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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

Since the establishment of the new District Councils (DCs) in January 2000, a number of measures have been put in place to enhance the role of the DCs and the support for DC members. The Administration has undertaken to examine how the roles and functions of the DCs could be further enhanced after the new DCs had been in operation for some time and to complete the review in 2001. An inter-departmental Working Group chaired by the Home Affairs Bureau has been set up in July 2000 for this purpose.

## The Review

2. The Working Group has recently completed the review and proposed a number of measures to further enhance the roles and functions of DCs and strengthen the support for them. It agrees that the DCs should and could play an important role in empowering the community and in ensuring that Government provides accountable and responsive district services. At the same time, the Working Group is mindful of the need to ensure that the proposed measures would not lead to the proliferation of executive authorities at the district level, each making policy decisions and exercising executive functions independently. The thrust of the Working Group's recommendations is, therefore, to enhance the fundamental role of the DCs as Government's key advisers on district affairs and communication channel with the public, as well as their participation in and ability to oversee and influence the work of the departments in the district.

## Summary of Recommendations

3. The Working Group has made a total of 28 main recommendations in five main areas, which are summarized below.

**A. *Enhancing the roles and functions of DCs and providing additional funding for them***

- (1) To allocate to the DCs an additional **\$31 million** per annum for organizing community involvement (CI) projects starting from 2001-02. Together with the \$25.4 million transferred from the Leisure & Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the DC funds for organising CI projects in 2001-02 will have increased by 46% over that for 2000-01 (2.12 – 2.14)<sup>1</sup>.
- (2) To provide the DCs' with an additional **\$10 million** per annum for implementing Minor Environmental Improvement (MEI) projects starting from 2001-02, representing a 50% over that allocated by DCs in 2000-01 (2.17).
- (3) To set up a **consultative committee** in each district to advise on the **usage and management** of district-based cultural and leisure facilities such as indoor games halls, parks, swimming pools, beaches, local libraries; and to appoint DC members to the committee as members. (2.21)
- (4) To strengthen DCs' ability in monitoring the **provision and delivery of district-based municipal facilities and services<sup>2</sup>** by institutionalizing a mechanism to ensure that the departments concerned will:
  - (i) **consult** the DCs **in advance** on their proposed initiatives, measures and projects and their priority;
  - (ii) **take on board** the DCs' views on the **design and layout** of district-based municipal facilities which have secured funding approval, provided their recommendations do not depart from the territory-wide policies and are **broadly within the prescribed budget**;
  - (iii) **submit** to the DCs a district **annual plan and half-yearly progress reports** on the work of the department; and

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<sup>1</sup> Figures in brackets denote paragraph number in the report.

<sup>2</sup> District-based municipal services/facilities refer to:

- Environmental hygiene services/facilities such as public toilets, markets, litter bins, refuse collection points (but excluding food safety and hygiene), clearance of environmental black spots and street cleaning
- Greening and beautifying the districts such as tree-planting, landscaping, etc
- Local leisure and cultural services/facilities (all except the provision and management of territory-wide facilities and formulation of central cultural and sports policies).

- (iv) invite the DCs to comment on the **performance and standards** of the municipal services provided by private contractors in the districts and to **take account of** their views and other relevant factors in deciding whether the contracts should be renewed (2.18 –2.20).
- (5) To improve communication between the two municipal departments and the DCs, Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (DLCS) and Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (DFEH) undertake to hold **regular liaison meetings** with the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the relevant DC committees to collect views on the work of the departments. Similar meetings between DLCS and the chairmen of the management consultative committees proposed in (3) above can be arranged. (2.22).
- (6) To enhance the role of DCs in the planning and implementation of **other district-based services and facilities** (e.g. transport, territory development), the core departments<sup>3</sup> will:
- (i) submit to the DCs their **annual district plans** and incorporate their views into the work plans as far as practicable;
- (ii) **seek and take on board** the DCs' views on the priority, location and design of local projects and facilities within the purview of the core departments, provided that they are broadly within the prescribed budget and do not depart from the territory-wide policies; and
- (iii) in exceptional cases where the DCs' views cannot be taken on board, **explain** the reasons clearly to them (2.23).
- (7) Policy bureaux and departments to invite DCs to comment on **major policy issues and capital works projects** affecting the well-being of the people in the district, and to **report** their views in the bureaux/departments' submissions to the approving authority (2.24).
- (8) To involve DCs in drawing up the priority of **major culture and leisure works projects** in the respective districts before LCSD puts forward a consolidated **Five-Year Plan** for such projects for

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<sup>3</sup> Core departments include Home Affairs Department (HAD), Hong Kong Police Force, Housing Department, Transport Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and Territory Development Department.

consideration within the Administration. The Plan would give the DCs an indication as to whether and when a particular project will proceed (2.26).

- (9) To increase DCs' involvement in the implementation of local minor works projects by devolving to DC chairmen/members the **chairmanship** of the two Steering Committees on **Rural Public Works (RPW)** and **Urban Minor Works (UMW)** Programmes as well as the 18 District Working Groups (2.16).
- (10) To take into account DCs' views as far as practicable in considering **planning applications** and **requests for land use changes** (2.29-2.30).
- (11) To invite DCs to consider the **specific suggestions** made by departments at Appendix II to increase DCs' involvement in their work (2.31)
- (12) To devolve **chairmanship** of certain district committees to DC members and to invite them to take part in more **district committees** (2.32).
- (13) To invite chairmen of DC committees to attend **District Management Committee (DMC) meetings** as and when items concerning their committees are discussed (2.33).

**B. Enhancing communication between DCs and the Administration**

- (14) To enable effective **dialogue** between the DCs and the **Policy Secretaries/Heads of Department (HoDs)** who oversee matters affecting people's livelihood, the latter would meet DC members as necessary and at least once within the four-year term of DCs (2.34).
- (15) To stipulate clearly the **level of representation** of the core departments at DC meetings and to require a **director** officer of the bureau and department which cannot attend a DC meeting to give a **written or oral explanation** to the DC secretariat in advance (2.36).
- (16) Departments having dealings with DCs to assign a suitable officer to provide **"one-stop" services** for DC members including the handling of complaints (2.37).

- (17) To develop a **feedback mechanism** for collecting DC members' feedback to the work of the core departments. The feedback collected from DCs will be conveyed to the Heads of Department concerned for reference and necessary follow-up action (2.38).
- (18) To keep DCs abreast of new policy proposals, policy bureaux will send electronic copies of **LegCo briefs** (especially those containing information of interest to the general public) to the DC secretariats for dissemination to DC members (2.40).
- (19) To provide **training for civil servants** who have frequent dealings with DCs on the future enhanced roles and functions of the DCs with a view to improving their communication with DC members and cultivating among them a more forthcoming attitude towards the DCs (2.39).

**C. Enhancing DC members' participation in the policy-making process**

- (20) The Government to take **proactive** measures with a view to appointing more DC members to advisory and statutory bodies, especially those which are concerned with people's livelihood. The Home Affairs Bureau and Home Affairs Department will keep track of the progress made (2.41).

**D. Strengthening support for DC Members**

- (21) The Independent Commission on Remuneration for DC Members to review the **remuneration package** for DC members and to come up with recommendations in Autumn, so that it can take into account the future enhanced roles and functions of the DCs in finalizing recommendations. (2.42).
- (22) To organise more **familiarisation** visits, seminars, briefings, etc. for DC members and, where necessary and appropriate, their assistants (2.43-2.44).
- (23) To earmark **\$12 million** for providing additional **resources for the DC secretariats and the works section of HAD** to enable them to take on the new tasks arising from the enhanced functions of the DCs and to strengthen support for the DCs (2.45).
- (24) To provide **more IT support**, both hardware and software, for DCs

and DC members (2.46).

**E. Enhancing DCs' accountability and efficiency**

- (25) To facilitate public scrutiny of DC's work, each DC to consider publishing an **annual report** covering, among others, its achievements in the past year, deployment of public funds and outstanding issues to be further pursued (2.51).
- (26) To strengthen the **safeguards** against conflict of interest by DC members by tightening the DC Standing Orders, taking into account the advice of the ICAC and rules and procedures adopted by other related organisations (2.52).
- (27) DCs to consider whether a **self-regulatory code** to govern the conduct of members should be developed (2.52).
- (28) To provide more detailed guidelines in the DC Standing Order governing the **conduct of DC meetings** so as to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of such meetings and to ensure **clear and prompt responses** will be provided to departments on matters being consulted (2.53).

**Conclusion**

4. The package of recommendations in this report seek to further enhance the roles and functions of DCs in monitoring the provision, delivery and management of district services and facilities, improve the communication between the Government and the DCs and strengthen the support for them. Separately, the independent commission will make recommendations on the remuneration package for DC members in Autumn, taking into account the recommendations made in this report and the community's views on the proposed roles and functions of DC members. Subject to the approval of the relevant authorities, the Government aims to implement the package of measures before the end of 2001.

5. Please send your comments on this Report to Home Affairs Bureau by **10 September 2001** by any of the following means:

By post: Home Affairs Bureau  
(Attn: Division IV)  
31/F, Southorn Centre

130 Hennessy Road  
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By E-mail: [dcreview@hab.gcn.gov.hk](mailto:dcreview@hab.gcn.gov.hk)

6. For any enquiry related to this Report, please contact HAB at 2835 1376.

Home Affairs Bureau  
July 2001

## **Part I : BACKGROUND**

### **DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION SCHEME**

1.1 The District Administration Scheme was introduced in 1982 with the establishment of a District Board (DB) and a District Management Committee (DMC) in each of the 18 administrative districts in Hong Kong. Through the Scheme, the Government promotes public participation in district affairs and fosters among Hong Kong people a sense of belonging and mutual care. The Scheme also helps ensure that public opinions are effectively channeled to the Government and that the Government is responsive to district needs and problems.

1.2 The primary functions of the **DBs** were to advise the Government on matters affecting the well-being of the people living and working in the districts as well as on the provision and use of public facilities and services within the district. The DBs also served as a major communication channel between the Government and the local community. On July 1, 1997, 18 Provisional District Boards (PDBs), with members appointed by the Chief Executive (CE), replaced the former DBs. Following the review of the structure and functions of district organisations conducted in 1998, it was decided that the 18 PDBs should be retained and renamed 'District Councils' (DCs) to underline their important role in district administration.

1.3 The **DMC** is chaired by the District Officer of the respective districts and comprises representatives of departments providing essential services in the district. The DMC serves as a forum for inter-departmental consultation on district matters and co-ordinates the provision of public services and facilities to ensure that district needs are promptly met.

1.4 The District Administration Scheme has undergone certain important changes at different stages during the past two decades. For example, when the DBs were set up in 1982, they were chaired by the respective District Officers and consisted of government officials,

appointed and elected DB members. Since 1985, the chairmanship has been transferred to a non-official member elected from among the members themselves, and the government officials ceased to be DB members though they continued to attend meetings regularly. Since the establishment of the new DCs in January 2000, the DC Chairman and Vice-chairman take part in DMC meetings as full members. In the past two decades, the roles and functions of the DCs have been progressively expanded - apart from reflecting public opinion and promoting community building, DCs nowadays play an instrumental role in monitoring the delivery of public services at the district level and promoting government initiatives ranging from the Clean Hong Kong Campaign, building and fire safety to the use of information technology among the grassroots.

## **THE NEW DISTRICT COUNCILS**

1.5 The first DC election was held on 28 November 1999, returning 390 elected members. In addition, there are 102 appointed members and 27 *ex officio* members (i.e. Rural Committee chairmen in the nine New Territories districts), making a total of 519 DC members. Their term of office is four years starting from January 2000.

1.6 The Government attaches great importance to the DCs as its key advisers on district affairs and an effective communication channel with the local community. Since 1 January 2000, a number of measures have been put in place to enhance the roles of DCs and the support for DC members. For example, additional funds have been provided to DCs to implement minor environmental improvement and community involvement projects in the districts. In 2001-02, the funds allocated to the 18 DCs amounted to \$168.4 million, representing a 30% increase over the allocation for 1999-2000 (\$130 million), prior to the establishment of the new DCs. Secondly, the ceiling of the accountable allowance for DC members has been raised from \$4,990 to \$10,000 per month since January 2000 to cover the actual expenses incurred in hiring assistants and maintaining local offices. Thirdly, a Vice-chairman post was created for each DC to assist the chairman in handling Council business. Both the DC Chairmen and Vice-chairmen are now full members of the respective DMCs. They also sit on the Central Steering Committees and

District Working Groups to advise on the use of funds allocated to the Rural Public Works (RPW) and the new Urban Minor Works (UMW) Programmes, the aim of which is to improve the environment and basic facilities (e.g. street lighting, village roads) in the districts. Fourthly, each DC has either set up a committee on environmental improvement or expanded the role of an existing one, in order to strengthen its role in monitoring the provision and delivery of environmental hygiene services. The committee regularly receives reports from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD).

## **BACKGROUND LEADING TO THE DC REVIEW**

1.7 During the Resumption of Second Reading and Third Reading debates of the Provision of Municipal Services (Reorganization) Bill in December 1999, the Administration undertook to consider the scope for strengthening the roles, functions and duties of the DCs.

1.8 At the Legislative Council (LegCo) sitting on 19 January 2000, Professor Hon. Ng Ching-fai moved a motion urging the Government to enhance the functions of DCs. In response, the Administration made a commitment to conduct an overall review of the roles of DCs after they had been in operation for some time and to complete the review in 2001. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) was tasked to conduct the review (the DC Review) in consultation with the relevant bureaux and departments.

1.9 An inter-departmental working group was set up in July 2000 to consider the scope for further enhancing the roles and functions of the DCs and to recommend specific measures. The Working Group comprises representatives of bureaux and departments which have a substantial role to play in identifying ways to enhance the functions of DCs. The membership is at **Appendix I**. The Working Group's deliberations and recommendations are summarized in Part II of this report.

## **Part II : THE REVIEW**

### **MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS**

2.1 In conducting the DC Review, the Working Group has considered the views and suggestions put forward by the community on various occasions as well as the relevant constitutional and policy framework. These are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### ***(a) The Community's Views***

2.2 In the course of the DC Review, a great deal of views have been expressed and suggestions made by the community, in particular those from members of the LegCo and the DCs, on how the roles of the DCs and the support for DC members should be enhanced. These included, among others, the views expressed by DC members during the Secretary for Home Affairs' (SHA's) visits to the 18 DCs from August to November 2000 and those by the Director of Home Affairs (DHA) in March and April 2001; the District Administration Seminar organised by the Home Affairs Department (HAD) on 18 November 2000 and the LegCo motion debate moved by the Hon Ip Kwok-him on 22 November 2000 on measures to strengthen support for DC members. The Working Group has carefully considered these views in the course of its deliberations.

#### ***(b) Review of District Organisations***

2.3 The Government conducted a "Review of District Organisations" in 1998 with a view to ensuring that the structure of district organisations (i.e. Municipal Councils (MCs) and DBs at the time of the review) would continue to provide efficient and responsive delivery of services to meet the changing needs of our community. Having regard to the views collected during the public consultation exercise, the review concluded, among other things, that the 18 PDBs should be retained and renamed "District Councils" upon expiry of the terms of PDB members on 31 December 1999. In addition, the majority of the respondents were of the view that the DBs should play a more important role in district affairs and take on a wider range of responsibilities. The Working Group believes that this remains to be the mainstream public opinion.

### ***(c) The Basic Law***

2.4 Article 97 of the Basic Law (BL 97) provides that "district organisations which are not organs of political power may be established in the HKSAR, to be consulted by the Government on district administration and other affairs, or to be responsible for providing services in such fields as culture, recreation and environmental sanitation". The 18 DCs are district organisations covered by BL 97. Article 98 of the Basic Law (BL 98) provides, among other things, that the powers and functions of the district organisations shall be prescribed by law. In other words, the DCs must operate within the statutory framework laid down by the relevant legislation, in this case the District Council Ordinance (Cap 547).

### ***(d) The Policy Addresses***

2.5 In the 1998 Policy Address, the CE announced that a number of measures would be taken to enhance the roles of the new DCs, including the provision of additional funding to the DCs for improving the local environment and promoting community building programmes and district activities, expanding the DCs' role in advising and monitoring municipal services delivery and ensuring that the Government was more responsive to DCs' advice by consulting them before finalising the district programmes. The 1999 Policy Address announced a package of specific measures to enhance the role of the new DCs including those mentioned in paragraph 1.6 above. In the 2000 Policy Address, the CE made a commitment to consider ways to enhance the roles of the DCs in district affairs and to give the DCs better support.

## **THE WORKING GROUP'S DELIBERATIONS – A SUMMARY**

2.6 The Working Group has carefully considered the above factors and the views put forward by the community, including those expressed by members of DC and LegCo on various occasions. It agrees that the DCs should and could play a more important role in empowering the community and in monitoring the provision and delivery of public services and facilities at the district level, thereby ensuring that Government departments are accountable and responsive to public opinions. Furthermore, DC members, who are in close contact with the various sectors of the community, are in the best position to advise the Government on how the needs and concerns of the local community can be met. The Working Group also agrees in principle that better support should be given to DC members so that they can discharge their duties

more effectively.

2.7 At the same time, the Working Group is mindful of the need to ensure that the proposed measures would not lead to the proliferation of executive authorities at the district level, each making policy decisions and exercising executive functions independently. As pointed out in the 1998 Policy Address, given the small size of Hong Kong, delegating specific executive functions to the 18 DCs would run the risk of fragmenting responsibilities and diminishing efficiency. It is necessary to strike a balance between enhancing the roles of DCs and maintaining the integrity of public policies and the efficiency of the administration.

2.8 The thrust of the Working Group's recommendations is therefore to enhance the fundamental role of the DCs as Government's key advisers on districts affairs, as well as to increase their participation in and ability to influence the work of the departments at the district level, particularly in the provision, delivery and management of district services/facilities. To this end, we agree that it is imperative to **institutionalize a mechanism** to ensure that the Government is proactive in soliciting DCs' views and responsive to their advice and suggestions.

2.9 With the further enhancement of the roles and functions of the DCs and an increase in the funding provided to them, the Working Group considers it necessary to strengthen the safeguards against conflict of interests as well as to improve the guidelines governing the conduct of Council business.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.10 In the light of the above-mentioned considerations, the Working Group recommends the implementation of measures in **five** main areas with a view to:

- (a) enhancing the DCs' roles and functions and providing additional funding for them;
- (b) improving the communication between DCs and bureaux and departments;
- (c) enhancing DC members' participation in the policy-making process;
- (d) strengthening support for DCs and DC members; and

- (e) enhancing DCs' accountability and efficiency.

The measures proposed by the Working Group under each of these five headings are discussed below.

**A. Enhancing DCs' roles and functions and providing additional funding for them**

***(a) To allocate more funds to DCs for organizing community building, cultural and recreational activities***

2.11 In 2000-01, 86% (or \$123 million) of the \$143 million allocation to the 18 DCs (the DC funds) had been used for organising community involvement projects. Many DCs considered the funding insufficient for them to undertake community building, cultural and recreational activities. They also expressed the wish to have a bigger say over the way the funding for cultural and recreational activities was allocated.

2.12 In view of the DC members' wishes, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has, ahead of the completion of the DC Review, transferred the \$25.4 million allocated to the District Festival Subsidies Scheme (DFSS) and the District Cultural Projects Grants Scheme (DCPGS) to HAD starting from 2001-02. The allocation now forms part of the DC funds for organising district-based **cultural and recreational activities** and **district festivals** (e.g. Dragon Boat Races, Mid-Autumn Festival). Under the new arrangement, the DCs decide for their respective districts how the funds should be allocated at the beginning of the financial year. As a further step to enhance the capacity of the DCs and other district organizations in organizing cultural/recreational activities and district festivals, the Working Group proposes that the DCs should be allocated, in addition to the \$25.4 million from LCSD, an additional **\$6 million** starting from 2001-02 for organizing the above-mentioned activities. As with usual practice, HAD would, in consultation with the DCs, decide on how the additional funding should be distributed among the DCs.

2.13 In the past few years, the DCs have actively supported the Government in promoting various initiatives in the districts. These include, among others, the Healthy Living Campaign, Clean Hong Kong Campaign, wider use of information technology in the community, building management and maintenance, promotion of fire safety, etc. In

addition, HAD and the DCs have been approached by various public and charity organisations (e.g. Community Chest, Tourism Board) for assistance in organising activities to promote other worthwhile causes in the districts. While the DCs are pleased to take on these new tasks, they are concerned that the existing DC funds are insufficient for organising programmes in support of the initiatives. It is thus proposed that an additional **\$25 million** be allocated to the 18 DCs starting from 2001-02 for organising or subsidizing **community building projects** in the districts. Actual distribution of the funding will be determined by HAD in consultation with the DCs.

2.14 The additional funding (\$56.4 million) for organising the community building, cultural and recreational activities in 2001-02 represents a 46% increase over that provided for DCs in 2000-01.

***(b) To enhance DCs' involvement in the implementation of local minor works projects***

2.15 At present, there are **two** main sources of funding for implementing minor works projects at the district level, viz:

- (a) *Rural Public Works and Urban Minor Works Programmes (RPW/UMW)*. Essentially, the RPW Programme caters for local minor works projects (up to or no more than \$15 million) such as village roads, minor flood prevention works, street lighting, rain-shelters, etc in the nine New Territories districts; while the UMW Programme caters for the construction of sitting-out areas, playgrounds, information panels, etc in the nine urban districts. The costs of RPW/UMW projects normally exceed \$600,000. \$100 million and \$35 million have been allocated to the RPW and UMW Programmes respectively in 2001-02; and
- (b) *Minor Environmental Improvement (MEI) Projects*. About \$20 million has been allocated by the 18 DCs to implement MEI projects in 2001-02, accounting for about 12% of the \$168.4 million DC funds. MEI projects are essentially small-scale projects costing less than \$600,000 per project. Examples include greening and beautification projects, clearance of environmental black spots, etc.

In addition, a small amount of funds will be allocated under the Minor Building Works Projects block vote under the Capital Works Reserve

Fund (CWRF) and administered by the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) for implementing local leisure and recreational works projects such as playgrounds and sitting-out areas. Such projects, the cost of which is up to or no more than \$15 million, will be implemented as and when funding is available under the block vote. Thus far in the current financial year, one such project (a sitting-out area) has been approved under the CWRF block vote.

2.16 We see merit in involving the DCs more closely in the planning and implementation of local public works projects as they are in the best position to advise on the priority, location and design of the facilities. The Working Group suggests that a **three-pronged approach** be adopted. First, insofar as the **RPW/UMW Programmes** are concerned, two **Steering Committees**, chaired by DHA and with DC Chairmen and representatives of relevant departments as members, have been set up to decide on the allocation of funding under each of the two Programmes. In addition, **District Working Groups (DWGs)** have been set up in each of the 18 districts to oversee the implementation of the local projects. The departments concerned also attend and give advice to the DWGs (e.g. LCSD on landscaping, FEHD on environmental hygiene issues). The experience in the past year has been a successful one. Through contracting-out arrangements, HAD has been able to implement the necessary minor works to upgrade the infrastructure and environment based on an agreed programme and respond quickly and positively in emergency situations by effecting minor repairs. The mechanism, which provides for coordination with the relevant departments and partnership with the DCs and the local community, has been functioning well and gained positive support from the districts. To further enhance DC members' participation in the process, it is proposed that the **chairmanship** of the Steering Committee on Rural Public Works, the Steering Committee on Urban Minor Works and the 18 District Working Groups should be devolved to DC chairmen/members and that more DC members be appointed to the District Working Groups. As with usual practice, the chairmen and members of these committees will be appointed by DHA.

2.17 Secondly, the DCs can take on more minor environmental improvement projects in the districts such as greening and beautification projects so as to bring out the district identity through these projects. For this purpose, we propose to allocate an additional **\$10 million** to the 18 DCs for implementing **MEI projects** starting from 2001-02, which represents a 50% increase over that in 2000-01 (i.e. \$20 million). To ensure timely completion of the projects, it is proposed that additional

resources should be provided to the works section of HAD to oversee and executive the MEI and RPW/UMW projects (see paragraph 2.45 below). Thirdly, DLCS has undertaken to consult the relevant DCs or committees before finalizing the design and layout of the local leisure/recreational facilities mentioned in paragraph 2.14 above, as and when funds are available from the CWRP block vote (see also paragraph 2.20(b) below). The Government will **review** the above-proposed arrangements some time after their implementation to see if they can be further improved.

*(c) To enhance DCs' role in monitoring the provision, delivery and management of district-based municipal facilities and services and the performance of private contractors*

2.18 Many DC members consider that the role of DCs in monitoring the work of the Government in municipal affairs should be enhanced. The Working Group agrees that the DCs should exercise greater influence over the provision, delivery and management of district-based municipal facilities and services. For this purpose, **district-based municipal services and facilities** include:

- **environmental hygiene services/facilities** such as public toilets, markets, refuse collection points and litter bins; clearance of environmental black spots and street cleansing (food safety and hygiene excluded).
- **greening and beautifying** the districts such as amenity vegetation planting, maintenance, etc.
- **district leisure and cultural services/facilities** such as provision of indoor games halls, swimming pools, playgrounds, parks etc and the services/programmes provided therein (territory-wide cultural and sports policies and facilities excluded).

*Provision and delivery of municipal services/facilities*

2.19 In order to enhance the DCs' role in monitoring the **provision and delivery** of the municipal services and facilities referred to paragraph 2.18 above, the Working Group proposes that **the existing DC set-up** should be strengthened and, for this purpose, a **built-in mechanism** should be instituted to ensure that the advice tendered by the DCs will be taken on board or duly considered by the departments concerned in the decision-making process.

2.20 Specifically, the Working Group proposes that the departments concerned (LCSD and FEHD) should make a clear and firm commitment to:

- (a) **consult** the DC (or the relevant committee) **in advance** on their proposed **initiatives, measures or projects** which would affect the respective districts and their priority. For municipal matters that have territory-wide implications but nonetheless affect the well-being of the districts, the department concerned should endeavour to present the proposal to the DCs for discussion and the department would make a final decision or recommendation taking into account the DCs' views and other relevant factors;
- (b) **take on board** the DC's views in respect of the **design and layout** of district-based municipal facilities which have secured funding approval, provided their recommendations do not depart from the territory-wide policies and are **broadly within the prescribed budget**;
- (c) **submit** to the DC or its relevant DC committee a **district annual plan** and **half-yearly progress reports** on the work of the department to facilitate monitoring of the provision and delivery of municipal facilities/services; and
- (d) invite the DC or the relevant committee to comment on the **performance and standards** of the municipal services provided by private contractors in the districts on a regular basis, and to **take account** of their views and other relevant factors in deciding whether the service contracts should be renewed. Departments will have to follow established government procedures in tendering/awarding service contracts. In this regard, LCSD has recently strengthened its contract management system and would brief the DCs on the developments.

#### *Management of district-based municipal facilities*

2.21 To increase DC members' participation in the **management** of local municipal facilities, the Working Group proposes to set up a **consultative committee** in each of the 18 districts to advise on the usage and management of the district-based leisure and cultural facilities (e.g. district libraries, indoor games halls, parks, swimming pools,

playgrounds). At present, similar committees have been set up for FEHD's markets and HAD's community halls/centres, both are venue-based. In view of the large number of local cultural and leisure facilities in each district and to enable more efficient use of resources and DC members' time, it is proposed that only one committee, instead of a large number of venue-based committees, should be set up in each district to advise on the management of district cultural and leisure facilities. The committee will comprise DC members and other personalities to be appointed by DLCS and the terms of reference will be worked out by the Department in due course.

### *Communication between DCs and Heads of Departments*

2.22 **Better communication** between the DCs and the senior directorate of the two municipal departments will be conducive to cooperation and help minimize possible misunderstanding. It is thus proposed that the heads of the two departments (DLCS and DFEH) should hold **regular liaison meetings** with the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the relevant DC committees to exchange views on the work of the departments. Invitation to these liaison meetings could be extended to the DC Chairmen and Vice-chairmen where appropriate. Agenda and minutes of the meetings should be circulated to all DC members to facilitate their discussion and follow-up action with LCSD. Similar meetings between DLCS and the chairmen of the district management consultative committees proposed in paragraph 2.21 above can be arranged.

*(d) To enhance the role of DCs in monitoring the planning and implementation of other (e.g. transport, housing, territory development and welfare) district-based services and facilities*

2.23 The Working Group agrees that DCs can play a positive and constructive role in advising departments on the planning and implementation of district-based services and facilities as they are best placed to reflect the needs and problems of local residents. It is thus proposed that **core departments**<sup>1</sup> sitting on the DCs should brief the latter on their **annual district plans** setting out the initiatives and changes to be implemented in the year. Subject to the work schedule of individual departments, submission of annual plans should preferably be done at the beginning of the calendar/financial year. The views

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<sup>1</sup> Core departments attending DCs include Home Affairs Department (HAD), Hong Kong Police Force, Housing Department, Transport Department, LCSD, FEHD and Territory Development Department.

expressed by the DCs should be **incorporated** into the work plans as far as practicable. Non-core departments dealing with matters affecting the people in the district should also be encouraged to do so. In this connection, departments should bear in mind the need to **allow sufficient time** for consultation with the DCs or the relevant committees. They should **seek and take on board** the DCs' views on the priority, location and, where appropriate, design of the local projects within their purview, provided that they are broadly within the prescribed budget and do not depart from the territory-wide policies. In exceptional cases where DCs' views cannot be taken on board, the departments concerned should **explain** the reasons to the DCs.

*(e) Policy bureaux and departments to invite DCs to comment on major policy issues and capital works projects affecting the well-being of the people in the district*

*Policy issues affecting the well-being of the district*

2.24 It is generally acknowledged that the DCs can assist in the promotion of **policy initiatives** to the local community, especially those that affect the well-being of the people in the district. It is proposed that bureaux and departments should take the initiative to consult the DCs on the relevant policy initiatives where appropriate. Recent examples of policy proposals on which individual DCs have been consulted include the "Health Care Reforms" and "Building Safety and Timely Maintenance". Acknowledging the resources constraints of the policy bureaux, it is suggested that they may organize different formats of consultation such as **joint briefings or regional seminars** for DC members with the assistance of HAD.

*Major capital projects affecting the district*

2.25 The DCs also wish to be briefed on the proposed **capital works projects** such as roads, railways and drainage projects that have a significant impact on their respective districts. They would also be concerned about the progress of the works projects and the temporary measures taken by departments before the commencement of or during the projects so as to minimize inconvenience caused to the neighbourhood. Departments will be advised to include these as key issues in their consultation with the DCs. Furthermore, to ensure that DCs' views will be duly considered by the relevant authorities (e.g. CE in Council) in approving the projects, it is proposed that the bureaux and departments should include DCs as one of their consultation targets and

**report** their views in their submissions to the approving authority.

*(f) To involve DCs in drawing up the priority of ex-PMC Works Projects on a district basis*

2.26 Before the dissolution of the PMCs, some 160 projects were on the drawing board or being planned, but fell short of securing funding approval from the two Councils. The majority of these projects are culture and sports related. LCSD has already injected nine of them directly into the Public Works Programme (PWP) as Category A items, and will seek to upgrade another three to Category A when the outstanding issues are resolved. Many DCs have expressed disappointment with the lack of a concrete timetable for implementing these projects. The LegCo has also set up a Sub-committee to monitor the progress of the projects.

2.27 The Working Group acknowledges that after the dissolution of the PMCs, LCSD and FEHD have to follow the established government procedures in processing the proposed works projects. These include bidding of resources under the annual Resource Allocation Exercise (RAE) and preparation of preliminary project feasibility studies for each of the proposed projects. These are in line with the arrangements for other capital works projects such as schools and hospitals. It would be difficult to justify creating a separate queue or project vote for cultural and sports projects but not other equally important projects.

2.28 Nonetheless, the Working Group agrees that the DCs should be more closely involved in drawing up the priority of the major cultural and leisure projects in the districts. For this purpose, LCSD had invited the 18 DCs to draw up a priority list for their respective districts earlier this year. The consultation was completed in April 2001. DCs' input has provided LCSD with as a useful reference for the allocation of departmental resources to preliminary planning work for the projects and for drawing up a consolidated priority list for the 18 districts. To take this planning process further, LCSD is in the process of drawing up a proposed **Five-Year Plan** for culture, sports and leisure capital works projects for consideration within the Government. The Five-year Plan will give the DCs an indication of whether and when the projects planned for their districts will go ahead and provide a useful basis for further consultation.

***(g) To take into account DCs' views in considering planning applications and requests for land use changes***

2.29 A number of DC members have expressed their wish to be consulted on town planning applications and rezoning requests, as well as applications for temporary use of land (e.g. short term tenancies), as these applications may affect the district in a significant way. At present, DCs are consulted on **major land grants**, such as those for railway-related development and projects involving social, educational or community facilities. DCs are also consulted on land use projects which may be of local concern, such as the provision of car parks under short term tenancies, road closure for temporary works, etc. In conjunction with the project proponents, the District Lands Office will continue to consult DCs on such land-related projects.

2.30 As regards **private development projects requiring Town Planning Board's (TPB) approval**, the current practice is that the Planning Department will request the District Officer (DO) concerned to sound out the affected residents so as to provide input on the "local views" to the TPB. As there is no express provision in the existing Town Planning Ordinance for public consultation on **planning applications and requests for land use changes**, the Planning Department cannot institute formal consultation with the DCs and has to rely on the DOs to function as a bridge between the TPB and the local communities. The issue on public consultation will be addressed in the Town Planning Bill. Meanwhile, the Planning Department will do whatever it can within the ambit of the existing Town Planning Ordinance so as to take account of the local views in processing planning applications and requests for land use changes. Since February 2001, Planning Department has adopted several new measures to improve the collaboration with HAD/DOs in handling consultation on such applications/requests. As for other major development projects which do not require TPB's approval but have significant impact on the local environment, Planning Department would encourage the project proponents to explain to the DC concerned their proposals at the pre-submission stage. This would enable the DC to better understand the project and allow their concerns be addressed as far as practicable and at an early stage.

***(h) To increase DCs' involvement in the specific areas of work of the departments***

2.31 A number of bureaux and departments which deal with

matters affecting people's livelihood have proposed certain specific measures to enhance DCs' involvement in their work. A compendium of the proposed initiatives is at **Appendix II**. For example, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has proposed an expanded role for DCs in promoting and participating in various environmental protection initiatives; and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) would involve the DCs more closely in a host of welfare-related initiatives. DCs may wish to consider whether they support the proposed initiatives.

*(i) To devolve chairmanship of certain district committees to members of the DCs and invite DC members to take part in more district committees*

2.32 In addition to the Steering Committees and the District Working Groups on RPW/UMW mentioned in paragraph 2.16 above, DHA has proposed to devolve to members of the DCs chairmanship of the **District Fire Safety Committees**. The chairmen and members of these committees will continue to be appointed by DHA on an ad personum basis. In addition, Director of Social Welfare (DSW) has proposed to appoint DC members to the **District Coordinating Committees** (DCCs) on welfare services and to involve them in the **user groups** to be set up under the DCCs to monitor the provision and delivery of welfare services, particularly those provided on a contract basis. Continued efforts will be made with a view to identifying more district forums in which DC members' involvement would be beneficial.

*(j) To invite chairmen of DC committees to attend District Management Committee (DMC) meetings as and when items concerning their committees are discussed*

2.33 A number of DC members have suggested that in addition to the DC Chairmen and Vice-chairmen, the chairmen of all the DC committees should be invited to attend DMC meetings so that they can assist in the discussion of the issues concerning their respective committees and serve as a bridge between the DMC and the committees. The Working Group supports the idea in principle, but considers that a balance should be struck between the need to enhance communication between the DMCs and the DC committees and the need to minimize the inefficiency caused by an oversized DMC. It therefore proposes that the chairmen concerned should be invited to DMC meetings as and when items concerning their committees are discussed.

## **B. Enhancing communication between DCs and the Administration**

### ***(a) Policy Secretaries and Heads of Department (HoDs) dealing with matters affecting people's livelihood to meet DC members at least once within the four-year term of DCs***

2.34 Since the beginning of the new DC term, a number of HoDs including DFEH, DLCS and DSW have visited the 18 DCs to discuss with them issues of concern. DHA has also completed her second round of visits to DCs in April 2001. The result is a much more cordial working relationship between the DCs and the departments concerned and a better understanding of the constraints faced by the latter. For Policy Secretaries, SHA has completed his first round of visits to DCs in November 2000. SPL and D of Plan had organized a seminar on planning and development for all DC members in March 2001. These efforts are well received by the DC members, who welcome the opportunity to have face-to-face dialogue with the Policy Secretaries and HoDs. To enable more effective **dialogue** between the DCs and the Policy Secretaries and HoDs who oversee matters affecting people's livelihood, it is proposed that the Policy Secretaries and HoDs concerned should be invited to meet DC members as necessary and at least once within the four-year DC term. The timing, frequency and format will be decided by the Policy Secretaries/HoDs concerned and HAD stands ready to assist them in organizing such events.

### ***(b) To stipulate clearly the requirements for departments to attend DC meetings and the level of representation of core departments***

2.35 Some DCs have complained that the departmental representatives attending the DC meetings are either too junior or not equipped to answer questions raised by members. Also, invitations to policy bureaux and some departments to attend DC meetings to assist in the discussion of certain territory-wide issues were declined on many occasions.

2.36 Given that policy bureaux have a relatively small set-up (e.g. a Principal Assistant Secretary is responsible for a number of policy subjects), they often have genuine practical difficulties in sending representatives to DCs to discuss territory-wide policy issues, particularly if the consultation has to be completed within a short timeframe. It is hoped that the measures proposed in paragraph 2.34 above could to some extent improve the communication between policy bureaux and DCs and

enable the latter to better understand the policy issues, in particular those affecting people's livelihood. As for departments, the Working Group believes that it may help improve the situation by stipulating the **level of departmental representation** at DC meetings. For this purpose, a list stipulating the level of representation of the core departments at DC meetings and those which will be in attendance when required is at **Appendix III**. In compiling the list, consideration has been given to the staffing structure of the departments concerned. In the event that a bureau or department (other than the core departments) is invited to attend a DC meeting to discuss a subject which affects the well-being of the people in the district but cannot attend, it is proposed that a **written or oral explanation** should be given by a **director** of the bureaux/department and sent to the DC secretariat in advance.

*(c) Departments having dealings with DCs to assign a suitable officer to provide "one-stop" services for DC members*

2.37 Some LegCo and DC members have suggested that each department should designate an Assistant Director (AD) to handle DC members' complaints. This was indeed one of the suggestions debated at the motion debate last November and on which views of LegCo members were divided. The Working Group is concerned that this specific proposal would impose a burden on the ADs, especially for departments having a small AD establishment. Moreover, given the wide range of subjects overseen by an AD, he or she may not be familiar with all the issues at the district level. The Working Group nonetheless agrees that a scheme for DC members, similar to the one introduced by the Transport Department (TD) for LegCo members (a TD directorate officer has been assigned to provide "**one-stop**" service for LegCo members), could be established. Under the scheme, each department having dealings with DCs should assign a senior officer to serve as a contact point for DC members and/or to provide "one-stop" services, including the handling of complaints. While the designated officer need not be at AD level, he/she should be sufficiently senior and knowledgeable of the issues involved. It is further proposed that the respective list of **complaint officers** and their contact numbers should be made available to all members of the DC. HAD or the DOs would be tasked to coordinate and compile the lists. For core departments, their DC representative will normally be the complaint officer/contact point for DC members.

*(d) Feedback mechanism to improve cooperation between Government departments and DCs*

2.38 The Working Group considers it useful to develop a mechanism for collecting DCs' feedback to the work of the departments on a regular basis so as to help the latter better understand the clients' assessment. The detailed mechanism will be worked out by HAD in consultation with DCs. One possibility is to invite DC members to fill in a questionnaire (to be designed by the DC secretariat) to provide feedback on the work of the core departments on an annual basis. The feedback will be conveyed to the HoDs concerned for reference and necessary follow-up action.

*(e) To organise training courses for civil servants who have frequent dealings with DCs on the future enhanced roles and functions of the DCs*

2.39 The proposed measures will not be effective unless they are diligently implemented by the officers concerned. It is proposed that training courses and seminars should be organised for civil servants who have frequent dealings with the DCs to brief them on the new roles and functions of the DCs and to cultivate among them a more forthcoming attitude towards the latter.

*(f) Policy bureaux to send electronic copies of LegCo briefs (especially those containing information of interest to the general public) to the DC secretariats for dissemination to DC members*

2.40 Some DC members have complained that they are not kept abreast and updated on the latest policy initiatives and measures. They often receive public consultation documents weeks after they are published. The Working Group agrees that sending LegCo briefs to DC members is one of the most efficient and effective ways to keep the members abreast of the latest policy proposals and developments. However, to minimize paper wastage, it is suggested that the DC secretariat could, on receipt of the electronic copies, compile and circulate a list of LegCo briefs which may be of interest to DC members. Members who are interested to see a particular brief can ask the secretariat to download the brief for them or do it themselves.

### **C. Enhancing DC members' participation in the policy-making process**

*(a) To appoint more DC members to advisory and statutory bodies which are concerned with livelihood matters*

2.41 Appointing DC members, on an ad personum basis, to advisory and statutory boards could be mutually beneficial. On the one hand, it could broaden the member's horizon and exposure to policy-making at the central level and, on the other, the bodies concerned could benefit from his/her advice who is generally representative of the views of the community. The Government will therefore adopt proactive measures with a view to appointing more DC members to bodies which are concerned with livelihood matters. HAB and HAD will keep track of the progress made.

#### **D. Strengthening support for DC Members**

*(a) To invite the independent commission to review the remuneration package for DC members to come up with recommendations in Autumn 2001*

2.42 With the enhancement of DCs' role in district administration, the Working Group agrees in principle that the resources and financial support for DC members should be increased to enable them to carry out their duties more effectively. The Government has committed to reviewing the remuneration package for DC members, including the level of honorarium and accountable allowance. To enable recommendations to be made in a more independent manner and in line with the arrangements for ExCo/LegCo members, an **independent commission** to review the remuneration for DC members will be set up shortly and is expected to come up with a package of recommendations in Autumn. Such a timeframe will enable the commission to take account of the proposed future roles and responsibilities of DC members and the public opinions thereon before finalizing its recommendations.

*(b) To organise more familiarisation visits, seminars, briefings, etc for DC members and, where necessary and appropriate, their assistants*

2.43 HAD will continue to organize briefings and visits on various subjects to familiarize DC members with the work of Government departments so as to facilitate their discharge of duties. These include, among others, the operation of various government departments, priorities and considerations in town planning, the use and development of information technology, environmental protection, etc. Additional resources will be dedicated to this purpose.

2.44 In addition, DSW is planning to organise briefing sessions for the **assistants of DC members**. The aim is to introduce to them welfare services and procedures so as to facilitate their handling of requests for welfare assistance from members of the public. Subject to the availability of resources, we will explore with other departments the possibility of providing briefings for members' assistants in other areas.

*(c) To provide more resources support for the DC secretariat*

2.45 There has been a substantial increase in the workload of the DC secretariats following the increase in the number of DC members and the setting up of new DC committees since January 2000. In 2000-01, the Government provided one additional Executive Officer (EO) post for each of the DC secretariats. This has to some extent alleviated the burden on the secretariats. However, their workload will continue to increase in 2001-02 and onwards when the DCs' responsibilities further increased. Almost all DCs have voiced concerns about the inadequate staffing support provided to the secretariats. Furthermore, additional workload for the works section of HAD/DOs will be generated as a result of the increase in the number of RPW/UMW and MEI projects. It is thus proposed that **\$12 million** be set aside for HAD/DOs to employ extra staff to strengthen support for the DC committees and the works section of HAD.

*(d) To provide more IT support, both hardware and software for DCs and DC members*

2.46 The Working Group supports this initiative. Indeed, HAD has now developed homepages for all DCs. Efforts will be made to upkeep the homepages so as to make them an effective means of communication with the public. As for the hardware for individual members, we will invite the independent commission to take into account the requirements of DC members in this respect in reviewing the remuneration package.

*(e) To assist DC members to identify office accommodation*

2.47 Some DC members, especially those with no public housing estates (PHEs) in their constituencies, have complained about the difficulties in finding suitable office accommodation and the inadequacy of the accountable allowance to pay for office rental. Some of them have encountered difficulties in renting offices in private property developments and even Home Ownership Schemes (HOS) due to the

objection from the property manager and/or owners corporations. For those whose offices are in the PHEs, they have asked Housing Department (HD) to waive their rental or give rental concessions (rather than charging them market rent).

2.48 After careful consideration, the Working Group considers that increasing the accountable allowance, which is paid on a reimbursement basis upon the production of receipts, may provide a **uniform and equitable solution** for the different types of problems encountered by DC members in renting offices. This will be a subject to be looked at by the independent commission. As regards those DC members who have genuine difficulties in finding accommodation in PHEs, HD would provide assistance in identifying suitable premises for them.

2.49 The Working Group has also considered the suggestions of the Government renting offices for DC members in suitable localities in the district (as in the case of LegCo Members), or allowing them to use Government premises as offices, but found the suggestions not feasible since the DC members would most likely prefer to stay close to their constituents and may not like the offices provided by the Government. Nonetheless, both HAD and LCSD have no objection to allowing DC members to use their district community and leisure venues for meeting the public and organizing activities subject to the usual booking policies and procedures. In determining the level of accountable allowance, the independent commission will take into account all relevant factors including the difficulties in finding suitable offices and the expenditure incurred by DC members in this regard.

#### **E. Enhancing DCs' accountability and efficiency**

2.50 We will need to consider how to enhance the DCs' public accountability and efficiency as well as the safeguards against members' conflict of interests if the DCs are to be provided with more resources and entrusted with greater responsibilities. In this regard, the following measures are proposed:

##### ***(a) Publication of Annual Report***

2.51 To enhance accountability and to facilitate public scrutiny of the work of the individual DCs, it is recommended that each DC should be invited to produce **an annual report** covering, among other things, its achievements in the past year, its contributions towards addressing the concerns of the local community, its deployment of public funds, the

outstanding issues that need to be further pursued and the attendance of DC members etc. To reduce the workload on the Secretariat, it is suggested that the report should be put on the DC's homepage rather than published as a glossy report (limited hard copies may be provided). Suitable publicity should be given to the report.

***(b) Strengthening the safeguards against conflict of interest***

2.52 The Working Group considers it necessary to strengthen the **safeguards** against possible conflict of interests involving DC members. HAD is reviewing the DC Standing Orders with a view to strengthening the guidelines, taking into account the advice of the ICAC and standing orders and guidelines of other related organisations. To enhance DCs' accountability and efficiency, HAD will issue guidelines to and organise seminars for DC members later in the year to promote good practices and efficient use of public resources in the course of discharging their duties. Furthermore, DCs may wish to consider whether a **self-regulatory code** governing the conduct of DC members should be developed.

***(c) Guidelines on Conduct of DC meetings***

2.53 A review is being undertaken by HAD. The purpose is to provide more detailed guidelines in the Standing Order governing the **conduct of DC meetings** (e.g. modeling on the LegCo Rule of Procedures) with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of DC meetings and to ensure that clear and prompt responses will be provided to departments on matters being consulted.

## **Part III : CONCLUSION**

3.1 The recommendations made in this report seek to enhance the roles and functions of DCs in monitoring the provision, delivery and management of district services and facilities, thereby ensuring that Government departments are as accountable and responsive to the public as practicable. Implementation of the proposed measures will also improve the communication between the Government and the DCs and strengthen the support for the latter. Many of these proposals are devised having regard to the views and suggestions put forward by the community, in particular those by DC members. Separately, we expect that the independent commission to review the remuneration for DC Members will make recommendations in Autumn. In conducting the review, the commission will take into account the recommendations made in this report and the public views expressed during the consultation exercise regarding the proposed roles and functions of DC members in future.

3.2 To enable the early implementation of the proposed measures, the Administration hopes to be able to finalize its recommendations after the summer, after consulting LegCo and the DCs as well as listening to the views of the community at large. Subject to the approval of the relevant authorities, the Government aims to implement the package of recommendations, including those to be made by the independent commission, before the end of 2001. HAB and HAD will be responsible for overseeing and ensuring the timely and effective implementation of the recommendations.

Home Affairs Bureau  
July 2001

**WORKING GROUP ON DISTRICT COUNCILS REVIEW**

**Membership of  
the Working Group on District Councils Review**

**Chairman**

Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs

**Members**

Director of Home Affairs/Deputy Director of Home Affairs

Deputy Secretary for Constitutional Affairs

Deputy Secretary for the Environmental and Food

Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Deputy Director of Leisure and Culture Services

**Compendium of Suggestions made by Bureaux/Departments  
to Enhance the Roles of District Councils (DCs)**

<b><u>Representation at DCs/DMCs</u></b>	<b><u>Recommended by</u></b>
1. The District Social Work Officer (DSWO) (to be upgraded to the rank of Principal Social Work Officer (PSWO) (D1)) may attend DC meetings on a need basis, e.g. when an item concerning social welfare appears on the agenda.	Director of Social Welfare (DSW)
2. Department of Health will be represented at the DMCs in all districts by phases and will attend DC meetings on a need basis.	Director of Health (D of Health)
3. Building Department will be represented at DMC to assist discussion on matters concerning building safety and maintenance.	Director of Buildings (D of Bldgs)

**Appointment of DC Members to Government Bodies**

4. Over 10% of the existing non-official members of the Women's Commission (WoC) are DC members. Active consideration would be given to involve the DC members in the work of the WoC, e.g. the upcoming Open Forum in July 2001.	Secretary for Health and Welfare (SHW)
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**Enhancing Communication with the DCs**

5. Regular briefing/sharing sessions for DC members (e.g. joint forums) on policy directions and current social welfare issues will be organized.	DSW
6. Briefing sessions for assistants of DC members will be organized in the summer to introduce to them welfare services and procedures so as to facilitate their handling of requests for welfare assistance from members of the public.	DSW

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|----|---|---------------------------------|
| 7. | DCs could be invited to visit D of Health's services and facilities to build up a better relationship.  | D of Health                     |
| 8. | Communication between the DCs and the Housing Authority (HA) on new initiatives, e.g. new housing designs and facilities could be strengthened. More guided tours could be organized. | Director of Housing<br>(D of H) |

**Expanding the role of the DCs**

*Building Safety and Management*

- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
| 9.  | The DCs' functions could be expanded in areas related to unauthorized building works (UBWs) by assisting in the identification of buildings (particularly those with illegal roof-top structures) for inclusion in the Buildings Department's Coordinated Maintenance of Buildings Scheme and providing advice and support on the removal of UBWs. | Secretary for<br>Planning and Lands<br>(SPL)<br>D of Bldg |
| 10. | The DCs could be involved in the removal of abandoned signboards in their districts.   | D of Bldg   |
| 11. | The DCs could help promote public awareness of a safer and a more hygienic built environment and educate building owners on the need to remove UBWs upon notification by Buildings Department.   | SPL<br>D of Bldg  |
| 12. | More theme-based publicity programmes, such as building management and fire safety could be jointly organized by Housing Authority and DCs.  | D of H  |

*Social Welfare*

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 13. | DC members could be involved in the planning and preparation of SWD's district programmes. SWD has recently consulted the 18 DCs on the proposals to enhance the role of DSWOs. | DSW |
| 14. | DCs could be consulted on the planning and implementation of district-based services and facilities, including welfare services and facilities.                                 | SHW |

### Transport

15. The functions of DCs could be expanded in areas related to transport services by :
- Commissioner for Transport (C for T)
- (a) DCs to provide ancillary public transport facilities, such as taxi shelters, bus shelters, information panels etc; and
  - (b) DCs to conduct independent surveys on transport services in the district.
16. DCs could be invited to organize district road safety education and publicity programmes.
- C for T

### Environmental Protection

17. DCs could be the district's 'eyes and ears' so that they could report to EPD not only relevant complaints but also help liaise with difficult or persistent polluters and monitor the progress of rectification. This could be achieved by inviting all DC members to be smoky vehicle spotters and spotters of other pollution incidents e.g. fly-tipping, dark smoke from chimneys etc. Briefing could be arranged for DC members with a view to improving the quality of their reports so that they could be used as evidence for enforcement action.
- Director of Environmental Protection (DEP)
18. DCs could be involved in promoting waste reduction and recovery, e.g.:
- DEP
- (a) DCs could organize waste reduction and recovery schemes in their districts which can range from waste separation to using fewer plastic bags etc. EPD would provide technical support, such as seeking collectors to provide the recyclables collection service. DCs could provide financial support and/or arrange publicity to arouse public awareness and participation;

- (b) the DCs may help identify suitable sites and set up local recycling centers to facilitate public participation in the reuse and recycling of useful materials (e.g. old books, computers, furniture etc). DCs may consider contracting out the operation of the recycling centers to recyclers or NGOs;
- (c) relevant departments are looking into increasing the number of waste separation bins in public places. DCs could play a part in advising on the locations of these bins and also drum up the necessary district support and publicity to encourage the public to use these bins when they are in place; and
- (d) to enable DCs to fulfil such roles, EPD would consider the idea of District Environmental Ambassadors like that for the students. The scheme could provide some sort of ‘recognition’ to those members who are active in improving their local environment.

- 19. DCs could be involved in monitoring the environmental performance of those policies and programmes in the districts. EPD would conduct individual briefings to all 18 DCs on the progress and achievement as well as the future work plan in the various environmental programmes at least once a year initially. Depending on the feedback, briefings at more frequent intervals could be considered. DEP
- 20. More funds should be allocated to DCs to support activities in environmental protection to implement more local improvement projects and to raise public awareness on specific district matters. DEP

Health

- 21. DCs could be involved in promoting health education activities at districts, including the formulation of district or regional plans on health promotion priority areas. D of Health

22. Information could be fed to DCs on DH's new initiatives and health advice so that they can help disseminate the message at the district level. D of Health

Education

23. DCs could play an active role in helping Government to achieve its educational objectives by : Director of Education

- (a) aligning community resources to enable schools to offer diversified and interesting learning experiences to students, e.g. opening up community and municipal facilities to bring schools outside classrooms, financing students to participate in community projects;
- (b) coordinating or organizing district-wide activities and programmes, e.g. recreational and cultural activities, summer youth programmes and environmental improvement projects which may form part of the school curriculum; as well as community targeted activities such as talks relating to parental education; and
- (c) helping to promote educational policies and reform initiatives through the normal district network.

**Departmental Representation at District Council (DC) Meetings**

**Regular attendees (Core Departments)**

<u>Department</u>	<u>Official</u>
Home Affairs Department	District Officer
Hong Kong Police Force	District Commander
Housing Department	Chief Manager/Management
Transport Department	Chief Transport Officer
Leisure and Cultural Services Department	District Leisure Manager
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	Senior Superintendent
Territory Development Department	Chief Engineer

**In Attendance at DC Meetings when required**

<u>Department</u>	<u>Official</u>
Education Department	Chief Schools Development Officer
Lands Department	District Lands Officer
Social Welfare Department	Principal Social Work Officer
Environmental Protection Department	Principal Environmental Protection Officer
Planning Department	District Planning Officer
Highways Department	Chief Engineer
Buildings Department	Chief Building Surveyor