

THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE
Executive Committee 2023/24

Minutes of 1st Meeting of the Executive Committee for 2023/24 held on Monday, 11 December, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. in Rm 201, 2/F., Duke of Windsor Social Service Building, 15 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong.

Present : The Hon. Bernard Chan (Chairperson)
Ms. Yvonne Chak Ms. Chan Siu Lai
Ms. Susan Chan Mr. Benny Cheung
Mr. Cooke Cheung Mrs. Angela Chiu
Mr. Thomas Chu Revd Canon Hon. Peter Douglas Koon
Mr. Larry Kwok Dr. Hon. Lam Ching Choi
Mr. Billie Lau Ms. Elizabeth Law
Ms. Carmen Lee Ms. Ivy Leung
Mr. Kennedy Liu Dr. CC Luk
Ms. Melissa Pang Dr. Hon. Tik Chi Yuen
Ms. Yvonne Yeung

In-Attendance : Mr. Chua Hoi Wai, Chief Executive
Ms. Angie Chan, Business Director
Ms. Grace Chan, Business Director
Dr. Jessica Tam, Business Director
Mr. Anthony Wong, Business Director

Apologies : Ms. Queenie Chan Mr. Raymond Chiu
Dr. Fung Cheung Tim Mrs. Patricia Lau
Ms. Anthea Lee Ms. Rachel Leung
Ms. Bonnie So Ms. Wong Sau Wa

WELCOME

1. In the Meeting, Mr. Chua Hoi Wai, the Chief Executive, sought the consent of the Members to proceed with the Meeting until the election of office-bearers for the Executive Committee (ExCo) were completed. Mr. Chua warmly welcomed the presence of all attending members and took the opportunity to introduce the newly elected members and representatives of the Standing Committees who were joining the first ExCo meeting for the term of 2023-24.

ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON, VICE-CHAIRPERSON(S), HON. TREASURER AND HON. LEGAL ADVISOR

2. Mr. Chua provided the Members with an update on the nominations received for the election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson(s), Hon. Treasurer, and Hon. Legal Advisor. With unanimous support from the attending members, the Hon. Bernard Chan was elected as the Chairperson, Ms. Yvonne Chak and Mr. Kennedy Liu were elected as Vice-chairpersons, Ms. Elizabeth Law assumed the role of Hon. Treasurer, and Mr. Larry Kwok was appointed as the Hon. Legal Advisor. All of these positions were elected to serve a one-year term from 2023 to 2024.

(The Chairperson, the Hon. Bernard Chan, took chair of the Meeting at this point of time)

DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

3. As per the Council's Constitution, the Executive Committee was required to hold a minimum of 6 meetings per year. In line with previous practices, the proposed schedule of ExCo meetings for the 2023-24 term, as outlined below, was adopted.

1st Meeting	11 December 2023	5:00 p.m.
2nd Meeting*	29 January 2024	6:00 p.m.
3rd Meeting	25 March 2024	5:00 p.m.
4th Meeting	27 May 2024	5:00 p.m.
5th Meeting	29 July 2024	5:00 p.m.
6th Meeting	30 September 2024	5:00 p.m.

Members were requested to note that the 2nd ExCo meeting, scheduled for 29 January 2024, would commence promptly at 6:00 p.m. This meeting would follow immediately after the annual Extended Governance Meeting. Members would receive a meeting notice containing additional information at the appropriate time.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

4. Minutes of the last meeting dated 18 September 2023 were confirmed with no amendment.

MATTERS ARISING

5. No matters arising from the last minutes was reported.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION AND APPROVAL

To note the Chief Executive's Progress Report

6. Mr. Chua highlighted and provided supplementary information to Members on the progress report.

6.1 Gerontech and Innovation Expo cum Summit (GIES) 2023

According to Mr. Chua's report, this year's GIES (Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Summit) witnessed a remarkable response. We received an overwhelming participation of more than 200 exhibitors, showcasing around 800 innovative technology products and application solutions from both Hong Kong and around the world. The four-day expo (23-26 November) attracted an impressive count of 37,000 visitors, representing an increase of over 50% compared to the previous GIES that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the visitors, there were senior government officials, as well as healthcare professionals from both private and public sectors.

The overall feedback received was exceedingly positive and satisfactory. This event served as an interactive platform, bringing together experts from various disciplines, particularly from the health sector, as well as users, NGOs, and the general public. It offered a diverse range of innovative technologies related to health products, allowing attendees to experience them first-hand.

Furthermore, the event facilitated collaboration opportunities with potential partners from the Mainland, specifically Guangzhou and Shenzhen. These partners were highly impressed with Care Food products, which introduced care food standards. This collaboration has fostered the development of collaborative gerontech in elderly care and smart aging, strengthening the ties between Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area.

To note the Position of Funds

7. Ms. Elizabeth Law, Hon. Treasurer, reported that a revised version of the statement for the month of September and October 2023 in appendix 4 was presented for Members' perusal. Members noted and received the report.

Additionally, Ms. Law informed Members that a realized loss of HKD 1.2 million was incurred as a result of the recent disposal of financial stock assets in four batches, with the funds being redirected towards the purchase of Tracker Fund. This decision was made collectively by the Council's Investment Fund Committee after careful consideration, aiming to mitigate risks associated with the volatile stock market.

To note and approve the change of name of Agency Member

8. Members noted and approved the change of name of below agency members:
- Hong Kong Sports Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability 香港智障人士體育協會
 - ImpactHK Limited

To note the Election Results of the Executive Committee (2023-25), the Standing Committee on Social Development and Standing Committee on Sector Development and Finance (2023-24 & 2023-25)

9. Members noted the election results for the Executive Committee 2023-25, as well as the two Standing Committees for the respective terms of 2023-24 and 2023-25.

In addition, the Chairman of the election committee extended an apology on behalf of the Council to those who were affected by an unintentional error that occurred during the processing of the election forms. The election committee and the staff team would conduct a thorough review and take lessons from this process to ensure that such mistakes be avoided in the future.

To note and approve the Signing Authorization for Contracts and Instruments entered into by the Council for 2023-24

10. Members noted and approved the delegation of signing authorization for contracts and instruments entered into by the Council to the Chief Executive. It was highlighted that a system of checks and balances would be implemented during the decision-making process, and the Chief Executive would periodically report to the ExCo, seeking the professional advice of the members. This authorization would remain valid until the first ExCo meeting following the next Annual General Meeting of the Council.

To note and approve the New Signing Authorization of the HKCSS Bank Accounts

11. Members noted and approved the updated signing authorization for the Council's bank accounts, as well as the submission of an application for a corporate credit card for the Business Director, aimed at facilitating business-related activities. Furthermore, it was observed that the signing authority for the new bank accounts and the transaction authorization for internet banking would be aligned with the existing bank accounts already in effect for the Council. Members also noted and gave approval for this alignment.

To note and approve Appointment of Members for Steering / Advisory Committees and Strategy Committees for 2023-24

12. Members noted and approved the appointment of members for Steering / Advisory Committees and Strategy Committees presented for the term of 2023-24.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION

Revised LSG Manual and the Government's Plan to Reduce Budget Allocation for Various Bureaux and Departments in 2024-2026

13. At the meeting, Mr. Chua presented a summary of three key aspects under which revisions were proposed in the Lump Sum Grant manual (the manual) by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). The Council recognized that these revisions would have a long-term impact on the strategic development of the sector, encompassing sustainable service provision by NGOs, and financial management. In addition, there was concern about a potential 2% subvention cut in the next two years and beyond. Members noted the initial compilation of the sector's viewpoints regarding the revised edition of the manual.
 1. Given the manual held significant influence, the SWD should consider the opinions of the sector and incorporate them into the revised manual.
 2. The process of revising the manual was rushed and lacked input from the sector and service users. NGOs were not provided sufficient time for questions and discussions during the briefing session.
 3. The guidelines in the manual were part of the contractual agreement, and it was important to use clear definitions and appropriate terms to avoid confusion and ambiguity. Unfortunately, these concerns were not addressed. Moreover, there was no mention of an appeal mechanism in case of disputes.

Mr. Chua also invited views from Members, who expressed the following opinions:

1. Members acknowledged the importance of enhancing monitoring measures under the guidelines but were uncomfortable with the SWD's disregard for long-term partnerships with NGOs. They highlighted the need for consultation sessions and proper communication during the drafting of the manual.
2. Some Members believed that the revision should be implemented gradually, allowing sufficient time for exchanging views and effective communication between the SWD and the sector.
3. It was observed that NGOs had no option but to comply with the revised guidelines, which transformed the relationship into an official service provider and funder relationship, rather than a valued partnership.
4. The new clause introducing time-defined contractual agreements was seen as detrimental to the partnership between NGOs and the SWD, negatively impacting governance and strategic planning.

During the meeting, some Members acknowledged that the bureau and department were under pressure from various parties to enhance monitoring of NGOs and ensure good governance, particularly in light of past cases of child abuse. They viewed the revisions as adjustment measures that the government could effectively implement to address public demands. However, Members opined that adopting a more flexible approach could help alleviate the pressure and tension between NGOs and the gov't.

The Council would write to the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) expressing serious concerns about the revised manual and the 1% subvention cut. The sector expressed willingness to engage in rational discussions and share their understanding of the government's financial considerations or alternative viewpoints. The Council would keep the LegCo representatives updated on sector concerns and collaborate with them to explore alternate options to present to principal officials and address the sector's situation.

Mr. Chua thanked Members for their views and that he would follow up to ensure that the sector's views were effectively expressed and optimal options could be pursued.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14. Annual Extended Governance Meeting on 29 January 2024
Mr. Chua reminded that the annual Extended Governance meeting was scheduled for 29 January 2024 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and 2nd ExCo meeting to be held immediately

after. Meeting invitations to all members of ExCo and Standing Committees, chairperson and vice-chairperson of Specialized Committees would be sent accordingly.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

15. The next meeting was scheduled for 29 January 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.