

**For discussion
on 5 May 2009**

Legislative Council Panel on Security

Police Handling of Ethnic Minorities and Beat Patrol Arrangement

Purpose

This paper sets out the information requested by Members of the Panel on Security on the Police's guidelines and training in respect of the handling of ethnic minorities and street sleepers, as well as the beat patrol arrangement for police officers.

Handling of ethnic minorities

Force Policy

2. The Force's "Vision, Statement of Common Purpose and Values", introduced in 1996, embraces the elements of "respect for the rights of members of the public and of the Force" and "fairness, impartiality and compassion in all dealings" as the Force's Core Values. Under this fundamental principle, police officers are required to serve the public, regardless of ethnic origin, in an impartial manner.

3. In April 2006, the Force established a Working Group on Non-ethnic Chinese to –

- (a) review and appraise existing mechanisms and initiatives within the Force that relate to ethnic minority issues;
- (b) develop means to enhance dialogue and engagement with ethnic minority communities; and
- (c) develop a policing strategy to work in partnership with ethnic minority communities to fight crime.

The Working Group works closely with various policy wings in the Police Headquarters to explore measures to promote racial equality in policing work.

Training to police officers

4. All police officers are trained to be fair and impartial in carrying out their duties and in dealing with all members of the community, irrespective of their background or ethnic origin. This basic concept is inculcated during their foundation training at the Hong Kong Police College, the training syllabus of which covers various elements on human rights and racial equality. In particular, the training focuses on the relevant provisions of the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap. 383), the Crimes (Torture) Ordinance (Cap. 427) and various anti-discrimination ordinances. As part of the foundation training, new recruits are also required to perform community service for the ethnic minorities to gain a better understanding of the non-ethnic Chinese culture and facilitate mutual understanding.

5. As part of their continuous development, junior police constables and inspectorate officers receive additional training, including modules on human rights and racial equality, periodically after receiving foundation training. The Force regularly reviews the content of its training courses, taking account of changes in society and feedback from the service recipients. Following the enactment of the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602) in 2008, the Police have, in partnership with the Equal Opportunities Commission, arranged a series of large-scale workshops for serving officers in order to raise their awareness of racial equality issues. The Police have also produced a training day package on the Ordinance to enhance police officers' awareness on racial equality in the provision of services to members of the public.

Other measures to enhance communication with ethnic minorities

6. The Police attach importance to developing constructive relationship with the ethnic communities in Hong Kong. They have implemented various initiatives to engage the ethnic communities, to enhance mutual understanding and to enhance service delivery to them.

Interpretation and translation service

7. In accordance with internal guidelines and as the need arises, the Force provides interpretation service to arrestees belonging to the ethnic minorities during the investigation process and the detention period. To facilitate communication between police officers and individuals belonging to the ethnic minorities not conversant with the

English / Chinese language, a variety of commonly used police forms and publications have been translated into different ethnic minority languages. Moreover, in order to enhance the provision of emergency services to ethnic minorities making 999 calls, the Kowloon Regional Command and Control Centre has embarked on a pilot scheme whereby volunteers are engaged through non-governmental organisations to act as interpreters via conference calling. The Police will review the operation of the pilot scheme and assess whether it should be rolled out to the other Regional Command and Control Centres.

Proactive engagement of ethnic minorities

8. The Force has a longstanding policy of reaching out to different ethnic communities in Hong Kong. This has been achieved by establishing and maintaining liaison with local ethnic minority groups through visits and personal contacts by Police Community Relations Officers at District level, offering language courses to police officers working in Districts with a high concentration of ethnic minorities population, establishing contact points with various ethnic minority media channels for timely dissemination of information, facilitating police volunteer work, and assisting ethnic minority youths to better understand their civic responsibilities and the work of the Force by engaging them in the Junior Police Call programme.

Handling of street sleepers

Force Policy

9. The Force has formulated guidelines and procedures for the handling of destitutes, which include those who have no means of shelter and hence have no option but to sleep outdoors.

10. On encountering a destitute person who appears to be in need of assistance, a police officer will check if the person concerned has been reported as a “missing person” and inform him / her of the services provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). If the destitute person agrees to be referred to a SWD establishment, he / she will be taken there by Police transport. For destitutes who are in poor health, elderly or under the age of 14 years, police officers will convey him / her to the nearest public hospital and will advise him / her to approach SWD for assistance.

Training to police officers

11. All officers are trained to handle destitutes with care. The foundation training for probationary Inspectors and recruit Constables covers the procedures and techniques for handling destitutes.

Beat patrol arrangement

12. It is the Force policy that under normal circumstances, one officer is deployed to cover one beat¹. The Divisional Commander may, in consultation with his District Commander, deploy more than one officer to a beat after an evaluation of the need and risk concerned. The factors to be considered include –

- (a) the manner and nature of crime reports and incidents prevailing in the beat;
- (b) the unique features of the beat and the risk factors; and
- (c) deployment considerations, including available manpower and their personal safety.

On this basis, police officers on the beat are generally deployed to patrol by themselves during daylight hours to improve beat coverage, while officers normally patrol in pairs in the evening and at night.

13. The personal safety of police officers on beat patrol is of paramount concern to the Force. Whenever a single officer is deployed to respond to an incident, the despatching officer and the officer deployed will use their experience and discretion to call for assistance from other officers when the circumstances so require. Moreover, officers at Sergeant rank, supported by experienced Station Sergeants, are tasked to monitor, support and supervise a number of beats within a specified sector of a Division.

14. Officers in Emergency Units, Police Tactical Units, Task Forces can be deployed to reinforce beat duties where necessary. Auxiliary officers are also required to be on beat duty for at least 72 hours a year.

¹ A beat covers a defined area and the officer deployed to cover a particular beat is responsible for patrolling the area as well as handling incidents and reports occurring in that area.

15. The current beat patrol arrangement, which enables Formation Commanders to have flexibility in deploying officers and adjusting the pattern of beat duty, has proved to be effective over the years. That said, the Police will keep the arrangement under review with a view to further enhancing the effectiveness of beat duty.

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