

## District Council review consultation ends

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A consultation launched by the Government to seek public views on a review of the role, functions and composition of the District Councils (DCs) ends today (July 31). The consultation started on April 27 and lasted for more than three months. The Government has received views and suggestions from the 18 DCs, the Legislative Council, various sectors of the community and the public. Over 100 written submissions have been received during this period.

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, said all the views collected would be thoroughly considered and compiled before a decision would be made on whether to revise the various proposals listed in the consultation document. He said the aim of the exercise was to strengthen the role of DCs in district administration and ensure that district needs are promptly met. "This is expected to ensure the ultimate goal of 'people-based' governance can be achieved," he said.

Immediately after the launching of the consultation document, Dr Ho led senior officials of the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) and the Constitutional Affairs Bureau to visit the 18 DCs and listen to the district councillors' views. The 18 DCs have all indicated clear support for the broad directions of the recommendations contained in the DC review.

The Home Affairs Department organised three public forums, created a webpage, and collected public views via post, e-mail and fax.

"To summarise all the views collected over the past three months, there are generally five areas that most concern the public: mode of operation and management of district facilities, funding mechanism, DC members' honorarium and operating expenses allowance, role of District Officers, and the overall constitutional development," Dr Ho said.

"According to the preliminary analysis, DCs and the public generally support DCs' involvement in the management of district facilities, strengthening the role of District Officers, and enhancing communication between the Government and DCs."

Dr Ho said that in line with broad support for the recommendation, a pilot scheme to involve DCs in the management of some district facilities would be launched as proposed, in several designated districts in January next year (2007).

"As time is of essence in this exercise, the HAB and Home Affairs Department, as well as the Leisure and Culture Services Department will soon start preparatory work in manpower resources, review of DC funding guidelines, fine-tuning DC members' honorarium and operating expenses allowance to ensure the smooth implementation of the pilot scheme," he said.

Ends/Monday, July 31, 2006