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Panel on Home Affairs
Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 26 August 2011

Outstanding leisure and cultural services projects

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the outstanding leisure and cultural services projects ("LCS projects") undertaken by the Administration, and highlights the concerns of members of the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") about the subject.

Background

2. Since the dissolution of the two former Municipal Councils ("ex-MCs") on 31 December 1999, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") under the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") has taken over the responsibility for the provision of municipal services, including the LCS projects committed by the ex-MCs.

3. In December 1999, a subcommittee was set up under the House Committee ("HC") of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") to follow up the outstanding ex-MCs projects. The subcommittee was dissolved at the end of the First LegCo after reporting on its work to HC in June 2000. At the beginning of the Second LegCo in October 2000, HC set up another subcommittee to continue to follow up the outstanding ex-MCs projects. The subcommittee concluded its work and reported to HC in June 2003. Members of these two subcommittees expressed particular concern about the arrangements for, among others, the 139 LCS projects under the responsibility of LCSD.

4. At its meeting on 21 March 2005, the Panel discussed the progress of the outstanding ex-MCs projects. Members were disappointed with the Administration's failure to prioritize the implementation of the

outstanding LCS projects in accordance with the pressing needs of various districts. The Panel decided to set up in May 2005 the Subcommittee to follow up the Outstanding Leisure and Cultural Services Projects of the Former Municipal Councils ("the Subcommittee") to monitor the Administration's work, with a view to expediting the implementation of the outstanding LCS projects.

5. Given the importance of District Councils ("DCs")' views in this regard, the Subcommittee requested LegCo Secretariat to arrange, subject to the views of the DC concerned, to include the matter for discussion at LegCo Members' regular meetings-cum-luncheons with DC members. The relevant views expressed by DC members at these meetings had been referred to the Subcommittee for consideration. At the Subcommittee's request, the Administration also undertook to conduct annual reviews with DCs to examine the priorities of the outstanding LCS projects. In December 2007, the Panel decided to dissolve the Subcommittee but requested the Administration to submit regular bi-annual progress reports on the implementation of the outstanding LCS projects to the Panel.

6. Since dissolution of the Subcommittee, the Administration had submitted six regular reports on the progress of the 139 ex-MC LCS projects to the Panel, including the most recent one issued in February 2011. According to the Administration, the position of the 139 LCS projects as at December 2010 was as follows -

- (a) 47 projects had been completed and 16 projects had been under construction;
- (b) 10 projects were currently under planning;
- (c) 17 projects had been deferred or deleted after consultation with DCs; and
- (d) 49 projects were under various stages of review and preliminary planning.

7. According to LCSD, in addition to taking over the 139 ex-MC LCS projects, it has initiated new LCS projects since 2000 and completed more than 60 such projects at a total cost of over \$10 billion. In its planning of LCS facilities, LCSD has taken the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPSG") and the distribution of district population as important references. For members' reference, an extract of HKPSG for LCS facilities is in **Appendix I** and a table on the projected Hong Kong resident population by District Council District from 2010 to 2019 is in **Appendix II**.

Members' concerns

8. The subject of outstanding LCS projects was discussed at the Panel meetings on 11 February and 10 June 2011. Members' concerns are highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs.

Progress of ex-MC projects

9. Members expressed dissatisfaction with the Administration's failure to provide a concrete implementation timetable for many outstanding ex-MC projects, and urged the Administration to attach importance to DCs' views in this regard. At members' request, the LegCo Secretariat has collected the 18 DCs' views on the progress of outstanding LCS projects in their respective districts in **Appendixes III & IV** and information on the new LCS projects supported by DCs in **Appendixes V and VI**.

Planning of facilities

10. Some members pointed out that since the dissolution of ex-MCs in 2000, only two public swimming pool complexes ("SPCs") in Tuen Mun and Tung Chung had been completed or under construction, and only two additional sites had been reserved in Tai Po and Kam Tin for the planning of such facilities. Noting that the standard ratio between the population size of an area and the provision of a public SPC was about 200 000:1, some members further pointed out that the provision of only two new public SPCs had lagged behind the population growth from 6.4 million to over 7 million in Hong Kong in the past 10 years. They also called on the Administration to clarify whether it had taken into account the swimming pools provided in clubs of private estates in its planning of the provision of public SPCs. In addition, as swimming was a popular sport for grassroot residents and their demand for year-round public SPCs, including indoor heated swimming pools, was strong, the Administration should formulate a comprehensive plan to increase the provision of such facilities to which grassroot residents might access at a low fee.

11. According to the Administration, under HKPSG, one SPC would be provided per 287 000 population. Based on this ratio, a total of 25 SPCs would suffice for the territory. Nevertheless, at present, LCSD had operated 37 public SPCs while the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society had operated another seven. According to the Administration's survey, swimming was the second most popular sport in Hong Kong, after jogging and before badminton. To enable the public

to continue swimming in winter, the Administration would strive to include indoor heated swimming pools in newly-built SPCs, and where practicable, convert facilities in the existing SPCs into heated pools when large-scale renovation/improvement works were carried out. Indeed, five new SPCs with indoor heated swimming pools (in Tuen Mun, Tin Shui Wai, Siu Sai Wan, Lam Tin and the Central and Western District) were under construction for completion by 2012; and four existing SPCs (Victoria Park, Lai Chi Kok, Kwun Tong and Kennedy Town) were being re-developed or upgraded to provide indoor heated swimming pools.

Implementation problem

12. There was a view that the main problem of many outstanding ex-MC LCS projects was related to their implementation rather than planning, as evidenced in Tin Shui Wai. In Hong Kong, the planning and implementation of such projects involved different government departments, whereas in overseas metropolitan cities, the mayor had sufficient powers to take forward both the planning and implementation of works projects effectively and efficiently. The Administration was urged to review the existing institutional structure for the planning and implementation of LCS projects. The Administration assured members that it had learnt from the experience of the town planning of Tin Shui Wai. For instance, LCS facilities had been provided in Tung Chung even though its population had not yet reached the required thresholds for district libraries and swimming pools.

13. Noting DCs' sense of powerlessness in pushing the Administration to take forward the outstanding ex-MC LCS projects to which they accorded priority, members urged the Administration to respect DCs' views on the provision of LCS facilities to meet the needs of the local community. In particular, regarding the 49 ex-MC projects under review or preliminary planning, the Administration should provide a clear explanation on whether all of them would be proceeded with, and if yes, a concrete timetable for their implementation. There was a suggestion that the Panel should seek all DCs' confirmation again on their agreement to the priorities accorded to the 49 ex-MC projects. Similar to the Subcommittee to follow up the Outstanding Leisure and Cultural Services Projects of the Former Municipal Councils formed in the Third LegCo, a subcommittee might be formed to follow up the progress of such projects. Some members urged the Secretary for Home Affairs to make every endeavour before the end of his term of office in June 2012 to take forward those LCS projects to which DCs had accorded top priorities, and to identify and clear the hurdles to their implementation.

14. According to the Administration, the planning and implementation of LCS facilities were based on the needs of local districts. The 49 ex-MC projects were large-scale and therefore needed longer time for planning. HAB had all along respected DCs' views and attached importance to those LCS projects urgently requested by DCs, and would try its best to upgrade the priority of such projects. As different departments would accord priority to their own capital works projects and the Government would determine the funding priority for them, a concrete implementation timetable for the 49 ex-MC projects would not be available until the funding priority had been set. In addition to taking over the 139 ex-MC LCS projects, LCSD had since 2000 initiated a large number of new LCS projects and had completed 60-odd LCS projects at a total capital cost of over \$10 billion.

Provision of sports facilities

15. Members generally expressed concern about how sports for all and athletes' performance could be enhanced in view of the long-standing shortage of sports facilities in Hong Kong. They called on the Administration to formulate a comprehensive, long-term and sustainable sports development policy to address, among others, the shortage of sports facilities at the district level and schools. In addition, members noted with concern that the total hours of schools' use of major public sports facilities had decreased significantly in the past three years. They urged the Administration to look into the matter. According to the Administration, since 2005, it had completed new sports facilities or upgraded existing facilities at a cost of more than \$4.5 billion. In planning new facilities, the Administration would make reference to the planning standards set out in HKPSG, the policy objectives for sports development, the utilization rates of existing facilities, the preferences of members of the public, and the extent to which such facilities were provided by the Government and other non-governmental organizations.

Relevant papers

16. A list of the relevant papers with their hyperlinks at LegCo's website is in **Appendix VII**.

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