

**For discussion on
13 November 2009**

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

Funding for Diversified Community Activities

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on our proposal regarding the allocation of a one-off sum of \$180 million to organise diversified community activities (the Fund), with a view to achieving a range of policy objectives as set out in paragraph 2 below.

Background

2. The Financial Secretary announced in May 2009 that the Government would allocate a one-off sum of \$180 million to 18 districts to further foster community building, enhance social cohesion, promote cultural and sports activities, stimulate consumption and domestic demand, and create business opportunities for local tourism.

Proposal and Justifications

3. The proposed allocation of the Fund is set out in the following paragraphs.

(a) Allocation for organising district activities

4. We propose to allocate \$108 million (i.e. 60% of the Fund) to 18 District Councils (DCs) for district organisations to organise a variety of community activities, including local cultural, arts, leisure, sports and entertainment events, so as to help foster the spirit of embracing challenges, mutual help and care for families, as well as to boost local

consumption and create job opportunities. We also encourage DCs to make use of the Fund to support local tourism activities, so that local residents and people working or studying in the districts, in particular the underprivileged, can have opportunities to appreciate distinctive natural, cultural and historical characteristics of individual districts in Hong Kong and to mingle with members of their own families and those of other families in a joyful setting. We hope that these activities will help enhance family cohesion and residents' sense of belonging to the community.

5. DCs have been playing an important role in advising the Government on matters affecting the well-being of people, provision of public services and facilities, and promotion of recreational and cultural activities in districts. As DC members are familiar with district needs and have rich experience in vetting applications for district programmes or activities, we consider that DCs are best placed to oversee the disbursement of the bulk of the Fund to achieve the above policy objectives.

(b) Allocation for promoting thematic activities

6. We propose to allocate \$45 million (i.e. 25% of the Fund) for government departments, in consultation with the DCs concerned, to centrally coordinate the launching of programmes around the themes of "Sports for All", "Arts for All" and "Cultural/ Ecological Tourism for All", with a view to promoting the spirit of sportsmanship, arts appreciation and festive atmosphere –

- (i) Sports for All: To encourage Hong Kong people to take part in sports and physical activities, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) proposes to organise a wide range of promotional and publicity activities including territory-wide activities, such as the "Hong Kong Walking Day" and the "Physical Activity Award Scheme", with a view to enhancing people's understanding of the benefits and importance of participation in sports and physical activities; tailor-made recreational and sports activities for people in different age groups and with various needs; and more

district-based recreational and sports activities to encourage community participation in sports and physical activities/competitions.

- (ii) Arts for All: LCSD proposes to strengthen arts and cultural development and education programmes, in order to promote arts at the district level. These programmes include specially curated cultural and entertainment programmes and community arts activities; arts education programmes and workshops in collaboration with district arts groups; music and dance programmes; and exhibitions of local artists' work at indoor and outdoor venues of civic centres, community halls, schools, bamboo theatres, district venues and shopping malls to promote diversified arts.
- (iii) Cultural/ Ecological Tourism for All: The Home Affairs Department (HAD), in conjunction with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and other relevant departments/agencies, propose to organise programmes to promote district features of cultural and ecological interests including the various geo-sites of Hong Kong National Geopark and other heritage spots or paths at districts. These activities include producing publicity materials and websites in different languages; organising local tour guide training programmes, and designing guided tours, etc. The Tourism Commission will also assist in promoting large-scale events which may attract overseas visitors. Not only will these activities enable the public to have opportunities to appreciate the distinctive features of districts in Hong Kong, but also suit the needs of different age groups and provide families with opportunities to enjoy themselves during weekends, which will enhance forging closer relationships among family members.

7. Individual DCs may also submit project proposals to HAD to apply for extra funding to organise large-scale or cross-district programmes around these themes.

8. We hope that through organising these thematic programmes, we can further help foster sports and cultural ambience in the community, as well as enhance the quality of life in the territory. The relevant government departments will take the lead in coordinating these large-scale or cross-district activities to ensure smooth implementation.

(c) Allocation for staff and contingency

9. We propose to reserve \$18 million (i.e. 10% of the Fund) for HAD to employ contract staff to assist DCs and the department in implementing the above programmes and activities. This is in line with the current practice that not more than 10% of DC fund may be used by HAD for employing contract staff to assist in coordinating, administering and promoting district projects. We shall also reserve \$9 million (i.e. 5% of the Fund) for publicity and contingency.

Administration of the Fund

10. Regarding the 60% of the Fund to be allocated to the 18 DCs, we propose to draw up a set of guidelines, modeled on the current “Manual on the Use of District Council Funds”, with suitable modifications to reflect the policy objectives of the Fund.

11. The disbursement of the 25% of the Fund under HAD’s disposal for organising activities will be subject to the prevailing relevant government regulations, circulars and departmental guidelines. Furthermore, we propose that the Secretary for Home Affairs appoints an assessment panel which comprises non-official members with expertise in the relevant fields (i.e. sports, arts and culture, and tourism) to advise the Director of Home Affairs on the broad allocation of this portion of the Fund. The assessment panel will be responsible for endorsing the proposed vetting criteria, broad allocation to government departments and DCs for the thematic programmes, as well as monitoring the progress of the approved programmes/activities.

Financial Implications

12. We propose to seek a one-off grant of \$180 million. The proposal has no recurrent financial implications. We also propose that the disbursement of the Fund straddle the 2009-10 and 2010-11 financial years.

Advice Sought

13. Members are invited to advise on our proposed allocation of the Fund. We plan to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 4 December 2009.

Home Affairs Department
November 2009