

LCQ8: Role and functions of District Councils

Following is a question by the Hon Yeung Sum and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (March 1):

Question:

Regarding the implementation of the measures proposed by the Government in mid-2001 to enhance the role and functions of the District Councils ("DCs"), will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the details of the suggestions put forward by each DC over the past three years regarding the use and management of district leisure facilities (such as games halls and swimming pools) as well as district municipal facilities and services; the respective numbers of such suggestions that were accepted and rejected by the relevant government departments and the reasons for rejection;
- (b) of the numbers of times government departments in various districts invited, over the past three years, the relevant DCs to comment on the performance and standards of municipal services provided by private contractors in the districts concerned and the respective numbers of contractors whose contracts were renewed or discontinued by the authorities after considering DCs' comments;
- (c) among the Legislative Council Briefs issued by various government bureaux in the past three years, of the number of briefs whose electronic copies were provided to the DC secretariats for DC Members' information;
- (d) of the respective numbers of meetings that have been held, since

the commencement of the office of DC members of the current term, by Directors of Bureaux and Heads of Government Departments with these DC members, as well as the numbers of DC meetings these government officials have attended;

- (e) among the existing Steering Committees for Rural Public Works and Urban Minor Works Projects and the 18 District teams, of the numbers of such committees/teams that are chaired by DC chairmen and DC members respectively;
- (f) of the number of members of the various consultative committees in each of the 18 districts of the territory, the percentages of DC members in the membership of the committees concerned, and the committees which are chaired by DC members; and
- (g) as the authorities have allocated an additional \$12 million to the Home Affairs Department ("HAD") in 2001 to strengthen support to the DC secretariats and HAD's Works Section, of the details of the funds that have been spent so far?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) According to our records, the number of suggestions put forward by District Councils (DCs) over the past three years regarding the use and management of district leisure facilities (such as libraries, sports centres and swimming pools) and district municipal facilities totalled 567 and 190 respectively. In respect of district leisure and cultural facilities and services, 372 suggestions were accepted by the relevant Government department, and the remaining 195 suggestions are being studied and followed up. The suggestions being studied and followed up involve construction of new facilities, utilisation of resources and arrangement of services, such as opening hours, which require thorough deliberation and hence cannot be implemented immediately. As regards district municipal facilities and services,

166 suggestions were accepted by the relevant Government department, 13 suggestions are being considered and kept under review subject to availability of resources. The remaining 11 suggestions were not accepted either because they were not supported by the stakeholders or they were not compatible with the existing policies.

(b) Over the past three years, Leisure and Cultural Services Department has provided the relevant DCs with about 300 reports on the performance of leisure services provided by private contractors in the districts concerned. The DCs generally accepted the department's assessments on private contractors. Generally speaking, the Government re-tenders the services upon the expiry of its contracts with private contractors. The process of tendering is conducted according to established policies and procedures, and the tenders are evaluated on the basis of the conditions of contract, the tenderers' experience and standard in service delivery, staff qualifications and tender prices, etc.

(c) According to our records, the Secretariats of the 18 DCs have received electronic copies of two Legislative Council briefs from Government bureaux over the past three years.

(d) Since the commencement of the current DC term in January 2004, some 160 meetings have been held between DC members and Directors of Bureaux as well as Heads of Departments. 60 of these meetings are DC meetings at which Government officials concerned have attended.

(e) At present, both the Rural Public Works Steering Committee and Urban Minor Works Steering Committee are chaired by the Director of Home Affairs. As regards the 18 District Working Groups, ten of them are chaired by the respective DC Chairmen, one by the DC Vice Chairman, and seven by DC members of the respective districts.

(f) There are around 300 district consultative committees in the 18 districts with a total membership of 6 983, among which 1 774 (25%) posts are held by DC members. 131 out of the 300 committees are chaired

by DC members. These committees include some of the Area Committees, District Fight Crime Committees, District Fire Safety Committees, District Clean Hong Kong Committees, Urban Minor Works Programme District Working Groups, Rural Public Works Programme District Working Groups and District Summer Youth Programme Co-ordinating Committees.

(g) A sum of \$12 million was allocated to the Home Affairs Department (HAD) in 2001-02 for the creation of 48 posts to strengthen the District Council Secretariats and divisions in the HAD Headquarters. The sum has been fully used for deployment of permanent staff and employment of non-civil service contract staff to provide support to the work of HAD and the 18 DCs on an on-going basis.

End/Wednesday, March 1, 2006