

# Report No. 42 of the Director of Audit — Chapter 7

## PROVISION OF AQUATIC RECREATIONAL AND SPORTS FACILITIES

### Summary

1. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is responsible for promoting and developing recreation and sports at the community level. The LCSD manages 41 gazetted beaches, 36 swimming pool complexes and 4 water sports centres.

#### Gazetted beaches

2. *Closed gazetted beaches.* The Audit Commission (Audit) has found that eight closed gazetted beaches were still manned by 6 Amenities Assistant (AA) IIIs at a staff cost of \$1.6 million in 2002-03. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should critically review the need and cost-effectiveness of deploying AA IIIs at these eight closed gazetted beaches.*

#### Swimming pool complexes

3. *Swimming during the winter months.* During the winter months from November 2002 to March 2003, 1.53 million swimmers used the 13 swimming pool complexes provided with heated pools. Audit has found that 55% of the swimmers went to the three most popular complexes (i.e. the Kowloon Park, the Morrison Hill and the Shing Mun Valley swimming pool complexes). Audit considers that the LCSD needs to promote the utilisation of the other 10 complexes. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should make efforts to step up the patronage of the underused swimming pool complexes during the winter months.*

4. *Extension of opening period to November in recent years.* Audit has found that between 2000 and 2002, the patronage in November of five swimming pool complexes (i.e. the Jordan Valley, the Kennedy Town, the Kowloon Tsai, the Pao Yue Kong and the Victoria Park swimming pool complexes) that were not provided with heated pools had been low. Audit considers that it is not cost-effective to open these five complexes in November. Apart from staff cost, closing these five complexes in November would result in an annual saving of \$1.5 million in operating costs. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should consider closing in November these five swimming pool complexes.*

## Water sports centres

5. **Usage of water sports centres.** Audit has found that during the low season in 2002-03, the enrolment rates of the Chong Hing Water Sports Centre (CHWSC) and the Jockey Club Wong Shek Water Sports Centre (WSWSC) were low. Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should improve accessibility to the CHWSC and organise more water sports activities at the WSWSC so as to improve their usage during the low season. Audit has also found that the St. Stephen's Beach Water Sports Centre (SSBWSC) has been very congested during the peak days. In December 2000, the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG) proposed to relinquish its Stanley Outdoor Activities Centre site, which was adjacent to the SSBWSC, to the LCSD. Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should discuss with the HKFYG to ascertain its intentions about the Stanley Outdoor Activities Centre site with a view to resolving the overcrowding problem in the SSBWSC. Furthermore, the Tai Mei Tuk Water Sports Centre, located in the Tai Mei Tuk Recreation Area, is congested. There are six other organisations located in the same area providing similar but exclusive water sports activities to their members. Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should consider the feasibility of cooperating with the cluster of water sports providers at the Tai Mei Tuk Recreation Area to develop the area into a large-scale integrated water sports centre.

## Provision of lifeguards

6. **Number of core lifeguards.** To cope with additional demand for life-saving service during the swimming season from April to October, the LCSD employs non-core lifeguards (i.e. those on non-civil-service contract terms on a monthly or daily basis) to supplement its core lifeguards (i.e. those on permanent establishment or full-year contract terms). The size of the core life-saving workforce should be kept at half of the full manpower requirement for lifeguards during the peak swimming months. During the peak swimming months from June to August 2003, the highest number of lifeguards employed was 1,887 (980 core and 907 non-core lifeguards). Audit considers that in 2003-04, the optimal size of the core life-saving workforce should be 944. If 36 non-core lifeguards, instead of core lifeguards, had been employed during the swimming season in 2003-04, there would have been an annual saving of \$4.8 million in staff cost. Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should ensure that the overall number of core lifeguards employed is kept close to the optimal size.

7. **Distribution of core and non-core lifeguards.** For safety reasons, a core to non-core lifeguard ratio of no less than 1:1 should be maintained at individual aquatic venues throughout the year. Audit analysis revealed that the core to non-core lifeguard ratios of 18 Type 1 swimming pool complexes during the peak swimming months in 2002-03 varied considerably, ranging from 0.5:1 to 1.9:1. Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should ascertain whether there is a need to redeploy the core and non-core lifeguards among the Type 1 swimming pool complexes, and ensure that the core to non-core lifeguard ratio at individual aquatic venues is no less than 1:1 throughout the year.

8. ***Provision of lifeguards at underused swimming pool complexes.*** Audit analysis revealed that the highest average numbers of swimmers per lifeguard for the 18 Type 1 swimming pool complexes varied significantly in 2002-03. Audit considers that the provision of lifeguards at swimming pool complexes should be regularly reviewed and adjusted on the basis of patronage level. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should, on the basis of patronage level, critically review the provision of lifeguards at the swimming pool complexes and make the necessary adjustments.*

9. ***Provision of temporary lifeguards for session breaks.*** In 2002-03, to meet the service needs during the two one-hour session breaks daily, the LCSD provided each swimming pool complex with one to two additional temporary lifeguards. As the daily average patronage of the complexes was low during the non-peak swimming months, Audit considers that the LCSD needs to deploy the lifeguards with more flexibility to meet the service needs during the session breaks. Dispensing with the hiring of these additional temporary lifeguards during the non-peak swimming months would result in an annual saving of \$3 million in staff cost. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should dispense with the hiring of temporary lifeguards for the session breaks at the swimming pool complexes by redeploying flexibly the existing lifeguards to meet the service needs during the non-peak swimming months.*

#### **Deployment of surplus staff during the winter months**

10. ***Monitoring of winter works.*** In 2002-03, the LCSD devised a winter works programme (WWP) to ensure that 521 surplus lifeguards were fully and gainfully employed during the winter months when most of the beaches and swimming pool complexes were closed. Sixty-six filtration plant artisans also participated in the WWP. There was inadequate assurance that the surplus lifeguards and artisans were gainfully employed during the winter months because there were no laid down monitoring procedures on the WWP. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to ensure that the surplus staff are gainfully employed during the winter months. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should establish proper procedures for keeping of records of work carried out and of the time spent by different staff in implementing the WWP.*

#### **Response from the Administration**

11. The Administration generally agrees with the audit recommendations.

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