

LCQ18: Facilities in community halls and community centres

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Pierre Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (December 16):

Question:

Quite a number of members of the public hope that the facilities in the community halls and community centres (CHs/CCs) under the management of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) can be put to optimal use, so that more community activities and activities for promoting inter-generational harmony can be held in such venues to promote a sense of community belonging as well as social and family harmony. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information about the conference rooms and multi-purpose halls (including stages) of CHs/CCs in each of the past three years:

(i) their respective average monthly utilisation rates, (ii) the average time taken to process each hiring application, (iii) the average time waited by each successful applicant for using such facilities, and (iv) the number of organisations which incurred demerit points as they had breached the terms and conditions for hiring such facilities, and the terms and conditions mainly breached by them, and set out such information in a table by District Council district and name of CH/CC;

(2) given that a small number of District Offices (DOs) permit, on a discretionary basis, individuals and commercial organisations to hire the facilities in CHs/CCs for organising community-building activities (regardless of whether such individuals/organisations will make any profit out of the activities), but most DOs do not allow such individuals/organisations to hire those facilities, whether the HAD will standardise the criteria for hiring facilities in CHs/CCs in various districts to permit individuals and commercial organisations to hire such facilities, so as to increase the variety of community activities available for residents' participation and, at the same time, increase the utilisation rates of the facilities in CHs/CCs;

(3) whether the HAD will, by following the practice of some shopping malls, relax the terms and conditions of hire of and the management rules for the facilities in CHs/CCs to permit the entry of guide dogs, with a view to facilitating the use of such facilities and participation in activities by the visually impaired; and

(4) given that the Leisure and Cultural Services Department has launched in six districts a trial scheme of Inclusive Park for Pets, in which the parks concerned are open for use by members of the public accompanied by their pets

with a view to providing an inclusive environment for different users to use the park facilities, whether the HAD will follow this practice and permit entry to CHs/CCs by members of the public accompanied by their pets, so as to respond to the needs of the community?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the question is as follows:

(1) (i) The usage rates of multi-purpose halls and conference rooms of community halls/community centres (CHs/CCs) under the management of the Home Affairs Department from 2017 to 2019 are at Annex.

(ii) and (iii) District Offices (DOs) will decide the booking arrangement of sessions of CHs/CCs by means of ballot. In general, DOs will inform an applicant of the outcome within ten working days after receipt of his/her application for individual sessions of facilities at CHs/CCs or conducting the ballot, where appropriate. For block bookings of facilities at CHs/CCs for a continuous period of up to three months, an applicant will be informed of the outcome within 21 working days after receipt of his/her application or conducting the ballot, where appropriate.

(iv) The numbers of organisations served with demerit points for breaching the terms and conditions for hiring CH/CC facilities in the past three years are shown in the following table. The breaches mainly involve number of participants below the minimum requirements, failed to turn up and cancellation of allocated timeslot with insufficient advance notice before the date of the activity, etc.

Year	2017	2018	2019
Number of organisations in breach of hiring terms and conditions	1 207	1 071	1 189

(2) One of the main purposes of the hiring policy of CHs/CCs is to serve the general public as far as possible. At present, the majority of CHs/CCs mainly allow hiring by organisations, but not individuals or commercial organisations. In general, organisations have better ability in organising larger events to facilitate and benefit more people. As the current arrangement has been effective all along, there is no plan at this stage to change the organisation-based hiring policy.

(3) and (4) Starting from late 2014, guide dogs have been allowed to enter all CHs/CCs. However, in order to avoid causing disturbance and inconvenience to other users of CHs/CCs, animals, except guide dogs, are not allowed to enter CHs/CCs, unless prior approval from respective DOs has been obtained.