

LCQ3: Community halls and performing arts venues

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kwok-him and an oral reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (March 18):

Question:

It is learnt that a number of proposals made over a decade ago by District Councils ("DCs") (including Sham Shui Po and Tai Po DCs) to build community halls or civic centres in their districts have so far not been implemented, and many incumbent Members of such DCs have expressed strong dissatisfaction with the matter. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of:

- (a) the current utilisation rates of various types of venues in community halls and civic centres, and the respective percentages of users of such venues who are not residents of the districts concerned;
- (b) the locations and other details of the community halls and civic centres planned to be built in the coming five years, and on what considerations the authorities' decisions to build were based; and
- (c) the locations and other details of the community halls and civic centres which have been proposed by DCs but have yet to be endorsed by the authorities, and the reasons why the authorities have not yet endorsed the construction of such facilities?

Reply:

President,

- (a) The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) manages a total of 13 purpose-built performing arts venues. Major venues include the Hong Kong City Hall, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Sha Tin Town Hall, Tsuen Wan Town Hall, Tuen Mun Town Hall, Kwai Tsing Theatre, Yuen Long Theatre and Ko Shan Theatre. Smaller venues include the Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre, Sheung Wan Civic Centre, Ngau Chi Wan Civic Centre, Tai Po Civic Centre and North District Town Hall. Apart from these 13 performing arts venues, the Hong Kong Coliseum and Queen Elizabeth Stadium managed by LCSD are multi-purpose venues which also cater for

cultural/entertainment performances and community functions.

The average utilisation rates of these facilities over the past three years were 92% in 2006/07, 93% in 2007/08 and 93% in 2008/09. As for the utilisation rates of individual venues over the past three years, please refer to Annex I.

At present, there is a total of 51 community halls and 38 community centres managed by the Home Affairs Department (HAD). Since January 1, 2008, District Councils have been involved in the management of district facilities, including community halls/centres. With the provision of multi-purpose halls, conference rooms, meeting rooms and dressing rooms, community halls/centres are also suitable for staging small-scale performances. The average utilisation rates of the multi-purpose halls over the past three years were 76% in 2006, 75% in 2007 and 75% in 2008. The utilisation rates of various community halls/centres in the past three years are set out at Annex II.

As performing arts venues and community halls/centres are open for use by all public organisations, statistics on "non-local" users of these venues are not available.

(b) & (c) LCSD and HAD have been keeping a close watch on the demand for and provision of performing arts and community hall facilities. As the provision and operation of performing arts venues involve heavy capital investment and long-term commitment of resources, the Government must prudently take into consideration a number of relevant factors in the planning of new performing arts facilities to ensure effective utilisation of resources. They include the availability and rate of utilisation of existing facilities in the territory, overall planning of the district, views of the cultural sector, needs of the community at large, related cultural policies, etc.

The West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) under planning will provide dedicated performing arts facilities in various sizes and for different purposes to serve the public in the West Kowloon region (including Sham Shui Po). The Recommendation Report of the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the WKCD (CC Report) proposed that 15 performing arts venues of different sizes serving different art forms, a new and forward-looking cultural institution with museum functions (temporarily called "M+") which focuses on 20th-21st century visual culture, an exhibition centre and piazza areas should be provided in the WKCD. The WKCD Authority will take into account the recommendations of the CC Report in preparing the Development Plan for the

WKCD.

Apart from the WKCD, new government performing arts venues under planning include a Cross-District Community Cultural Centre in Kwun Tong, a new Annex Building for Ko Shan Theatre in Hung Hom and a Xiqu activity centre to be converted from Yau Ma Tei Theatre. For details, please refer to Annex III.

Performing arts facilities of LCSD are open for use by all sectors of the community and the general public. As mentioned above, the Government has to take into prudent consideration various factors in the planning of new facilities to ensure proper use of resources. We also have to take into account the progress of local public works programmes. Details of the performing arts venue proposals with no confirmed timetable for construction or yet to be endorsed after review of local needs are set out at Annex IV.

In accordance with the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG), community halls are provided on need basis. In determining the need, factors such as population size, local characteristics, community aspirations and utilisation rates of community halls in the vicinity would be taken into consideration.

Presently, eight new community halls are under construction and planning for another five is actively pursued by the Government. For details, please refer to Annex V. Six projects proposed by District Councils are yet to be endorsed either for insufficient justifications to support the proposals in accordance with the HKPSG or for the need to tie in with local planning and development. A list of these proposed projects is attached at Annex VI.

We share the local concern for the provision of performing arts and community hall facilities in the community and shall keep a close watch on local needs and development in our regular review for these facilities.

Ends/Wednesday, March 18, 2009

Issued at HKT 14:52