

**For discussion on  
22 July 2013**

**Legislative Council  
Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Home Affairs**

**Concerted Efforts to assist Street Sleepers**

This paper aims at introducing to Members the Administration's support services for street sleepers and the assistance rendered to street sleepers staying underneath the Ferry Street Flyover.

**Support Services for Street Sleepers**

2. Since 2004, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has provided subvention to three non-governmental organisations (NGOs), namely the Salvation Army, St. James' Settlement and the Christian Concern for the Homeless Association, for each of them to operate an Integrated Services Team for Street Sleepers (IST). The ISTs provide integrated services for street sleepers, including day and late-night outreaching visits, emergency shelter/short-term hostel placement, counselling, employment guidance, personal care (e.g. bathing, haircut and meal), emergency relief fund to cover various expenses (e.g. short-term payment of rent and living costs, rental deposit, other removal expenses, etc.), aftercare service and service referrals, etc. The comprehensive services provided by the ISTs aim to address the emergency needs of street sleepers and enhance their work motivation and skills so as to help them give up street sleeping and become self-reliant as far as possible. Besides, SWD also subvents the Society for Community Organisation to run a Care and Support Networking Team (CSNT) which aims at helping street sleepers and other vulnerable groups reintegrate into the community. Outreaching support, casework and group work services are provided to street sleepers by the CSNT. In 2012-13, 138 street sleepers quitted street sleeping. As at 30 June 2013, the number of registered street sleepers on the Street Sleepers Registry (SSR) maintained by SWD was 648.

3. To address the emergency and short-term accommodation needs of street sleepers, SWD subvents NGOs to operate five urban hostels and two emergency shelters, providing a total of 202 accommodation places.

The average utilisation rate of these hostels and shelters in 2012-13 was 81.1%. Apart from these government subvented hostels and temporary shelter, there are seven hostels operated by NGOs on a self-financing basis, providing a total of 397 places of overnight or temporary accommodation for street sleepers. Any individuals (including street sleepers) who have genuine and pressing housing needs but are unable to solve the problems themselves may approach Integrated Family Service Centres run by SWD or NGOs. Based on the specific circumstances and needs of each individual case, appropriate assistance will be provided to the persons concerned, including the provision of short-term financial assistance, arranging for them to stay in hostels run by NGOs, and referring cases eligible for Compassionate Rehousing to the Housing Department for consideration of allocating public rental housing, etc.

### **Greening works project underneath Ferry Street Flyover**

4. The greening works underneath the Ferry Street Flyover is one of the District Minor Works projects initiated by the Yau Tsim Mong District Council (YTMDC). The proposal to install a green zone and landscaping features underneath the Ferry Street Flyover was first raised at the YTMDC District Facilities Management Committee (DFMC) meeting on 10 March 2011, with a view to greening and improving the environment. After several rounds of discussion, the DFMC endorsed on 10 May 2012 the proposal to install planters along the edges of the said area for greening purpose. The Yau Tsim Mong District Office (YTMDO) has also consulted the resident organisations, schools and trade associations in the vicinity, as well as the concerned Area Committee on the proposed project. Views received during the consultation period were largely supportive of the project.

#### *Assistance rendered to street sleepers*

5. YTMDC understands that the proposed works project may affect the street sleepers staying underneath the flyover. It has always been concerned about the conditions of the street sleepers and urged SWD to provide counselling services and support to the street sleepers. Through the subvented Salvation Army Integrated Services Team for Street Sleepers (the Salvation Army), SWD arranged a number of outreaching visits to the concerned area to provide counselling services to the street

sleepers and offer information on accommodation options, including emergency and short-term accommodation services, hostels for single persons, private rented abode, etc., with a view to helping them quit street sleeping as soon as possible.

6. In addition, YTMDO, Lands Department (LandsD) and SWD met with representatives of the street sleepers and the Society for Community Organisation (SOCO) on 2 May 2013 to better understand the accommodation needs of the street sleepers. Separately, some YTMDC members also met with representatives of the street sleepers and SOCO at a meeting on 21 June 2013 to listen to their concerns and requests. To further strengthen the assistance to the street sleepers, YTMDO and SWD have continued to liaise with non-governmental organisations in the district to specially arrange their social workers to visit the street sleepers and give advice on the accommodation options based on individual needs of the street sleepers.

7. On the other hand, YTMDO, LandsD, SWD, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Police met with the representatives of residents in Yau Ma Tei on 11 July 2013 to listen to their concerns over the environmental hygiene and public order conditions underneath the Ferry Street Flyover, as well as the living conditions of the street sleepers there.

8. According to latest figures provided by SWD, it is estimated that there were around 16 street sleepers in the area, eight of which have successfully quitted street sleeping recently through our assistance, and two others have left the area themselves. The remaining six street sleepers include five from ethnic minority groups and one from local community.

### **Advice Sought**

9. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Social Welfare Department  
Home Affairs Department  
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