

For Information

Response to the Taking Back of the Management of Two Outsourced Sports Centres with Swimming Pools

Background

The Hong Kong & Kowloon Life Guards' Union (the HKKLGU) wrote to the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs on 15 April 2010, raising concern about the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) not having taken back the outsourced management of the swimming pools at Island East Sports Centre and Tai Kok Tsui Sports Centre, and outsourcing the management of these two sports centres again.

Follow-up Action and Current Situation

2. At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs on 10 July 2009, the LCSD undertook to study the feasibility of taking back the management of the above two swimming pools (see paragraphs 38 and 39 of the minutes of meeting at the Appendix). Subsequently, the LCSD has followed up on the above undertaking and carried out a detailed review of the matter. The Department agreed to take back the management of the two sports centres including the swimming pools subject to the availability of resources. Nevertheless, the previous contracts for these two sports centres expired on 30 April 2010 and the LCSD was unable to deploy the required resources within a short period of time to take back the management of the two sports centres. Therefore, to enable the two sports centres to continue providing services for the public, the LCSD still needed to outsource the management of these two sports centres this year. The relevant tendering exercise commenced in end of January 2010 and the new contracts took effect on 1 May 2010. The continuity of services at the two sports centres has thus been ensured after the expiry of the previous contracts.

3. The LCSD will continue to devote efforts with a view to taking back the management of the two sports centres as early as possible. To enable the Department to take back the management as soon as it is in a position to do so, we have built in a clause in the new outsourcing contracts to enable early termination of the contracts by giving four months' prior notice to the contractors. Moreover, to ensure that the lifeguard services provided by the contractors can achieve the highest standard and to guarantee swimmers' safety, we have taken a number of measures including stipulating in the new contract that the contractor must increase the manpower of lifeguards at the swimming pool in Island East Sports Centre (i.e. from three lifeguards per shift in the previous contract to four lifeguards per shift in the new contract) so that there will be adequate manpower to handle unexpected and other emergency situations. In addition, more stringent provisions are also stipulated in the new contracts to penalise the contractors if their performance fails to meet the relevant requirements or is unsatisfactory. The LCSD will continue to closely monitor and review in a timely manner the contractors' performance.

4. The LCSD has also considered the feasibility of taking back only the management of the swimming pools while continuing to outsource the management of the other facilities of these two sports centres as suggested by the HKKLGU. Given that the swimming pools are an integral part of these two sports centres in terms of both design and

operation, taking back only the management of the swimming pools but not the other facilities will cause serious management problems. For the above reason, the LCSD considers that it should continue its efforts in the direction of taking back the management of the sports centres as a whole.

Communications with the HKKLGU

5. Prior to the invitation of tenders for the two sports centres in January 2010, the LCSD invited the HKKLGU to a meeting during which the Department clearly indicated its intention to the HKKLGU that it agreed to take back the management of the two sports centres subject to the availability of resources. However, as the LCSD was unable to deploy the required resources within a short period of time, it needed to invite tenders for the new contracts for the two sports centres to maintain continuity of services provided by the sports centres. We emphasised that a clause had been added to the new contracts so that when the conditions are ripe, LCSD could effect termination of the contracts by giving four months' prior notice to the contractors. Afterwards, the LCSD has continued to maintain dialogue with the HKKLGU and explained the Department's position and its follow-up action time and again.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
May 2010

Action

38. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming enquired about the investigation on the allegation against the service provider of the Island East Swimming Pool (IESP) in committing fraudulence and whether LCSD would consider resuming the management of IESP and Tai Kok Tsui Swimming Pool (TKTSP) which had been contracted out.

39. DLCS responded that -

- (a) the relevant lifeguard unions had been invited to submit written justifications for a review of the Artisan (Beach-Swimming Pool) grade;
- (b) LCSD maintained a core to non-core lifeguard ratio of no less than 1:1 and had conducted on-going recruitment exercises to enable contract staff to become regular lifeguards; and
- (c) the case in which the IESP contractor was alleged of providing forged report on the shift duties records of lifeguards was being dealt with by law enforcement body. LCSD would study the feasibility of resuming the management of the two pools mentioned in paragraph 38.