

For discussion on
3 April 2007

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON SECURITY

PRISON DEVELOPMENT

Purpose

Members wish to be updated on progress in prison development since we last briefed the Panel on the subject in April 2006.

Background

2. At the Panel meeting on 4 April 2006, we consulted Members, vide LC Paper No. CB(2) 1565/05-06 (03), on our proposal to redevelop the Lo Wu Correctional Institution (LWCI), to accommodate mainly female prisoners, to alleviate the overcrowding situation in maximum security institutions, and to update aging facilities. Members also noted that the Correctional Services Department (CSD) would continue to implement other measures, and study other redevelopment options to upgrade the current penal facilities and to address the problem of overcrowding in some penal institutions, with a view to maintaining our standards in prison management, security and rehabilitation work. The Finance Committee subsequently approved funding for the LWCI project at its meeting on 7 July 2006.

3. We have explained that apart from the LWCI project, CSD would continue to pursue further possibilities including -

- (a) minor works and small-scale projects to improve current facilities; and
- (b) larger-scale projects, such as the redevelopment of the two institutions at Chi Ma Wan.

Problems

Current Overcrowding

4. The situation is similar to that reported in LC Paper No. CB(2) 1565/05-06 (03), in that while overcrowding at the aggregate level is not too serious, shortfall is serious in maximum security prisons, remand facilities and female institutions. As at 16 March 2007, the total penal population was 11 211. The total number of penal places in all 23 penal institutions is

currently 11 538. The overall occupancy rate is therefore 97%. In the case of male institutions, the occupancy rate is 95%, but there is a shortfall of 462 places in remand facilities and maximum security prisons. In the case of female institutions, the occupancy rate is 106%, representing a shortfall of 114 places. Shortfall is more serious in remand facilities and maximum security prisons, which is 264 places¹.

Projected Shortfall

5. Looking ahead, as we informed Members at the Panel meeting on 4 April 2006, the penal population is projected to grow to 13 330 by 2010, and to 14 250 by 2015. Taking into account the current penal places (11 538) and the additional places to be provided by the LWCI project (1 400) and the extension project at the Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre (144) (paragraph 7 below), at the aggregate level there may still be a shortfall of 248 places in 2010, and 1 168 in 2015.

Outdated Penal Facilities

6. Besides the problem of overcrowding in some penal institutions, of the 23 existing penal institutions, ten will be over 40 years old by 2010, and eight were converted from buildings previously used for other purposes. It would enable CSD to further improve its work on rehabilitation if some of the oldest prisons could be replaced by new ones.

Progress in Prison Development

7. In order to relieve the overcrowding in some penal institutions and to update the outdated facilities, CSD has taken steps to launch a series of smaller-scale projects which can be done relatively quickly to meet the immediate demand, and continues to consider other options for further development. In November 2005, we reported, vide LC paper No. CB(2)192/05-06(03), the various projects we would undertake to relieve the overcrowding situation, such as the conversion works at the Chi Sun Correctional Institution to add 48 female penal places, and the construction of the new Lai Chi Kok Correctional Institution to add a further 212 female penal places. CSD is continuing to identify and work on further possibilities, of which details are set out below :

(a) Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre

An extension block is being added to the existing Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre to provide 144 additional penal facilities. The

¹ As some remand institutions are also maximum security facilities and vice versa, we are presenting the combined shortfall of these two types of institutions. Presenting separate shortfalls for the two types of institutions will result in double counting.

project is scheduled for completion in early 2008, and will relieve the overcrowding of remand facilities for adult males.

(b) Swapping of the Functions of the Lai King Training Centre (LKTC) and the Tai Tam Gap Correctional Institution (TGCI)

The LKTC is currently a penal institution for young male inmates, while the TGCI is for young females. Since the LKTC has been under-utilized and we are short of female penal places, we intend to swap the functions of the LKTC and TGCI. The conversion works at the LKTC are scheduled for completion in early 2008, and will provide 80 additional places to relieve the overcrowding of female institutions.

(c) Further Option and Studies

CSD will consider other smaller-scale projects such as further swapping possibilities in different types of penal institutions. As for larger-scale projects, the LWCI, upon redevelopment, will help relieve the current overcrowding situation of female and maximum security facilities, and meet largely the projected demand for penal places in 2010. But we must plan beyond 2010. As reported to Members on 4 April 2006, we have identified the possibility of redeveloping the existing institutions at Chi Ma Wan. There are, however, a number of issues that require further studies, for example, the site constraints because of the topography, the limitations of the access road, etc. The Architectural Services Department (Arch SD) is conducting a more detailed feasibility study on this proposal. CSD will consider the option further, taking into account the outcome of Arch SD's study later in the year.

Way Forward

8. We will continue to monitor the situation, and consider other development possibilities, including smaller-scale projects to bring early improvement, and larger-scale in-situ redevelopment with a view to meeting longer-term needs.