

# LC: Speech by CS in presenting Government Minute in response to Report No. 75A of Public Accounts Committee

Following is the speech (translated from Chinese) by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr John Lee, in presenting the Government Minute in response to Report No. 75A of the Public Accounts Committee in the Legislative Council today (August 18):

President,

Laid on the table today is the Government Minute (GM) responding to Report No. 75A of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) presented to the Legislative Council on May 12, 2021.

I welcome the Report of the PAC and am grateful for the time and efforts devoted by the Chairman, the Hon Abraham Shek, and members of the PAC on it. The Government accepts the PAC's various recommendations and sets out in detail in the GM the specific responses of the relevant bureaux and departments. The Report of the PAC provides recommendations on areas in relation to the following three chapters in the Director of Audit's Report No. 75, namely, collection and removal of marine refuse by the Marine Department (MD); Government's efforts in tackling shoreline refuse; and efforts of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) in facilitating building management. I would like to highlight the key measures taken and progress made by the relevant government departments and organisations in response to the recommendations.

Collection and removal of marine refuse by the MD

As pointed out in the PAC Report, there were inadequacies in the administration of marine refuse cleansing and disposal contracts by the MD and there was room for improvement in the monitoring of marine refuse cleansing and disposal services. Prior to the PAC public hearing, the MD had already introduced various improvement measures, such as conducting surprise checks to monitor the performance of the contractor in reporting the quantity of marine refuse collected, requesting the contractor to maintain proper records of the refuse transportation vehicle's daily log books, recovering from the contractor of the Tai Po District contract the overpaid disposal charges at the refuse transfer stations and strengthening the monitoring of the contractor's management of the marine refuse collection points (MRCPs). The PAC has acknowledged the above improvement measures implemented by the MD.

To improve the management of marine refuse cleansing and disposal contracts, the MD has, starting from January 1, 2021, followed the practice

of the International Maritime Organization to measure the quantity of refuse collected from the sea and vessels by volume in cubic metres. The MD has also stepped up inspections on the procedures for disposing marine refuse by the contractor at the MRCs. In response to the PAC's recommendation, the MD is also actively following up on the adoption of other performance indicators in its Controlling Officer's Report to reflect the effectiveness of its marine refuse cleansing work.

With respect to tender invitation for the marine refuse cleansing and disposal contracts, the MD will make reference to the recommendations of the Central Tender Board, including allowing a longer tender period for the tenderers to prepare proposals and shortening the contract period to allow more flexibility, so that the tendering process for future contracts can allow more competition, thereby making the most cost-effective tender award.

To strengthen the monitoring work over the collection and removal of marine refuse by the contractor, the MD will deploy patrol officers to conduct more surprise checks on priority areas and MRCs. Should it come to the MD's notice that the contractor is in breach of relevant contractual requirements, the MD will promptly investigate and take necessary actions, such as imposing penalties as per the terms of contracts and claiming against the contractor for administration costs arisen. The relevant breach will also be properly recorded in writing by the MD.

Furthermore, the MD has put in place a number of new initiatives on marine refuse cleansing. For instance, floating booms have since March 2021 been placed in Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter to intercept floating refuse, and drones have since April 2021 been used to enhance the monitoring of the sea surface cleanliness condition. The MD will, together with the contractor, continue to widely apply information technology to enhance the daily management and monitoring of marine refuse cleansing and disposal services.

On enforcement front, to tackle marine littering in a more effective manner, about 30 per cent of the MD's anti-marine littering enforcement operations have been conducted by officers in plain clothes starting from 2021.

Apart from improvement measures on administration and operational aspects, the Environment Bureau (ENB) and the MD will continue to step up efforts in promotion and education. The MD will actively follow up on the recommendations in the PAC Report and the Director of Audit's Report, and the ENB will closely monitor the work progress.

#### Government's efforts in tackling shoreline refuse

As regards the Government's efforts in tackling shoreline refuse, in response to the PAC's recommendations, the Inter-departmental Working Group on Marine Environmental Management (the Working Group) steered by the ENB has adopted the Environmental Protection Department (EPD)'s shoreline cleanliness grading system as the standard to monitor the clean-up work of the departments concerned. The relevant departments will also take timely follow-up actions and manage the cleansing contractors for better performance base

on the monitoring results. The ENB will continue to provide necessary policy steer in the Working Group.

The Government also notes the PAC's emphasis on the need for a specific and measurable performance target and timetable for improving the cleanliness of shorelines. While there are visible improvements in shoreline cleanliness in the recent years, the Working Group will explore feasible options of setting a specific and measurable performance target for monitoring the progress of the collaborative efforts of the member departments in future.

As regards the PAC's recommendation of assigning a department to take up the responsibility on the cleanliness of shoreline areas which do not fall within the purview of any bureau or department, the Task Force on Marine Refuse under the Working Group has agreed that the EPD will continue to co-ordinate joint departmental in-depth clean-up operations to deal with refuse accumulation problems at individual remote and back-of-beach areas. The EPD will also flexibly deploy unmanned aircraft system and helicopter flights to extend more effectively the coverage of monitoring to remote shorelines.

Furthermore, the Government has taken actions in response to other key recommendations of the PAC and the Audit Commission (the Commission). For instance, the EPD has reviewed the list of marine refuse priority sites and uploaded their respective cleanliness grading with photos onto the Clean Shorelines website, and will continue to update the information on a quarterly basis so as to enhance public awareness on keeping the cleanliness of shorelines. Meanwhile, the Working Group has established direct communication channels with the Mainland authority for handling matters related to marine refuse incidents and alerting each other in a timely manner to expedite clean-up actions. The EPD will continue to enhance its educational and promotion work and engage the public when appropriate.

Keeping the shoreline clean is of paramount importance to maintaining Hong Kong's image as a metropolitan and vibrant city. The Government will accord priority to this on-going task on a long term basis.

#### Efforts of the HAD in facilitating building management

As regards the work on building management, the HAD has been assisting owners of private buildings to form owners' corporations (OCs) under the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344) and providing various support services on building management.

At present, various bureaux and departments regulate different building-related areas such as building safety and fire safety in accordance with relevant legislation. Meanwhile, the HAD has all along been working closely with these bureaux and departments to provide support to owners and residents of private buildings. For example, the HAD has since 2018 been hosting the Central Platform on Building Management regularly, where representatives of relevant departments and organisations are invited to introduce their support services on building management and maintenance to owners and OCs. Recently, the HAD has assisted the Security Bureau and the Fire Services Department in the procurement of portable firefighting equipment, which will be distributed

to owners and residents of "three-nil" buildings in the pilot districts through the relevant District Fire Safety Committees. The HAD will continue to work closely with relevant bureaux and departments in supporting owners and residents in need.

The HAD has been actively following up on the recommendations made by the PAC and the Commission. The PAC has recommended in its Report, among others, that the HAD should step up efforts in taking forward the Building Management Professional Advisory Service Scheme (the Scheme), including engaging community organisations with extensive network with local residents to reach out to the owners or residents of "three-nil" buildings. With reference to the PAC's recommendation, the HAD will introduce a pilot initiative under the Scheme to recruit community/non-governmental organisations, and through their district network contact and reach out to owners of "three-nil" buildings, with a view to encouraging the formation of OCs. Apart from assisting the formation of OCs in target buildings, the community/non-governmental organisations will also assist in the recruitment of Resident Liaison Ambassadors.

As regards internal guidelines and administrative arrangements, the HAD has issued to District Building Management Liaison Teams (DBMLTs) new guidelines in relation to the requirements on the frequency of liaison, record keeping and visit procedures. It has also updated the Operational Manual on Building Management for Liaison Officers. The new guidelines and revised manual provide DBMLTs with further guidance on their liaison with owners or management bodies of private buildings.

In addition, the HAD has implemented a number of measures to strengthen its support services. For example, in respect of the Central Platform on Building Management, the HAD has expanded the geographical coverage of the briefing sessions and made the sessions available online. The HAD will also adopt measures to enhance the attendance rate of its training programmes for members of the management committees of OCs.

With reference to the recommendations from the PAC and the Commission, the HAD will continue to enhance the support to owners of private buildings and assist them to discharge their building management responsibilities.

President, I would like to thank the Chairman and members of the PAC again for their efforts and suggestions. The concerned bureaux, departments and organisations will strictly adhere to their responses in the GM and implement improvement measures.

Thank you, President.