Outstanding Leisure and Cultural Services Projects of the Former Municipal Councils

Introduction

1. Reference is made to the letter from Legislative Council dated 3rd November 2005 inviting the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS) to express our views on whether the lead-time required for specific procedures could be compressed and the ways to speed up the implementation process of Leisure and Cultural Services (LCS) projects.

Views on the procedures and lead-time required for implementing the LCS projects

2. According to the information given by the Architectural Services Department, the total lead-time required for pre-construction works of the LCS projects is too long. It requires at most 46 months for pre-construction works of Swimming Pool Complex and Library cum Indoor Recreation Centre Complex, and 42 months for pre-construction works of Open Space. The total lead-time is definitely too long when compared with the private projects which may need less than 2 years.

3. Furthermore, the above lead-time does not involve the time required for approval from the Property Strategy Group for the projects involving construction of government buildings which may need a further lead-time of 6 to 18 months, as well as the special process such as land resumption, environmental impact assessment, slope stability works and application for inclusion in Resource Allocation Exercise by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department etc. This means that the final lead-time required for pre-construction works would be much longer 4 years. Such long period would create the problem of wasting resource and also come up the question of whether it is cost effective for implementing these projects.

4. In particular, the time allowed for selection and appointment of consultants is 6 months which seems to be too long. A shorter period, say 3-4 months should be more appropriate.

5. The time allowed for consultants to prepare sketch design, detailed design, working drawings and tender documents is also too long. It requires 10-18 months for Open Space, 18-22 months for Library cum Indoor Recreation Centre Complex and even 20-22 months for Swimming Pool Complex. In normal practice for private projects, such work can be completed within a year.

6. According to the information given by the Architectural Services Department, the construction time for LCS projects may need at most 35 months. Such time may be shortened to about 2 years due to the simplicity of the LCS projects. For example, the construction of swimming pool complex requires 31-35 months but actually most nature of swimming pool complexes are quite similar to each others. As a result, it may be possible to shorten the construction period, especially if the contractors with previous experience in construction of those swimming pool complexes are employed.

Ways to speed up the implementation process of LCS projects

7. Different Government bureaus and departments, mainly the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and Architectural Services Department, are involved in the process of implementation of the LCS projects. Greater coordination between them should be very useful for facilitating the pre-construction work and also the construction process.

8. The experience gained from previous LCS projects should also be very useful for the Government officials so that they can put more effort into reducing the lead-time for LCS projects with reference to those previous LCS projects.

9. It is also essential for the Government to make the policy in consistent. In fact, the construction industry has suffered badly from the "stop-and-go" situation in the past years. Where in one year, when the emphasis was on creating jobs, there was a surge in public works. Then, in the next year, when the emphasis got shifted to cost-effectiveness, many projects had to be halted or aborted. What we would like to see is a strong growth in public works. The consistency and predictability of the policy is also very important.

The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors
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