

LCQ13: District Minor Works under District Council

Following is a question by the Hon Cyd Ho Sau-lan and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (December 10):

Question:

From the year 2008-2009 onward, a total of 300 million dollars will be allocated in each financial year to District Councils ("DCs") for implementing district minor works. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) in respect of each DC since January this year, of the number of projects endorsed, the respective numbers of funding applications for such projects which have been approved, are still being examined and have been rejected by the delegated authorities, the contents and estimated amount of expenditure of each project, as well as the reasons why some of them have not yet been approved or have been rejected; and

(b) as it has recently been reported that the funding has not been utilised so far, of the reasons for that; and whether it will review the funding mechanism to ensure that the funding applications can be examined and approved expeditiously so that the community can be benefited as soon as possible?

Reply:

President,

(a) The provision for the District Minor Works (DMW) programme is \$300 million for 2008-09. The funds were allocated to the 18 District Councils (DCs) in April this year. The DMW programme block vote is a dedicated block vote for DCs to carry out district minor works with a view to improving the district facilities, living environment and hygiene conditions in the respective districts. Most of the DMW projects are initiated by DC members, though some are recommended to the DCs by government departments. As long as the projects endorsed for implementation by DCs fall within the ambit of the DMW programme block vote, the approving officers of the Administration will approve funding for the project.

As at end-November this year, 626 DMW projects have been endorsed for implementation by DCs, and the Administration has approved the funding for their implementation in a timely manner. In addition, DCs have agreed in principle for further studies to be carried out for about 250 proposed projects so as to define project

scope, prepare estimates of expenditure, and conduct feasibility studies and relevant consultations, etc. If a DC decides to implement a project upon completion of such initial preparation work, the Administration will arrange for the approval of the required funding. Apart from the above projects, the DCs have been actively identifying other new projects in conjunction with government departments concerned. Therefore, the number of projects is expected to be on a steady rise.

DMW projects with funding approved so far mainly comprises works to provide or improve sitting-out facilities such as parks, sitting-out areas, rain shelters and pavilions (accounting for about 23%), works to improve leisure and cultural venues such as sports venues, district libraries and swimming pools (accounting for about 17%), as well as various types of beautification and greening projects (accounting for about 15%). Most of the abovementioned works are relatively minor projects costing not more than \$3 million each. The estimated total project costs amount to some \$373 million. The number of projects with funding approved in respect of individual districts is set out at Annex.

(b) DCs have been proactively planning for projects since the launch of the programme. This has enabled construction works to commence for one project after another. We expect that with the progress of works, the majority of the actual expenditure will be incurred during the latter part of this financial year.

The Home Affairs Department, together with the DCs and government departments concerned, regularly reviews the implementation of the DMW programme with a view to making improvement. To expedite the implementation of the projects, we have proposed to the DCs the appointment of a member or a dedicated working group for each project to follow up on its planning and detailed design (such as conducting site inspection and discussion) with the assistance of the District Office. The objective is to enhance communication so that issues can be resolved as they emerge as fast as practicable without resorting to regular meetings. We have also proposed that DCs should consider endorsing projects by way of circulation of papers instead of waiting for deliberation at the bimonthly meeting of the relevant District Council Committee. As regards projects requiring consultation with other government departments, the departments concerned will respond expeditiously, and coordinate inputs at higher levels for complex issues. District Offices will also assume a more proactive role in following up the progress of the projects.

Ends/Wednesday, December 10, 2008