

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs  
Committee on Performing Arts Recommendation Report (I)**

**Purpose**

This paper sets out the Administration's response to the key recommendations of the Committee on Performing Arts Recommendation Report (I).

**Arts and Cultural Policy**

2. The Government's arts and cultural policy is to create an environment which is conducive to the freedom of artistic expression and creation, and a wider public participation in cultural activities. The policy comprises the following four major elements –

- Respect freedom of creativity and expression
- Provide opportunities for participation
- Encourage diversified and balanced development
- Provide a supporting environment and conditions (venue, funding, education and administration)

This policy is in line with the core values of Hong Kong as a free, diversified and open society.

**Committee on Performing Arts Recommendation Report**

3. The Committee on Performing Arts (The Committee) was established in November 2004 to advise the Secretary for Home Affairs on the provision of performing arts services. The Committee is tasked to follow up on the policy recommendations of the Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC) which relate to performing arts<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Committee on Museums and Committee on Libraries were established at the same time to follow up the other policy recommendations of the Culture and Heritage Commission.

4. The Committee issued a Consultation Paper in November 2005 proposing changes in the areas of funding mechanism, venue provision and cultural programme presentation by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), based on the relevant policy directions put forward in the CHC Policy Recommendation Report. The consultation ended on 31 January 2006.

5. During the consultation period, the Committee held 11 consultation sessions (seven with the performing arts sector and four with the general public and District Councils), and received 52 written submissions. There were 34 articles in the press commenting on the Consultation Paper.

6. The majority of the respondents welcomed and supported the direction and overall strategy proposed in the consultation paper. Some considered that the proposed changes, though being long overdue, was an important step towards a community-driven performing arts scene. However, some were concerned that the proposed changes might lead to the diminishing role of the smaller groups in the performing arts scene, hence undermining the pluralistic characteristics of our arts scene.

7. The Committee carefully considered the responses to the consultation earlier this year. The Recommendation Report has been written with reference to the Consultation Paper. Public views have been taken into account as appropriate. The Report has been issued to Members on 20 June 2006.

### **The Administration's Views**

8. We fully appreciate the hard work and efforts of the Committee in conducting a public consultation exercise and putting together a Recommendation Report during the past 18 months.

9. We accept, in principle, all the recommendations put forward by the Committee. Taken together, these recommendations seek to enhance community involvement in the provision of performing arts services, which should be highly conducive to increasing the vibrancy,

diversity and plurality of the arts and cultural scene in Hong Kong. We would implement these recommendations within the relevant timeframes proposed in the Report.

### **Key Recommendations and the Administration's Response**

10. The recommendations of the Committee cover mainly three areas – funding support, venue support and presentation of programmes.

#### **Funding Support for Performing Arts Groups**

11. It is our policy to encourage diversified and balanced development of the arts and cultural sector. This is conducive to the vibrancy and plurality of our performing arts scene. We provide funding support to budding, small-scale and amateur performing arts groups as well as professional performing arts groups.

#### **Budding and Small-scale Performing Arts Groups**

12. In response to the concerns of small-scale performing arts groups expressed during the consultation, the Committee came up with a number of new initiatives to identify and develop budding artists and small-scale arts groups. These initiatives include –

- (a) LCSD identifying resources to provide more performing opportunities for them;
- (b) Extending LCSD's presentation and sponsorship of local performing arts programmes to non-LCSD venues;
- (c) the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) setting up a new grant scheme to provide funding and venue support for budding artists/arts groups; and
- (d) Setting up a Programme and Development Committee (see para 19 below) to be underpinned by six Art Form Panels to advise LCSD on development strategies based on the needs of individual art forms, in order to provide sustainable

support to local artists / arts groups.

We agree with the above-recommended initiatives and shall work to bring them into effect.

The Four Performing Arts Groups Funded by LCSD and the Six 3-Year Grantees of the HKADC

13. The Committee recommends the establishment of a single funding mechanism whereby the major performing arts groups will be funded by one single funding body. Funding will be in the form of consolidated grants covering employment of artists and staff, administration, programme production and venue rental. This should apply to the four performing arts groups currently receiving recurrent subvention from LCSD and the six performing arts groups receiving 3-year grants from the HKADC. The proposed new assessment mechanism should comprise -

- (a) a new set of assessment criteria which takes into account the artistic output, community impact, quantifiable deliverables, performance in governance and management of each group;
- (b) an adjustment system which allows the funding level of each group to be adjusted upwards and downwards in accordance with the outcome of their performance assessment; and
- (c) an “exit and entry” system which allows other groups to join and those under-performing to go.

We agree with this recommendation as this will provide a level-playing field for these groups to compete for public funding resources in a fair and open environment. We plan to establish a Funding Committee before the end of 2006 to advise the Government on both the new set of assessment criteria which has to be drawn up in consultation with the ten performing groups, as well as the funding level for each of these performing groups .

## **Venue Support for Performing Arts Groups**

14. It is our policy to provide a supporting environment for the development of performing arts. The provision of adequate and appropriate venues is essential to the sustainable development of performing arts groups. With the growth in the number of professional and amateur groups, there has been a growing demand for performing arts venues and particularly keen competition for use of facilities at prime venues.

15. The Committee recommends that the use of performing arts venues be rationalized in order that existing venue resources can be put to better use. To address the shortage of centrally-located performing arts venues, the Committee recommends that the existing booking policy be changed so as to accord priority to use for performing arts programmes, and to put in place a Venue Partnership Scheme whereby a partnership arrangement will be established between the venue management and the arts groups so as to help establish the artistic character of individual venue, enlarge the audience base and encourage community involvement in the development of the arts.

16. We fully agree with this recommendation. We consider that the LCSD performing arts venues should be used mainly for arts-related programmes and that prime venues such as the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Hong Kong City Hall and Kwai Tsing Theatre should be used primarily for performing arts activities and high quality productions. Moreover, to take forward the Committee's recommendation, we are planning to introduce a Venue Partnership Scheme covering all 13 performing arts venues under LCSD. The Scheme will be open to all local arts groups and organizations. We shall start with inviting Expression of Interest (EOI) from arts groups and organizations around July or August 2006. Depending on the outcome of the EOI, we aim to formally invite proposals around October and November 2006 and start launching the Scheme by phase from late 2007 or early 2008.

17. The Committee recommends that LCSD should consider providing more marketing and promotional support at the moderately-equipped venues to attract audience and use by performing arts

groups, and strengthen the use of its facilities at non-performing arts venues (such as theatres in museums) by budding and small-scale performing arts groups. The Committee also recommends that HKADC should partner with other non-LCSD venues to provide additional venue support for performing arts groups. We agree to these recommendations. We will prioritize and rationalize the use of the different categories of performing arts venues under LCSD, explore the possibility of using other non-dedicated venues, and extend the use of funding to cultural programmes to be presented outside LCSD venues. We are also planning to seek the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for funding injection of \$40 million to the Arts and Sports Development Fund for HKADC to strengthen its support for budding artists and arts groups through funding and venue support.

### **Presentation of Performing Arts Programmes**

18. It is our policy to provide opportunities for public participation in performing arts activities. The diverse and pluralistic range of performing arts programmes is an integral part of Hong Kong's vibrant arts scene. The presentation of performing arts programmes by LCSD aims to bring performing arts to the general public in Hong Kong.

19. The Committee recommends that a Programme and Development Committee (PDC) supported by six Art Form Panels (AFPs) respectively on music, dance, theatre & multi-arts, Chinese traditional performing arts, festivals and community arts be established to advise LCSD on the performing arts programmes and strategies, including systematic strategies on funding, venue, programming and marketing for budding and small-scale performing arts groups. We agree with this recommendation as it will increase the participation of the arts sector and the community in the selection process of programmes/arts groups so as to enhance their ownership of the programmes presented. We plan to establish the proposed PDC and its six AFPs by the end of 2006. Membership of the PDC and AFPs will include experts in the relevant fields and district/community representatives.

## **Cantonese Opera**

20. It is our policy to support traditional art forms in Hong Kong. In this connection, we attach great importance to the development of Cantonese opera as a traditional performing art form in Hong Kong. In the course of its deliberations, the Committee notes the renewed interest and discussions in society on the positioning and future of Cantonese opera. The Committee takes full note of the concerns expressed by the Cantonese opera sector that the Administration should fund a professional Cantonese opera group for the promotion and development of Cantonese operatic art, and that the sector's need for suitable performance venues should be addressed, etc. The Committee welcomes the dedicated attention given to the development of this unique art form in Hong Kong through the setting up of the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee (COAC) in 2004 and the establishment of the Cantonese Opera Development Fund in November 2005. The Committee recommends that the Government, together with the COAC, should continue to address the needs and concerns of the sector in order to facilitate the long-term development of Cantonese opera.

21. At present, Cantonese opera performances take place at various venues in Hong Kong. Every year, there are on average 300 opera performances at the Sunbeam Theatre in North Point. These include different forms of operatic performances and singing. Cantonese opera performances account for a majority of these bookings. Apart from the Sunbeam Theatre, Cantonese opera performances are regularly staged in performing arts venues managed by LCSD. They may take the form of bookings by the professional companies or presentations by LCSD. There were 364 such presentations in 2002-03, 373 in 2003-04 and 385 in 2004-05. From time to time, other non-government venues such as the facilities of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts are hired for Cantonese opera performances. We have adopted a series of measures in response to the Cantonese opera sector's concerns. These include special booking arrangements at selected LCSD venues to suit the needs of Cantonese opera performances, as well as improvements to the Ko Shan Theatre where Cantonese opera performances have the highest booking rate amongst other LCSD performing arts venues so as to make it a venue more suited to the requirements of Cantonese opera. These have gone a long way towards meeting the sector's requirements. The COAC is now

deliberating on the proposal for the establishment of a government-funded professional Cantonese opera group.

22. We would work together with the Committee and the COAC to continue to address the needs and concerns of the sector, not only in the provision of performance venues, but also in the continued cultivation of performing talents and audience to facilitate the long-term development of Cantonese opera. In addition, we believe that the Cantonese opera sector will also benefit from the recommendations in the Report, such as more performing opportunities for budding and small-scale arts groups, the new grant scheme to be introduced by HKADC for identifying and developing budding artists / arts groups and the proposed Venue Partnership Scheme. We shall ensure that the needs of the Cantonese opera will be given adequate attention in the implementation of the recommendations.

23. A table summarizing the Committee's key recommendations and our response is at **Annex**.

### **The Committee's Next Stage of Work**

24. We understand that the Committee will be studying other areas of concern, including performing arts education, venue hire and ticket pricing, cultural exchange, arts festivals, marketing and promotion, audience building, community support and corporate sponsorship, in their next stage of work. We look forward to working closely with the Committee and the performing arts sector on practicable ways and means to further promote and develop our performing arts scene.

Home Affairs Bureau  
June 2006

<b>Funding Support for Performing Arts Groups</b>	
<b><u>Recommendations</u></b>	<b><u>Administration's Response:</u></b>
<p>1. Identifying resources by LCSD to provide more performance opportunities to local budding and small-scale performing arts groups and extending such support to performances staged at non-LCSD venues.</p>	<p>1(a) LCSD would identify additional resources to present / sponsor performances of local budding and small-scale arts groups.</p> <p>1(b) LCSD would present and sponsor performances at non-LCSD venues as well should suitable LCSD venues be found not available.</p>
<p>2. Setting up a new grant scheme by HKADC to provide funding and venue support for budding artists/arts groups.</p>	<p>2(a) HKADC is working out new grant schemes to provide funding and venue support for budding artists/arts groups. It is expected that the new schemes would start operation from April 2007.</p> <p>2(b) The Administration would seek the approval of Legislative Council in 2006-2007 for a new funding injection of \$40 million to the Arts and Sport Development Fund for use by HKADC.</p>
<p>3. Developing a single assessment mechanism for major performing arts groups, with a set of clear and measurable assessment criteria focusing on artistic and community impact, quantifiable outputs and deliverables as well as governance and management.</p>	<p>3. We aim to set up a single funding mechanism and a common set of assessment criteria for all major performing arts group within 12 months following the establishment of the new funding body.</p>

<p><b><u>Recommendations</u></b></p> <p>4. Putting the four performing arts groups funded by LCSD and the six 3-year grantees funded by HKADC under one roof, i.e. funded by one single body.</p>	<p><b><u>Administration's Response:</u></b></p> <p>4. We aim to put together all the ten major groups under one roof by April 2007. All of them would then be funded in the form of a consolidated grant so that they could more flexibly deploy their own resources to plan productions taking into account audience demand and at venues of their own choice.</p>
<p>5. Proposing the establishment of a new funding body to advise the Government on funding major performing arts groups from April 2007.</p>	<p>5. We would set up the proposed Funding Committee before end 2006 so that the Funding Committee could start working out the assessment criteria with the major performing arts groups in 2007.</p>
<p><b>Venue support for Performing Arts Groups</b></p>	
<p><b><u>Recommendations</u></b></p> <p>6. Establishing a partnership between LCSD venues (as venue operators) and performing arts groups (as programme providers) to help establish the artistic character of individual venue, enlarge the audience base, develop venue-based marketing strategies, facilitate the solicitation of corporate/private sponsorship, and encourage community involvement in the development of the arts.</p>	<p><b><u>Administration's Response:</u></b></p> <p>6(a) We agree that a long-term partnership relationship between LCSD venues and performing arts groups should be established to better utilize our venue resources and enhance community involvement in the development of the arts.</p> <p>6(b) We would invite Express of Interest (EoI) from the sector in July/August 2006 in order to collect ideas and suggestions for drawing up the assessment criteria and monitoring / evaluation mechanism for the Invitation for Proposal to be issued in late 2006 / early 2007.</p>

	6(c) An Assessment Panel would be set up before end 2006 to assess the proposals received with a view to gradually implement the Scheme from late 2007 / early 2008.
7. Putting forward all 13 performing art venues under LCSD for the Venue Partnership Scheme.	7. All 13 LCSD venues and their available ancillary facilities would be covered under the Scheme.
8. Encouraging local arts groups/organizations to submit proposals singly or jointly for the Scheme.	8. In order to allow small-scale art groups to join the scheme, we would welcome arts groups to collaborate and submit joint proposals.
<b>Presentation of Performing Arts Programmes</b>	
<b><u>Recommendations</u></b>	<b><u>Administration's Response:</u></b>
9. Setting up a Programme and Development Committee (PDC) and six Art Form Panels (AFP) to consider and endorse LCSD programme strategies / directions, resource allocation and annual programme plans.	9. We aim to set up the Programme and Development Committee (PDC) supported by six Art Form Panels (AFP) by end 2006.
10. Charging the Programme and Development Committee with the responsibility for formulating structured and sustainable programming strategies for support of budding and small-scale performing arts groups, shifting from a "programme-based" to "arts group-based" programming approach.	10. We would set out clearly in the terms of reference of the PDC and its AFPs that they would be responsible for identifying and developing budding artists and small-scale arts groups.