

**Motion on  
“Strengthening the Role and Functions of District Councils”  
Progress Report**

At the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting held on 23 November 2016, the motion on “Strengthening the Role and Functions of District Councils” moved by Hon LAU Kwok-fan with amendments by Hon WU Chi-wai was passed. This report aims to brief LegCo Members on the progress of the work concerned.

**Strengthening the Role and Functions of District Councils (DCs)**

2. The motion mentioned the strengthening of the role and functions of DCs and the need to review and amend the District Councils Ordinance (DCO) (Cap. 547). Such proposal involves constitutional changes. DCs are district organisations with no political power. They are established by the Government as its most important partner in district administration. Their role and functions are stipulated in Article 97 of the Basic Law.

3. Section 61(a) of the DCO further elaborates on the functions of DCs, including to advise the Government on matters affecting the well-being of the people in the district, the provision and use of district facilities and services, the district-based programmes as well as the use of public funds allocated to the districts for local works and community activities. DCs also undertake environmental improvement, promotion of recreational and cultural activities, and community activities within the districts subject to the availability of funds.

4. While the above constitutional arrangements are premised on relevant legislation, the Government has strengthened the role and functions of DCs without prejudice to these constitutional arrangements. District Facilities Management Committees (DFMCs) are set up under DCs to oversee the management of certain district facilities, including libraries, sports centres, swimming pools, recreation areas and community halls. To ensure that district facilities can better meet the needs and expectations of the local community, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will consult and seek approval from DCs regarding matters on the operation, management and maintenance of the facilities under their purview. Through DFMCs and related working groups, DC members can also propose new initiatives for the facilities concerned, such as the priority of improvement works, and the design of renovation and improvement works.

5. Since 2008, the District Minor Works Programme has been fully implemented in all 18 districts in Hong Kong. More resources have been made available for DCs to carry out projects for the improvement of district facilities, living environment and hygiene conditions. The implementation of the Signature Project Scheme and the District-led Actions Scheme showcase the strengthening of DCs' role and functions. With the full participation of DCs in formulating projects under the schemes as well as setting work priority, the relevant work can better meet local needs and improves district environment.

### **Strengthening Support to DCs**

6. We have strengthened support to DCs and DC members in many ways, including the provision of additional allocation to DCs, as well as enhancing the remuneration and the "Operating Expenses Reimbursement" (OER) to support the work of DC members.

### Additional Allocation for the Community Involvement Programme

7. The Chief Executive has just announced in his Policy Address on 18 January that an additional \$100 million to the Community Involvement Programme will be provided, bringing its annual funding to some \$461 million, so as to enable the 18 DCs to further enhance the implementation or sponsorship of community involvement projects. We believe that the arrangement will give DCs greater flexibility in implementing various community-building activities, recreational, sports and arts events as well as cultural activities at the district level in response to local needs.

8. We appreciate that LegCo Members are very much concerned about the transparency and accountability of the use of DC funds. At present, DCs are required to observe the "Manual on the Use of DC Funds" (The Manual) in vetting funding applications. The Manual stipulates that DC members should declare any actual, potential or apparent conflict of interest when processing the applications for funds. All declarations must be recorded in the minutes of DC meetings.

### Adjustment to the Remuneration of DC Members

9. With effect from 1 January 2016, we have substantially increased DC members' monthly honorarium by 15% and introduced an additional provision to cover their expenditure during duty visits which is capped at \$10,000 for each DC member in their term of office. Since January

2014, we have also significantly increased the OER by 34% to double up our support to DC members. They can leverage on this provision to rent offices and hire assistants.

10. The remuneration, OER, Miscellaneous Expenses Allowance and Entertainment Expenses Reimbursement for DC Chairmen are adjusted annually in accordance with the year-on-year rate of change in the CPI (A).

#### District Council Secretariat

11. DC Secretariats are mainly supported by Executive Officers in District Offices. The practice has been running smooth over the years. We will review the staffing of DC Secretariats from time to time to ensure the smooth operation of DC Secretariats.

#### Enhancing Communication with DCs

12. We will continue to enhance the communication between the Government and DCs through various channels, including holding regular meetings with DC Chairmen and Vice-chairmen, inviting representatives from different bureaux and departments to brief Chairmen on issues of territory-wide concerns such as “Promotion of Organ Donation”, “Mandatory Provident Fund Default Investment Strategy” and “Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030”. By facilitating the two-way communication between the Government and DCs, we can effectively enhance the understanding of DC Chairmen of major Government policies, and enable government departments to tap DCs’ views at an early stage.

13. In addition, we will continue to arrange duty visits and community activities for Principal Officials, and arrange Heads of Departments to meet with DC members to listen to their views face-to-face.

14. Government departments will continue to listen to the views of DCs and provide appropriate support to DCs and DC members to facilitate DCs in exercising their role and functions.

Home Affairs Department  
25 January 2017