

LCQ2: Promoting recreational and cultural activities in districts

Following is a question by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a reply by the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, in the Legislative Council today (June 21):

Question:

There are views that the District Councils (DCs) should perform the function of promoting recreational and cultural activities more proactively, and therefore, after the improvement of the district governance structure, the Government should further mobilise the initiative of community and district organisations to encourage them to organise more activities with local characteristics, so as to enrich the cultural and recreational life of members of the public, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging to the community and creating local cultural characteristics. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the authorities' plan, after the improvement of the district governance structure, to encourage various district organisations to organise more cultural and recreational activities with local characteristics, so that DCs can perform the function of promoting recreational and cultural activities more proactively;

(2) whether the authorities will consider appointing some people with cultural and sports backgrounds to DCs, so that DCs can better perform the function of promoting recreational and cultural activities; and

(3) whether the authorities will consider creating one post of cultural and sports activities coordinator in each district dedicated to the promotion and coordination of cultural and sports activities and performances in the district, and encouraging district organisations to organise more cultural and sports activities with local characteristics?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to promoting leisure and cultural developments. At the district level, the 18 District Offices (DOs) and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) have been encouraging members of the public and organisations to participate in and organise leisure and cultural activities, with a view to enriching the life of the members of the public and enhancing their sense of belonging to the community. In consultation with the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the consolidated reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (3) The DOs organise and collaborate with community organisations to organise different community involvement projects, including district recreational, sports, arts and cultural activities, so as to promote community building, social harmony and public participation in community affairs.

The Government has set up the Community Involvement (CI) Programme to provide funding to the relevant government departments and eligible organisations for organising events featuring local characteristics, including festive events, activities to promote community building and social harmony, as well as cultural, recreational, sports and arts activities. The annual total provision for the implementation of CI Programme is about \$460 million. In order to promote recreational and cultural developments in districts, \$160 million out of the total provision is reserved for the LCSD, which is responsible for the relevant work, to organise cultural, recreational, sports, and arts activities (such as Community Arts Scheme, concerts, Cantonese opera workshops, recreational and sports training courses, recreational activities and competitions). The remaining \$300 million is used by DOs and local organisations to organise various kinds of district activities.

In addition, district sports associations (DSAs) and district arts associations (DAAs) play an important role in promoting recreational, sports, arts and culture development in the community. Through their district networks, these associations have unique advantages in promoting district-based cultural, recreational and sports activities and encouraging active participation of members of the public in the community. In order to support the day-to-day operation of these associations and encourage them to organise more district activities, Home Affairs Department (HAD) has implemented the Community Sports Subvention Scheme and the Community Arts Subvention Scheme, under which an annual provision of up to \$150,000 is provided to each DSA and DAA to support their operating expenses and finance their activities. These associations can also apply for funding under the CI Programme from their respective DOs to organise more district recreational, sports, cultural and arts activities.

The LCSD provides quality cultural and recreational services to enrich people's lives; and works closely with sports, cultural and community organisations to create synergies to strengthen the momentum of arts and sports developments in Hong Kong.

The LCSD supports district arts and cultural groups to organise arts and cultural activities. Among them, the District Arts and Cultural Activities Venue Sponsorship Programme welcomes applications from qualified district arts and cultural groups, with a view to encouraging them to organise more cultural activities with special features of the district. The LCSD also provides free use of venues under its management and ticketing services for qualified district arts and cultural groups.

As for other district activities, the LCSD will continue to arrange or organise different types of arts and cultural activities in various districts

of Hong Kong, such as the 18dART Community Arts Scheme and the Community Cultural Ambassador Scheme. For some of the activities, the LCSD actively seeks collaboration with appropriate district groups/organisations as "supporting organisations" to assist with the promotion of relevant activities in the district.

Furthermore, in order to encourage DSAs to organise more sports programmes, the Government launched the five-year District Sports Programmes Funding Scheme in 2022 to provide DSAs with additional resources so that they may organise more sports programmes in each district, thereby building a stronger sporting culture in the community.

A key objective of the proposals on improving governance at the district level is to get the District Councils (DCs) back on track as district organisations which are not organs of political power in accordance with the Article 97 of the Basic Law. DCs are to be consulted by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on district administration and other affairs, or to be responsible for providing services in such fields as culture, recreation and environmental sanitation.

The reformed DCs will play the role of complementing the Government, assisting the Government in keeping its finger on the pulse of the community so that the Government can have more effective planning of district services. They will also help foster social cohesion, garner public support for the Government, as well as provide different services to the people in the districts. Under the District Councils (Amendment) Bill 2023, the revised District Council Ordinance will stipulate that DCs can assist in the smooth delivery of cultural and recreational services relating to the interests of the people in the District under the coordination of the Government; as well as apply for funding for projects and activities for the purpose of promotion of sports, arts and culture. DCs and its committees or working groups can continue to collaborate with local organisations, including applying for funding under the CI Programme to organise more sports, arts and cultural activities with local characteristics.

With regard to the co-ordination aspect, the LCSD has already set up dedicated offices to arrange arts and cultural, as well as recreational and sports activities of the department in 18 districts. In addition, the LCSD also arranges staff to regularly attend district council meetings to assist the work of district councils.

(2) The Government makes appointments to advisory and statutory bodies on the basis of the merit of individuals concerned, taking into account a candidate's ability, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to serve the public and with due regard to the functions and nature of business of the bodies concerned and the requirements in the relevant ordinances of statutory bodies.

Under the principle of appointment by merit, the Government will, with due regard to, the situation of each district appoint capable persons (such as professionals or important stakeholders in the district) who are patriotic

and have an affection for Hong Kong to serve as appointed DC members. The appointed DC members should not only be patriotic and have an affection for Hong Kong, but also have good conduct and integrity; have experience in serving the district or have made achievements in their respective professional fields; and be representative and well-recognised in the district or field concerned, etc. The Government will identify candidates of different backgrounds, ages and sectors, including those with cultural and sports backgrounds, for appointments having regard to the circumstances of each district, so as to enhance the diversity of DCs and their overall capabilities in performing their functions.