

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)543/14-15(04)

Ref : CB2/PL/HA

### **Panel on Home Affairs**

#### **Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 9 January 2015**

#### **Development of football in Hong Kong**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on issues relating to the development of football in Hong Kong, and highlights major concerns of members of the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") on the subject.

#### **Background**

2. According to the Administration, the Hong Kong Football Association ("HKFA"), which is affiliated to the Federation Internationale de Football Association, is the recognized national sports association ("NSA") governing the promotion and development of football in Hong Kong. The setting of priorities and objectives in the promotion and development of local football falls within the purview of HKFA. Its work includes organizing local leagues, selecting and supervising Hong Kong representative teams that play at the international level, and arranging overseas football teams to play exhibition matches.

#### Review of football development in 2008-2010

3. A Members' motion on "Promoting the development of local football" was passed at the Council meeting of 4 June 2008, urging the Administration to promote local football development so as to raise the standard of the sport, enhance community involvement and strengthen social cohesion. When receiving the policy briefing by the Secretary for Home Affairs ("SHA") on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2008-2009 at the Panel's special meeting on 20 October 2008, members criticized the Administration for failing to attach

importance to promoting the development of local football. When the Panel subsequently discussed with the Administration issues relating to the promotion and development of local football at the meeting on 8 May 2009, members were advised that the Administration had been working in partnership with HKFA to help promote and develop football, primarily by providing funding and venue support. Members were also advised that the Administration would commission a consultancy study with a view to developing measures and strategies to raise profile and standards of football in Hong Kong.

4. At the Council meeting of 6 January 2010, a Members' motion on "Promoting the sports development of Hong Kong" was passed, urging the Administration, among others, to provide additional funding for promoting the development of local football. When the Panel was briefed on the key findings of the "Consultancy Study on Football Development in Hong Kong" ("the Consultancy Study") [LC Paper No. CB(2)1106/09-10(01)] and the Administration's proposals for implementing the recommendations in the Consultancy Study at the meeting on 17 March 2010, members were advised that football in Hong Kong was far from meeting its full development potential, and it was possible to envisage a transformation of football in Hong Kong within the next five to 10 years if changes were implemented in a timely and effective way. The Consultancy Study made a total of 49 recommendations, of which the following were considered key recommendations -

- (a) improved governance of HKFA;
- (b) establishment of a new Hong Kong professional league;
- (c) strengthening of the Hong Kong representative teams;
- (d) creation of more development pathways for players;
- (e) improvement of facilities;
- (f) establishment of a new Football Training Centre<sup>1</sup>; and
- (g) promotion of the status of football players.

5. To assess the effect of implementing these recommendations, the Consultancy Study set out a number of key targets, including (a) to improve the

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<sup>1</sup> The consultant noted that the development of a football training centre in Tseung Kwan O had been under discussion between HKFA and the Hong Kong Jockey Club ("HKJC"), and recommended that the Government invited HKJC to develop and manage the Football Training Centre. The consultant considered that the management of the proposed Football Training Centre should work in partnership with HKFA and other stakeholders with a view to developing a pool of elite and senior players.

FIFA world ranking of the Hong Kong Team from 143 in 2009 to 120 in 2012 and 100 in 2015; (b) to increase the number of registered players to 280 000 in 2014; (c) to increase the percentage of population playing football from 2.16% in 2009 to 4.0% in 2014; (d) to increase the average number of spectators in each First Division football match from about 1 000 in 2009 to 5 000 in 2015; (e) to increase the number of artificial turf pitches from 11 in 2009 to 34 in 2015; and (f) to start the operation of the Football Training Centre in 2012. Members were advised that the Administration would work with HKFA and other stakeholders to implement the recommendations, and form the Football Taskforce to oversee the implementation of the relevant plans and programmes.

### "Project Phoenix"

6. According to the Administration's replies to Members' written questions during the examination of the Estimates of Expenditure 2014-2015, HKFA appointed a "change agent" in October 2010 to formulate a football development strategy, entitled the "Project Phoenix", to help HKFA in the areas of governance structure, development strategy and business planning in order to take forward the recommendations made by the Consultancy Study. The Sports Commission endorsed in October 2011 a proposal to earmark \$20 million annually over a period of three years from 2011-2012 onwards for allocation to HKFA to implement the "Project Phoenix". The funding started in November 2011. By the end of February 2014, HAB had allocated \$35.9 million to HKFA to implement the "Project Phoenix".

### **Members' concerns**

7. Members discussed specifically issues relating to football development in Hong Kong at two Panel meetings in May 2009 and March 2010. They also expressed concerns on the subject at a number of other Panel meetings in the past three years. Members' major concerns are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Government's support for football development

8. When discussing the promotion and development of local football in May 2009, some members expressed grave concern about the continuous drop in the international ranking of the Hong Kong Team in the past two decades and the decline in audience attendance for local football matches. Concerns were also raised about the insufficient funding for the First Division teams, lack of career prospects for professional players and coaches, and inadequate international exposure of local players. There was a view that the Administration should enhance its support for football development, including increasing the annual subvention for HKFA. There was, however, another

view raised at the meeting in March 2010 that the Government should be mindful of the impact of tilting its policy towards a particular sport, as far as fairness and balanced development of other sports were concerned.

9. According to the Administration, the annual subvention for HKFA was among the highest as compared to the funding received by other NSAs. The Administration was committed to embarking on major reforms as recommended by the Consultancy Study with a view to turning the vicious cycle in football development to one that was virtuous, and regarded this as a direct response to the concerns of Legislative Council Members and the public on the decline of football and their aspirations for revitalizing this popular sport among Hong Kong people. To this end, the Administration had adjusted its stance by tilting towards the development of football in terms of policy and financial support, including earmarking funds for the proposed reforms.

#### Reform of HKFA

10. At the Panel meeting in March 2010, there was a view that among all the recommendations of the Consultancy Study, the most crucial one was to revamp the governance structure of HKFA. There was another view that the Administration should explain to the public clear targets, strategies and plans for the restructuring of HKFA prior to the injection of funds for the reform of HKFA. Concern was also raised about the timeframe/benchmarks for evaluating the progress of implementing the reform of HKFA.

11. According to the Administration, HKFA, as the NSA for football, would play a leading role in implementing the recommendations of the Consultancy Study, with an appropriate level of support from the Government. While the Administration saw the need for HKFA to engage an outside party as a "change agent" to improve its governance and management, as recommended by the Consultancy Study, it would respect HKFA's operation autonomy provided by the Olympics Charter. A taskforce would be set up to consider the priority and implementation details of the recommendations in consultation with HKFA and relevant stakeholders.

#### Development of players and district teams

12. Members had repeatedly expressed the view that the Administration should enhance its efforts on the development of young players and promotion of district football. There was a view that the Administration should inspire young players to pursue a career in football by providing professional players with more developmental and educational opportunities and a decent standard of living. There was another view that the Administration should devote more resources to the development of district football teams to complement the major changes in football reform.

13. The Administration advised that it would allocate additional resources for district and representative teams and at the elite level for coaches and training facilities, and work closely with HKFA to study ways to strengthen the support for football players and coaches. The recommendations in the Consultancy Study, such as the creation of more development pathways, provision of systematic coaching for players, and enhancement of their educational and vocational opportunities, were essentially aiming at building strong professional league and representative teams, and hence raising the status and market value of football players. In the long run, corporate sponsorship and public interest in the game were vital in sustaining the status of football and inspiring young people to pursue a career in the sport.

#### Provision of football facilities

14. Members had repeatedly expressed concerns about the Administration's plan to provide training and competition facilities for football. Concerns were raised about the shortage of football pitches in primary/secondary schools as well as inadequate football facilities for young people at district level. When discussing the management and maintenance of the Hong Kong Stadium turf pitch at the Panel meeting on 8 November 2013, members urged the Administration to ensure that the quality of the turf pitch at the Hong Kong Stadium as well as the facilities in other soccer pitches managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") were up to the standard.

15. According to the Administration, it would endeavour to secure the necessary resources and support from the District Councils ("DCs") so as to reach the target of providing a total of 34 new/converted third-generation artificial turf pitches for public use in the five years from 2010 to 2015, as recommended by the Consultancy Study. Arrangements would be made for schools to block-book in advance sports facilities managed by LCSD, and the Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation could book the facilities 12 months in advance for organizing competitions and training. LCSD would continue to liaise with DCs and the Education Bureau for measures to improve the facility support to schools. Furthermore, the Administration considered that the proposed development of the Multi-Purpose Sports Complex at Kai Tak would solve various problems including the shortage of public sports facilities and the lack of up-to-date venues for hosting major international sports events.

#### **Relevant Council questions**

16. In reply to the written questions raised at the Council meetings of 12 February and 11 June 2014 concerning the development of local football and the progress of the "Project Phoenix", the Administration advised that among

the 33 recommendations under the "Project Phoenix", 22 had been adopted by HKFA and the remaining 11 were either on-going or underway. The completed and on-going recommendations included HKFA's approval of a new constitution, its adoption of a new board structure and re-organization of its administrative structure<sup>2</sup>, and improvements in areas such as youth development, coach education, the development of women's football, the training of referees, and the management and training of the Hong Kong representative teams.

### **Recent developments**

17. At the Panel meeting on 10 January 2014, some members expressed concerns about incidents of suspected manipulation of match results of the Hong Kong soccer league. They considered it necessary for the Administration to update members on HKFA's implementation of the "Project Phoenix" and the Administration's next course of action having regard to the effectiveness of the project.

18. The Administration will update the Panel on the development of football in Hong Kong at its meeting on 9 January 2015.

### **Relevant papers**

19. A list of relevant papers, motions passed and questions raised at the Council meetings is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
7 January 2015

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<sup>2</sup> According to FIFA's website ([https://www.hkfa.com/en/load\\_page/6](https://www.hkfa.com/en/load_page/6)), its 2011-2015 Board of Directors comprises the President, the Chairman and 7 Directors (including 4 Club Directors and 3 Independent Directors). The senior management of the FIFA Secretariat included the Chief Executive Officer, the General Secretary, the Head of Football Development, the Referees Manager, the Technical Director & Head Coach, and the Head of Corporate Governance.

**Relevant papers on  
Development of football in Hong Kong**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper / motion / question
Legislative Council	4.6.2008	<a href="#">Members' motion on "Promoting the development of local football"</a>  <a href="#">Progress report</a>
Panel on Home Affairs	20.10.2008 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	8.5.2009 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	6.1.2010	<a href="#">Members' motion on "Promoting the sports development in Hong Kong"</a>  <a href="#">Progress report</a>
Panel on Home Affairs	17.3.2010 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	8.11.2013 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	10.1.2014 (Item I)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	12.2.2014	<a href="#">Official Records of Proceedings Pages 5174 to 6178 (written question raised by Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN on "Support for the development of football in Hong Kong")</a>
	11.6.2014	<a href="#">Official Records of Proceedings Pages 14787 to 14788 (written question raised by Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN on "the Project Phoenix of Hong Kong Football Association")</a>