



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

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10 January 2017

Mr Anthony CHU
Clerk,
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr CHU,

Public Accounts Committee
Chapter 10 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 67
Audience building activities for performing arts

I refer to your letter dated 19 December 2016 to the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services.

Our reply in response to the matters as set out in your aforesaid letter is at the Appendix.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr Louis NG)
Deputy Director (Culture)
for Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Encl

c.c. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (fax no. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit (fax no. 2583 9063)

Chapter 10
of the Director of Audit's Report No. 67
Audience Building Activities for Performing Arts
Questions Raised and Information Required

Questions to be responded by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

PART 2: PLANNING OF AUDIENCE BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Question:

- (1) In the case quoted in paragraph 2.7 of the Report, an arts group was commissioned by the Audience Building Office (ABO) under the School Performing Arts in Practice Scheme to provide instrumental music training to primary school students who had not received music training before. Meanwhile the Music Office (MO) was organising an instrumental music training scheme targeting people aged 6 to 23. Did ABO notice that MO was also organising instrumental music training at the same time? What were the measures taken by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to coordinate the efforts of ABO and MO to ensure that the resources for instrumental music training were fully and appropriately utilised?

Reply:

- (1) The Audience Building Office (ABO) maintains good communication with the Music Office (MO) in planning school music programmes, and MO's expert advice will be sought whenever necessary to ensure appropriate allocation of resources. ABO and MO play complementary role in organising audience building activities.

Currently, LCSD prepares annual programme plans and co-ordinates among programme offices to optimise the use of resources through daily contacts and programme plan meetings among different offices. The case quoted in paragraph 2.7 of the Report refers to the "Music of the Heart" Orchestra in Practice

Project under the “School Performing Arts Practice Scheme”, which is designed for students without music background. It helps nurture the interest and enhance the knowledge in orchestral music. The objectives, positioning and target service recipients of the Project differ from the instrumental music training scheme organised by MO. The latter, aiming at nurturing local young music talents, offers beginners to grade 8 level training in more than 30 Chinese and Western musical instruments, and comprises 3 independent courses of instrumental and musicianship training, namely, a two-year Elementary Course, a three-year Intermediate Course, and a three-year Advanced Course.

Question:

- (2) According to paragraph 2.13(b), LCSD will re-examine the procedures for preparing annual programme plans. Please advise on its progress as well as the timing for the formulation and implementation of the overview of the annual programme plan.

Reply:

- (2) At present, LCSD prepares annual programme plans and co-ordinates among programme offices to optimise the use of resources through daily contacts and programme plan meetings among different offices.

In response to the recommendation of the Audit Commission, LCSD is now re-examining the current mechanism to formulate the annual programme plan. In 2017-18, LCSD will put in place a mechanism to prepare and coordinate an overarching annual programme plan on audience building activities for performing arts covering all programme offices (including the Music Office) of LCSD for 2018-19.

PART 3: AUDIENCE BUILDING ACTIVITIES OF THE AUDIENCE BUILDING OFFICE

Question:

- (3) Regarding the response of LCSD in paragraph 3.7(b) of the Report, please provide the percentage of attendance to the respective

activities by LCSD officers and the number of surprise checks conducted in each of the past three years to monitor the activities and counter check the attendance. Did LCSD officers attend the concerts mentioned in Cases 2 and 3 in paragraph 3.6 of the Report? If so, did they notice that there were some issues with the attendance rate? If not, is there a need for the Department to step up surprise checks so that events would be appropriately monitored?

Reply:

- (3) In deciding the number and venues to be attended by subject officers for inspection and checking, LCSD will take into account factors such as the experience of arts groups in organising the activities, the total number, location and time of activities organised, level of support provided by the venues, complexity of activities, etc. Every year the number of activities under the Scheme varies.

In the past three years, LCSD officers conducted 236 (2014), 259 (2015) and 208 (2016) inspection visits to the activities, representing over 40% of the activities held each year. Whilst LCSD officers did not pay visits to Case 2 and Case 3 mentioned in paragraph 3.6 of the Report, officers paid a total of 19 visits to the identical concerts presented by the two arts groups held at other venues. We have accepted the recommendation of the Audit Commission to issue clearer guidelines on the estimation of attendance to the arts groups and subject officers to improve the accuracy of the estimation. We shall also review the number of inspection visits whenever necessary to enhance monitoring of the performances.

Question:

- (4) According to paragraph 3.18 of the Report, as at July 2016, 93 schools (including 67 international schools or private schools) in Hong Kong had never participated in any school schemes. LCSD responded in paragraph 3.19(c) that among those 93 schools many of them had a curriculum different from mainstream schools and could have more resources in organising their own arts programmes. Does it mean that the school schemes are actually not targeted at them? If not, what measures were taken by the

Department to satisfy their needs for arts programmes?

Reply:

- (4) Whilst the school arts programmes organised by LCSD target all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong and LCSD disseminates relevant information to all primary and secondary schools including special schools, it is up to individual schools to decide whether to join the programmes taking into account the profile, interest and capacity of their students and staff, extra-curricular activities, availability of resources, etc.

LCSD's programmes intend to complement rather than substitute schools' own provision. We offer a variety of choices in art forms, types of educational activities, date, time and venues for schools' selection in order to meet the needs of different schools. Where resources are available, programmes are specially designed to attract the participation of schools with special requirements, such as English speaking or special schools which have never participated. Currently, activities organised by LCSD have generally taken care of the different needs of most schools in arts education. We will continue to reach out to non-participating schools. Priority will be given to new participating schools and their successful rate is very high. We will also gauge the opinions of non-participating schools through different channels to evaluate the different types of school schemes and enrich their content to meet the needs of the schools for arts activities.

Question:

- (5) According to paragraph 3.14 of the Report, LCSD will continue to assist arts groups under the community schemes to identify suitable venues for staging audience building activities. However, it did not commit itself to provide arts groups as far as practicable with available time slots and facilities for holding activities. Will the Department consider taking the initiative to invite applications from arts groups under community schemes and accord priority to the hiring of available time slots of its venues?
- (6) Was there a mechanism for inviting the hiring of available time slots from arts groups under community schemes? Were they given priorities when hiring these time slots? Did the Department

take the initiative to encourage hiring of available time slots for audience building activities at its venues?

- (7) Has LCSD conducted any studies on the modes, habits, needs and difficulties relating to the use of venues by arts groups with a view to formulate measures, such as streamlining the application procedures and strengthening the dissemination of information, to facilitate the use of LCSD venues? If yes, what are the details of the findings and the follow-up actions? If no, will the Department consider launching such studies in the near future? If yes, what is the work plan? If no, what are the reasons?

Reply in response to Questions (5) to (7):

By nature, LCSD's community audience building activities are basically outreach activities organised to bring performing arts into the community and widen the audience base. In order to appeal to the general public and target groups for wider participation, it is more preferable to hold more audience building activities at convenient locations throughout the territory such as shopping malls, community halls, elderly centres, parks, piazzas and pedestrian zones away from the performing venues managed by LCSD. It is worth highlighting that the competition for LCSD's performing arts venues is extremely keen at peak periods and the utilisation is near saturation. It would not be conducive to the healthy and sustainable development of the arts sector if LCSD reserves more slots for its own use for organising audience building activities.

Through the rigorous selection process, years of experience in launching community schemes and on-going liaison with art groups, LCSD has a good understanding of the modes, needs and difficulties encountered by arts groups in the use of venues. Whilst the arts groups are responsible for the implementation of the approved projects including the securing of venues for their proposed activities, LCSD has all along taken the initiative to help identify suitable venues in various districts for the groups. LCSD will reserve some vacant time slots of suitable LCSD venues in advance for certain arts groups in organising audience building activities. Apart from booking LCSD cultural venues for the arts groups, the subject officers will also help liaise with LCSD leisure venue management, district-based non-governmental organisations and commercial organisations whenever applicable and to provide

administrative support on venue booking. LCSD's efforts in assisting arts groups in securing suitable venues are recognised by the participating arts groups. Looking ahead, LCSD would consider organising more audience building activities at music centres and ancillary facilities of civic centres with lower utilisation rates. We would encourage and help arts groups to make use of these venues if the available times slots fit their event schedule and target groups.

PART 4: AUDIENCE BUILDING ACTIVITIES OF THE MUSIC OFFICE

Question:

- (8) As reflected from paragraph 4.21 of the Report, many Music Officers and Assistant Music Officers spent quite a lot of work hours on non-music training work, particularly administrative work. For 6 Assistant Music Officers and 3 Music Officers, none of their work hours was used for delivering music training courses and other music activities during 2015/16 school year. Please describe the duties of the 9 officers during the school year and advise if their duties could be discharged by administrative staff? Has LCSD ever considered transferring duties not directly related to music training from the responsibilities of Music Officers to professional arts administrators so that the former can focus on music training? Meanwhile, since the popularity of different musical instruments among members of the public, in particular the youth, may fluctuate from time to time, Music Officers on civil service terms may not be able to fully satisfy the ever changing needs for instrumental training. Did the Government review the establishment and responsibilities of the Music Officer grade or deploy more instructors on non-civil service contract terms for teaching less popular instruments to optimise the work time of the Music Officers and the instructors?

- (9) As shown in Figure 3 under paragraph 4.21 of the Report, Assistant Music Officers and Music Officers used only 36% of their work hours for delivering music training courses and other music activities during 2015/16 school year. However, part-time instructors were required to give classes under various music training schemes and outreach music interest courses. Would the Department regard such arrangement as satisfactory? Will it

consider taking measures to co-ordinate and optimise the use of staff resources mentioned above?

- (14) In paragraph 4.50 of the Report, the Audit has recommended that LCSD should review the mode of operation of the Music Office (MO). However, specific work plan for the review was not provided in the response from LCSD under paragraph 4.51. As greater flexibility will bring about effective promotion of cultural and arts activities, will the Government re-consider if MO should remain part of LCSD? Will the Government consider conducting a review and study on this fundamental structural issue in the near future?

Reply in response to Questions (8), (9) and (14):

The Activities and Promotion (A&P) Unit of the Music Office (MO) organises over 400 music activities and 260 Outreach Music Interest Courses each year. Whilst the nine staff members of A&P Unit do not directly conduct classroom teaching, they deliver duties directly pertaining to music education and promotion. Specifically, they perform the following functions which require solid expertise and network in music profession:

- (a) recommending the appointment of part-time music instructors who are directly involved in delivering Outreach Music Interest Courses;
- (b) conducting class inspections of the outreach courses for quality control; and
- (c) coordinating the organisation of music activities such as concerts in conjunction with other units of MO, venue management, schools and community organisations.

As regards MO as a whole, the Government has reviewed the development of MO over the years and concluded in 2015 that MO should be managed under LCSD and re-incorporated into the Civil Service as a long-term arrangement having regard to MO's unique role in providing quality music training for young talents, promoting cultural exchange and strategic partnership between Hong Kong and other regions, fostering synergy with LCSD and other government departments, complementing school education and the education sector and promoting arts at the district and territory-wide levels. To this end, MO will maintain a core staff of Music Officer grade members whilst retaining the flexibility to

engage part-time instructors with music expertise to complement its in-house full-time staff. This set-up seeks to ensure quality, stability and cost-effectiveness in upkeeping MO's strategic areas such as ensemble and musicianship training and key instrumental classes whilst offering a variety of training in more than 30 musical instruments required in Chinese and Western orchestras and bands. While MO staff are professionally qualified for instrumental music training, they cannot teach every type of instrument. Therefore for some particular instruments, it is necessary, more cost-effective and optimal to employ professional instructors on a part-time basis. In 2015-16, MO engaged a total of 100 part-time instructors.

Similar to the operation of schools and universities, MO colleagues' music education-related work is not confined to time spent in the classrooms. "36% of the working hours" in question only includes duties that are directly related to the delivery of music training courses and other music activities such as classroom teaching, school programme performances and music accompaniment. Other music-related supporting duties, such as class preparation for instrumental/band/orchestra/choir training, supervision and management of band, orchestra and choir, administrative and clerical work, and staff supervision, are in fact also essential to the quality delivery of music training courses.

Question:

- (10) According to paragraph 4.25 of the Report, the Music Office (MO) generally will specify the standard class size of each training course (mostly ranging from 5 to 10 trainees). Paragraph 4.26, however, shows that many training classes had a very small class size in 2015/16 school year, including five training classes each having only one trainee. Why did MO not consolidate classes which fell short of the minimum class size to better utilise the resources? How would the Department improve this situation in the future?

Reply:

- (10) Currently, the minimum number of trainees for each class is two. For classes which fall short of the minimum class size, subject officers are required to consolidate them with other suitable classes

within a month. Some instruments are less popular than the others but training classes are still required for feeding players to bands/orchestras of the Music Office (MO) and schools for the sustainable development of local youth orchestras and bands. MO will step up the promotion of these classes to improve the enrolment rate.

Question:

- (11) Paragraph 4.39 of the Report points out that, from 2013/14 to 2015/16 school years, the number of training sessions delivered each year under music training schemes and outreach music interest courses was about 43,000 sessions. However, the number was equivalent to only 29% of the capacity of the music centres. How long has it been going on? Did LCSD introduce any improvement measures? Has LCSD considered handing back unused or under-utilised music centres to the Government for other purposes? If not, what are the reasons?
- (12) Paragraph 4.43 of the Report points out that, measures would be taken to improve the usage of the music centres under the Music Office. According to media reports earlier, some music and arts practitioners and groups had difficulties in hiring LCSD facilities for music rehearsals. In this connection, will LCSD consider taking the initiative to communicate with them and understand their difficulties? In order to meet the needs of the arts and music circle, will LCSD also consider streamlining application procedures for hiring and enhancing the flexibility of the use of facilities to improve the usage of the music centres especially during non-peak hours?
- (13) Did LCSD exchange views with the music and arts practitioners and groups on the use of facilities at the music centres under the Music Office? Did the Department examine their needs for its facilities and their opinions on the application procedures? If yes, what are the details, results and follow-up actions of these exchanges? If no such efforts were made in the past, will the Department consider taking the initiative in this respect in the future? If not, what are the reasons?

Reply in response to Questions (11) to (13):

The five music centres in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Central, Kowloon East, New Territories East and New Territories West are designed and currently used for organising music training activities for the public, especially young people in the regions, and serve as workstations of the Music Office staff. As the priority use of the centres are for organising activities for student trainees, their core operating hours are from 4p.m. to 8p.m. on weekdays and from 9am to 6pm on weekends, and the average usage rate of the centres for these periods reached 70%. To optimise the usage of these venues during the non-peak hours (i.e. 9:30a.m. to 4p.m. on weekdays), LCSD will explore options in consultation with other departments, non-profit-making organisations and arts groups on the demand and feasibility of using these venues for audience building activities, training and rehearsals.

PART 5: AUDIENCE BUILDING ACTIVITIES OF URBAN AND NEW TERRITORIES VENUES SECTIONS

Question:

- (15) According to paragraph 5.6 of the Report, audience building activities held at the foyers or piazzas at LCSD venues had a higher number of participants. In paragraph 5.10, while LCSD accepted the recommendations of Audit Commission on foyer and piazza activities, no specific work plan was given. As many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) find it difficult to hire venues for different types of community or public education activities at relatively low charges, will LCSD consider inviting NGOs to hire its venues and relaxing hiring requirements to optimise venue resources? If so, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?

Reply:

- (15) To foster the development of arts and culture in Hong Kong, LCSD has endeavored to organise audience building activities in collaboration with venue partners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), District Councils, community organisations, arts groups and Consulate Generals. In 2016-17, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre collaborated with venue partners, NGOs, performing arts groups and Consulate Generals in staging about 70 programmes at its foyer and piazza areas. LCSD will continue to proactively

invite NGOs and other arts groups to organise arts-related activities with a view to encouraging more participation and support in the arts by the public.

LCSD offers piazza areas at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Sha Tin Town Hall, Tsuen Wan Town Hall and Kwai Tsing Theatre for hiring by the public and organisations to organise performing arts programmes, exhibitions and community activities. To support local arts and culture, concessionary rates are offered to non-profit making organisations who hire the piazza areas.

Question:

- (16) How many applications were received from community organisations, schools and non-governmental organisations for hiring foyers or piazzas at LCSD performing arts venues in the past three years? How many of them were successful? Did LCSD take the initiative to disseminate information on the availability of its foyers or piazzas to different organisations in the community? If no, how did these organisations file their applications?

Reply:

- (16) LCSD's Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Sha Tin Town Hall, Tsuen Wan Town Hall and Kwai Tsing Theatre have designated outdoor areas for hire for hosting performances, exhibitions, public entertainment and community events. In the past three years from 2013 to 2015, the total number of applications received from the concerned organisations (such as community organisations, schools and non-governmental organisations) and the total number of successful booking applications for events held at the outdoor areas of these four performing arts venues are 686 and 609 respectively.

LCSD has established a fair and transparent booking policy for its performing arts venues. The booking procedures and assessment criteria of all hiring facilities including plazas are made known to the public through 'Booking Arrangements' available at all venues and on LCSD's website.

On the other hand, foyers of LCSD's performing arts venues are non-hiring units due to limited space. They are primarily

intended for the safe circulation of audience before and after performances. Events are occasionally hosted to complement the performances.

Question:

- (17) In paragraph 5.15 of the Report, LCSD accepted the recommendation of the Audit Commission on further promoting the use of minor facilities of the performing arts venues. The problem of low utilisation of minor facilities of the performing arts venues is in fact fairly similar to that of generally low utilisation of music centres of the Music Office. Will LCSD consider tackling these two problems together and taking the initiative to approach community organisations and arts groups for hiring available time slots of its facilities? If so, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?

Reply:

- (17) LCSD agrees with the recommendation of the Audit Commission to strengthen the collaboration among all relevant offices with a view to optimising the utilisation of minor facilities of performing arts venues and Music Office's music centres. These include assigning music centres or minor facilities with lower utilisation rate for audience building activities; collaborating with schools and arts groups to explore the use of the facilities for music activities and rehearsals; and encouraging and helping arts groups to make use of these facilities if the available slots fit their event schedule and target groups. In addition, the minor facilities of performing arts venue also provide concessionary hire charges to encourage arts organisations to utilise more of the non-prime time slots.

Question:

- (18) According to paragraph 5.23(a) of the Report, the Tai Po Civic Centre would be closed for upgrading works to improve the standard of its performance facilities. Please provide information on the commencement date, target completion date and the impact of the project on audience building activities at Tai Po district.

Reply:

- (18) LCSD will continue to process the facility upgrading of the Tai Po Civic Centre in accordance with the established funding mechanism for public works. The timetable of this project hinges on its success in securing funding approval having regard to the competing priorities in the Public Works Programme.

In the meantime, LCSD will continue to press ahead with the audience building activities in the Tai Po district using the Tai Po Civic Centre and other available venues in the district such as parks, sport grounds, housing estates and open spaces.

Question:

- (19) Please advise on the progress of relaying the recommendation of the Audit Commission to the Committee on Venue Partnership and the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee as mentioned in paragraph 5.23(b) of the Report.

Reply:

- (19) The Venue Partnership Scheme (VPS) is in its third round in 2015-16 to 2017-18. LCSD is currently planning for the fourth round of VPS and will consult the Committee on Venue Partnership and Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee in 2017 regarding the recommendation of the Audit Commission on Ko Shan Theatre for enhancement of the Scheme.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
10 January 2017