

Ombudsman announces results of direct investigation into repairs and maintenance of outdoor recreational and sports facilities under Leisure and Cultural Services Department (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Ms Winnie Chiu, today (December 14) announced the completion of a direct investigation into the repairs and maintenance of outdoor recreational and sports facilities under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD).

The investigation by the Office of The Ombudsman revealed that the LCSD had formulated guidelines regarding its outdoor recreational and sports facilities for instructing frontline staff to regularly inspect the facilities and submit reports on damage as soon as possible so that repairs can be arranged. Nevertheless, between 2017 and 2021, it took the LCSD on average two-and-a-half to three months from the day of receiving a damage report to confirm the completion of repairs of the facility in question. Between 2018 and 2022, about a quarter to half of the repair works completed by LCSD contractors involved their failure to complete the repairs by the expected works completion date. Delay in repair works was rather serious.

"As the management authority for a huge number of outdoor recreational and sports facilities, the LCSD has a duty to ensure that the facilities are in good condition and arrange for their timely repairs and maintenance so that they can be used by the public safely for a sustained period. The Office's investigation found that some LCSD frontline staff had failed to discover during day-to-day inspections some prolonged or serious damage in facilities and report them in a timely manner. Furthermore, there are inadequacies and therefore room for improvement in the LCSD's procedures for arranging repairs for facilities and monitoring contractors' performance," Ms Chiu noted.

The Office has made 11 recommendations for improvement to the LCSD. For example, it should formulate practice guides and improve the current routine inspection form to assist frontline staff to inspect facilities thoroughly and judge accurately the damage spotted; strengthen facility inspection training for frontline staff to heighten their awareness about implementing temporary safety measures for damaged facilities or cordoning off those facilities; follow up closely on the development of the computer system designed for facility inspection and repair records so that in the future,

staff can inspect in real time the relevant records and follow up on the repairs for facilities in a timely manner; review the current term contract arrangement and in the long run explore options that allow more flexible arrangements for facility repairs by contractors; and consider making use of smart technology to facilitate reports of damaged facilities by the public.

The LCSD has in general accepted the Office's recommendations.

The full investigation report has been uploaded to the website of the Office of The Ombudsman at www.ombudsman.hk for public inspection.

