

Efforts of the Narcotics Division and Beat Drugs Fund in combating drug abuse

The Audit Commission ("Audit") conducted a review of the work of the Narcotics Division ("ND") in combating drug abuse, including the administration of the Beat Drugs Fund ("BDF") with a view to identifying room for improvement.

2. ND of the Security Bureau is responsible for coordinating policies and measures across the public sector, non-governmental organizations and the community to combat the drug abuse problem. To promote community efforts to beat drugs, the Government also established BDF in March 1996 with a capital outlay of \$350 million to generate investment income for financing anti-drug projects. BDF is administered by the Governing Committee of the Beat Drugs Fund Association with secretariat support provided by ND.

3. Under the Regular Funding Scheme, BDF supports community-driven anti-drug activities in various areas. Through the Special Funding Scheme, BDF also provides financial assistance to the Drug Dependent Persons Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres to carry out capital works for meeting the licensing requirements and enhancing their service capacity.

4. Hon CHAN Hak-kan declared that he was a member of the Governing Committee of the Beat Drugs Fund Association.

5. The Committee noted the following findings from the Director of Audit's Report:

- while the number of reported drug abusers decreased from 14 115 to 8 926 between 2005 and 2014, the hidden drug abuse problem had worsened and the number of psychotropic substance abusers had exceeded that of narcotics drugs abusers since 2007. The median length of drug abusing experience of newly reported abusers increased from 1.7 years to 5.2 years between 2007 and 2014, and the situation was more serious for those aged 21 and above with the figure at 7.2 years in 2014;
- a Healthy School Programme with a Drug Testing Component ("HSP(DT)") had been launched since 2011-2012 school year for early identification and intervention of the youth at risk, but only 92 (19%) of 479 local secondary schools participated in HSP(DT) in 2015-2016. The overall proportion of students joining the voluntary drug testing of

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HSP(DT) dropped from 48% in 2011-2012 to 43% in 2014-2015. ND had engaged a contractor to conduct an independent evaluation research on HSP(DT) in 2015-2016 to review the effectiveness, administration and monitoring of the programme and make recommendations;

- ND collected drug abuse information through the Central Registry of Drug Abuse ("CRDA") to facilitate the planning of anti-drug strategies. Nevertheless, CRDA was only voluntary-based. From 2011 to 2014, 39 (54%) of the 72 reporting agencies had not reported any cases to CRDA. According to the non-identifying information (i.e. without personal identity) collected by ND, in 2013, information on 1 055 drug abusers was not reported to CRDA;
- screened-in applications for Regular Funding Scheme would be passed to respective vetting panels for assessment. However, no marking scheme was drawn up to facilitate panel members' assessment; and
- the number of annual applications under the Regular Funding Scheme of BDF decreased from 349 to 54 between 2010 and 2014. The approved funding of \$42 million in 2014 only constituted 6% of the \$682 million available for funding projects in that year. Of the 59 priority areas set in the funding exercises from 2010 to 2014 for soliciting projects to address the prevailing drug abuse trend, there were no approved projects for 10 (17%) priority areas. The number of applications under the Special Funding Scheme of BDF was also lower than expected.

6. The Committee did not hold any public hearing on this subject. Instead, it asked for written responses regarding the measures against hidden drug abuse problem, the comprehensiveness and the accuracy of drug-related statistics, the promotion of HSP(DT) and the management of BDF. The replies from Commissioner for Narcotics are in *Appendices 67 and 68*.

7. The Committee wishes to be kept informed of the progress made in implementing the various recommendations made by Audit. In this connection, ND is requested to update the Committee every six months on the progress and results of the independent evaluation research of HSP(DT) and the progress in adopting a marking scheme with weightings and passing marks for each assessment criterion for the funding exercises of the Regular Funding Scheme.