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Panel on Home Affairs

Information note prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 17 May 2016

Free admission to permanent exhibitions of designated museums of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

The Chief Executive stated in his 2016 Policy Address that the month-long free admission to museums of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") under the "Appreciate Hong Kong" Campaign¹ has been well received by the public and the Government has decided to make free admission to the permanent exhibitions of designated LCSD museums a standing practice. Specifically, the permanent exhibitions of five fee-charging LCSD museums (namely the Hong Kong Museum of Art, the Hong Kong Museum of History, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence and the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum) will offer free admission for the public. The permanent exhibitions of the Hong Kong Science Museum ("HKScM") and the Hong Kong Space Museum ("HKSpM") will offer free admission for full-time students. Through the free admission arrangement ("the new initiative"), the Administration aims to further promote culture and art, and knowledge and experience in history and science, and encourage more visits to the museums to widen the audience base.

2. According to the Administration's replies to written questions raised by Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditures 2016-2017, the five fee-charging museums² recorded a total attendance of 317 624 in January 2016

¹ Of the 17 museums managed by LCSD, seven are fee-charging museums. Under the "Appreciate Hong Kong" Campaign, a territory-wide public participation campaign held by the current-term Government, the public was offered free admission in January 2016 to five designated fee-charging LCSD museums, including the Hong Kong Science Museum, the Hong Kong Museum of History, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence and the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum. As the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the permanent exhibition halls of the Hong Kong Space Museum had been closed for renovation, they were not included in the list. These two museums are expected to be re-opened in 2019 and late 2016 respectively.

² Please refer to footnote 1 for details.

(i.e. the free admission period), representing a 58.5% increase over January 2015. It is estimated that the overall attendance of the permanent exhibitions at the seven fee-charging museums will increase by around 30% after the implementation of the new initiative. An additional funding of \$13.5 million will be allocated to LCSD in 2016-2017 (including \$11.1 million to cover the cost for additional service requirements on security guards, cleansing, technical and maintenance services and \$2.4 million for the creation of 15 time-limited civil service posts) in anticipation of an increase in attendance and breakdown rate of exhibits upon the implementation of the new initiative.

3. Members may also wish to note that in its reply to a written question raised by Hon Frederick FUNG on museum services at the Council Meeting of 2 March 2016, the Administration advised that the attendance recorded by HKScM during the free admission period in January 2016 had more than doubled the attendance during the same period last year (i.e. the normal fee-charging period). However, the damage rate of interactive exhibits in HKScM had also doubled at the same time. Taking into consideration the capacity of HKScM and HKSpM, and the policy objective of enhancing the promotion of science and astronomical knowledge among students, LCSD had decided to offer free admission to the permanent exhibitions of both museums to full-time students only. Meanwhile, the arrangement for free museum admission on Wednesdays will be maintained, i.e. everyone can visit the permanent exhibitions of museums on Wednesdays free of charge.

4. The Secretary for Home Affairs is empowered under section 124J of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) to prescribe by regulation the admission fees to museums. The Administration will consult the Panel on its proposal to amend the Public Health and Municipal Services (Fees and Charges) (Museums) Regulation (Cap. 132 sub. leg. CK) to implement the new initiative at the next meeting on 17 May 2016.