

Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council
Public Hearing on the Director of Audit's Report No. 74
16 May 2020

**Management of funding for sports development through the Arts and
Sport Development Fund (Sports Portion)**

Opening Remarks by the Chairman of Hong Kong Football Association

Secretary,

Hong Kong Football Association noted the report and recommendations of the Director of Audit to better formulate directions and initiatives in football development, and to improve the governance of the Association.

2. In the previous five years there has been significant progress, but it is recognized that certain targets and measures are still work in progress and certain areas of governance and management will be strengthened.

3. A new five-year football development plan and strategic plan have been prepared for the period 2020 to 2025 and the implementation of these plans will take football forward both 'on and off' the pitch.

4. HKFA has continued to expand and develop the grassroots and community football where there are thousands of children participating weekly across the 18 Districts in age groups from 6 years to 18 years. The introduction of 'golden age' development initiative, the under 6 years to under 12 years, has been extremely successful.

5. Women and girls' football has developed considerably since the HKFA took back control in 2012; and since then due to the continued hard work of the HKFA women's division and promotion of women football the base of the girls football pyramid has continued to grow, with more leagues, competitions and age groups. The future is certainly bright for women's football in Hong Kong.

6. The HKFA Boy Academy grew over the previous five years with an expansion of age groups and regular training. However, the new five-year strategy will take a different route going from centralized to decentralized system with the clubs in Hong Kong taking on more of a responsibility to train the elite boys with support from HKFA. HKFA will work closely with the clubs and also the 18 Districts in youth development.

7. Success and improvement is often measured by FIFA world ranking. The men have improved from 156 in 2014 to 143 in 2020, but this is not good enough and the new plans will have actions in place to improve the performance; while developing the elite youth boys coming through the age groups by implementing an exciting and ambitious 'Project 2034'; were HKFA has a target to qualify for the FIFA World Cup in 2034.
8. Hong Kong Men Team did successfully qualify for the East Asian Football Federation Finals in 2019.
9. HKFA has introduced strength and conditioning programs with all Hong Kong representative team age groups in football and futsal. HKFA plan the continued expansion and development of sports science to raise the fitness of Hong Kong players so they can compete at a higher level.
10. HKFA introduced the Club License system for professional clubs in Hong Kong in 2013 in an attempt to raise the quality and standard of the clubs and give Hong Kong clubs the opportunity to participate in the AFC Champions League. Since 2017, Hong Kong has had two professional clubs participating in the AFC Champions League.
11. It is recognized that more work is required to attract more attendance at Hong Kong Premier League matches and there is a need to improve the product and quality to attract spectators. HKFA plan to work closely with the clubs to promote and market the matches and to improve the match day experience for the fans.
12. HKFA, after many years of delay, successfully opened the HKFA Jockey Club Football Training Centre in 2019. The six-pitch training centre is the new home for HKFA and is used by the HKFA teams, many Hong Kong Premier League clubs for training, HKFA senior and youth league matches, junior tournaments with hundreds of participants; and is open for public and community bookings. HKFA now conducts all coach education and referee training at the Football Training Centre and progress is being made on the frequency of training and the number of coaches and referees getting qualified in Hong Kong. HKFA is grateful for the support of the Government and Hong Kong Jockey Club to deliver this project which has made a big impact on football development in Hong Kong.
13. It is understood that HKFA need to improve marketing and promotion to attract more sponsorship and reduce the reliance on public or charity funding. The new five-year plan addresses this point with actions to solicit more sponsorship.
14. The good work of HKFA over the recent years has been recognized by the Asian Football Confederation. HKFA won the 'AFC Developing Member Association of the Year' in 2015; and also, in 2019.

15. There is continued development and progression required to keep HKFA improving both on and off the pitch, HKFA is aware of this fact and will act on the recommendations of the Director of Audit's Report No. 74.