

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Paper for the House Committee on 9 April 2010

Report of the Subcommittee on Designation of Libraries Order 2010

Purpose

This paper reports on the deliberations of the Subcommittee on Designation of Libraries Order 2010 (the Subcommittee).

The Subcommittee

2. At the House Committee meeting on 5 March 2010, members formed a Subcommittee to study the Designation of Libraries Order 2010 (L.N.22 of 2010) (the Order) gazetted on 26 February 2010 and tabled in the Legislative Council on 3 March 2010. Under the chairmanship of Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung, the Subcommittee held a meeting with the Administration on 19 March 2010. The membership list of the Subcommittee is in the **Appendix**.

Designation of Libraries Order 2010

3. The Order designates the Students' Study Room on the first floor of Tung Chung Municipal Services Building, 39 Man Tung Road, Tung Chung as a library. As a result, the management and control of the library is vested in the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services. The Director may also exercise other statutory functions under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) in respect of that library.

4. The Order came into operation on 1 March 2010. The scrutiny period of the Order has been extended from 17 March 2010 to 21 April 2010 by resolution of the Council. The Administration has explained that the subsidiary legislation has taken effect before the expiry of the scrutiny period, so that the Students' Study Room can be put into operation as early as possible for the use of students during the examination period.

Background

5. The provision of public libraries is made with reference to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines which states that one district library should be provided for each district and there should also be a district library for every 200 000 persons. Accordingly, the Administration has provided a district library in Cheung Chau in respect of the Islands District. To meet the needs of the projected growing population in Tung Chung area from 61 100 in 2004 to 82 200 in 2014, and in consideration of the geographical remoteness of the area, the Administration will also provide another district library (viz. the Tung Chung Public Library (TCPL)) in the Tung Chung Municipal Services Building in 2010. Pending the commissioning of TCPL, a temporary library of 745 square metres was set up in rented premises at the Yat Tung Shopping Centre of Tung Chung in 2004, as a stop-gap measure to provide library services to Tung Chung residents.

6. The TCPL will occupy a floor area of about 2 700 square metres to accommodate a full range of library services and facilities (including a Students' Study Room) at district level, and is tentatively scheduled for commissioning around mid 2010. However, in view of the request of the Islands District Council and strong demand from the local community for the early provision of the Students' Study Room therein to meet the students' needs during the examination period, the Administration has decided to open the facilities of the new library by phases, with the Students' Study Room on 1 March 2010 and the library proper in mid 2010. To facilitate the operation of the Study Room, the Administration has introduced the Order for the designation of the Study Room as a library with effect from 1 March 2010, and the concerned Study Room was opened for public use on the same date.

Deliberations of the Subcommittee

7. The Subcommittee is supportive of the proposal for the early provision of the Students' Study Room and the designation of the Study Room as a library by virtue of the Order with effect from 1 March 2010, as this would cater for the needs of students during the examination period. To better serve the needs of the population in the Tung Chung area, members hold no strong view on the commissioning of the TCPL in mid 2010, but have expressed reservation on the Administration's plan to cease the operation of the existing library at Yat Tung Estate (YTEL) upon the opening of the new library.

Library services at Yat Tung Estate

8. The Subcommittee notes that, to many residents in Yat Tung Estate (YTE), in particular the large population of young children, the YTEL is the most convenient and cost-effective means to meet their learning and information needs. Moreover, YTEL has also become the focal point of the local community where

many basic recreation and social facilities are either lacking or underprovided. Members consider that the Administration should take heed of the special circumstances of the YTE community, and address the residents' demand for library facilities in a more caring and flexible manner.

9. The Administration has advised that it would not be feasible for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to operate YTEL and TCPL concurrently, in view of resource constraints and the need to comply with the planning requirements for public libraries as described in paragraph 5 above. To address the needs of YTE residents, the Administration is making alternative arrangement by enlisting the partnership of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to operate a community library at the YTEL premises for the continued provision of library services in the YTE community.

Interface arrangements

10. Members in general have no objection to the option of an NGO-operated community library for the provision of library services in the YTE, but stress that as an overriding principle, library services at YTE should not be interrupted under any circumstances in the implementation of the proposed library. In this connection, members have strongly requested the Administration to undertake that it would ensure uninterrupted library services for local residents during the transitional period, and minimise the disruption to library services during the fitting out works. Members have also asked the Administration to confirm as to whether an NGO operator has been identified at this stage, and to undertake that it would put in place another NGO to take charge of the community library, in the event that the first operator cannot proceed with the plan for the proposed library for whatever reasons.

11. The Administration assures members that in the conversion of YTEL into a community library, it would endeavour to arrange with the NGO concerned on measures to ensure a short transitional period and uninterrupted library service. For instance, by keeping the fitting out works to a minimum as far as possible with a view to shortening the transitional period required, and ensuring the continued provision of basic library services, such as reading space and Internet access, during the period as far as practicable.

12. To address members' concern about the identification of an NGO, the Administration further assures members that-

- (a) it is now actively discussing with the interested NGO for the setting up of a community library at the premises of the YTEL;
- (b) the organisation concerned has indicated strong desire to collaborate with the public library and is willing to take up the premises of the existing temporary library at YTE for the setting up a community library to provide library services to the residents of YTE; and

- (c) it would make its best endeavour to provide the necessary assistance and support to the organisation concerned to facilitate the timely and smooth implementation of the plan, and strive to identify another NGO for cooperation should the organisation concerned be unable to continue to carry out the plan for whatever reasons, so as to ensure that the provision of library services at YTE will not be disrupted.

Services of the community library

13. Members have pointed out that library services and facilities would provide a gateway to knowledge and information for YTE residents, particularly young children, and are instrumental in resolving the inter-generational poverty problem plaguing the YTE community. They have urged the Administration to ensure that the scope and level of services of the community library (such as public areas, number of books, newspaper and periodical service and Internet facilities) should be on par with those currently provided by the YTEL, and notwithstanding the fact that the NGO operator may render other mission-related social services at the community library, the provision of library services should remain as the primary objective of the library. To better serve the needs of local residents, members also consider that it would be useful to gauge users' views on the services provided by the community library at the early stage of its operation.

14. The Administration has explained that to bring library services to the community, the Government has worked in partnership with NGOs/local organisations in setting up community libraries under the Libraries@neighbourhood - Community Libraries Partnership Scheme. By virtue of this partnership arrangement, the NGOs will play a leading role in the provision of library services, as well as community/social services in relation to the mission of the respective organisations, while the government will mainly provide block loan of books and professional advice on library management to accommodate their services. The Administration will give due respect to the operation autonomy of the NGOs concerned in the context of the partnership scheme, with a view to achieving the common goal of serving the interest of the local community. Moreover, the Administration undertakes to convey members' views on the services of the proposed community library to the future operator of the library.

15. To further monitor the implementation of the community library, members have requested the Administration to provide information on arrangements with the concerned NGO regarding the services and operation of the community library, as well as the timeframe and details of the related interface with the YTEL. In response, the Administration undertakes to provide the relevant information upon finalisation of the partnership arrangements with the NGOs concerned.

Conclusion

16. The Subcommittee has completed the scrutiny of the Order and has not raised objection to it. The Subcommittee and the Administration will not move any amendment to the Order.

Advice sought

17. The House Committee is invited to note the deliberations of the Subcommittee.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 April 2010

**Subcommittee on
Designation of Libraries Order 2010**

Membership list

Chairman Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung

Members Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH

Hon LEE Wing-tat

Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP

(Total : 4 Members)

Clerk Ms Betty FONG

Legal Adviser Mr Stephen LAM

Date 19 March 2010