

Chapter XV : Home Affairs

15.1 At the Chairman's invitation, the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA), Mr David LAN, gave a presentation on the resource requirements under his policy areas in 2000-01 (Appendix V-14).

Culture

15.2 On members' concern about the delay in the establishment of the Culture and Heritage Commission (the Commission), SHA advised that the membership of the Commission would be announced shortly. As the role of the Commission was to advise the Government on the long-term cultural policy, the delay of three months in its establishment would not have any adverse impact on the cultural development of Hong Kong. On the delivery of cultural policies and programmes, the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (DLCS) advised that the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) had been operating smoothly since its establishment in January 2000 and would further improve its services to meet the different needs of the community.

15.3 In response to Mr Howard YOUNG's enquiries, the Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3) (DS(HA)3) advised that there was no change in funding support given to the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society and Hong Kong Arts Festival Society after the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) assumed the funding responsibility for these two associations in January 2000. The Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Culture) (DDLCS(C)) also clarified that no provision was earmarked for the Asian Arts Festival as the event would not be held in 2000-01.

15.4 As regards the need to corporatise the three performing companies, namely, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre and Hong Kong Dance Company, DLCS advised that corporatisation would provide greater flexibility in their operations and artistic development. It was expected that the corporatisation proposal would be available by the end of 2000. As in the case of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, these three performing companies might not be able to operate on a self-financing basis after corporatisation. In the circumstances, the Government would continue to provide funding support to them to facilitate their operation and development. Miss CHAN Yuen-han suggested that the Administration should consult the three performing companies before finalising the corporatisation proposal.

Recreation and sports

15.5 Some members were concerned about the division of work among the Recreation and Sport Section (RSS) of HAB, Hong Kong Sports Development Board (HKSDB), and Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC). SHA advised that the three bodies had their own independent roles. RSS was responsible for co-ordinating and overseeing sport and recreation policies on a territory-wide basis. It worked closely with HKSDB, which played a key role in the training of elite athletes, on the promotion and development of sport and physical education in Hong Kong. SF&OC was an independent body operated in accordance with its own charter. In the past, funding was provided to SF&OC through HKSDB. Starting from 2000-01, the subvention for SF&OC would be provided by HAB direct, making the funding arrangement more straightforward. This change would not affect the co-ordination between HKSDB and SF&OC. In fact, the co-ordination between the two bodies had been strengthened as a result of the enactment of the Hong Kong Sports Development Board (Amendment) Bill 1999 which increased the number of representatives from SF&OC on HKSDB from one to two.

15.6 Apart from providing physical training to elite athletes, Dr YEUNG Sum considered that the Administration should also provide training to them in other aspects so as to better prepare themselves for the future. DS(HA)3 advised that a working group under HKSDB was responsible for providing training to elite athletes, including physical, language and computer training. Scholarships were also available for them to further their studies.

15.7 In response to Mr Andrew CHENG's enquiry on the details of the strategic sports development plan for 2001-2005, DS(HA)3 advised that work on the 5-year plan was about to start and HKSDB, SF&OC, LCSDB would be consulted and other stakeholders in the sports community would be involved. At the request of the Chairman, DS(HA)3 undertook to brief the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs on the subject in due course.

15.8 In response to Mr LEE Wah-ming's enquiry, DLCS advised that the major policy review to be conducted by LCSDB in 2000-01 to examine the new trends and development in recreation and amenities would include the examination of the current Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines on Recreation and Open Space, the provision of leisure facilities and their usage, etc.

The scope of the review would not cover the facilities required for hosting the 2006 Asian Games in Hong Kong, as the Asian Games Bid Committee had been established to co-ordinate the preparation of the formal bid and related matters. The preliminary assessment was that improvement of the existing facilities would meet international standards for hosting the Asian Games and no new facilities would be required solely for the purpose.

Contracting out of venue management

15.9 Some members considered that there was a need to explore contracting out the operation of civic centres. The scope of contracting out should not be confined to venue management, but should cover the range of programmes staged in these facilities and the ways to market these facilities for higher attendances and more cost-effective use of these venues. DLCS advised that some services in civic centres had already been contracted out, such as cleaning and security. The Administration was also actively exploring the feasibility of contracting out more aspects of work of venue management. However, apart from looking at cost-effectiveness, the Administration also needed to consider the impact of contracting out, for example, the impact on service quality and staff morale, and whether it would result in staff redundancy. As far as leisure services were concerned, a trial scheme had been launched in February 2000 to contract out the management of the Tuen Mun Butterfly Beach Indoor Recreation Centre for two years. It was expected that a saving of \$1.9 million could be achieved during the two-year period. A review would be conducted in due course to determine the applicability of this scheme to other leisure venues.

15.10 Referring to DDLCS(C)'s remarks that the Administration had the obligation to consider the matter carefully having regard to the need to ensure a high standard of services for these international and territory-wide arts performing venues to meet users' requirements, Mrs Selina CHOW reiterated that the Administration should continue to explore a better way to improve the management of these facilities.

Publicity

15.11 Regarding the promotion of cultural and sports activities, DLCS advised that the Administration was contemplating the establishment of a dedicated team to cultivate a higher level of interest in culture among the younger generation. Apart from bringing cultural programmes to schools, the Government would also open the use of sports facilities to schools during non-peak hours to promote sports activities. As regards the use of the new technology in promoting activities, DLCS advised that the public could obtain information on various activities organized by LCSD from its website. In 2000-01, a new bilingual automation system would be installed in libraries and museums to provide more functions and greater convenience to users.

Youth development

15.12 Regarding the substantial increase in financial provision for formulating policies and implementing programmes on youth development by 266.3% in 2000-01, the Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1) (DS(HA)1) advised that the increase was for expenses on youth development programmes, not for the creation of additional posts. The increase in provision was mainly due to the transfer of the administration of subventions for uniformed groups and two youth development related associations from the Social Welfare Department to HAB. On Mr LEE Wing-tat's concern about the lack of performance indicators, DS(HA)1 pointed out that it was difficult to measure the progress of work on youth development.

15.13 In response to Mr LEE Wing-tat's enquiry, DS(HA)1 advised that the funding scheme for study tours to the Mainland for enhancing the understanding of and respect for Chinese culture and heritage amongst young people would continue in 2000-01 as in the previous few years. HAB had no plan to cover study tours to Taiwan or Macau in the scheme.

District and community relations

15.14 Regarding the decrease in financial provision for Programme (3): District and Community Relations under HAB by 38.2% in 2000-01, the Deputy

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Secretary for the Treasury (1) advised that in accordance with the normal financial procedure, new commitments on non-recurrent expenditure would be included in the Estimates for the year ending 31 March 2001 if the commitment had been approved before the Estimates cut-off date by the Finance Committee where the amount exceeded \$10 million or by S for Tsy under delegated authority. The cut-off date was usually around mid-December of the preceding year. As the details of the celebration activities for the National Day and for the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to be organized in 2000 had yet to be finalized, the commitments and hence the estimated provision for the relevant activities had not been included in the Estimates. HAB would seek approval for the commitments in due course.

District administration

15.15 Members noted that there would be an increase of 36% in the number of territory-wide issues on which District Councils (DCs) would be consulted in 2000 and 29% in district issues, and enquired whether sufficient resources had been earmarked for DCs to perform its enhanced role in district administration. The Director of Home Affairs (DHA) advised that the accountable allowances for each DC member had been doubled to \$10,000 per month and most of the DC members had set up their offices to meet the increased workload. In some DCs, one or two Executive Officer posts had been added to reinforce the secretariat support to DCs. At Miss Emily LAU's request, DHA agreed to provide a comparison of the average time spent by members of DCs and members of the former Provisional District Boards on meetings of DCs and their committees/Provisional District Boards and their committees respectively.

15.16 On the financial provision for DCs to organize District Festivals, DLCS advised that a total of \$18.7 million had been earmarked in 2000-01 for the purpose, but the allocation of funds among the 18 DCs was still a matter under discussion.

Women issues

15.17 Miss Emily LAU expressed concern about the progress of the establishment of a central mechanism within the Government to co-ordinate the

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work on women issues, as recommended by the United Nation Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN Committee) in 1999. SHA and DS(HA)1 assured members that the Government attached great importance to women issues and was actively studying the UN Committee's recommendation. As various bureaux and departments were involved in the handling of women issues, it would take time to consider the issue of a central mechanism.

Divorcees and children lived on alimony

15.18 On the progress of the review conducted by the inter-departmental working group to improve the law and administrative measures affecting divorcees and children who lived on alimony, DS(HA)1 advised that the review had reached its final stage and was expected to be completed by the end of the current legislative term. The LegCo Panel on Home Affairs would then be briefed on the recommendations of the working group. As the result of the review was not known at this stage, HAB had not earmarked any resources in the Estimates for 2000-01 to follow up the recommendations of the working group. Approval for additional funds would be sought in due course, if necessary.

Performance indicators of LCSD for 1998 and 1999

15.19 At the request of Mr LEE Wah-ming, DLCS agreed to provide the performance indicators of the programme areas currently under LCSD, and formerly under the two Provisional Municipal Councils, for the years 1998 and 1999 for members' reference.

Staffing arrangement of LCSD

15.20 On the creation of posts, the Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Administration) (DDLCS(Admin)) advised that a total of 754 posts had been budgeted for creation in LCSD in 2000-01. These will be partially offset by the deletion of 204 surplus posts arising from the reorganization of the municipal services but were retained temporarily to accommodate the surplus staff pending posting. The 204 surplus posts would be deleted on 1 April 2000. Hence, the net increase in post would be 550. The department will attempt to fill new posts by redeployment of staff within LCSD or from other departments, or by

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recruitment of non-civil service contract staff. Of the 754 budgeted posts, 171 were originally required to accommodate surplus general grades staff in the civil service in place of LCSD's contract staff whose contracts were due to expire in 2000-01. The latest position was that the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) was reviewing the need to replace the contract staff concerned by general grades staff and a decision had yet to be made.

15.21 Miss CHAN Yuen-han noted that since the issue of the guideline on the employment of non-civil service contract staff in January 1999, LCSD had employed 271 new contract staff at market rate, i.e. around 25 - 30% lower than the minimum salary of comparable civil service ranks. In response to Miss CHAN's enquiry, DDLCS(Admin) advised that the new arrangement did not apply to the 241 contract staff appointed before the issue of the guideline, and the salaries of these staff had not been reduced. LCSD was seeking CSB's approval to allow these 241 contract staff to retain their current terms of employment upon renewal of contracts.