

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)455/13-14

(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/HA

Panel on Home Affairs

Minutes of meeting held on Friday, 8 November 2013, at 8:30 am in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon YIU Si-wing
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen
- Members attending** : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
- Members absent** : Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP

**Public Officers : Item IV
attending**

Mr TSANG Tak-sing, GBS, JP
Secretary for Home Affairs

Mrs Pamela TAN KAM Mi-wah, JP
Director of Home Affairs

Miss Dora FU Ha-man, JP
Assistant Director of Home Affairs (3)

Item V

Mr TSANG Tak-sing, GBS, JP
Secretary for Home Affairs

Mrs Betty FUNG, JP
Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Miss Olivia CHAN, JP
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Leisure Services) 2

**Clerk in : Ms Alice LEUNG
attendance Chief Council Secretary (2) 2**

**Staff in : Miss Josephine SO
attendance Senior Council Secretary (2) 6**

Miss Emma CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

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**I. Confirmation of minutes
(LC Paper No. CB(2)182/13-14)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2013 were confirmed.

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II. Information papers issued since the last meeting

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)84/13-14(01), CB(2)200/13-14(01), CB(2)201/13-14(01) and (02), CB(2)202/13-14(01) and CB(2)239/13-14(01))

2. Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting -

- (a) Administration's response to Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN's letter dated 27 September 2013 concerning the Tin Sau Bazaar in Tin Shui Wai;
- (b) Referral memorandum from the Clerk to the Panel on Environmental Affairs, enclosing a joint letter from Hon KWOK Wai-keung and Hon TANG Ka-piu dated 6 June 2013 concerning the government's policy on street performance;
- (c) Letters dated 30 October 2013 respectively from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN and Dr Hon Helena WONG on issues relating to a new ballet production of The Hong Kong Ballet;
- (d) Administration's response to the joint letter from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN and Hon Dennis KWOK dated 7 October 2013 concerning the flag raising ceremony at Golden Bauhinia Square, Wan Chai, on 1 October 2013; and
- (e) Administration's response to the two letters dated 30 October 2013 respectively from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN and Dr Hon Helena WONG regarding recent media reports on a new ballet production of The Hong Kong Ballet.

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)203/13-14(01) and (02))

List of outstanding items for discussion

3. Members noted that the list of outstanding items for discussion (LC Paper No. CB(2)203/13-14(01)) had been updated pursuant to the discussion at the informal meeting on 21 October 2013 between the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Panel and the Secretary for Home Affairs ("SHA") to discuss the Panel's work plan for the 2013-2014 session. Members did not raise any query on the list.

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Regular meeting in December 2013

4. Members agreed to discuss the following two items proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting to be held on Friday, 13 December 2013, at 8:30 am -

- (a) Regulation of the property management industry; and
- (b) Reprovisioning of Shanghai Street refuse collection point and street sleepers' services units to the site at Hau Cheung Street, Yau Ma Tei for the phase II development of the Yau Ma Tei Theatre project.

Letters concerning a new ballet production of The Hong Kong Ballet

5. Mr IP Kwok-him noted that the Deputy Chairman proposed in his letter dated 30 October 2013 that the Panel should discuss issues relating to a new production of The Hong Kong Ballet. In seeking details on the areas of concern of the Deputy Chairman, Mr IP questioned the propriety for the Panel to discuss the matter. He pointed out that the Panel had all along advocated freedom of creation of arts groups and the Panel's discussion of the matter would be seen as interfering the freedom of artistic expression and creation of arts groups.

6. The Deputy Chairman said that there were recent media reports on and overwhelming concern from the cultural and art sector about alleged political interference with the performance of and self-censorship exercised by The Hong Kong Ballet in respect of its new production "*The Dream of the Red Chamber*". Although The Hong Kong Ballet and Ballett Dortmund had issued a joint statement subsequently and the Administration had, at the Panel's request, provided a written response on the matter, many doubts remained unclear. In order to better understand the matter, he considered it necessary for the Panel to provide a platform for relevant parties to give a detailed explanation and clarification.

7. Mr WU Chi-wai said that the matter surrounding The Hong Kong Ballet had indicated that Hong Kong's core values of freedom of speech and expression were at stake. He was concerned that The Hong Kong Ballet might have second guessed the will of the authorities and exercised self-censorship in its performance. He suggested the holding of a special meeting and requested that representatives of The Hong Kong Ballet be invited to attend the meeting.

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8. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan suggested that to facilitate members' consideration of whether and how issues surrounding The Hong Kong Ballet's new production be followed up appropriately by the Panel, The Hong Kong Ballet should be requested to provide a written response explaining and clarifying the matter before a decision was taken by the Panel.

9. The Chairman said that the Panel's discussion should focus on policy matters and not individual cases. Even if members agreed to discuss the matter, it was for the Administration to attend the Panel meeting and explain to members the relevant policy issues arising from the case, instead of the case per se, as referred to by the Deputy Chairman.

10. Mr IP Kwok-him and Mr YIU Si-wing considered it inappropriate for the Panel to discuss any case on account of unsubstantiated allegations made in press reports. Mr IP objected to the holding of a special meeting to discuss individual case. He considered that the freedom of artistic creation and artistic autonomy of arts groups should be respected. He did not support the proposal to invite a particular arts group, The Hong Kong Ballet in the present case, to attend a Panel meeting for the purpose of discussing a particular case. His view was echoed by Mr YIU. Mr Frankie YICK also expressed reservation about the proposal.

11. The Deputy Chairman stressed that he had no intention of interfering with the artistic autonomy of The Hong Kong Ballet. His proposal was made having regard to the wide public concern about suspected political interference with the performances of and self-censorship by The Hong Kong Ballet, as well as the adverse effect on local art development.

12. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che considered it necessary for members to find out what had happened, so as to clear the doubts surrounding the matter. He suggested to discuss the matter at the next regular meeting and to invite the relevant arts group, i.e. The Hong Kong Ballet, to attend the meeting. Ms Cyd HO said that "*The Dream of the Red Chamber*" was a newly commissioned ballet co-produced by The Hong Kong Ballet and Ballett Dortmund. Pointing out that The Hong Kong Ballet was receiving subvention from the Government and it was reported that the latter had made unfavourable views on the matter, she considered that the Panel might pursue the subject from the perspective of enabling cultural exchange and international collaboration. Ms HO and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen supported the Panel's discussion of the subject. Ms HO further said that it was up to The Hong Kong Ballet to decide whether to accept the Panel's invitation to attend a meeting.

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13. As there were divided views among members, the Chairman said that he would discuss with the Deputy Chairman after the meeting on the way forward for handling the matter. Members agreed.

(Post-meeting note: In the light of members' concern, the Chairman, after consulting the Deputy Chairman, decided to include an item "Promoting artistic creation and autonomy of arts groups" in the agenda for the next regular meeting to be held on 13 December 2013. The Chairman also instructed that the nine major performing arts groups receiving subvention from the Government be invited to give written views on this agenda item. The Hong Kong Ballet would be requested to also provide the Panel with a written response explaining and clarifying the matter about its new ballet production. Members were informed of the above meeting arrangements vide LC Paper No. CB(2)356/13-14 dated 25 November 2013.)

IV. Review of allowance and expense reimbursement arrangements for District Council members

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)203/13-14(03) and (04))

14. The Chairman reminded Members that in accordance with Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure, a member should not move any motion or amendment relating to or speak on a matter in which he had a pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, except where he had disclosed the nature of that interest.

15. At the invitation of the Chairman, SHA briefed Members on the Administration's proposed enhancements to the remuneration package for District Council ("DC") members with effect from 1 January 2014 (i.e. within the current DC term) as set out in its paper for the meeting.

Increase of the accountable Operating Expenses Reimbursement ("OER")

16. Mr IP Kwok-him declared that he was a member of Central and Western DC and was returned from the District Council (First) Functional Constituency. While expressing support for the proposed enhancements to the remuneration package for DC members, he considered that there were rooms for further improvement in areas such as provision of allowance for DC members to conduct overseas duty visits and the arrangements of renting premises for ward offices. Mr IP said that the average monthly rental paid by DC members for their ward offices in public housing estates was \$6,000, whereas the rent for office space in private buildings was exorbitant. Mr IP and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan both suggested that consideration should be given

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to setting up a dedicated provision to provide subsidies to those DC members who had to rent private premises for ward offices. Dr CHIANG was of the view that the level of rental subsidies to DC members should be the difference between the average costs of renting office units of comparable size in private and public premises.

17. Mr WU Chi-wai declared that he was a member of Wong Tai Sin DC. In his view, the need to rent private premises as ward offices and the high rentals were the major causes leading to some DC members' shortfall in OER. He considered that the Administration should keep a separate account and set a ceiling for reimbursement of the actual expenses on rental charges. He stressed that improving DC members' remuneration package without giving due regard to their roles and functions might trigger public criticism about the proportionality and reasonableness of such an increase. He hoped that the Administration would take this into consideration when reviewing the roles and functions of DCs.

18. SHA responded that the Administration had received and considered similar views expressed by other DC members and Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members representing the District Council Functional Constituencies, in reviewing DC members' remuneration package and drawing up the present proposal. Director of Home Affairs ("DHA") added that at the focus group meetings with DC members to gauge their views on the current remuneration package, some DC members had also made similar requests. SHA explained that the proposed 34% increase was based on assumptions regarding the expenditures that DC members needed to incur in renting a Grade C office at market rental as ward office; employing a full-time assistant and a part-time assistant; and covering miscellaneous operating expenses. In cases where individual DC members opted to rent office space of a higher grade for their ward offices, the proposed increase of OER might not be sufficient to pay for the rent. However, based on past expenditure patterns, the proposed increase in the rate of OER would fully cover the relevant expenditure of around 98% of the DC members who had made the claims.

19. The Chairman queried the Administration's claim that an increased OER amounting to \$408,000 per annum would help alleviate the financial pressure on around 98% of the DC members who had made the claims. He said that there were cases where no public housing estates were found in some DC constituencies and DC members servicing these constituencies had to set up their ward offices in private premises. In view of the rapid increase in the rentals of offices in private buildings, the Chairman suggested that the Government should consider providing DC members whose constituencies did not have public housing estates with rental subsidies to enable them to

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cope with their rental expenses for setting up their ward offices in private premises.

20. Mr YIU Si-wing said that he was supportive of the proposal to enhance the remuneration package for DC members. Noting that the current level of OER was insufficient and many DC members had to finance the unmet expenditure with their own resources, he asked whether the Administration had statistics on the "out-of-pocket" expenses incurred by individual DC members. The Chairman said that it was unfair to require DC members to meet the shortfall through their own means.

21. In response, DHA advised that -

- (a) the estimation was based on all DC members' actual expenditure patterns and past utilization of OER;
- (b) although the Administration could not predict the rental increase upon the renewal of tenancies of ward offices, it was believed that the proposed 34% increase in the rate of OER would help cater a reasonable rise in office rental; and
- (c) OER was a lump sum provision provided for DC members to meet expenses incurred for discharging their functions and duties. The major expenditure items included salaries for their assistants, rental for ward offices and other operating expenses (e.g. utility expenses, publicity and printing). DC members were given the flexibility in deciding on the types of offices to be rented and deploying their OER according to their operational needs.

22. SHA reiterated that the proposed increase in OER by 34% was already high enough to meet the imminent need for increases in the operation-related expenses for existing DC members. The Administration would keep DC members' remuneration package under regular review to ensure that it was appropriate and in line with time. As regards the suggestion of setting up a dedicated provision for providing rental subsidies to DC members who set up ward offices in private premises, SHA explained that as office rents varied in different districts, the suggestion involved complicated technical issues and would require careful consideration. DHA further said that there were cases where some DC members chose to make use of their own premises as ward office and spent almost 100% of their OER entitlement on staff employment. The suggestion of creating a dedicated funding provision for reimbursement of rental expenses might affect the flexibility of these DC members in deploying their resources.

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23. The Deputy Chairman considered that the Administration should consider providing office space to DC members for setting up ward offices as it was the best solution to address the problem of rising market rentals of private premises. Noting that the Administration proposed to implement the enhancement measures with effect from 1 January 2014, ahead of the next DC election scheduled for November 2015, he pointed out that this arrangement might be seen as enhancing the competitive advantages of incumbent DC members over other potential candidates who might run for the election. There were concerns that incumbent DC members could use the increased resources in enhancing their services or building their networks in readiness for the next DC election.

24. SHA stressed that the enhancement measures were mapped out in response to calls from DC members that there was an urgent need for enhancing OER of their present remuneration package to facilitate them to effectively perform their duties. The decision was purely based on an objective review of the actual situation and there was absolutely no political consideration. On the suggestion that the Administration should consider providing office spaces to DC members as ward offices, SHA said that it was not easy to identify suitable sites and premises for such purpose in every constituency given the limited land supply.

25. Mr Christopher CHUNG said that he had been a member of Eastern DC for over 22 years and had to meet the shortfall from time to time through his own means. He shared the concern over DC members' difficulty in renting offices at the prevailing market rental level and agreed with the view that the Administration should provide rental subsidies or allocate spaces to DC members as ward offices. He also brought up the issues of long service payments for DC members' assistants and writing off computer equipments to illustrate the need for further improvements in the arrangements and entitlement of OER.

26. DHA responded that the Administration was aware of the issues associated with long service payments for staff employed by DC members and would look into the matter in its next review. She pointed out that the remuneration package of DC members included other components, such as the non-accountable monthly provision of Miscellaneous Expenses Allowance ("MEA") at \$4,680. DC members could make use of MEA to cover minor expenses such as entertainment, self-development and minor purchase.

27. Ms Cyd HO considered that the Administration should first formulate some basic components of the accountable OER in terms of the area of office and the number of staff that were required to enable DC members to carry out

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their functions and duties. Based on these components, the Administration could work out a formula/mechanism for adjusting OER according to the inflation rate and the rental market situation.

28. DHA responded with the following points -

- (a) the proposed increase of OER by 34% was based on, among others, DC members' past spending patterns of their OER entitlement;
- (b) in determining the proposed rate, the Administration had made reference to prevailing market rents for private premises of a comparable area size if they were available in public housing estates. Reference had been drawn to the figures published in the Rating and Valuation Department's Hong Kong Property Review;
- (c) the proposed increase was based on assumptions regarding the expenditures that DC members needed to incur in renting a Grade C office at market rental as ward office; employing a full-time assistant and a part-time assistant; and covering miscellaneous operating expenses; and
- (d) OER was also adjusted annually in accordance with the Consumer Price Index (A).

29. In reply to Mr YIU Si-wing's enquiry, DHA confirmed that under the new arrangements, the Administration would allow roll-over of OER entitlement to subsequent years within a DC term in order to provide members with greater flexibility in deploying their resources.

Entitlement of the Setting-up Expenses Reimbursement ("SER")

30. Mr IP Kwok-him considered that taking into account depreciation of furniture and equipment through normal wear and tear over a period of four years, the Administration should increase the ceiling for re-elected DC members to claim SER categorically to 100%, irrespective of whether they had moved their ward offices to new locations in the new DC term. Sharing a similar concern, Mr YIU Si-wing opined that the Administration could consider pitching the maximum amount of the accountable SER which a re-elected DC member could claim per term at around 70% to 80% of that for a new DC member.

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31. In response, DHA advised that the Administration had a standard formula, which was applicable to all government departments, for calculating depreciation of capital items such as furniture and equipment. The suggestion of devising a new mechanism for DC members would require careful consideration. She added that under the existing arrangement, the maximum amount of the accountable SER for a new DC member was \$100,000 per term for renovation and refurbishment of a ward office, procurement of furniture and equipment, and other expenses that were necessary for the set-up of a ward office. While it was believed that less expenditure in this regard would be incurred by re-elected members who had not changed the location of their ward offices in the current term, these members would still be eligible for 50% of the expenses reimbursement in the subsequent DC terms.

Conclusion

32. Summing up, the Chairman said that Panel members supported the proposed enhancements to the remuneration package for DC members with effect from 1 January 2014 and did not raise objection to the Administration's submission of the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration and approval at its meeting in December 2013.

V. Management and maintenance of the Hong Kong Stadium Turf Pitch

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)203/13-14(05) and (06), CB(2)1675/12-13(01) to (03), CB(2)1708/12-13(01) and CB(2)1730/12-13(01) to (06))

33. At the invitation of the Chairman, SHA reported on the management and maintenance of the Hong Kong Stadium ("the Stadium") turf pitch and provided an update on the Administration's review of and improvement works to the pitch of the Stadium, the details of which were set out in the Administration's paper.

Enhancing the quality of the turf pitch

34. Noting that the Administration had set up an Expert Group on the Hong Kong Stadium Turf Pitch ("the Expert Group") in late August 2013 to work on recommendations to improve the quality of the turf pitch, Mr Frankie YICK enquired about the composition of the Expert Group and whether representatives of the Hong Kong Jockey Club ("HKJC") were enlisted to provide professional advice. SHA replied in the positive, adding that the Expert Group comprised local and Mainland turf experts, representatives of HKJC, the Hong Kong Football Association ("HKFA") and

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the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union ("HKRFU") and relevant government departments.

35. While appreciating the Administration's expeditious efforts in formulating and taking forward short-, medium- and long-term measures to restore/enhance the quality of the turf after the incident of the waterlogged pitch of the Stadium in July 2013, Mr WONG Kwok-hing wondered whether the deterioration of the quality of the turf was due to the contracting out of the routine turf maintenance work after the dissolution of the former Urban Council. Mr Frankie YICK said that it was important for the staff responsible for maintaining the turf to work with their heart. Noting that limited sunlight exposure owing to the physical environment and the roof cover over the East and West flanks of the Stadium had hindered the growth and quality of the turf, Mr WONG and Mr YICK both asked about the measures to be adopted by the Administration to address the problem and whether consideration would be given to adopting different grass species.

36. Director of Leisure and Cultural Services ("DLCS") responded that the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") had not contracted out any of its turf maintenance work, including that of the Stadium. At present, the routine turf maintenance of the Stadium was carried out by a six-man team. Although all members of the six-man team responsible for maintaining the turf of the Stadium had either received in-house horticulture training or attended training courses conducted by turf experts commissioned by LCSD, the Administration saw a need to enhance the technical support and training as well as strengthen the emergency response capability of the Stadium staff. For this reason, LCSD would set up a specialized in-house team to provide further professional advice and technical support for the maintenance of all the natural turf pitches under its management. It would also provide staff with more in-depth training courses on turf maintenance, by arranging in batches some 2 000 LCSD staff to attend such training organized locally or overseas in five years' time.

37. DLCS further advised that having studied in detail the test data on the current condition of the turf pitch and taking into account its expected usage, the Expert Group had recommended that, as a thorough improvement measure and to enhance the long-term quality and durability of the pitch, the entire pitch should be reconstructed, including redesigning and replacing the drainage and irrigation systems, and replacing the entire soil structure and the turf. Consideration would be given to installing technologically advanced ancillary facilities, such as growth lights, to promote healthy turf establishment. The reconstruction would involve in-depth and comprehensive technical studies of the design of the turf pitch, the construction techniques to be deployed and the choice of grass species.

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In this regard, she said that while natural grass was preferred by the turf experts, there were also suggestions that a hybrid/reinforced natural grass system should be considered as an option.

38. Mr Christopher CHUNG also declared that he was a member of the former Urban Council. He and Mr IP Kwok-him both pointed out that the pitch problem of the Stadium had long existed, since Wembley International was engaged to manage the Stadium in 1994, without being properly addressed over the years. In their view, the incident in late July 2013 made the Administration resolve to tackle the problem by embarking on the full reconstruction of the entire turf system, including the drainage and irrigation systems. Expressing support for the reconstruction work, Mr IP and Mr Tony TSE asked about the measures to be adopted by the Administration to ensure that large-scale international sports events could be held as usual before the commencement of the reconstruction works and during the temporary closure of the Stadium for the carrying out of the works.

39. DLCS responded that taking into account factors such as the timing of major sports events to be held at the Stadium (e.g. the annual Hong Kong Rugby Sevens and international football matches), the lead time for planning and pre-construction works as well as the optimal season for carrying out the works, the Expert Group estimated that the reconstruction could start after March 2015 at the earliest. While the exact time for closing the Stadium had yet to be decided, the Government would further discuss and consult the relevant organizations, including HKFA and HKRFU, on the matter to minimize the impact of the closure on their planned/scheduled events. LCSD would also explore the possibility of arranging some international sports events/football matches be held in the Mong Kok Stadium and the Siu Sai Wan Sports Ground during the temporary closure of the Stadium.

40. The Chairman said that he had visited Old Trafford of Manchester United this summer and noted that they had just relaid the turf. He was told that the work of relaying the pitch in Old Trafford was completed in about two months' time and costed around one million pounds. He asked about the reasons for the Administration's estimation that the reconstruction works at the Stadium would cost about \$100 million and require longer time to complete.

41. In response, SHA surmised that the returfing exercise in Old Trafford might only involve the replacement of the top soil of the turf. He explained that members of the Expert Group had discussed in detail various issues, including the current condition of the Stadium turf, the management and maintenance approach and various medium- and long-term improvement options (including replacing the top layer of the turf pitch, reconstruction of

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the entire turf system and adopting different grass species). Having studied in detail test data on the current condition of the Stadium pitch and its expected usage, the Expert Group recommended that, as a long-term improvement measure and to ensure the quality and durability of the pitch, the entire pitch should be reconstructed, including redesigning and replacing the drainage and irrigation systems as well as replacing the entire soil structure and the turf. In view of the complexity of the works involved, the cost and the time required for completion might comparatively be higher and longer than the returfing exercise in Old Trafford. DLCS added that the \$100 million figure was only a rough estimate, and a more detailed estimate of the actual cost and time required for the reconstruction project could only be worked out after further technical studies.

42. Regarding the problem associated with impurities found in the top soil of the turf, Ms Cyd HO asked whether any monitoring mechanism was in place to ensure that the quality of sand supplied by LCSD's existing contractor was up to standard.

43. DLCS responded that given the urgent need to replace the top soil of the Stadium turf after the first day of football matches on 24 July 2013, LCSD had requested its contractor to deliver in one single day 70 tons of sand to the Stadium. Under tremendous pressure to complete the large-scale topdressing work within a very tight time-frame, the Stadium staff had omitted the usual procedure of sieving possible impurities from the sand thoroughly before applying them to the pitch. When impurities were detected, LCSD immediately deployed additional hands to remove the impurities from the pitch. To avoid recurrence of similar problems in future, LCSD would require its existing contractor to produce, upon delivery, official documents certifying that the river sand supplied was up to standard and free from impurities. As the current contract would expire in February 2014, LCSD planned to procure quartz sand instead, which was of much higher quality, for the topdressing work of natural turf pitches in future.

44. Mr WU Chi-wai said that he was a member of the former Urban Council. He said that a review had been conducted before the Urban Council was dissolved in 2000 and a host of concrete recommendations put forward for improving the facilities in the Stadium. He requested the Administration to respond in writing whether all the recommendations were taken on board by the Administration after the dissolution of the former Urban Council. Given that staff in LCSD were subject to posting or job rotations, he queried the effectiveness of the manpower arrangement and training to be pursued by LCSD.

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45. In response to the concern raised by Dr CHIANG Lai-wan, DLCS advised that the Government had covered the Stadium pitch with a tarpaulin during the torrential rain in late July. Consideration would be given to continuing with such a practice in future to afford better protection to the turf pitch in times of heavy rain.

Venue hiring and events scheduling arrangements

46. Mr YIU Si-wing asked about the venue hiring and event scheduling arrangements in the interim before the commencement of the reconstruction of the Stadium turf system in 2015.

47. DLCS responded that the Government aimed to give priority to maintaining the quality of the Stadium turf pitch. In this regard, it would strive to adhere strictly to the requirement to reserve at least seven days between matches for turf maintenance and restoration. If two matches were held on the same day, restoration work would take no less than 14 days before the next scheduled activity took place. LCSD would also meet with the main users of the Stadium, including HKFA and HKRFU, to discuss the scheduling and frequency of events and activities, the months for holding events and the conditions of using the venue, so as to minimize the damage to the turf. A balance would be struck to avoid causing excessive damage to the turf or compromising the turf maintenance work whilst seeking to satisfy the needs of different parties in the scheduling of events.

48. Mr WU Chi-wai said that it was equally important to maintain flexibility in the scheduling of sports events/activities. He hoped that the Government's review on the optimal level of usage of the Stadium would not affect the holding of sports events in the Stadium and cause inconvenience to events organizers. DLCS noted the view of Mr WU.

Management and maintenance of the Stadium

49. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that based on the usage of the Stadium during the last playing season (i.e. from September 2012 to August 2013) as set out in the Administration's paper, he did not consider the schedule too packed or frequent that could cause adverse impact on the quality of the turf pitch. He and Mr Christopher CHUNG wondered whether the current pitch problem was largely due to LCSD's poor management and maintenance of the Stadium.

50. The Deputy Chairman, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr WU Chi-wai expressed concern whether the findings of the Administration's review had revealed any maladministration or dereliction of duty on the part of

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government officials, and recommended punishment in respect of any LCSD staff.

51. DLCS explained that to maintain the quality of the pitch at the Stadium, each year about 200 odd days would be reserved for the purpose of turf maintenance. The pitch had been used for 15 years since it was relaid in 1998, and with the passage of more than a decade, a considerable amount of organic matter had accumulated in the top soil, leading to poor surface drainage, which in turn rendered the pitch less durable and more susceptible to damage in adverse weather conditions. DLCS further said that the recent review had concluded that a combination of unfavourable factors (including prolonged and extreme adverse weather conditions, ageing of the turf pitch leading to poor surface drainage, and inability of Stadium staff to respond to unforeseen circumstances during major competitions etc.) had led to the undesirable pitch condition during the football matches in July 2013. While the problem should not be attributed to the fault of one single staff member, LCSD agreed that there was a need to improve the ability of its venue staff to respond to emergencies and to take remedial measures. For this reason, LCSD would set up a specialized in-house team to provide further professional advice and technical support for the maintenance of natural turf pitches under its management, and strengthen the training as well as the emergency response capability of LCSD staff responsible for turf maintenance. It would also take into account the advice of the Expert Group in enhancing its turf management and maintenance practices.

52. In response to Mr CHAN Chi-chuen's enquiry, DLCS said that she had not heard of any overseas football teams blacklisting Hong Kong as a destination for hosting exhibition matches because of the incident in late July 2013. It was her understanding that some other friendly/competitive matches involving well-known football teams in overseas countries were being contemplated.

53. Dr Helena WONG criticized that the incident in late July 2013 had reflected the problem of sloppiness and the lack of foresight and professionalism on the part of LCSD and its venue staff. She asked how the Administration would address the problems.

54. SHA responded that after the matches in July, the Home Affairs Bureau and LCSD took immediate action to examine the pitch problem of the Stadium and followed up on various remedial measures, including setting up the Expert Group to work on the medium and long-term measures for improving the pitch, including, but not limited to, the need for re-designing and replacing the existing pitch system. Details of the improvement measures were set out in the Administration's paper.

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55. Mr IP Kin-yuen held the view that the crux of the problem lay in the incompetence and mismanagement on the part of the Stadium management. Noting that LCSD was conducting a review of the manpower and organization structure of the Stadium management with a view to better meeting the requirements for the management and maintenance of the turf pitch in future, he sought detailed information in this regard.

56. DLCS responded that acknowledging that its frontline staff responsible for turf maintenance might not have adequate expertise, LCSD would set up a specialized in-house team to provide further professional advice and technical support for LCSD staff involved in the maintenance of natural turf pitches. The team would be headed by an expert, who might be recruited from Hong Kong or overseas, with substantial experience in turf management and maintenance. It was hoped that this would bring international turf management standard and experience to LCSD.

(Members agreed to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.)

Other issues discussed

57. The Deputy Chairman expressed disappointment about the decline of local football development in recent years. As the development of sports hinged on the provision of hardware and software, he considered it important for the Administration to ensure that the quality of the turf pitch at the Stadium as well as the facilities in other turf soccer pitches under LCSD's management were up to standard. He was also concerned about the position and progress regarding the proposed establishment of a dedicated football training centre in Tseung Kwan O.

58. In response, SHA made the following points -

- (a) the Government was working closely with HKFA to implement the "Project Phoenix" for the purpose of supporting the long-term development of football in Hong Kong. One of the priority recommendations under "Project Phoenix" is to improve HKFA's internal governance, which would in turn strengthen confidence in the promotion of football in various areas, including giving HKJC a confidence boost in supporting the development of the football training centre in Tseung Kwan O; and
- (b) given that the Stadium was built in 1952, its design was old. The proposed development of the Multi-Purpose Sports Complex ("MPSC") at Kai Tak would be the ultimate solution to

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various problems.

59. Mr Christopher CHUNG said that to alleviate Hong Kong's shortage of venues suitable for hosting major international sports events, it was important to ensure that the sports venues of the proposed development of MPSC at Kai Tak were fully compliant with the requirements of international sports organizations for holding international sports events.

VI. Any other business

(LC Paper No. CB(2)199/13-14)

Continuation of work of the Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project ("the Joint Subcommittee")

60. The Chairman informed members that the Panel on Development had earlier endorsed by circulation of paper the continuation of work of the Joint Subcommittee in the 2013-2014 session.

61. Members noted the progress of work of the Joint Subcommittee and endorsed the proposal for the Joint Subcommittee to continue its work in the 2013-2014 session. The Chairman said that a report would be made to the House Committee for seeking its endorsement of the proposal.

62. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:41 am.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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