

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1673/09-10
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/HA

Panel on Home Affairs

Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 9 April 2010, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH (Deputy Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun

Members absent : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Public Officers attending : Item IV

Home Affairs Bureau

Ms Florence HUI Hiu-fai, JP
Under Secretary for Home Affairs

Mrs Avia LAI WONG Shuk-han
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
(Culture)²

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Mr CHUNG Ling-hoi, JP
Deputy Director of Leisure & Cultural Services (Culture)

Mr LEE Yuk-man
Assistant Director (Libraries and Development)

Ms Terry LEE Wing-mui
Chief Librarian (Administration and Planning)

Item V

Home Affairs Bureau

Mr TSANG Tak-sing, JP
Secretary for Home Affairs

Home Affairs Department

Ms Sharon HO Ho-shuen, JP
Assistant Director of Home Affairs (4)

Mrs Connie LEE TSE Chiu-fun
Acting Chief Liaison Officer (Building Management)

Clerk in attendance : Ms Betty FONG
Chief Council Secretary (2)²

Staff in attendance : Ms Louisa YEUNG
Senior Council Secretary (2)²

Miss Vivien POON
Council Secretary (2)²

Miss Amy WONG
Legislative Assistant (2)²

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1189/09-10]

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 February 2010 were confirmed.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting -

LC Paper No. CB(2)1116/09-10(01) -- The Administration's quarterly report on the progress of the re-location of public toilets, refuse collection point and the street sleepers' shelters in relation to the Xiqu Activity Centre project

LC Paper No. CB(2)1150/09-10(01) -- Referral from the meeting between Legislative Council Members and Yau Tsim Mong District Council members on 26 November 2009 on issues relating to the revitalization of Yau Ma Tei

LC Paper No. CB(2)1161/09-10(01) -- Information paper provided by the Administration on staff deployment and management of public swimming pools

LC Paper No. CB(2)1166/09-10(01) -- The Administration's report on the regulation of karting in Hong Kong

LC Paper No. CB(2)1204/09-10 (01) - (03) -- Three emails from members of the public expressing views on the service of the Peng Chau Public Library and the proposed relocation of a soccer pitch in Peng Chau

LC Paper No. CB(2)1229/09-10(01) -- The Administration's report on the measures taken to encourage female participation in Village Representative Elections

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III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[Appendix I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)1203/09-10]

Regular meeting on 14 May 2010

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for 14 May 2010 -

- (a) strengthening the arts and cultural software of Hong Kong; and
- (b) construction of an annex building for the Ko Shan Theatre and injection of fund into the Cantonese Opera Development Fund.

4. At the suggestion of Mrs Sophie LEUNG and Professor Patrick LAU, members further agreed that a visit to the Ko Shan Theatre (where an annex building would be constructed), and the Yau Ma Tei Theatre/Red Brick Building (which were being converted into a Xiqu activity centre) and its surrounding areas should be arranged in order to have a better understanding of the hardware support for Cantonese Opera before the discussion of the item in paragraph 3(b).

5. Ms Emily LAU, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Ms Cdy HO expressed concern about the low female participation rate in the Village Representative ("VR") Elections. As the publicity campaign for the next VR election would commence around the end of May 2010, members agreed that issues relating to female participation in VR elections should be included for discussion at the next regular meeting, and written submissions be invited from Heung Yee Kuk, Rural Committees and the 28 female VRs to seek their views on the difficulties encountered by female voters/candidates, and measures to improve female participation in these elections. At the request of Ms Emily LAU, the Administration would be asked to clarify the exact date for the next village ordinary election.

Clerk

Clerk

Regular meeting on 11 June 2010

6. Members agreed that the regular meeting on 11 June 2010 should be extended to three hours for discussion of the following items -

- (a) Regulation of karting facilities (as proposed by the Deputy Chairman);
- (b) Regulation of internet cafés (as proposed by Mr WONG Kwok-hing);
- (c) Review on the financial assistance to Mutual Aid Committees (as proposed by the Administration); and

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- (d) Setting up an intermediary body for the effective enforcement of maintenance orders (as proposed by the Administration).

7. Regarding the item in paragraph 6(a), members agreed that the discussion should focus on the Government policy in the operation and regulation of karting facilities. While recognising the need to tighten the monitoring and inspection of these facilities, Ms Sophie LEUNG cautioned that over-control might diminish participants' enjoyment of the sport.

IV. Development of public library services

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1203/09-10 (01) and (02)]

8. Under Secretary for Home Affairs ("USHA") briefed members on the present position regarding the provision of libraries and application of information technology in public libraries as set out in the Administration's paper.

Library opening hours

9. Mr CHEUNG Man Kwong and Ms Emily LAU considered that the Administration had failed to address the need of the working population and students in the opening hours of public libraries. A case in point was the Peng Chau Public Library where the opening hours from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm during weekdays coincided with the working/school hours of most users. To optimise public use of library facilities, particularly after office hours, Ms Cyd HO suggested that the Administration should earmark extra resources for operating an evening shift, say until 10:00 pm at major public libraries. She requested the Administration to revert to the Panel on the manpower and resources so required. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming enquired about the public feedback on the arrangement to extend the opening hours in 33 public libraries since April 2009 and the timeframe for reviewing its effectiveness.

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10. USHA said that to meet the public's demand for library services, 33 major and district libraries (which did not include the Peng Chau Public Library) had extended their opening hours from 61 or 62 to 71 hours a week since 1 April 2009 to provide seven-day-a-week library services. To cater for the needs of the working population, these libraries operate until 8:00 pm on Monday to Friday. The Government would review the arrangement and revert to the Panel on the findings towards the end of 2010. As regards the opening hours for the Peng Chau Public Library, the Administration would convey members' concern to the Islands DC for consideration to deploy DC funding to enhance the service.

11. Upon the Chairman's request, USHA confirmed that the individual District Councils ("DCs") could consider allocating DC funds to extend the

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opening hours of libraries at district level. The Deputy Chairman remarked that he did not see any reason for DCs to object to extending the library opening hours, if the required resources were provided by the Administration.

12. In response to Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming's concern about the parking problem encountered by mobile libraries in some stops, Assistant Director (Libraries and Development) ("AD(LD)") advised that the Administration would liaise with the local organisations concerned to ensure the provision of parking space for the visiting mobile libraries.

Provision of libraries at district level

13. Referring to the report in Annex D of the Administration's paper, which showed the discrepancies between the proposals for additional library facilities from the DCs and the actual provision made by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"), the Deputy Chairman was concerned that the provision of library at district level was far from adequate in meeting the local demand. He enquired how the Administration would address the situation. Ms Emily LAU shared similar concern.

14. USHA explained that the provision of public libraries was made with reference to the current Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPS&G") which stated that one district library should be provided for each district and that there should also be a district library for every 200 000 persons. In the planning of library facilities, the Administration was mindful of the need to strike a balance between quantity and quality in order to ensure the standard of library services. In terms of quantity, the present provision of 66 static libraries and 10 mobile library vans in the territory had generally met or in some cases exceeded the standard suggested in the HKPS&G. To complement the services of the public libraries, 139 community libraries were operating across the 18 districts to become an integral part of the library network. In terms of service quality, the Government had since 2006 adopted an enhanced space provision for new libraries (viz. 6 200 square metres for major libraries and 2 900 square metres for district libraries). New facilities such as Express Check-in Counter, Young Adult Library, Leisure Reading Corner, Computer and Information Centre, electronic lockers were accommodated in the new libraries where appropriate to provide more efficient and comprehensive library services.

15. Deputy Director of Leisure & Cultural Services (Culture) ("DD(C)") supplemented that in meeting the district demand for library services, it was essential for the Administration to take a holistic view to ensure that the overall quality of library services would not be compromised with limited resources available. In working towards this goal, LCSD had put in place 15 new libraries and two mobile libraries since it took over the management of library services in 2000, and the planning/development of another five public libraries were underway. On the other hand, equal weight was given to the software

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support for library services, particularly through the enhanced application of information technology, such as the development of "wall-less" library, upgrading of the Library Automation System and the Multimedia Information System, so as to enable the public to enjoy high quality, user-friendly, efficient and easily accessible library services.

16. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the Administration's position regarding the provision of major libraries in Yuen Long and Kwai Tsing Districts, where the population now stood at around 560 000 and 520 000 respectively. DD(C) advised that following the completion of the new multi-purpose complex in Tin Shui Wai in mid-2011, the existing district library at Tin Shui Wai would be upgraded to a major library. As for the Kwai Tsing area, there were currently three district libraries. LCSD would closely monitor the population changes and review the service need in the respective districts.

Review of HKPS&G

17. Pointing out that HKPS&G was prepared by the Town Planning Board in the 1990s, Professor Patrick LAU enquired whether the Administration would review the planning standard in relation to public libraries prescribed therein in view of the change in the concept and mode of operation of library services in recent years. Ms Emily LAU was doubtful as to whether the planning standard for public libraries had taken into account Hong Kong's special circumstances, such as its crowded living environment and the strong public demand for studying and reading space. Mr WONG Kwok-hing urged the Administration to refer to the planning ratio recommended by the former Urban Council, viz. the provision of a district library for every 100 000 persons.

18. USHA said that the planning standards for public libraries provided in the HKPS&G were last reviewed by the then Committee of Libraries ("CoL") in 2006. While the CoL did not propose any change to the planning standards, it had recommended strategies and plans for betterment of the facilities and services of the Hong Kong Public Libraries ("HKPL"). To take forth the CoL's recommendations, the Public Libraries Advisory Committee ("PLAC") was set up in 2008 to advise the Government on the overall development strategies of HKPL, including mapping out the vision, missions and key strategies which guided the planning of library development in the coming decade. At the request of Ms Emily LAU, the Administration tabled the membership list of PLAC at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The membership list of PLAC was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1269/09-10 on 12 April 2010).

19. USHA further advised that based on PLAC's Strategic Plan for the HKPL 2009-2018 presented to the Panel in April 2009, business plans would be devised to implement the missions and meet the strategic goal of the Plan. A review of the Plan would be conducted at three-yearly intervals.

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PLAC

20. At the suggestion of Ms Emily LAU, members agreed that the Administration/PLAC should be requested to respond to members' views and concerns on public library services raised at the meeting, in particular to provide further information on the background of PLAC members, and explain the considerations in drawing up the planning standards for libraries in HKPS&G. Members further agreed that a special meeting should be arranged to exchange views with members of PLAC on the development of library services, as suggested by Ms Emily Lau and Mr WONG Kwok-hing.

(Post-meeting note: The meeting with PLAC had been scheduled for 14 June 2010)

Application of information technology to library services

21. Ms Cyd HO considered that the Administration should leverage on the use of information technology for the development of a knowledge-based society. She also called for more Government initiative in promoting the use of e-books, exploring different sources for the provision of e-book resources, and resolving the related copyright and licensing issues. To facilitate the public in the loan and return of books, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong urged the Administration to give serious thought to the feasibility of setting up convenient library outlets at mass transit railway stations through the application of new technology such as the Radio Frequency Identification ("RFID") sub-system.

22. USHA said that while the provision of e-books at public libraries would involve complicated copyright and licensing issues, she envisaged that this would be the direction of the future in the development of library services. USHA further advised that the Administration would explore the feasibility of setting up book returning points at major railway stations, through the application of the RFID sub-system. The system, which was currently put into trial at six libraries until the end of 2011, would eventually replace the existing bar-code labels on library materials with RFID tags. Subject to the result of the pilot test, the implementation of RFID was expected to further enhance the efficiency of the major library processes, including lending and returning of library materials, sorting, shelving and inventory management of library items. This should facilitate the extension of selected library services at major transportation outlets.

23. AD(LD) supplemented that HKPL had made available 48 000 titles of e-books, and a collection of free e-resources for access via Internet by HKPL card holders. HKPL card holders might also have access to the library catalogues for the 12.47 million collection items of the HKPL, and reserve most of these items for borrowing through the automated library system on the Internet.

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Community libraries

24. Referring to the Administration's proposal for cooperation with an NGO to operate a community library at the existing library at Yat Tung Estate ("YTE") upon the opening of the new district library at Tung Chung, Mr WONG Kwok-hing urged the Administration to take heed of the requests made by a DC member concerning the services and operation of the proposed community library in his submission tabled at the meeting. In particular, the Administration should ensure that library services at YTE would not be interrupted during the transitional period, and the scale and scope of library services of the community library should be on par with the YTE library. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che asked the Administration to clarify the status and scale of the proposed community library, and the role and scope of responsibility of the future non-governmental organisation ("NGO") operator.

(Post-meeting note: The submission expressing views on the provision of library services at YTE was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1269/09-10 on 12 April 2010).

25. USHA and DD(C) advised that the LCSD had since 2005 introduced the Libraries@neighbourhood – Community Libraries Partnership Scheme to further promote reading and to bring library services to the local community. To meet the demand of YTE residents, the proposed library would be operated on a larger scale than a general community library in terms of scope of services and collection of books. Under the partnership format, the Administration would offer block loan of library materials and free professional advice to the participating NGO in the setting up of the library, while the NGO concerned would manage the library in accordance with a set of prescribed standards and bear the related manpower, rental and operating costs.

26. USHA further advised that the Administration was currently actively discussing with an interested NGO regarding the setting up of the community library in YTE. She also assured members that the Administration would collaborate closely with the future operator to ensure an uninterrupted library service, and convey members' suggestions regarding the services and operation of the library for its consideration.

27. The Deputy Chairman suggested that to better utilise the services of community libraries, the Administration should make available information on the location of these libraries on the Internet, and enrich the scope of their services to include internet access, as well as book lending and returning services for collection items of the HKPL. USHA agreed to arrange for the uploading of information on community libraries onto the Internet.

Other issues

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28. Mrs Sophie LEUNG suggested that the Administration should collaborate with publishers in the promotion of reading habits to the community. She asked whether the Administration had compared Hong Kong's library services with those provided by other overseas countries. Mrs LEUNG also requested the Administration to provide information on the public loaning of library materials (with detailed breakdowns) in the past few years.

29. AD(LD) advised that for the promotion of reading habits, HKPL had collaborated with publishers and schools in organising various educational activities, such as reading programmes, book displays and exhibitions. This apart, HKPL also played an active role in organising literary awards and competitions, the annual Hong Kong Literature Festival and a wide range of literary activities throughout the year. As far as book loaning rate was concerned, Hong Kong was ranked first as compared to other major cities.

Motion

30. Mr KAM Nai-wai moved the following motion, as amended by Mr WONG Yung-kan and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che -

" 本事務委員會要求政府重新檢討公共圖書館服務的《香港規劃標準與準則》，降低設立公共圖書館設施的人口標準，應參考各區區議會意見增設公共圖書館及延長開放時間，並考慮在港鐵站及離島渡輪碼頭開設圖書站，方便市民。"

(Translation)

"That this Panel requests the Government to review afresh the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines in relation to public library services with a view to lowering the population standard for the provision of public library facilities, to provide additional public libraries and extend library opening hours with reference to the views of various District Councils, and to consider setting up library outlets at MTR stations and ferry piers on outlying islands for convenient access by the public."

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31. The Chairman put the motion to a vote. Eight members voted for the motion and a member abstained from voting. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

V. Support to Mutual Aid Committees

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1203/09-10(03) and (04)]

32. The Chairman decided to extend the meeting for 15 minutes beyond its appointed ending time at 10:30 am in accordance with House Rule 24A(a).

Action

33. Secretary for Home Affairs ("SHA") briefed members on the financial assistance to Mutual Aid Committees ("MACs") provided by the Home Affairs Department ("HAD"), and the Administration's proposal to review the level of such assistance as well as its application and reimbursement procedures, as set out in the Administration's paper.

Review on support to MACs

34. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed support for the proposal to review the financial assistance to MACs. He pointed out that the current financial support of \$1,000 per quarter for MACs to cover the basic office operation expenses was grossly inadequate, and suggested that the assistance should be raised to \$1,000 a month. This apart, he considered that HAD should organise training course for MAC members during the weekend to enhance their knowledge in the operation of MAC.

35. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong was supportive of the proposal for review, but stressed the need for HAD to streamline the procurement procedures for activities organised by MACs when utilising DC funds, and to make suitable arrangements to facilitate the reimbursement of expenses paid in advance by MAC members in relation to these activities. Mrs Sophie LEUNG shared the view that the cumbersome administrative procedures should be simplified to facilitate the work of MACs.

36. Ms Emily LAU supported in principle the review and considered it necessary to monitor the proper use of the financial assistance. For the building of a harmonious community, she opined that the Administration should highlight in the review the importance for MACs to adopt a more accommodating attitude, with a view to encouraging communication and promoting the participation of parties of different views in the organisation of various community building activities for residents.

37. SHA acknowledged the need to review the financial assistance to MACs for covering their basic operating expenditure such as electricity charges, telephone bills, office equipment etc. He further explained that the funds so allocated were public funds and the prevailing financial control and safeguards should apply. In view of members' concern, SHA agreed to explore the possibility of streamlining the application and reimbursement procedures, without compromising the principle of prudent use of public funds. He also affirmed MACs' role in the promotion of social harmony and inclusiveness, and clarified that MACs might apply for the DC funds for the organisation of community building or cultural and recreational activities.

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38. To facilitate the work of MACs, Mr WONG Kwok-hing requested the Administration to consider in its review the following suggestions made by some DC members and community workers in their submission to the Panel tabled at the meeting: (a) MACs should be entitled to a special rate for utility deposits as they were non-profit making organisations; (b) bank charges for MAC deposits below the minimum amount required by the respective banks should be waived; (c) apart from the one-off setting-up payment, subsidy should be provided for minor refurbishment works at MAC offices at an interval of several years; and (d) HAD staff should strengthen their communication with MACs by visiting these bodies more frequently. Mr WONG further suggested that HAD should compile a list of authorised service providers who provided coaches for hire so as to save the need for MACs to go through the cumbersome quotation procedures when utilising DC funds, and provide interest-free loan for MAC activities to eradicate the need for MAC members to pay for these activities in advance.

(Post-meeting note: The submission expressing views on Government support to MACs was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1269/09-10 on 12 April 2010.)

39. SHA agreed to consider the above suggestions in the review. He also clarified that HAD would provide, at the request of MACs, documentary proof to financial institutions to facilitate the waiver of the minimum deposit requirement for the MACs concerned.

Role of MACs and OCs in building management

40. Pointing out that MACs could serve as a trial and transitional arrangement for the formation of Owners' Corporations ("OCs") in many private buildings, Ms Cyd HO enquired about the number of MACs formed in private buildings, and the number of OCs developed from these MACs. Ms HO further pointed out that building management problems were particularly prevalent in old buildings with a large number of rental units, as both the owners (most of whom were not residing in the building) and renters were reluctant to take on such a responsibility. She considered that the Administration should step up its efforts in encouraging residents and owners concerned to form MACs and OCs, and establishing a standing mechanism to facilitate the communication between these bodies for the proper management of these buildings. The Chairman considered that the Government should review the respective role of Owners' Committees, OCs and MACs, as well as their relationship for the systematic development of these organisations in serving the local community.

41. Assistant Director of Home Affairs (4) said that it was primarily the Government's policy to encourage owners of private buildings to form OCs, which were vested with certain legal powers to facilitate the management of

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buildings. For those buildings where the tenants or owners had difficulty to form OCs, the Government would endeavour to provide assistance for the formation of MACs to promote mutual help, enhance environment and security, and more effective building management. At present, around 1 400 of the some 2 700 MACs in Hong Kong were formed in private buildings. Where both MACs and OCs had been formed in a building, the Government would continue to render appropriate assistance to the residents/owners concerned, should they consider it necessary to maintain both bodies in view of their specific circumstances.

42. Mrs Sophie LEUNG opined that owners should basically assume responsibility for the proper management of their buildings. As a long-term solution to building management issues, the Administration should make it a mandatory requirement for owners of new buildings to form OCs/MACs or appoint a property management company within a prescribed period after the issue of occupation permits in respect of their buildings. Owners should also be encouraged to set up a reserve fund for the maintenance of their buildings.

43. The Chairman concluded that the Panel in general was supportive of a review to enhance the financial assistance to MACs and, having regard to the need to ensure the prudent use of public funds, to streamline the procurement and reimbursement procedures for MAC-related activities. SHA undertook to revert to the Panel on the findings of the review at its meeting in June 2010.

Admin

VI. Any other business

44. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:42 am.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
2 June 2010