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Panel on Home Affairs

**Background brief prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 13 November 2009**

Funding for diversified community activities

Purpose

The Administration will brief the Panel at its meeting on 13 November 2009 on the government's proposal to allocate \$180 million to the 18 districts to foster community building, promote cultural and sports activities, provide more community tours and create business opportunities for local tourism. This paper provides background information on the community involvement (CI) projects currently organised by the 18 District Councils (DCs) and highlights major views expressed by Legislative Council (LegCo) Members on the subject.

Background

2. In May 2009, the Financial Secretary (FS) briefed members of the Panel on Financial Affairs on the government's proposal to introduce a package of additional relief measures to counter the financial crisis and help Hong Kong citizens to ride out of the financial turmoil. As one of the measures to support enterprises and preserve jobs, the Administration proposed to allocate \$180 million to the 18 districts for providing more community tours and leisure activities. FS advised that each DC could exercise flexibility in the use of the \$10 million allocated for the purpose.

District community involvement programmes

3. Since the dissolution of the then Municipal Councils in January 2000, DCs have played an enhanced role in the areas of leisure, sports, cultural and community building activities, improvement of the local environment, as well as giving advice on and monitoring the planning and implementation of district-based services and facilities.

Funding provisions

4. To implement the recommendations of the 2006 DC Review, the

Administration has taken further measures to enhance DCs' involvement in: (a) the management of district facilities, including libraries, community halls, leisure grounds, sports venues, swimming pools and beaches; and (b) organising district partnership programmes as well as recreational and cultural activities at district level. Since the commencement of the current DC term on 1 January 2008, the Administration has provided additional resources to DCs for carrying out district minor works (DMW) projects and CI programmes to help achieve a wide spectrum of social objectives, which include -

- (a) enhancing Hong Kong's cityscape;
- (b) strengthening public hygiene and disease prevention efforts;
- (c) fostering inter-cultural understanding, mutual respect and volunteerism;
- (d) supporting cultural, sports, leisure, heritage and literary initiatives at district level;
- (e) building social capital and helping people to help themselves; and
- (f) developing programmes or social enterprises leading to job creation in the district targeted at the disadvantaged.

5. A dedicated capital works block vote with an annual provision of \$300 million was set up to enable DCs to implement DMW projects with a view to improving the environment in the district. In addition, the annual provision to the DC Funds was increased from \$170 million to \$300 million for financing non-works projects such as leisure, sports and cultural programmes, CI activities and partnership projects in the 18 districts.

6. During the deliberation on issues relating to the 2006 DC Review by the Panel on Home Affairs (HA Panel) and the Panel on Constitutional Affairs in 2006 and 2007, members raised some questions and suggestions about the proposed annual provision of \$300 million for the DC Funds. Some members expressed concern as to how the Funds would be distributed among the 18 DCs. The Administration responded that the allocation would be made on the basis of objective criteria, such as the population size, district size, number of facilities in a district, etc. A member urged the Administration to consider a deputation's suggestion for the use of DC Funds not to be restricted to organising CI programmes in order to optimize the use of the Funds. The Administration agreed to consider the suggestion. As regards members' concern over the manpower support for DCs, the Administration advised that DCs might use the Funds to hire additional staff members to work independently to support their work.

Implementation of community involvement programmes

7. In February 2009, the HA Panel followed up with the Administration on the progress in the implementation of measures to enhance the role and functions of DCs to improve district work, including CI projects. The Administration informed

members that DCs had been actively collaborating with various sectors in the community to initiate projects to help build a more caring community and meet the special needs of the respective districts. With the increase in DC Funds for CI projects, over 33 000 CI projects had been sponsored by DCs in 2008. Major examples of these projects included -

- (a) supporting sports initiatives - the Beijing Olympic Games were held in 2008 and Hong Kong was the host city for the Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events. In the year, DCs maintained close collaboration with different district groups to promote the spirit of Olympism, resulting in a warm-welcoming atmosphere for the sports events whilst fostering people's sense of belonging to the districts;
- (b) serving disadvantaged groups - these included projects which sought to provide school-based after-school tuition service to children from disadvantaged families whose parents might have difficulty in taking proper care of them; to relieve the pressure of low-income families through arranging bulk purchase of daily necessities; and to organize a range of activities for the disabled such as visits to theme parks and engaging the disabled in performing in variety shows to encourage their participation in community activities;
- (c) promoting reading habits - these projects aimed to develop good reading habits amongst the youth population in partnership with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and various non-governmental organisations, complement the public library services and help forge a close working tie with the district organisations to create a supportive social network;
- (d) promoting cultural and natural heritage - these projects included publicising suggested recreation routes and providing free bus tours and guided tours to help promote the different cultural and natural heritage of the districts concerned to enable the public, including tourists, to better understand and appreciate the unique heritage characteristics of individual districts in Hong Kong; and
- (e) fostering inter-cultural understanding - these projects sought to help ethnic minorities to build up better social network and to integrate into the community through engaging them in performing in variety shows and organising sharing sessions with them on adapting to the local community.

8. The Administration further advised that building on the experience of fully implementing measures to improve district administration since January 2008, it would work closely with DCs to assist them in drawing up plans for collaboration with district groups in implementing CI programmes that could address district concerns and meet the needs of local residents. It would also review the current set

of guidelines for carrying out CI projects to enhance flexibility in the use of resources.

Further meeting

9. Pursuant to the Panel's preliminary review on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2006 DC Review mentioned in paragraph 7 above, members agreed that the Panel should revisit various issues relating to district administration (including the progress of DMW projects, measures to enhance the communication in the management of district facilities as well as the organisation of CI programmes), in early 2010 (i.e. two years after the full implementation of the relevant measures).

Relevant papers

10. A list of relevant papers with their hyperlinks at the LegCo website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
9 November 2009

Appendix

Panel on Home Affairs

Relevant documents on funding for diversified community activities

Committee	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
Panel on Home Affairs	10.11.2006	The Administration's paper on implementation of the district council review	LC Paper No. CB(2)257/06-07(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1110cb2-257-1-e.pdf
		Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat on implementation of the district council review	LC Paper No. CB(2)257/06-07(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1110cb2-257-2-e.pdf
		Minutes of Meeting	LC Paper No. CB(2)533/06-07 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha061110.pdf
Panel on Home Affairs	14.12.2007	The Administration's paper on the implementation of the pilot scheme under the 2006 District Council Review to further improve district administration	LC Paper No. CB(2)556/07-08(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1214cb2-556-1-e.pdf
		Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat on the implementation of a pilot scheme under the 2006 District Council Review	LC Paper No. CB(2)556/07-08(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1214cb2-556-2-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	LC Paper No. CB(2)1051/07-08 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha071214.pdf

Committee	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
Panel on Home Affairs	13.2.2009	The Administration's paper on the implementation of measures to enhance the role and functions of District Councils and to improve district work	LC Paper No. CB(2) 818/08-09(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0213cb2-818-1-e.pdf
		Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat on the implementation of recommendations of the 2006 District Council Review	LC Paper No. CB(2) 818/08-09(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0213cb2-818-2-e.pdf
		Minutes of Meeting	LC Paper No. CB(2)1280/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20090213.pdf
Panel on Financial Affairs	29.5.2009	The Administration's paper on additional relief measures to counter the financial crisis, help citizens to tide over the difficulties and prepare for economic recovery.	LC Paper No. CB(1) 1740/08-09(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fa/papers/fa0529cb1-1740-1-e.pdf
		Minutes of Meeting	LC Paper No. CB(1)2568/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fa/minutes/fa20090529.pdf (para 20-22)