

## LCQ8: Recruitment of and compensation for major officers of the Hong Kong Football Association

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (December 5):

Question:

According to a funding agreement signed between the Government and the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA), the Government allocates to HKFA a maximum of \$25 million annually from April 2015 to March 2020 for the implementation of a Five-Year Strategic Plan. Recently, some news reports have alleged that HKFA failed to follow the established procedure when it recruited the Head Coach of the Hong Kong Football Representative Team. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council if it knows:

(1) (i) the details of the procedure made by HKFA for the recruitment of the Head Coach and (ii) the measures taken by HKFA to ensure that the conduct of the recruitment exercise complied with the procedure and the principles of openness, impartiality and prudent use of public funds;

(2) in respect of the funding allocated by the Government to HKFA in each year since April 2015, the respective (i) amounts and (ii) percentages used for meeting the various expenses; whether the funding agreement has specified a maximum percentage for each type of such expenses in the total amount of the allocation;

(3) the total amount paid for the remuneration and fringe benefits for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of HKFA in each year since April 2015; as the former CEO has left upon contract expiry since September this year, the recruitment procedure as well as the remuneration and fringe benefits for the successor; and

(4) the respective current remuneration and fringe benefits for the following HKFA posts: (i) Referees Manager, (ii) Head Coach, (iii) Technical Director, (iv) Head of Football Development, (v) General Secretary, (vi) Head of Competitions, and (vii) Head of Corporate Governance?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA) has, upon my request, given relevant information on its Five-Year Strategic Plan (the Plan). My reply to

the question is as follows:

(1) Since April 2015, the Government has been funding the HKFA to implement its Plan. The funding provided, with a ceiling of \$25 million per year, is mainly used for subventing the creation of various posts to provide the administrative and technical capabilities required by the HKFA to implement the Plan. These subvented posts include the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Referees Manager, Head Coach, Technical Director, Head of Football Development, Head of Corporate Governance, Human Resources Manager, Academy Head Coach, Coach Education Manager, Grassroots Football Manager and Women's Football Manager.

With the agreement of the Football Task Force (FTF), the HKFA combined the posts of Head Coach and Technical Director in May 2014. Before commencing the recent recruitment exercise for the vacant post of Head Coach, the HKFA proposed to split the combined Head Coach cum Technical Director post back into two posts. The HKFA also made a proposal in its 2018-19 annual plan on the remuneration subvention ceilings of these two posts. Having considered the views of the FTF, the Government endorsed the HKFA's proposal on May 23, 2018.

The HKFA has formulated a set of Staff Recruitment Policy and Procedures. The open recruitment exercise for the vacant Head Coach post was conducted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. The HKFA placed the advertisement for open recruitment on recruitment websites around the world as well as its own website on May 24, 2018, inviting interested persons to apply on or before June 23, 2018. By the end of the application period, the HKFA received a total of 106 applications. The CEO shortlisted the applicants in accordance with the relevant guidelines and selected the nine most suitable applicants for interview. The HKFA's Selection Panel conducted interviews with the shortlisted applicants through video conferencing between July 17 and 19, 2018, and then made its recommendation on the appointment to the HKFA Board (the Board) on July 26, 2018. The Board deliberated on the Selection Panel's recommendation at its meeting on July 26 and August 2, 2018, and at the second meeting on August 2, the Board accepted the Panel's recommendation and confirmed the candidate for the Head Coach post.

We understand that during the Board's deliberation of the Selection Panel's recommendation, one of the Directors questioned the CEO's deviation from the relevant policy and procedures in certain parts of the recruitment exercise and his lateness in informing the Board. While the Board recognised that there was room for improvement in the handling of the recruitment exercise, the majority of the Directors considered that the impartiality of this recruitment exercise had not been compromised and the Board had therefore decided to accept the recommendation of the Selection Panel. The Board however agreed that the current policy and procedures and their implementation should be reviewed and improved.

(2) The funding allocated by the Government to the HKFA in the past three years for implementing the Plan is tabulated below:

Type of expenses	Funding amount (\$ million) (percentage in total allocation)					
	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18	
Subvented posts	17.3	(81.2%)	18.2	(80.2%)	18.5	(86.9%)
Professional services	1.7	(8%)	0.8	(3.5%)	0.8	(3.7%)
Market research / promotion	0.8	(3.8%)	1	(4.4%)	0.7	(3.3%)
Accident and medical insurance	0.4	(1.9%)	0.9	(4%)	0.6	(2.8%)
Others	1.1	(5.1%)	1.8	(7.9%)	0.7	(3.3%)
Total	21.3		22.7		21.3	

The funding agreement between the Government and the HKFA stipulates that the HKFA should submit its annual funding application to the FTF for endorsement to ensure effective funding allocation. The Government has not specified ceilings on the percentages in total allocation for the various types of expenses.

(3) and (4) For the implementation of the Plan, the Government has subvented in total 27 posts of the HKFA in 2018-19. Distribution of the relevant subvention is as follows:

Annual remuneration subvention (\$)	Number of posts
2.5 million or above	1
1.5 – 2.5 million	1
0.5 – 1.5 million	11
under 0.5 million	14

On October 2, 2018, the Board approved the appointment of its Head of Football Development as the acting CEO for a period of six months. We understand that the HKFA is currently preparing for the CEO recruitment exercise.