



康樂及文化事務署
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

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來函檔案 YOUR REF :

Clerk to Panel on Public Service
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1, Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Wendy JAN)

27 December 2018

Dear Ms JAN,

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

**Submission from
the General Union of HKSAR Government Leisure Services Staff**

Thank you for your letter of 29 November 2018 relaying the views of the General Union of HKSAR Government Leisure Services Staff regarding the issue on staff establishment and deployment of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) for tree management works on Unleased and Unallocated Government Land (UUGL) within 10m from public roads. We have looked into the case and our substantial reply is as follows.

All along, LCSD is tasked to manage trees within our venues and on roadside amenities areas. Six Regional Tree Teams (RTTs) under the department, together with horticultural maintenance contractors are responsible for carrying out the tree maintenance duties. The duties of RTTs include monitoring performance of the horticultural contractors, conducting regular tree risk assessments, following up tree risk mitigation measures and tree maintenance works such as crown thinning, reduction, lifting, pest & disease control, and handling of tree related complaints, etc. In accordance with the Director of Audit's Report No. 63 released in October 2014, a

number of recommendations were put forward on the government's efforts in enhancing tree safety. In response to the recommendations, LCSD was tasked by the Development Bureau (DevB) to gradually take over from the Lands Department the responsibilities of managing and maintaining some 150 000 roadside trees on UUGLs falling within 10m from kerb of public roads, except expressways in October 2015.

To cope with the new tree management arrangement, it would be necessary to strengthen the manpower of the RTTs. To this end, 24 and 21 permanent posts were created in LCSD in 2016-17 and 2018-19 respectively, involving a total of 45 permanent posts. The newly created posts were responsible for handling complaints; arranging and monitoring tree inspection services provided by the contractors; auditing the Tree Risk Assessments reports done by the contractors and monitoring the performance and quality of tree risk mitigation works conducted by the contractors. In fact, the core duties of these additional posts are in line with the scope of duties of the RTTs. Amongst these 45 permanent posts, 7 General Grade posts are mainly responsible for providing clerical support and record management for 6 RTTs. The remaining 38 posts comprising 9 Leisure Services Managers (LSM), 6 Senior Amenities Assistant (SAA) and 23 Amenities Assistant I (AAI) are deployed amongst 6 RTTs and worked with the existing establishment to manage both existing roadside trees and trees on UUGL. To allow management flexibility and better utilization of resources, during the creation of these 45 permanent posts, it was stipulated that they were also responsible for managing the existing trees in the respective regions. In fact, it is common for the Government departments to take the opportunity to review and streamline the internal procedures and structures under the established mechanism when additional resource is available with an aim to enhance efficiency and flexibility of the services to meet public demands and operational needs.

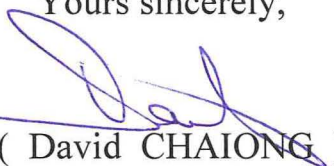
Due to lack of routine maintenance for the trees on UUGL before taking over by LCSD, their overall conditions were less than satisfactory. In order to enhance their overall conditions as soon as possible, most of the newly created AAIs were mainly deployed to manage UUGL trees through supervision of the contractors. However, due to the large geographical coverage of New Territories North (NTN) region which include Tuen Mun, North and Yuen Long Districts, and the large number of UUGL trees involved, i.e. around 50 000 trees, comparatively more posts were created for NTN RTT, i.e. 4 LSM, 3 SAA and 10 AAI. This has allowed the management more flexibility in manpower deployment to improve the efficiency of tree management in NTN. A trial scheme on division of work amongst AAIs by dividing the region / district into smaller sub-areas has been implemented in NTN

RTT since April 2018, in which the newly created AAIs would oversee both UUGL and existing roadside trees in their sub-areas whereas the existing 3 AAIs were responsible for leading the tree gangs to conduct routine tree care and provide emergency support services to existing roadside trees as needed. As the tree management work and the duties of the newly created posts are similar to the existing ones of RTTs, we consider that it is proper for the RTTs to appropriately deploy their manpower to improve the operation mode within the RTT having regard to the specific operational needs of respective regions to enhance flexibility. The above arrangements are in line with common practices under the established mechanism with a view to enhancing efficiency in tree management and meeting the public demands and operational needs.

LCSD is reviewing the operation of all RTTs, including the trial scheme adopted by NTN RTT, with a view to formulating the most desirable and practical staff deployment scheme to improve the tree maintenance standard and efficiency. The review is targeted to be completed in the first quarter of 2019.

Please feel free to contact me or Ms Annie FUNG, Senior Leisure Manager (Horticulture) at 2601 8886 should further information be required.

Yours sincerely,



(David CHAIONG)

for Director of Leisure & Cultural Services