

LCQ15: Hiring of taxis and other vehicles by the Government

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, in the Legislative Council today (January 20):

Question:

Under the Use of Hourly-hired Taxis for Duty Journeys Scheme (the Scheme), government officers of various government departments may hire taxis on an hourly basis as a means of transport when they undertake duty journeys, provided that there are operational needs and it is cost effective to do so. Furthermore, the Government hires other types of commercial vehicles to meet operational needs. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the total number of hirings of taxis under the Scheme and the total expenditure so incurred by various government departments in each of the past five years, as well as the average expenditure and duration per hiring;
- (2) how the expenditure incurred in the provision of transport services under the Scheme in the past five years compares with the expenditure that would have been incurred had such services been provided by means of maintaining a government fleet;
- (3) whether the Government has reviewed and improved the Scheme since its introduction in 2003; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; given that the Scheme is more cost-effective than maintaining a government fleet, whether the Government will encourage government officers to make more use of the Scheme; and
- (4) of the total number of hirings of other commercial vehicles and the total expenditure so incurred, by the Government for government officers' duty journeys in each of the past five years, together with a breakdown by type of vehicles?

Reply:

President,

The "Use of Hourly-hired Taxis for Duty Journeys Scheme" (the Scheme) was launched by the Government in 2003 to enable government officers to make use of hourly-hired taxis for duty journeys having regard to operational needs and cost effectiveness. My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Frankie Yick is as follows:

- (1) The total number of hirings and total expenditure incurred by various

government departments under the Scheme in the past five years from 2016 to 2020 are set out in Annex 1.

(2) The Government implemented the Scheme mainly with the aim of providing government departments with an alternative mode of transport to meet their additional, short-term or ad hoc needs for transport service. Hence, it is not appropriate to compare the Scheme with the use of Government fleet, through which regular transport services are provided, in terms of the expenditure involved and cost effectiveness.

(3) Since the launch of the Scheme in 2003, various government departments have made use of hourly-hired taxis to meet their operational needs, which shows that the Scheme has achieved its intended purpose. Furthermore, the Government Logistics Department (GLD) has from time to time kept government departments informed of the arrangements of the Scheme and reviewed relevant operational procedures with a view to facilitating departments in using the Scheme. According to the GLD's guidelines, departments are required to choose the appropriate mode of transport, including public transport, government vehicles, hired vehicles and hourly-hired taxis, taking into account operational needs and cost effectiveness.

(4) Regarding the hiring of saloon cars, buses and goods vehicles, the total number of hirings and total expenditure incurred by the Government each year in the past five years from 2016 to 2020 are set out in Annex 2.