

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Panel on Home Affairs

Background brief prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 5 February 2010

Future development of museum services

Purpose

This paper summarizes major reviews on the development of museum services in Hong Kong since 2000 and highlights the views and concerns of Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on the issue.

Background

2. Upon the dissolution of the then Municipal Councils, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LSCD) has since 1 January 2000 taken over the role of providing and managing public museums in Hong Kong under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132). According to the Administration, there were 17 public museums managed by LCSD as at December 2007. Three other government departments, i.e. the Hong Kong Police Force, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, and the Correctional Services Department also operate and manage museums on specific themes. Apart from these Government-run museums, there are currently nine museums that are funded and managed by educational institutions, charitable or non-profit making organizations. A list of these public museums and private museums is in **Appendix I**.

Reviews on the development of museum services

Review by the Culture and Heritage Commission

3. In April 2000, the Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC) was established to advise the Government on the policies as well as funding priorities on culture and the arts. The CHC submitted the "CHC Policy Recommendation Report" to the Government in April 2003, putting forward its policy recommendations on a wide

range of areas relating to the long-term cultural development, including the development of museum services in Hong Kong. To enhance the provision of museum services, CHC has recommended, inter alia, the setting up of a Museums Board to coordinate the overall development of museums, strengthening resource development and community involvement in the provision of museum services, and realigning museums' collections to build up clearer identities. The Panel discussed these recommendations with the Administration and CHC in November and December 2002.

Consultancy study on the mode of governance of public museums

4. In June 2002, LCSD commissioned a consultancy study on the mode of governance of Hong Kong public museums with a view to enhancing their services in keeping with the 21st century development. The study recommended, inter alia, the establishment of a Museums Board for the management of public museums, internal restructuring of the museum institutions to reflect the community-centred approach in the provision of museum services, introduction of a modern qualitative and quantitative management control framework for museum accountability and evaluation, and retention of existing museum staff to preserve expertise and ensure continuation of service. The Administration briefed the Panel on the findings and recommendations of the study in June 2003.

Recommendation Report of the Committee on Museums

5. To follow up on the CHC's recommendations relating to museum services as well as the recommendations of the consultancy study, the Administration established the Committee on Museums (CoM) in November 2004 to advise the Secretary for Home Affairs on the provision of public museum services in Hong Kong. In May 2007, CoM issued a Recommendation Report, outlining improvement measures covering the following major areas in the management and provision of public museum services -

- (a) development strategy of public museum services;
- (b) performance enhancement and promotion of patronage;
- (c) community involvement and partnership;
- (d) funding of public museums;
- (e) governance of public museums; and
- (f) public museum staff development.

6. The Panel received a briefing from the Administration on the key recommendations of CoM in June 2007, the focus of which are as follows -

- (a) a long-term strategy for the development of museum culture as an inherent part of cultural life should be drawn up to enhance the aesthetic sensibility of the public at large and their awareness and interest in visiting museums;
- (b) a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative performance assessment framework should be formulated for each museum to help increase public accountability and facilitate value-for-money assessment based on outcome, and an annual business plan should be drawn up for each museum to enhance efficiency and accountability of museum operation;
- (c) a strategy for further integration with the community and establishing closer collaboration network with interested parties such as artists, collectors, local and overseas museums, and other cultural institutions should be mapped out;
- (d) a statutory Museums Board should be set up in three years' time to take on the operation and management responsibility of public museums. To ensure the smooth migration from Government-run public museums to museums managed by a statutory board in the long run, a Provisional Museums Board should be set up during the transitional period to oversee the preparatory work, and study issues including ownership of collections, establishment of shared services department and staff management for the future statutory Museums Board. Improvement measures to the existing museum services should also be implemented early in order to lay a solid foundation for the proposed institutional change;
- (e) a long-term manpower strategy plan with focus on staff succession, training and development for the coming 10 years should be drawn up. To prepare for the institutional changes, measures should be taken to retain expertise and enhance the morale of serving museum staff, comprehensive consultation should be conducted to maintain regular dialogue with museum staff, and a remuneration package which would encourage a stable transition of the staff to the new institution should be drawn up;
- (f) the Government's commitment to provide a stable and adequate source of funding for public museum services should continue after the institutional change, but a review should be conducted on the feasibility for museums to be operated with an independent accounting system and allowed to retain revenue. Measures to broaden the income base of public museums should also be devised; and

- (g) further reviews on different operational aspects of public museums should be conducted by the proposed Museums Board, having regard to CoM's recommendations as well as the need for any re-alignment of roles and identities, collections allocation and the interfacing arrangements between the public museums and the future museum institution in the West Kowloon Cultural District.

Members' views and concerns

7. Members in general expressed support for reviewing the existing governance structure of public museums to keep pace with the changing needs and expectations of the community. They also enquired about the timeframe for the establishment of the statutory Museums Board and requested the Administration to conduct more staff consultation and pay careful attention to the concerns of serving museum staff towards any proposed changes.

8. In response, the Administration advised that CoM had recommended that the Museums Board should be set up in three years' time as far as practicable. However, it might take the Administration a longer time, say five years, to complete the entire transformation process, having regard to the need to set up a Provisional Museums Board, carry out a detailed planning study on how each cluster of museums should be aligned and transferred, draft the enabling legislation and resolve issues relating to the transitional arrangements for existing museum staff. The Administration undertook to further consult the Panel when the concrete implementation plan on the future governance of public museums was drawn up. The Administration further advised that it would introduce measures to retain expertise and enhance the morale of serving museum staff, and undertook to conduct extensive staff consultation regarding the change of mode of governance.

9. Some members considered that objective criteria and procedures should be drawn up to ensure that only the most suitable and capable individuals would be appointed to the Board. A member enquired how community involvement would be achieved in the Board composition. Referring to the trend of decentralization and increasing community participation in the governance of public facilities, another member considered that District Councils should play a more important role in the governance of public museums.

10. The Administration advised that although details of the composition of the proposed Museums Board had not been worked out, its members should represent a wide range of interest in the society. The Administration further assured members that reference would be made to the appointment procedures and criteria of similar statutory bodies in other jurisdictions in drawing up the appointment mechanism for the Board.

11. Noting that the general attendance of public museums was not very high and usually it was exhibitions of famous collections on loan from overseas major

museums that attracted visitors, a member suggested that the Administration should increase the allocation of resources to public museums to enhance the collections for the purpose of organizing more attractive exhibitions, and issue passes to arts teachers for free access to all public museums in order to boost their patronage which, in turn, would contribute to the promotion of art among students.

12. The Administration advised that while public museums were generally well-received by the visiting public, there was still room for further improving the public museum services. The Administration would continue to organize diverse and vibrant exhibitions to promote patronage and to increase museum collections for exhibition and display. In response to a member's enquiry about the accessibility of public museums to visitors with physical disabilities, the Administration advised that in general the existing public museums were accessible to these visitors. For museums, such as the Hong Kong Railway Museum and the Sam Tung Uk Museum, there was no problem of accessibility as they had no upper ground levels.

Future development of private museums

13. During the deliberation on the proposal relating to the relocation of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum in January 2008, members asked the Administration to explain its policy on the development of private museums. Members in general considered that the Administration should expedite the development of a standard mechanism for supporting the operation of private museums.

14. According to the Administration, it saw the need to formulate, in the longer term, a proper framework and mechanism for supporting the development of private museums in Hong Kong. The framework should comprise selection criteria based on cultural and historical significance and other considerations, an accreditation system, funding models and performance monitoring and evaluation. The Administration would make reference to overseas experiences in formulating such a framework and consult stakeholders including the Panel when a solid proposal was drawn up. In the absence of such a mechanism, the Administration would have to consider requests from individual private museums on a case-by-case basis.

Latest development

15. The Administration briefed the Panel on the progress in the implementation of improvement measures to enhance the provision of public museum services on 13 November 2009. Major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized in paragraphs 16 to 21.

Setting up of a statutory Museums Board

16. Members in general expressed disappointment at the Administration's failure to revert to the Panel on the progress in the establishment of a statutory Museums Board and the implementation plan on the future governance of public museums, which were the core issues of concern in the future development of museum services. Some members were worried that the uncertainty over the future mode of governance of public museums would take toll on staff morale, and was not conducive to the implementation of other measures to enhance the services of public museums.

17. In reply, the Administration advised that while most of CoM's recommendations had been implemented progressively, it would need to deliberate carefully the proposed migration of government-run museums to museums managed by a statutory Museums Board, in view of its implications on the future operation of public museums and the many complicated issues involved, including the drafting of the enabling legislation, handling of staff issues to ensure a stable transition of existing staff to the new institution, allocation and ownership of collections, re-alignment of roles and identities among public museums, as well as interfacing arrangements between public museums and M+, the future museum institution in the West Kowloon Cultural District.

18. The Administration further advised that in accordance with the standing practice in the government, it had ceased the recruitment of curatorial grade staff for public museums pending its study on the proposed institutional structure. The Administration was however fully aware of the impact of the prolonged recruitment freeze on the morale of the staff concerned, and would continue consultation and maintain regular dialogue with museum staff on various issues relating to the proposed governance structure. It also undertook to revert to the Panel on its decision regarding the establishment of the statutory Museums Board at the Panel's regular meeting in February 2010.

Promotion of museum culture

19. To promote a more vibrant museum culture, some members considered that the Administration should encourage the development of community museums, which had rich collections featuring specific, lively and interesting themes and would serve as a supplement to the mainstream collections in public museums. They further suggested that the Administration should introduce a legislative framework to provide for an accreditation system for private/community museums. Other members considered that the Administration should devise an overall cultural policy and corporate mission for the development of public museums, and formulate work plans with focused themes in the provision of museum services, so as to enhance the effectiveness of museum education and facilitate the development of museum culture. A member urged the Administration to step up its efforts in the support of private museums.

20. In response, the Administration advised that it was a common mission of public museums to enhance the quality of life of the community, for instance through broadening the vision and enriching the knowledge of the public. To this end, the Administration had endeavoured to promote the diversity and vibrancy of museum culture, as evidenced by the establishment of thematic museums under the streams of arts, history and natural science, while staying focused on the overall mission in the planning and development of public museums.

21. Regarding government support for private/community museums, the Administration explained that the collaboration between public and private museums would largely depend on the mission and mode of operation of the museums concerned. While it was the government policy for private/community museums to be operated with full autonomy on a self-sustainable basis, different forms of support (such as venue or financial subsidy) might be considered, subject to the merits of individual cases. The Administration further advised that the proposal for the establishment of a legislative regime would need careful deliberation.

22. At the Panel meeting on 8 January 2010, members requested the Administration to provide further information on: (a) measures to ensure the realization of the vision of public museums in broadening the cultural horizon of members of the public and inspiring their creative thinking in exhibition planning for these museums; (b) initiatives to promote the development of private museums; and (c) arrangement for the display of collection/donation items relating to Hong Kong's history during the Japanese Occupation at the Hong Kong Museum of History, to facilitate the discussion on the future development of museum services at the Panel meeting on 5 February 2010.

Relevant papers

23. A list of relevant papers with their hyperlinks at the LegCo website is in **Appendix II**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 February 2010

**Museums in Hong Kong
(As of December 2007)**

Museums under LCSD

1. Lei Cheng Uk Han Tomb Museum (1957)
2. Hong Kong Space Museum (1980)
3. Sheung Yiu Folk Museum (1984)
4. Flagstaff House Museum of Teaware (1984)
5. Hong Kong Railway Museum (1985)
6. Sam Tung Uk Museum (1987)
7. Law Uk Folk Museum (1990)
8. Hong Kong Museum of Art (1991)
9. Hong Kong Science Museum (1991)
10. Hong Kong Museum of History (1998)
11. Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence (2000)
12. Hong Kong Heritage Museum (2000)
13. Hong Kong Film Archive (2001)
14. Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre (2005)
15. Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum (2006)
16. Ping Shan Tang Clan Gallery cum Heritage Trail Visitors Centre (2007)
17. Fireboat Alexander Grantham Exhibition Gallery (2007)

Departmental Museums

18. Hong Kong Police Museum (1976)
19. Lions Nature Education Centre (1990)
20. Hong Kong Correctional Services Museum (2002)

Private Museums

21. University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of HongKong (1953)
22. Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (1971)
23. Tung Wah Museum (1971)
24. The Hong Kong Racing Museum (1996)
25. Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences (1996)
26. Po Leung Kuk Museum (1998)
27. Museum of Ethnology (2000)
28. Hong Kong Maritime Museum (2005)
29. Dr & Mrs Hung Hin Shui Museum of Chinese Medicine (2007)

Appendix II

Panel on Home Affairs

Relevant documents on the future development of museum services

Committee	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
Panel on Home Affairs	8.11.2002 and 17.12.2002	The Administration's paper on the Culture and Heritage Commission Consultation Paper 2002	LC Paper No. CB(2)289/02-03(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1108cb2-289-2e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting of 8.11.2002	LC Paper No. CB(2)590/02-03 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha021108.pdf
		Minutes of meeting of 17.12.2002	LC Paper No. CB(2)1117/02-03 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha021217.pdf
Panel on Home Affairs	13.6.2003	The Administration's paper on the consultancy study on the mode of Governance of Hong Kong's Public Museums and the Hong Kong Film Archive	LC Paper No. CB(2)2355/02-03(06) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0613cb2-2355-6e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	LC Paper No. CB(2)3067/02-03 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha030613.pdf

Committee	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
Panel on Home Affairs	18.6.2007	The Administration's paper on the Report of the Committee on Museums	LC Paper No. CB(2)2042/06-07(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0618cb2-2042-5-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	LC Paper No. CB(2)251/07-08 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha070618.pdf
Panel on Home Affairs	11.1.2008	The Administration's paper on the future development of private museums – Hong Kong Maritime Museum	LC Paper No. CB(2)746/07-08(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0111cb2-746-1-e.pdf
		The Administration's follow up paper on the Hong Kong Maritime Museum reporting on the progress of the Administration's discussion with the Hong Kong Maritime Museum	LC Paper No. CB(2)1800/07-08(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0111cb2-1800-1-e.pdf
		Letter dated 31 January 2008 from the Administration providing supplementary information on the number of staff working in the 17 existing museums under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department	LC Paper No. CB(2)1012/07-08(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0111cb2-1012-1-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	LC Paper No. CB(2)2135/07-08 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha080111.pdf

Committee	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
Panel on Home Affairs	13.11.2009	The Administration's paper on measures to improve the provision of public museum services	LC Paper No. CB(2)232/09-10(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1113cb2-232-1-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	LC Paper No. CB(2)626/09-10 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20091113.pdf