- (iii) Reptile Paradise: a slide, a contour rope course and climbing frames were built on the existing small hill while a tunnel suitable for autistic children was built under the ramp to provide different levels of challenges to all children with or without disabilities; and
- (iv) Sensory Zone: a sensory wall decorated with materials of different textures was provided to stimulate children’s sense of touch.

In response to the comments received in the workshops, an additional swing portion equipped with parent-child swings, seat swings, plank swings and cradle seat swings was provided to cater for children with different needs and enhance their experience of inclusive play.

2.1.5 Under the theme of “water-lily park”, the northern playground was comprised of the following three zones:

- (i) Contour Play Zone: fluctuating patterns of water were displayed by the up-and-down topography and a trampoline suitable for children on wheelchairs was provided;
- (ii) Musical Zone: drum seats and chimes were provided for children of different abilities and wheelchair users to stimulate their senses through playing these percussion instruments; and
- (iii) Flower Dew Plaza: a water play zone with different levels of water sprinklers and a water play platform were provided.

In short, the design of IP aimed at fostering the fun of play amongst children of different backgrounds, abilities and ages in facilitation of interaction.

- 2.1.6 Mr CHAN then gave a brief account of the public engagement exercise in relation to the IP at Tuen Mun Park. He said that ArchSD supported Playright Children's Play Association and a number of NGOs to implement the Junior Playground Commissioner Incubation Programme @Tuen Mun in 2016. Under this programme, students from two schools in Tuen Mun were recruited as Junior Playground Commissioners and activities such as site visits and workshops were organised to enhance students' understanding of the concept of inclusive playing and the design of IP. After several direct dialogue sessions with Junior Playground Commissioners, ArchSD adopted their designs by, inter alia, incorporating popular materials into the sensory wall at the southern playground and the floor pattern at Flower Dew Plaza at the northern playground.
 - 2.1.7 ArchSD thanked the Junior Playground Commissioners for taking part in the design of IP at Tuen Mun Park, and hoped that the IP would complete early so that children could enjoy the fun of inclusive play.
 - 2.1.8 The Chairperson thanked Ms NGAI, Mr CHUNG and Mr CHAN for the briefing.
- 2.2 Comments and questions on IP put forward by attendees and children representatives, as well as responses from the representatives of ArchSD and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) were as follows (group 1):
- 2.2.1 A children representative pointed out that although there were many recreation grounds in Hong Kong, the equipment was all the same and exciting game areas were lacking. The representative observed that as far as play equipment was concerned, excitement was more important than appearance and play equipment featuring climbing and jumping was more attractive to children. He/she suggested that the Government should strike a balance between safety and excitement by placing mats on the floor for exciting playgrounds. An attendee shared the view that the design of existing playgrounds was too conservative. He/she also observed that very often due to safety reason, renovated playgrounds would become smaller in scale and as a result much less exciting. He/she suggested that the Government should take into account the attractiveness of playground when undertaking renovation works in future.
 - 2.2.2 Ms WONG of LCSD pointed out that all the proprietary modular multi-play equipment procured by the department met internationally recognised safety standards. She also said that the factor of attractiveness had already been taken into consideration in the design of playgrounds and the District Councils would also be consulted on playground design to meet the needs of local children. Ms NGAI of ArchSD agreed that play experience was more important than the

appearance of play equipment. ArchSD welcomed further comments from children and the attendees on playground design to improve the play experience of playground users.

- 2.2.3 An attendee expressed concern on how the effectiveness of IP could be maximised. He/she opined that the Government should strengthen promotion and education on the ideas of social inclusion and acceptance, so as to encourage children with different needs to respect each other and to enjoy positive interaction and the fun of play.
- 2.2.4 An attendee shared the experience in organising activities for children with special needs. The attendee said that children with special needs were very creative. Their parents needed not give them excessive protection out of safety consideration and should let them enjoy the play equipment freely instead. An attendee was concerned that parents being overprotective might undermine children's play experience. The attendee noted that there were many play spaces available apart from playgrounds, and that parents should encourage children to make use of and explore those spaces to help them cultivate an adventurous spirit.
- 2.2.5 An attendee said that IP was the starting point for children to learn and grow, and could help them acquire mutual respect and inclusion. A children representative and an attendee suggested that the Government and NGOs should co-organise fun days at playgrounds to encourage children with special needs and of ethnic minorities to play for the enhancement of children's awareness on the concept of IP. Another attendee encouraged NGOs to strengthen collaboration in promoting interaction of children at the IP.
- 2.2.6 Mr CHAN of ArchSD noted that play equipment offering different levels of challenges, such as various types of slides including tube slides, stainless steel slides and contour slides, would be installed in the IP at Tuen Mun Park to cater for the needs of different children. Moreover, play equipment that could give sensory stimulation to hearing and visually impaired children was also available to provide a brand new experience of inclusive play for children with special needs.
- 2.2.7 An attendee welcomed the fact that hardware equipment offering different levels of challenges was provided in the IP at Tuen Mun Park, and hoped that such play equipment could attract children with disabilities or special needs to use and thus enhance their social competence.
- 2.2.8 An attendee was concerned that the location of IP might not be convenient to residents outside Tuen Mun and had concerns as to whether the supporting facilities like tactile guide paths and landing ramps could meet the needs of children with disabilities. Another attendee was of the view that as a relatively large playground in the New Territories, the IP at Tuen Mun Park was convenient to students from special schools in the district and children living in the New Territories. The attendee suggested that the Government should continue to incorporate inclusive elements into other parks in future. However, the factor of safety should also be taken

into consideration in site selection, e.g. locations far from facilities that would pose safety hazards to children, such as carparks, should be chosen so that children could play at ease.

- 2.2.9 Attendees shared their unpleasant experiences in holding activities at the Ap Lei Chau Wind Tower Park and a public housing estate in Fanling where organisers were driven away from playgrounds by the administrators of LCSD and Housing Department (HD) due to complaints of occupying spaces. Another attendee expressed concern over the long period of repair for play equipment which rendered it unable for children to use the equipment at playgrounds. A children representative was concerned that notices posted in parks setting an age limit for children users had deprived children of other age groups the chance to enjoy the play equipment. An attendee was worried that notices posted in children playgrounds would undermine children's play experience and suggested that more friendly terms should be used in those notices.

(Post-meeting note: LCSD enquired the Southern District Leisure Services Office (DLSO) about the incident after the meeting. After investigation, staff of the Southern DLSO could not find any relevant record. However, LCSD had reminded frontline staff including security guards again that the public could carry out all kinds of leisure activities in recreation grounds as long as other users were not affected and rules and regulations governing the use of the venues were complied with. The supplementary information provided by LCSD and HD were attached at Annex.)

- 2.2.10 Ms WONG pointed out that LCSD had been listening to users' views on the concerns raised by attendees. She said LCSD would consider as a whole whether the equipment in playgrounds could cater for the needs of persons with disabilities. Ms WONG pointed out that certain materials like wooden plank were relatively difficult to repair and therefore maintenance would take longer time. On the other hand, steps had been taken to improve the notices posted in playgrounds by replacing strong wording with softer terms to create a friendly atmosphere. Ms WONG said that in future playgrounds would be children-oriented and incorporate more inclusive elements. Ms NGAI of ArchSD said that she would relay attendees' views on IP to the department and welcomed further comments from attendees.
- 2.2.11 Ms NGAI, Mr CHAN and Ms WONG thanked the attendees and children representatives for their questions and suggestions.

2.3 Comments and questions on IP put forward by attendees and children representatives, as well as responses from the representatives of ArchSD and LCSD were as follows (group 2):

- 2.3.1 An attendee said the location of IP was rather remote and not easily accessible by public transport, which means long commuting time for persons with disabilities. He/she expressed concern over the waiting time, diversion measures, safety issues and the target age group of the

facilities, especially whether there were any emergency exits in the middle part of IP and whether the trampoline could bear the weight of electric wheelchairs.

- 2.3.2 A children representative appreciated the concept of inclusion adopted in the project. He/she expressed concern over the proper use of trampoline and raised the issues of custody of children by parents/adults and the sanitation of sand pit.
- 2.3.3 An attendee shared his/her organisation's experience in joint design with children. He/she pointed out that apart from hardware issues (e.g. a convenient location), other issues in respect of software should also be taken into account, such as whether the design of facilities could promote inclusion; whether the facilities were safe, sanitary and exciting; and whether consideration had been given to the differences in physical capabilities, psychological and social competence of children.
- 2.3.4 An attendee pointed out that park facilities was only the first step in the promotion of social inclusion. Tolerance and acceptance among the general public was more important in this respect.
- 2.3.5 While expressing appreciation for the various spaces and facilities provided in the park, an attendee pointed out that children were more in need of a real "space" where children could run freely.
- 2.3.6 An attendee suggested that a trial run be conducted before the IP was officially opened to public. For example, students of nearby schools could be invited to play in the IP so that experts could observe children's behaviour, safety and sanitation condition and test the implementation of the management guide in an environment relatively easier to control. The data collected could help formulate improvement measures and serve as reference when the project was extended to other districts.
- 2.3.7 In response to the enquiry of an attendee, Mr CHUNG of ArchSD said that Tuen Mun was chosen for the pilot project due to some historical reasons and the site in Tuen Mun Park was large enough to accommodate more facilities. At the workshops held earlier, people of different abilities were invited to share views on the transport facilities they needed such as barrier-free access and sheltered alighting area. In this regard, more pavilions would be available in the park to serve as rain shelters. An attendee who participated in the design process added that the renovation programme of LCSD parks had to be taken into account during site selection. Noting that Tuen Mun and the North District had more special schools and hence more students with special needs, the attendee suggested LCSD to draw on the experience of the pilot project when conducting site selection exercise in future. In supplement, Mr WONG of LCSD agreed that Tuen Mun Park was relatively far away but stated that it was easily accessible by transport. Located within a walking distance of 10 to 15 minutes from the nearby West Rail station through air-conditioned shopping malls, Tuen Mun Park was directly accessible to wheelchair users. He said that construction works was expected to

complete in the second quarter of 2018, and shared the view that a trial run could help raise the level of safety for users of different abilities. The department would conduct assessment after the IP was commissioned. If the project was well received, ArchSD would give due consideration to extending the project to other districts.

- 2.3.8 In response to the concern expressed by an attendee over whether wheelchair users could use the play equipment, Mr WONG explained that overseas experience showed that climbing frames could train muscle strength and wheelchair users could meet the challenge and train their physical fitness in a progressive manner. As to the concern of an attendee over whether the equipment was suitable for people of senior age, Mr WONG explained that various zones such as the water touch and musical zone in the northern playground were suitable for use by the whole family.
- 2.3.9 In response, Mr WONG stated that the trampoline was suitable for children of different ages and wheelchair users. The department would conduct a further review after the trial run. As for the sanitation of sand pit, Mr WONG said that the department took the matter very seriously and had been working closely with ArchSD on it. According to overseas experience, sand fleas grew in gloomy and humid environments. The best way to prevent their growth was to provide sufficient sunshine and turn the sand regularly like the sand pit in Hong Kong Park. The department would continue to monitor the situation. Moreover, he said that the park was spacious and had many sites other than the IP to suit the needs of different users, especially the leisure area in the northern playground which could provide adequate space for children to run around. Mr WONG agreed that a trial run was necessary to collect views from different parties for further studies.
- 2.3.10 An attendee asked about the availability of breastfeeding facilities and sitting-out areas where parents could rest and watch over their babies. Mr WONG replied that child care facilities were installed in phases at Tuen Mun Park in response to social changes. Persons in need could also make use of the facilities in the nearby Tuen Mun Town Plaza, Tuen Mun Public Library and Tuen Mun Town Hall, while additional seats and shelters were provided as many as possible inside the park. With children safety in mind, the department had minimised obscure corners or had adopted transparent design as practicable as possible. In response to the enquiry of an attendee on whether there was grassland in Tuen Mun park, Mr WONG gave a positive reply and welcomed visitors to use it.
- 2.3.11 Mr CHUNG of ArchSD supplemented that the playground design had taken security into account, e.g. tunnel entry and exit had to face conspicuous places. In addition, the design also catered for parents' need for child care. For instance, pavilions in the northern playground were situated at the centre of three zones which offered a full view of the playground to facilitate parents' taking care of their children. On the other hand, back rest seats for the elderly would be installed in the playground as a means to promote inter-generational harmony. Mr

WONG expressed appreciation to ArchSD's thoughtful and detailed design.

- 2.3.12 In reply to the enquiry as to whether there was objection against the pilot project, Mr WONG said that the project was highly transparent well-received by the District Council and other parties. He hoped that the support of Playright Children's Play Association and several NGOs, the assistance of ArchSD and the practical experience gained from the trial run would facilitate future management and foster a culture of social inclusion and mutual help gradually.
- 2.3.13 An attendee advised that NGOs could provide more experience of interaction and social inclusion for children to avoid bullying. Mr WONG agreed that parents and children in foreign countries had more interaction and joint participation experience, whereas local parents seldom took part in their children's activities due to the popularity of mobile phones or the assistance of foreign domestic helpers. An attendee was of the same view and hoped that we could all join hands to cultivate a culture of social inclusion together.
- 2.3.14 An attendee asked whether there was any Access Officer at the venue and whether additional manpower or training would be provided in preparation for the peak period after the commissioning of the IP. Mr WONG said that the staff establishment would remain unchanged for the time being but the department would consider hiring contract staff like cleansing and security staff. Regarding publicity work, Mr WONG said that the department would continue to study the arrangement of group visits for different organisations after the IP was commissioned.
- 2.3.15 Mr CHUNG and Mr WONG thanked the attendees and children representatives for their questions and suggestions.

**Supplementary information to the minutes of the 31st meeting
of the Children's Rights Forum**

Regarding the unpleasant experiences shared by attendees at para. 2.2.9 in the minutes of meeting, the responses of the departments concerned are as follows:

Response of LCSD

The LCSD welcomes the general public or organisations to carry out all kinds of leisure activities in its parks and recreation grounds, including group games in parks. LCSD staff will not prohibit activities held in parks and recreation grounds as long as they have not caused any obstruction, annoyance or danger to other users or violated the rules and regulations governing the use of recreation grounds. We would explain the arrangements in detail to frontline staff including security staff again. In addition, organisations could carry out sports activities at outdoor basketball courts under LCSD if the venues have not been hired in advance. If organisations would like to hold recreational and sports activities at basketball courts, they could submit booking applications three months in advance so that they could proceed with planning and organisation work early.

LCSD took the incident where an attendee was driven away by the administrators when holding activities at the Ap Lei Chau Wind Tower Park very seriously, but LCSD could not locate any relevant record after checking. However, we have reminded frontline staff including security guards again that the public could carry out all kinds of leisure activities in recreation grounds as long as other users are not affected and rules and regulations governing the use of the venues are complied with. LCSD apologises for the unpleasant experiences of the organisations concerned in holding activities at LCSD venues.

Response of HD

The recreational facilities in public housing estates under the Housing Authority (HA) are mainly intended for use by estate residents. If community organisations or schools would like to use venues available for hiring within housing estates, they could submit applications to the estate offices in advance. Successful applicants should comply with regulations governing the use of venues. For details, please contact the estate offices for enquiry.

As for housing estates under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS)/Buy-or-Rent Option (BOR) Scheme, recreational facilities and venues therein are private places under the management of the Owners' Corporation (OC) or property management agent of the estates. If organisations would like to hold activities at venues inside housing estates under the HOS/BOR Scheme, they should make enquiries and submit applications to the OC or property management agent direct.

HD takes the incident where organisers were impolitely rejected and driven away by security guards when using recreational facilities in a public housing estate in Fanling as raised by an attendee very seriously. We have checked records of all public housing estates under HA in Fanling and Sheung Shui districts but could not find the complaint or record concerned.