

Report No. 51 of the Director of Audit — Chapter 10

PROVISION OF RECREATION AND SPORTS SERVICES

Summary

1. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is responsible for promoting recreation and sports (R&S) at all levels throughout the community. It manages a wide range of indoor and outdoor R&S facilities, and organises a wide array of R&S programmes. The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review focusing on improving the organisation of R&S programmes and the usage of R&S facilities.

Organisation of recreation and sports programmes

2. *Need to critically review the funding allocation among districts.* The 18 District Leisure Services Offices of the LCSD are responsible for organising R&S programmes to meet district needs. Audit found that the funding allocation among districts for organising R&S programmes in 2006-07 was uneven, ranging from \$6.2 per population head for Wong Tai Sin to \$13.4 for Southern. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should critically review the R&S funding allocation among districts, taking into account the views of major stakeholders (such as the District Councils), when planning R&S programmes to meet local people's needs.*

3. *Need to address great differences in participation rates among districts.* Audit analyses show that participation rates in 2006-07 R&S programmes for special population groups and the general population varied greatly among districts. For instance, the participation rates of older persons ranged from 52.7% in Wanchai to 8.6% in Tuen Mun. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should step up efforts to improve the participation rates for those districts with low participation rates for specific population groups and/or the general population.*

4. *Need to consider developments affecting the provision of R&S services.* The LCSD's work on promoting the culture of "Sport for All" involves the preparation of annual R&S programme plans for districts. In this connection, the LCSD needs to take into account: (a) the District Councils' more active role in managing R&S facilities starting from 2008-09; (b) the outcome of the ongoing consultancy study on "Sport for All"; and (c) the Administration's strategies for promoting community sports. *Audit has*

recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should actively consult the District Councils, national and district sports organisations in preparing the annual R&S programme plans, making reference to the outcome of the consultancy study and the strategies for promoting community sports, and set targets/parameters to measure the effectiveness of the plans.

Enhancing the provision of recreation and sports services

5. ***Promoting the responsible use of booking rights by priority users.*** To facilitate event preparation, priority users are allowed to reserve R&S facilities 3 to 12 months in advance of the day of use. However, Audit found that in 2007-08: (a) among 33,000 hours of booked sessions for which priority users did not turn up, cancellation notices were given later than required for 12,000 hours and not given for 3,000 hours; and (b) the LCSD guidelines in dealing with these cases might not have been strictly followed. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should: (a) remind priority users of the importance of using their booked facilities and of giving proper cancellation notices if they cannot turn up; and (b) remind venue staff to follow the prevailing guidelines in dealing with priority users who fail to use their booked facilities without giving cancellation notices.*

6. ***Enhancing the use of heated swimming pools.*** Swimming is popular in Hong Kong. The LCSD operates 37 swimming pool complexes, 16 of which have heated pools. According to the LCSD, it appeared practicable to complete the maintenance of heated pools by all parties concerned within 51 days. However, in most cases in 2007-08, some 60 days were taken to complete the maintenance of heated pools. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should make efforts, in collaboration with the Director of Architectural Services and the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services, to shorten the duration for the maintenance of heated pools as far as possible.*

7. ***Free Admission Scheme of LCSD Leisure Facilities.*** During July to September 2008, the LCSD implemented the Free Admission Scheme of LCSD Leisure Facilities (FAS) to support the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and to promote community sports. Under the FAS, the public could use various R&S facilities free of charge and make bookings 30 days in advance. However, a total of 547,000 hours of booked sessions under the FAS were not used. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should carry out a post-implementation review of the FAS.*

Improving the usage of facilities

8. ***Provision of facilities with low usage.*** Fitness rooms have been provided in two recently built sports centres, i.e. the Tai Kok Tsui Sports Centre and the Tin Shui

Sports Centre. However, the usage rates of the fitness rooms were lower than the territory-wide rate of 30% in 2007-08. Audit examination of the LCSD records did not reveal any justifications for providing fitness rooms in these centres. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should critically review, in consultation with the District Councils, the public demand for R&S facilities (particularly those with low usage) when planning for their provision.*

9. ***Conversion of low-usage facilities into other gainful uses.*** The LCSD has converted some low-usage facilities into other more gainful uses. There is still scope for converting some tennis courts and gateball courts with particularly low usage into such uses. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should consider converting those courts with particularly low usage into other more gainful uses.*

10. ***Training courses organised by LCSD.*** R&S training courses organised by the LCSD are generally very popular, with an overall subscription rate of 97% in 2006-07. There is scope for the LCSD to organise more training courses for those sports that associate with under-utilised facilities, with a view to nurturing new players of the sports and enhancing the usage of the facilities. *Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should organise more training courses for those sports that associate with under-utilised facilities.*

Response from the Administration

11. The Administration has accepted the audit recommendations.

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