

Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council: How Governance Helps a Social Services Provider Fulfil the Christian Spirit

香港聖公會福利協會： 良好企業管治 助社會服務機構實踐基督精神

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As the term “corporate governance” suggests, corporations or companies are expected to uphold a system of policies, procedures and practices that checks and balances the interests of their myriad stakeholders. It follows that a non-incorporated organisation is not expected to observe the same standard of self-imposed vigilance.

So why should a church-based charity that has been tending to the welfare of various social segments for decades go through the trouble of getting incorporated? Ask the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council Limited (Welfare Council) and you will get a straightforward, simple answer: To improve governance.

Dr Jane Lee Ching-yee, Director of the Welfare Council, explained that the organisation had grown to such a scale that incorporation was deemed a means to “enhance corporate governance, including raising the degree of transparency, independence and accountability.” Set up by the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui (HKSKH) or Anglican Church, the Welfare Council has been providing social services since 1966 to a broad spectrum of the local community, including infants, children, teenagers, families and those undergoing rehabilitation. With HK\$1

billion allotted for operations in the financial year 2016-2017, the Welfare Council is now one of the largest non-government organisations (NGOs) in Hong Kong.

In 2013, the Welfare Council was incorporated as a limited company with a charity status by guarantee. Subsequently, its board set up an executive committee and various sub-committees – including an audit sub-committee and a complaints sub-committee – as a big step towards strengthening governance. “We wanted to set up a system of checks and balances whereby we can ensure the smooth operation of the organisation through mutual trust and accountability,” Dr Lee said.

In 2015 or barely two years later, the Welfare Council’s board decided to lay bare its governance system for third-party review. It entered The Hong Kong Institute of Directors’ “Directors of the Year Award.” While HKSKH itself is established and well-known to Hong Kong, the board explained that its members also wanted to “demonstrate that the Welfare Council’s efforts at corporate governance have earned public support and recognition.” What better way to rate one’s governance standing was there than to enter an award-giving activity? To every board member’s delight, the Welfare

Council’s board received last year’s award in the category of “Statutory/Non-profit Distributing Organisations.”

The Panel of Judges had described the Welfare Council’s board as a “cohesive and collaborative unit with strong determination to carry out reforms that put strong emphasis on reputation and risk control.” The board was said to have led the Welfare Council to “achieve significant improvements across many aspects of its governance.”

Give Weight to Diversity in Representation

As an organisation incorporated limited by guarantee, the Welfare Council appreciates the importance of diversity in representation. The six board members appointed by the HKSKH Archbishop come from different walks of life, namely, medicine, social work, accountancy, the legal field, architecture and the clergy. Furthermore, as the next level of the governance structure, the six-member executive committee also comprises professionals from various fields, who are responsible for heading various sub-committees. Thus a solid three-tier system is in place to promote accountability and collaboration.

In this case, diversity of representation also serves a practical purpose. The Welfare

Council's scope of services is wide and comprehensive. It provides care to virtually all age groups in more ways than one. Specialists serving on sub-committees do come in handy to help render the many services or carry out the key functions of the organisation.

Keep Line Open with Stakeholders

"Communication is the cornerstone to good corporate governance," said Dr Lee. Hence the organisation listens closely to its various stakeholder groups and reaches out to them proactively as follows:

- The government – Board members maintain a close dialogue with relevant government departments so as to keep abreast of social welfare developments and changing needs of the community.
- Service recipients – To understand first-hand the needs and concerns of the people the Welfare Council caters for, board members pay visits regularly to the different service units, during which they look into the daily operations, discuss issues with staff and even talk to the service recipients.
- The staff – The Welfare Council also

promotes a corporate culture of trust and support with staff by establishing a system of direct communication – literally.

Perhaps nothing can be more direct than a face-to-face event to interact. At the annual "All Staff Meeting," a sort of town hall meeting, nearly 3,000 staff members at all levels get to voice their comments to senior management about the Welfare Council's policy, services, employee benefits and operational issues. Taking such staff comments, the board is able to adjust policies and practices from time to time. For instance, it was after listening to staff that the board implemented paternity leave and launched the retiree re-employment programme, to name just a few.

In addition to the annual meeting, the Welfare Council conducts a staff satisfaction survey every year to gauge where the organisation may have fallen short of staff expectations. In the latest such survey conducted earlier in 2016, a majority of 76.5 per cent of staff expressed satisfaction with the Welfare Council.

Watch out for Risks

The board is fully aware that just like any organisation, even an NGO such as the Welfare Council has to cope with risks ranging from financial to operational, personnel-related, legal and reputational. As part of its governance structure, the Welfare Council has in place a risk management system to handle various matters, namely, complaints, financial projections, reserve monitoring and internal auditing.

In addition, the organisation adopts a crisis management plan that prescribes procedures to facilitate effective communication internally and externally when a major incident occurs. A call tree, for instance, ensures that at all levels – from the general staff to senior management and the board – someone is designated to take responsibility for prompt and proper response and action.

Plan to Meet Changing Needs

For more than two centuries since its first lay missionary Dr Robert Morrison set foot on Chinese soil, the Anglican Church has been reaching out to the masses by



▲ HKIoD's Deputy Chairman Ir Edmund K H Leung (middle) presents the Award trophy to Dr Donald Li Kwok-tung, HKSCH Welfare Council's Chairman.
▲ 本會副主席梁廣瀨工程師(中間)將獎座頒予聖公會福利協會主席李國棟醫生。



▲ The All Staff Meeting 2016 was a platform for the annual exchange of ideas and experiences between management staff and other employees.
▲ 2016年全體同工分享會是一年一度管理層與全體同工分享交流的平台。

ministering to their daily as well as spiritual needs. Now that the Welfare Council is an established and sizeable concern, a more systematic approach has been adopted to render social services.

A “Five-year Development Plan” is the direction that guides the Welfare Council to deploy resources toward closing services gaps. A forward-looking document, it enables the board and senior management to examine social developments either to respond to or prepare for the changing needs of society. Noting the widening wealth gap in Hong Kong, the “Walk with Love” family-support programme in the current five-year plan (launched in 2013) raised funds for the “N have-not” families in Kowloon City and helped household heads with personal development. In 2014, the “Love to Learn” Enhancement Centre was opened in response to the rising demand for special education needs. At the centre, multi-disciplinary professionals help develop children with learning disabilities such as autism, dyslexia and attention deficiency and teach their parents relevant grooming and parenting skills.

Upheld by Common Belief

Management concepts and professional methodology aside, the Welfare Council’s board members all share a common belief, which happens to be the Christian faith. “As a faith-based social services organisation, the Welfare Council’s duty is to realise Sheng Kung Hui’s mission to fulfil the Christian belief to ‘act justly’ and to ‘love mercy’ while serving those in need,” said Dr Lee. “This way, we stand to gain the trust and respect of society.”



「企業管治」一詞，顧名思義，包含了法團或公司應堅持執行一個政策、程序和做法兼備的制度，以制衡眾多持份者的利益的意思。這亦表示，對於這類型的非法團性質的機構並無預期要與企業有同等程度的自我警覺性。

既然如此，為什麼一個具教會背景並已服務社會各階層幾十年的慈善團體，也應該地進行「公司化」？就此問題請教香港聖公會福利協會有限公司（以下簡稱「福利協會」），你會得到一個簡單而直截了當的答案，就

是為了提升管治效能。

福利協會總幹事李正儀博士指出，經過不斷發展後，機構的規模已龐大到需要進行公司化，藉此「提升管治效能，包括提高透明度、獨立性和問責性。」福利協會由香港聖公會成立，自1966年起便一直為本港居民提供多元化的社會服務，服務對象包括幼兒、兒童、青少年、家庭及復康人士等。福利協會是香港現時最具規模的非政府機構之一，其於2016-2017財政年度的經費約為10億港元。

2013年，福利協會註冊成為一個有限責任的慈善法人組織。隨後其董事會成立了執行委員會及數個小組委員會，包括審計小組委員會及投訴小組委員會，為加強管治邁出了一大步。「我們希望加強有關投訴及財務質素的管理及發揮互相制衡、強化問責交待和互信的精神。」李博士說。

至2015年，即僅僅兩年後，福利協會董事會決定參加由香港董事學會舉辦的「傑出董事獎」，藉此讓第三方檢視其管治制度。據福利協會董事會表示，儘管聖公會在本地既具規模又家傳戶曉，但董事會成員仍想「證明福利協會對機構管治的努力可得到社會的認同。」要評估一個機構在管



▲ HKSAR celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2016 with a cocktail reception held last December.
▲ 聖公會福利協會在去年12月舉行誌慶酒會，慶祝機構在2016年成立50周年。

治方面的水平，最好的方法莫過於參加評選。因此，董事會所有成員對福利協會董事會能在去年的「法定/非分配利潤組織」類別中獲獎，均感到十分鼓舞。

評審團形容，福利協會的董事會是一個「具凝聚力和群策群力的團隊，成員致力推動變革以維護良好聲譽及完善風險管理制度。」評審團又認為，在董事會的領導下，福利協會「在管治的多方面均見顯著的進步。」

重視董事會的廣泛代表性

作為一個法團，福利協會明白董事會有廣泛代表性是很重要的。因此，由香港聖公會大主教委任的六名董事會成員，都是來自社會不同階層（分別為醫療、社工、會計、法律、建築及牧師）。執行委員會是管治架構的第二層，委員除包括上述董事外，亦包括六名本身來自不同界別的專業人士，而這六名委員會負責不同小組委員會工作。如此構成了一個堅實的三層組織架構，以強化問責交待和合作的精神。

對福利協會而言，董事會有廣泛代表性還有一個實際作用。福利協會的服務範圍廣泛而全面，透過多種方式，幾乎可為所有年齡的人士提供服務。因此，有來自不同界別的專家加入小組委員會，絕對有助福利協會提供

各種服務或執行機構的主要功能。

對持分者廣開言路

李博士說：「溝通是良好機構管治的基石。」因此，福利協會不但會細心聆聽不同持分者團體的聲音，亦會透過下列形式，主動接觸他們：

- 政府——董事會成員與相關政府部門保持緊密的溝通和聯繫，以掌握社福界動態和洞察社會不斷轉變的需要。
- 服務對象——為親身了解福利協會服務對象的需要和關注，董事會成員會定期到訪各個服務單位，了解服務單位的日常運作，與員工商討問題及與服務對象溝通。
- 員工——福利協會亦致力建立一個真正直接的溝通機制，藉此推動與員工互相信任和支持的機構文化。

要數溝通的方式，也許沒有比面對面的活動更為直接。在每年舉行一次的全體同工分享會上，近3,000名各級員工可就福利協會的政策、服務、員工福利及機構運作的問題，向管理層直接表達意見。在吸納職員的意見後，董事會便能夠不時調整政策和做法，例如在聆聽職員意見後，董事會增加了侍產假及優化了僱員退休後重聘政策等。

除了全體同工分享會外，每年福利協會亦會進行員工意見調查，以評估機構在哪些方面未能達到員工的期望，而根據2016年初進行的最新員工意見調查，大部分員工（76.5%）對福利協會均表示滿意。

注意風險

董事會充份明白，即使是非政府機構，也和其他機構一樣，要面對財務以至運作、人事、法律及聲譽方面的風險。作為管治架構的一部分，福利協會設立了一套風險管理系統來處理不同的事宜，即投訴、財務預測、儲備監測和內部審核。

此外，福利協會已在其危機管理計劃中制定了程序，確保在重大事故發生時，對內和對外均能有效地溝通。例如製訂了處理重大事故程序，以確保機構各階層，從基層員工、管理層到董事局，均有指定的人員負責迅速地作出適當的回應和行動。

因時制宜

自於兩個多世紀前派遣首位非神職傳教士馬禮遜博士踏足中國後，聖公會便深入到群眾之中，以解救他們的日常和精神需要。到現在，隨着福利協會已發展為一家知名的大型機構後，便採取了一個更為有系統的方法來提供社會服務。

「五年發展計劃」為福利協會提供開拓資源以填補服務空隙的方向。作為一份具前瞻性的文件，它確保董事會和管理層會審視社會的發展，以回應社會不斷轉變的需要或為此作好準備。有見香港貧富懸殊問題日趨嚴重，在今個五年計劃中推行的「愛童行」計劃（2013年推出），便透過籌款方式支援九龍城區的「N無」家庭，同時幫助家庭戶主尋求個人發展。而隨着社會對特殊教育的需求日漸殷切，福利協會在2014年成立了「愛·學習」成長中心，由跨專業團隊為患有閱讀障礙症、自閉症或注意力不足過動症的兒童提供發展服務，同時亦會向家長教授相關的培育及管教知識。

持守共同信念

除了管理概念和專業方法外，福利協會董事會的成員均有一個共同的信念，就是信仰基督。「作為一個具教會背景的社服機構，福利協會承擔了教會的委托，實踐教會『行公義，好憐憫』的使命，為社群提供適切服務。」李博士說，「憑着這種方式，我們得到了社會的信任及尊重。」