

**For discussion on
8 May 2009**

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Promotion and Development of Local Football**

Purpose

This Paper briefs Members on the current position regarding the promotion and development of football in Hong Kong.

Background

2. The recognised national sports association (NSA) governing the promotion and development of football locally is the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA), which is affiliated to the Federation Internationale de Football Association. Like all other NSAs, the HKFA is an independent legal entity with full autonomy to run its affairs. The setting of priorities and objectives in the promotion and development of football in Hong Kong fall within its purview. The HKFA organizes local leagues, selects and supervises Hong Kong representative teams that play at international level, and arranges overseas football teams to play exhibition matches. The Government works in partnership with the HKFA to help promote and develop the sport, primarily by providing funding and venue support.

Government's Role and Involvement

Subvention to the HKFA

3. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) provides an annual subvention to the HKFA through the Sports Subvention Scheme. In 2009-10, the subvention to the HKFA is about \$7.5M, of which \$1.54M is for administration and \$5.96M is for programme expenses. The major element (about \$4.44M) of the programme expenses is the organisation of youth development programmes. The remaining \$1.52M is for participation in international competitions, squad training and training of officials.

4. In addition to the annual subvention, the Government also provides funding to the HKFA from other sources to meet specific needs. For example, extra funding of about \$0.7M was provided to the HKFA from the Arts and Sports Development Fund in 2008-09 for preparing representative teams for this year's 11th National Games and 5th East Asian Games.

5. LCSD has a monitoring mechanism in place to ensure that subventions to NSAs are used in an accountable and effective manner. As with all NSAs, we have an annual subvention agreement with the HKFA, stipulating the amount of subvention and the programmes and activities on which the subvention may be spent. Under the subvention agreement, the HKFA undertakes to adopt internal controls and measures for its business to be conducted in a lawful and transparent manner.

6. The HKFA is required to submit annual audited statements of account and evaluation reports on subvented activities to LCSD for assessment. Whilst respecting the autonomy and independence of the HKFA, LCSD regularly attends programmes to monitor progress of implementation and conducts quality assurance checks to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

Provision of facilities

7. LCSD manages 50 natural turf pitches, 25 artificial turf pitches and 233 hard-surfaced football pitches. To cope with the demand for football pitches, since 2003 we have implemented a programme to convert natural turf pitches into third generation artificial turf pitches. So far, we have converted six pitches and we plan to convert four more in 2010. With the conversion of natural grass pitches into third generation artificial turf pitches, the number of available monthly sessions for each pitch will increase from 60 to 270.

8. In addition to the conversion of existing pitches, we have another 11 football pitches under construction or planning and these will be completed within the next two years. The Legislative Council has recently approved funding for major improvements to the Mong Kok Stadium. This will provide better facilities for football, in particular for First Division matches, which will encourage the development of local football.

Other initiatives to support football development

9. The identification and training of a large pool of young and talented athletes is important to the long-term development of any sport. In recent years, in partnership with the HKFA, we have strengthened local youth football development programmes by putting in place progressive, systematic and interlinked youth training programmes for youngsters aged 5 to 19. These programmes include the School Sports Programme, under which the HKFA assigns coaches to schools to conduct mini-soccer training and organises visits to major events to cultivate students' interest in football, as well as the Youth Football Promotion Scheme, the Primary Athletes Football Training Scheme, the Young Athletes Football Training Scheme and the District Youth Football Teams Training Scheme. In 2008-09, more than 48,000 youngsters signed up for these programmes. Outstanding players identified from these training programmes may join clubs in the HKFA leagues or represent Hong Kong in international competitions.

10. To help upgrade the standard of play in local leagues and to enhance district-level enthusiasm for football, in 2002 LCSD helped the HKFA to establish District Football Teams, which represent the 18 District Councils (DCs) to compete in the HKFA leagues, initially in the Third Division. As well as encouraging DCs to recognise and provide funding to their football teams, LCSD also provides each team with facilities free of charge for 36 training sessions each football season. The results of this initiative have been encouraging, with the Tai Po team being promoted to the First Division in the 2006-07 football season, and Sha Tin winning promotion to the First Division for the coming 2009-10 season. The Kwai Tsing team was promoted to the Second Division in 2004-05, and Tuen Mun will be promoted to the Second Division in 2009-10.

11. To provide a base for football training for the long-term development of the sport, we have been working with the HKFA to develop a football academy at Tseung Kwan O. The Hong Kong Jockey Club has approved a donation to support the project, and is reviewing with the HKFA the mode of development and operation of the football academy to ensure its viability and sustainability. We will continue to work towards the early implementation of this project.

12. With a view to understanding better the long-term needs of football in Hong Kong, we will shortly commission a consultancy study to review the current status of football in Hong Kong; analyse success factors in football development in nearby countries and cities; assess the relevance of these factors to the situation in Hong Kong; and recommend viable options for the

development of the sport locally. The consultants will deliver their recommendations in early 2010, and in the light of the study findings, we aim to develop measures and strategies to raise profile and standards of football in Hong Kong.

Activities Organised by the HKFA

13. The HKFA organises local leagues, selects and manages Hong Kong representative teams and organises exhibition matches involving overseas football teams. The Association conducts most of these activities using its own resources, derived from sponsorship, ticket income and other fees and charges and has full autonomy in administering these programmes. The HKFA is not required to report on the financial position of these programmes to the Government.

Way Forward

14. The Government will continue to work in collaboration with the HKFA to sustain football development in Hong Kong, in particular through the continued implementation of the following measures -

- (a) Funding of the HKFA, through both annual subvention and one-off allocations for preparing the Hong Kong representative teams for major competitions;
- (b) The improvement of existing pitches and the development of new facilities for football to provide more training and playing time; and
- (c) Support for the youth development programmes, the district football teams and the development of the proposed football academy, with a view to providing opportunities for more talented young players to develop and play at a high level.

15. We will also develop further proposals and strategies following the completion of the consultancy study described in paragraph 12 above, with a view to raising the profile of football in the community and improving playing standards at all levels.

Home Affairs Bureau
April 2009