

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

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## **Panel on Home Affairs**

### **Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 22 March 2013**

#### **Measures to enhance museum services**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the improvement measures implemented by the Administration for enhancing museum services and summarizes the views and concerns expressed by members of the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") on the subject.

#### **Background**

##### Public museums in Hong Kong

2. Upon the dissolution of the then Municipal Councils, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") 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). As of January 2010, there were 14 public museums under the management of LCSD (see **Appendix I**). Apart from LCSD, three other government departments, namely the Hong Kong Police Force, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Correctional Services Department, also operate and manage museums on specific themes. In addition to the Government-run museums, there are currently nine museums which are funded and managed by educational institutions, charitable or non-profit making organizations.

##### Major reviews on the development of museum services

3. In April 2000, the Culture and Heritage Commission ("CHC") was

formed to advise the Government on policies as well as funding priorities on culture and the arts. CHC submitted to the Government in April 2003 the CHC Policy Recommendation Report, putting forward recommendations on a wide range of areas relating to Hong Kong's cultural development in the long term, including the development of museum services. To enhance the provision of museum services, CHC 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.

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 order to keep up with the 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

#### Measures to improve the provision of public museum services

5. To follow up on 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 management and provision of public museum services in Hong Kong. In May 2007, CoM published its Recommendation Report, outlining improvement measures covering the following major areas -

- (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.

## **Deliberations of the Panel**

6. The Panel held four meetings between June 2007 and February 2010 to discuss issues relating to the development of museums services and the measures to enhance the operation and services of public museums under LCSD. Major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized below.

### Mode of governance of public museums

7. When the Administration briefed the Panel on its plan to implement improvement measures to enhance the operation and services of the public museums under LCSD at the meeting on 13 November 2009, 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. Some members expressed worries that the uncertainty over the future mode of governance of public museums would adversely affect staff morale.

8. 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. These issues included the drafting of the enabling legislation, handling of necessary 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 in the West Kowloon Cultural District.

9. 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.

10. On 5 February 2010, the Administration reverted to the Panel on its considerations and decision regarding the future mode of governance for public museums. The Administration considered that further improvement to public museum services, as recommended by CoM, could be better achieved under the existing mode of governance by way of proactive administrative measures to strengthen the missions of public museums, sharpen their identity and focus, and expand the pool of museum advisors and curators.

11. While members had no strong view on the Administration's decision of not taking forward the proposal of establishing a statutory Museums Board, they considered that the Administration should endeavour to promote an environment conducive to the healthy competition among different types of museums and to provide room for the organic growth of museums with a variety of missions, themes and characteristics. Some members urged the Administration to promote the development of private museums. For the sustainable development of private museums, policies and mechanisms governing the operation of private museums should be formulated in the long run. The Administration was also urged to introduce measures to enhance the accountability and transparency of public museums, and foster closer partnership and community participation in their operation and management.

12. The Administration assured members of its continued efforts to provide an enabling environment to promote the co-existence of different modes of governance of museums for the development of a pluralistic and vibrant museum culture to complement the development of cultural software and creative industries. The Administration had implemented an array of initiatives for enhancing professional and community participation in public museum services, including (a) the setting up of a Panel of Museum Advisors for each of the three streams of museums (viz. arts, history and science) to advise LCSD on the strategies for the development, promotion and management of public museums; (b) the continued engagement of guest curators to curate museum programmes; and (c) the organization of exhibitions and programmes to showcase the works of local artists to local and overseas audience. On the development of private museums, members were advised that while it was the government policy for private museums to be operated with full autonomy on a self-sustainable basis, requests for financial support from these museums would be considered having regard to the merits of individual cases.

#### Promotion of museum culture

13. 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. There were suggestions that the Administration should introduce a legislative framework to provide for an accreditation system for private/community museums, and step up its collaboration with/support for private museums. Some other members held the view that the Administration should devise an overall cultural policy 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.

14. The Administration advised that it 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. Regarding the 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. However, the proposal of establishing a legislative regime would need careful deliberation.

15. In response to the suggestion of identifying iconic items for public museums to enhance public awareness and interest in their services, the Administration assured members of its continuous efforts in establishing clear image/branding for each museum and strengthening publicity work to widen the audience base.

### **Latest development**

16. The Administration will update the Panel on the progress on the development and enhancement of museum services at its meeting on 22 March 2013.

### **Relevant papers**

17. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council's website is in **Appendix II**.

### Public Museums under LCSD<sup>Note</sup> (As of January 2010)

#### Art

1. Flagstaff House Museum of Teaware (1984)
2. Hong Kong Museum of Art (1991)

#### History

3. Lei Cheng Uk Han Tomb Museum (1957)
4. Sheung Yiu Folk Museum (1984)
5. Hong Kong Railway Museum (1985)
6. Sam Tung Uk Museum (1987)
7. Law Uk Folk Museum (1990)
8. Hong Kong Museum of History (1998)
9. Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence (2000)
10. Hong Kong Heritage Museum (2000)
11. Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum (2006)
12. Fireboat Alexander Grantham Exhibition Gallery (2007)

#### Science

13. Hong Kong Space Museum (1980)
14. Hong Kong Science Museum (1991)

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<sup>Note</sup> In addition to the 14 public museums listed above, the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre, the Ping Shan Tang Clan Gallery cum Heritage Trail Visitors Centre and the Hong Kong Film Archive are also gazetted as museums under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132). However, the two Centres are actually exhibition centres concerned with heritage preservation and under the management of the Antiquities and Monuments Office while the Film Archive is to conserve Hong Kong films and related materials and facilitate research on such films.

**Panel on Home Affairs**

**Relevant documents on  
Measures to enhance museum services**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Home Affairs	18.6.2007 (Item VII)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Home Affairs	11.1.2008 (Item III)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Home Affairs	13.11.2009 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	6.1.2010	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 3675-3678 (Question No. 8)</a>
Panel on Home Affairs	5.2.2010 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	28.4.2010	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 7593-7595 (Question No. 16)</a>