

LCQ19: Attendance of public officers at DC meetings

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Following is a question by the Hon Emily Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 12):

Question:

The Government indicates that it has always attached great importance to the work of District Councils ("DCs"), yet, some DC members have complained that the non-attendance of public officers at DC meetings has become increasingly prevalent. In this connection, will the Executive Authorities inform this Council:

- (a) of the respective numbers of agenda items for meetings of the 18 DCs and their committees in the past two years, as well as statistics on the attendances of the public officers concerned at the meetings for such agenda items;
- (b) of the respective post titles of Directors of Bureaux, Permanent Secretaries and officers at directorate level who had never attended any DC meeting for agenda items related to their purviews in the past two years;
- (c) of the number of agenda items of DC meetings for which no government representative concerned had attended in the past two years; and
- (d) whether they have assessed if the increasing non-attendance of public officers at DC meetings will seriously affect the implementation of district administration and communication between the Government and the people; if the assessment outcome is in the affirmative, whether they will formulate guidelines to specify that officers at various levels need to attend DC meetings as far as possible; if the assessment come is in the negative, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government regards the District Councils (DCs) as key players in district administration. Since the start of the current term of 2008-2011, we have enhanced the communication between senior Government officials and DCs through a series of arrangements.

We have arranged for Heads of Departments (HoDs) with direct interface with the public to attend DC meetings. In 2008 and 2009, the HoDs concerned attended a total of 69 and 83 DC meetings respectively. In the time available, it is not possible to provide an accurate number of all items discussed at the meetings of the 18 DCs and their committees in the past two years, but the Administration estimates it to be over 10,000.

Moreover, policy bureaux and departments continue to consult DCs on various policy proposals and other matters affecting the well-being of the people in the district. In this connection, the policy bureau / department concerned send representatives to attend the DC meetings. For instance, the Secretary for Food and Health and the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (or their representatives) attended meetings of all the 18 DCs to consult members on the healthcare reform and the constitutional development respectively.

Furthermore, representatives of the core departments continue to attend DC and committee meetings on a regular basis to answer questions raised by members. There is no question of an increasing non-attendance of public officers at DC meetings. In addition to the core departments, DCs and their committees may invite representatives of other Government bureaux or departments to attend meetings. Depending on the agenda and the meeting time, the relevant bureaux and departments will arrange appropriate representatives to attend the meetings as far as practicable. In the event that the representative from a policy bureau or department cannot attend a DC or committee meeting, they would provide a reply to the question raised and an explanation for their non-attendance to the DC or committee before the meeting.

Ends/Wednesday, May 12, 2010

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