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27 May 2019

Clerk, Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
No.1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Mr Anthony CHU)

Dear Mr Chu,

**Public Accounts Committee
Chapter 2 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 72
Management of Greening Master Plans**

Thank you for your letter dated 15 May 2019 to the Secretary for Development regarding the captioned chapter. Our response to Questions 1 and 2 is attached at **Annex** for consideration please.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Vina'.

(VINA WONG)

for Secretary for Development

Encl

c.c. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (fax no. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit (fax no. 2583 9063)
Director of Civil Engineering and Development (fax no. 2246 8708)
Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (fax no. 2691 4661)

**The Development Bureau's Response to Questions Raised by
the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council on
Chapter 2 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 72**

Management of Greening Master Plans

Part 4: Overseeing and public engagement of Greening Master Plans

- 1) It is mentioned in paragraph 4.6 that “the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) had not reported the implementation progress to the Greening Master Plan Committee (GMP Committee) and the Steering Committee on Greening, Landscape and Tree Management (GLTM) since commencement of the contracts for the related greening works.” In this connection, please inform this Committee:
 - (a) of the prevailing reporting procedures and guidelines;
 - (b) of the definition of “problematic” cases mentioned in paragraph 4.7(b), which states that “only problematic cases would be escalated to the Steering Committee on GLTM for resolution”;
 - (c) given that it is mentioned in paragraph 4.20 that the Department agrees with the recommendations in paragraph 4.18 to ensure the periodic reporting of the progress and results in implementing greening works under GMPs for the New Territories (NT) to the GMP Committee and Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS), of the expected dates for implementation of the related recommendations as well as the staff establishment and expenditure in relation to such work?

Response

- (a) The CEDD reports the implementation progress of various greening works from time to time to the GMP Committee. If the contents are simple and straightforward, the Department will make the report by circulation of papers. The CEDD reported to the Steering Committee on GLTM at the meeting held on 1 April 2019 and will report again to the Steering Committee on GLTMS depending on the progress and if required.

- (b) “Problematic” cases are those cases that involve the coordination of inter-departmental efforts or collaboration which the departments are unable to handle by themselves. Therefore, these cases have to be escalated to the Steering Committee on GLTM for resolution.
 - (c) The CEDD reported the results of the GMPs for Southeast and Northwest NT to the GMP Committee and the Steering Committee on GLTM (its members include a representative of the Development Bureau’s GLTMS) on 22 March and 1 April 2019 respectively. The Department will, at various implementation stages of the greening works, report to the GMP Committee and the Steering Committee on GLTM the progress and results of the GMPs for Northeast and Southwest NT. As the Department handles the related work with its existing manpower, there is no additional expenditure and no breakdowns of expenditure is available.
- 2) **It is stated in paragraph 4.10 that “GMPs for urban areas had not set any time frame for completion of medium and long-term measures”, and as indicated in Table 14, of the 288 to-be-followed-up measures, 102 (35%) were classified as “to be kept in view”, 156 (54%) as “to be explored” and 30 (11%) as “to be implemented”. In this connection, please provide information on the following:**
- (a) **It is further stated in paragraph 4.14 that “While GLTMS had taken certain follow-up actions with the responsible departments on the implementation progress of the 221 measures under their purview..., it had not taken specific follow-up actions”. Please advise what the certain follow-up actions were and why no specific follow-up actions had been taken.**
 - (b) **What are the latest situation and progress of the 288 to-be followed-up measures?**
 - (c) **Currently, are there any guidelines and manpower to assist the assessment officers to follow up on the progress of the measures and allow such officers to complete their monitoring work precisely according to guidelines? If yes, what are the details? If no, will the Administration consider the formulation of them?**

- (d) **What are the reasons that the GMPs for urban areas had not set any time frame for completion of medium and long-term measures? Does it have anything to do with problems relating to expenditures and staff establishments?**
- (e) **Further to the above question, what can be done to alleviate the problems?**

Response

- (a) The GLTMS of the Development Bureau had, through letters and memoranda, instructed the departments and encouraged private sector/public organisations to follow up actively on taking forward the implementation of the proposed medium and long-term greening measures whenever the right condition arises (for example, in cases where a related public works project is taken forward or a redevelopment programme is commenced). Subsequently, the GLTMS also obtained constant updates on the progress through face-to-face conversations and phone calls. The “certain follow-up actions” refers to such verbal follow-up actions.

For most of these measures, their next stage of work could only be formulated subject to the actual circumstances. Hence, the GLTMS had not taken specific actions to make it mandatory for the departments to submit written progress reports.

- (b) Regarding the 288 measures mentioned above, the GLTMS has, since March this year, made written requests to the departments and private sector/public organisations to report on the implementation of the greening measures, and provide reasons if the measures are yet to be implemented. Amongst all measures, 65 measures have been completed, 11 measures will be implemented, 66 measures are found infeasible (reasons include the following: the original proposed planting locations are either no longer suitable for planting due to changes in the site surroundings or have been used for other purposes amidst development in local areas) and remaining measures are being reviewed and required further clarifications.
- (c) The GLTMS has been overseeing the work related to GMPs at the policy level covering project proposals, progress, funding

applications and greening targets. Officers responsible for assessing the progress of medium and long-term greening measures are from professional grades with professional qualifications. Being familiar with the implementation of greening works and experienced in project management, they are competent to conduct the monitoring work.

(d) & (e)

The medium and long-term greening measures for GMPs should be incorporated with other programmes and urban redevelopment projects. Only by doing so can these measures be taken forward during the delivery of related public works or redevelopment programmes. Works project takes time and we have to take into account the actual circumstances (such as the surrounding developments and public views consideration) before an implementation timetable can be formulated. In view of the various uncertainties, it is indeed difficult to set an exact time frame for completion of medium and long-term greening measures. This has nothing to do with expenditures or staff establishments.

The urban environment is constantly developing and changing while medium and long-term measures involve a long time during which the land situation, public opinion, social demand, etc. may also change. It may be unrealistic to formulate medium and long-term greening measures solely based on the current environment. Hence, the GLTMS issued a technical circular in 2012, stating that for any works projects involving designs for greening on new roads, the departments concerned should make reference to the GMP themes to ensure that the greening themes for various districts can be brought out. The newly developed GMPs for the NT no longer include medium to long-term greening measures, which are susceptible to changes in the actual environment.