



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

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來函檔號 YOUR REF:

18 May 2004

Mr. Colin CHUI
Clerk
Public Accounts Committee
(By Fax : 2537 1204)

Dear Mr. CHUI,

**The Director of Audit's Report on the
Results of value for money audits (Report No. 42)**

Thank you for your letters dated 7 and 11 May 2004.

As requested, I enclose the following additional information which was requested by the Public Accounts Committee at its public hearing held on 7 May 2004: -

- (a) The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) was not aware in advance of the adverse impact of the Stage 1 of the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS) on the water quality of the gazetted beaches in Tsuen Wan District. On 15 January 2003, LCSD asked Environment Protection Department (EPD) to provide us with a report on the water quality of the gazetted beaches to enable us to determine the opening arrangement of beaches in the swimming season of 2003. This was a normal step to take annually. In response, Environmental Protection Department (EPD) informed us on 22 January 2003 that the water quality of the seven beaches in Tsuen Wan District had deteriorated as a result of the commissioning of the Stage 1 of the HATS and recommended us to close all the seven gazetted beaches along the coastal line of Tsuen Wan. In anticipation that the Tsuen Wan District Council would have strong reaction on the closure of the beaches, we expressed our concern to EPD and requested EPD to


attend the relevant committees of the Tsuen Wan District Council in February and March 2003 to explain to the members the reasons for deterioration of the water quality and the subsequent closure of these beaches. EPD admitted that the deterioration of water quality in Tsuen Wan beaches was not anticipated upon the full commissioning of Stage 1 of the HATS at one of these committees. The relevant document and a summary of sequence of events related to the above incidents are attached at the **Appendix**.

In view of the closure of the four gazetted beaches, we have at the Tsuen Wan District Council meetings held in February and March 2003 promoted the use of a number of nearby swimming facilities such as the Ma Wan Tung Wan Beach in Tsuen Wan District and the five beaches in Tuen Mun District, namely Butterfly, Kadoorie, Cafeteria Old, Cafeteria New and Golden Beaches. In addition, we have also at the same meetings promoted the use of two public swimming pools in Tsuen Wan District, namely Shing Mun Valley Swimming Pool and Tsuen King Circuit Wu Chung Swimming Pool. Moreover, improvement works at Ma Wan Tung Wan Beach including re-sanding, renewal of shark prevention net and refurbishment of the beach building have been completed in April and May 2004. We have set up two new beach volleyball courts at the Lido Beach in July 2003 to promote the use of land based facilities. In addition, we have produced pamphlets and booklets to introduce the public swimming pools and gazetted beaches managed by LCSD. At the same time, information on these facilities is uploaded to the web page of LCSD for publicity.

- (b) On the question as to whether the 29 established lifeguard posts for the Rocky Bay Beach and the seven beaches in Tsuen Wan District will be deleted, we would like to reiterate that, as a matter of fact, the 29 lifeguard posts have already been frozen and unfilled since the closure of these gazetted beaches. The lifeguards previously deployed to these beaches have been redeployed to fill other vacant posts elsewhere. In consideration of a recent advice from EPD that the Stage 2 works of HATS for improvement of the beach water quality of Tsuen Wan will take at least thirty months to complete, we agree that these 29 posts are unlikely to be filled in the near future and we will delete these posts.

- (c) We have conducted a review on the cost-effectiveness of deploying 6 Amenities Assistant IIIs (AAIIIs) stationed at the closed beaches including the Rocky Bay Beach and the seven beaches in Tsuen Wan District. The one AAIII originally stationed at Rocky Bay Beach has already been redeployed to Shek O Beach. For the remaining 5 AAIIIs, we shall retain one AAIII to carry out daily management of the seven closed beaches in Tsuen Wan District. The other 4 AAIIIs would be deployed to other leisure venues as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



(Paul K K CHEUNG)

for Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

c.c. Secretary for Home Affairs
Director of Audit

**Sequence of Events on
Closure of Gazetted Beaches in Tsuen Wan District**

- The Anglers' Beach was closed since 1994 because of consistent very poor water quality.
- The Approach Beach and Ting Kau Beach were closed since 1996 because of the very poor water quality due to local pollution.
- On 15 January 2003, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) asked Environment Protection Department (EPD) to provide a report on the water quality of the gazetted beaches for determining the opening arrangement of beaches in the swimming season of 2003. Please see **Annex I**.
- On 22 January 2003, EPD informed LCSD for the first time that upon the full commissioning of Stage 1 of the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS), sewage generated from around the Victoria Harbour has been transferred to Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works for treatment, and then discharged into the sea near Stonecutters Island. As a result, the water quality of the Tsuen Wan Beaches has deteriorated significantly. Since the remaining stages of HATS would not be completed in the next few years, EPD advised that the water quality of these beaches would not improve before 2006. To safeguard the health of bathers, EPD advised LCSD to close the remaining four beaches along the Tsuen Wan coast, including Lido, Casam, Hoi Mei Wan and Gemini Beaches, in the 2003 swimming season. Please see **Annex II**.
- In reply to EPD's request, we expressed our concern on the deterioration of the water quality of beaches along the Tsuen Wan coast. In addition,

we also advised EPD that we anticipated strong reaction from the Tsuen Wan District Council as it had all along been anxious for improvement of the water quality and knew that mitigation measures were being taken along Castle Peak Road and Sham Tseng by diverting the sewage and providing treatment plants. We have also asked EPD to attend the relevant committees of the Tsuen Wan District Council in February and March 2003 to explain to members the reasons for the deterioration of the water quality. Please see **Annex III** on our reply to EPD and **Annex IV** on the relevant Tsuen Wan District Council paper.

- On 25 February 2003, the LCSD informed the Tsuen Wan District Council of the closure of the seven beaches along the Tsuen Wan coast with background information about Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS) provided by EPD. Officers of EPD were invited to take questions from Tsuen Wan District Council. A copy of the relevant Paper and minutes of the meeting is at **Annex IV**.
- Although the seven beaches in Tsuen Wan District have been closed since 1 April 2003, the land-based facilities remain open to the public.
- On 7 May 2004, we wrote to EPD to seek its advice on the remedial measures to be taken and target date for improvement of water quality at the seven closed gazetted beaches in Tsuen Wan District. Please see **Annex V**.
- On 12 May 2004, EPD advised that it will take 30 months to complete the Stage 2 works of HATS for improvement of the beach water quality of Tsuen Wan subject to the availability of funding for the project. Please see **Annex VI**.

**Note by Clerk, PAC: Annexes I to VI not attached.*