

CHAPTER 4

Leisure and Cultural Services Department Planning Department

<h3>Development and management of parks and gardens</h3>

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DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF PARKS AND GARDENS

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DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF PARKS AND GARDENS

Executive Summary

1. Parks and gardens are recreation open space for the public. According to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG), the standard for the provision of open space in urban areas is a minimum of 2 square metres (m²) per person, apportioned as 1 m² per person for district open space and 1 m² per person for local open space. The open space may be developed by the public or private sector. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is primarily responsible for the development and management of public open space and purpose-built recreation facilities. A large part of the open space is landscaped as the LCSD's parks and gardens. As at 31 December 2012, the LCSD managed 1,503 parks and gardens with a total area of 973 hectares (ha). The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review to examine the LCSD's development and management of its parks and gardens.

Planning and provision of park and garden facilities

2. The LCSD's parks and gardens account for half of the open space provision. The other half is provided in non-LCSD venues (e.g. public housing estates and private residential developments). Audit noted that the LCSD might have difficulties in readily collecting comprehensive information on open space in non-LCSD venues for planning the provision of park and garden facilities. Audit analysed the provision of open space as at November 2008 and found that the overall provision in the territory was 2.6 m² per person. However, at the district level, there were shortfalls in open space in 11 districts, i.e. overall shortfalls in 2 districts, and shortfalls in either local or district open space in 9 other districts (paras. 2.6, 2.7 and 2.11).

3. Audit examined 10 recent park/garden projects. In six projects, when the park/garden facilities were opened to the public, considerable time (ranging from 5.5 months to 13.5 months) had elapsed since the target dates of works completion. The long lead time for commissioning parks and gardens may fall short of the public expectation (paras. 2.20 and 2.21).

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4. In 2000, the LCSD took over the Kwai Chung Park development project at a restored landfill site of 27 ha. The LCSD had explored different development options, but with little progress. Only a bicycle park of about 4 ha was completed at the site in 2009. As at December 2012, further development had not yet commenced for the rest (about 23 ha) of the site (paras. 2.27 to 2.29).

5. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) also provides recreation and leisure facilities (e.g. sitting-out areas) in districts. The HAD and the LCSD reached an agreement that some 170 facilities would be transferred to the LCSD with effect from 1 January 2007. To enable the LCSD to better manage and maintain the facilities, they should be designated as public pleasure grounds under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132). As at December 2012, the designation of 55 of these facilities remained outstanding. Audit's site inspections of such facilities showed that there were cases of suspected abuse/misuse of the facilities (paras. 2.36, 2.38 and 2.39).

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

6. The LCSD requires its 18 District Leisure Services Offices (District Offices) to conduct routine inspections of parks and gardens. According to the LCSD's survey, to many respondents, some service areas of parks and gardens just attained an "average" rating or below. Audit made site visits to 30 parks and gardens and noted cases of inadequacies which, though not widespread, highlighted room for improvement in the LCSD's routine inspections (paras. 3.3, 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7).

7. Audit visited three District Offices and found that there was room for improvement in their inspection practices (e.g. infrequent inspections, inspection plans not formulated, and inspections not adequately documented) (paras. 3.11 and 3.13).

8. The LCSD's Technical Unit is responsible for conducting annual structural inspections of playground equipment. Audit examined the records for 30 parks/gardens and found that, from 2008 to 2012, annual structural inspections were not conducted for many playground equipment items in these parks/gardens. This is a cause for concern as faulty playground equipment poses a safety risk to users who are mainly young children (paras. 3.18 and 3.19).

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Repair and maintenance of facilities

9. Damaged facilities cause inconvenience and may pose safety risks to users of parks and gardens. Audit noted that long time was taken to repair damaged facilities in some cases (particularly for playground equipment). According to LCSD records, damaged facilities in parks and gardens are a common cause for public complaints (paras. 4.7 and 4.8).

10. District Offices are required to report, through quarterly returns to the LCSD headquarters management, overdue cases of repair and maintenance works for park and garden facilities. During the examination of District Offices' repair and maintenance records, Audit found that many overdue cases (with a delay of more than 30 days each) had not been included in the quarterly returns submitted to the LCSD headquarters management (paras. 4.13 and 4.14).

Way forward

11. *Inadequate management information.* Audit found that the LCSD might not have comprehensive management information (notably regarding open space in non-LCSD venues) for planning its provision of park and garden facilities. Audit also noted that the LCSD did not conduct, on a periodic basis, surveys to obtain relevant user feedback (e.g. user satisfaction level) and assess the public's utilisation of parks and gardens (paras. 6.4 and 6.6).

12. *Provision of open space above the HKPSG minimum standard.* Audit found that numerically the overall provision of open space is generally sufficient to meet the HKPSG standard. According to the projections made by the Planning Department (PlanD) in November 2008, if all the sites reserved as open space were so developed, the existing and planned overall provision of open space would become 3.39 m² per person, some 70% above the HKPSG minimum standard of 2 m² per person (paras. 6.9 and 6.12).

13. *Review on sites reserved for open space development.* In Hong Kong, land is a valuable and scarce resource, subject to strong competing demands. The provision of open space some 70% above the minimum standard (see para. 12 above) raises a question as to whether an optimal allocation of valuable

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land resources has been made for the provision of open space. Audit noted that the PlanD had been exploring various measures to increase housing land supply, which included reviewing the undeveloped open space sites (paras. 6.2, 6.15 and 6.16).

Audit recommendations

14. **Audit recommendations are made in the respective sections of this Audit Report. Only the key ones are highlighted in this Executive Summary. Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

Planning and provision of park and garden facilities

- (a) **ascertain the underlying reasons for cases with long lead time in commissioning parks and gardens, and take effective measures to expedite project implementation in future (para. 2.25(a));**
- (b) **devise an action plan for the future development of the Kwai Chung Park site (para. 2.34(a));**
- (c) **expedite action in designating ex-HAD facilities as public pleasure grounds (para. 2.40(a));**

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

- (d) **take measures to improve the effectiveness of District Office inspections of parks and gardens (para. 3.8);**
- (e) **review the practices of the 18 District Offices in the management and conduct of routine inspections (para. 3.16(a));**
- (f) **ensure that adequate structural inspections are conducted for playground equipment (para. 3.21(d));**

Repair and maintenance of facilities

- (g) **take measures to ensure that repair and maintenance works of park and garden facilities are completed promptly (para. 4.10(b));**

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- (h) lay down a clear definition of long overdue cases which require the follow-up actions of the LCSD headquarters management (para. 4.18(b)); and

Way forward

- (i) review the adequacy of the LCSD's information management practices, with a view to ensuring that adequate management information is collected from various stakeholders (including other providers of open space and users of parks and gardens) for planning the future development of parks and gardens (para. 6.18).

15. Audit has also *recommended* that the Director of Planning should, in collaboration with the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services:

Planning and provision of park and garden facilities

- (a) consider establishing a mechanism under which the PlanD and the LCSD liaise with each other on a periodic basis so as to update relevant information on the provision of open space in both LCSD and non-LCSD venues (para. 2.15); and

Way forward

- (b) in conducting the review on sites reserved for open space development (see para. 13 above), critically assess the future effective use of lands reserved for open space development, taking into account relevant factors (para. 6.19).

Response from the Administration

16. The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. The Director of Planning has said that the PlanD is willing to review the sites zoned for open space development in consultation with the LCSD.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 This PART describes the background to the audit and outlines the audit objectives and scope.

Background

1.2 Parks and gardens are recreation facilities for the public. According to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG — Note 1), recreation is an essential activity for which land must be allocated and, apart from recreation use, provision of open space (Note 2) for the public also allows the penetration of sunlight and air movement as well as for planting areas for visual relief.

1.3 Planning standards for the provision of open space were first adopted by the Government in the early 1970s. The standards in the HKPSG were comprehensively reviewed and updated in March 1998, taking into account factors such as the aspiration of the community, existing and planned provisions, availability of land resources as well as standards adopted in other major Asian cities. The HKPSG stipulates that the standard for the provision of open space in urban areas is a minimum of 20 hectares (ha) per 100,000 persons, i.e. 2 square metres (m²) per person, apportioned as follows:

Note 1: *The HKPSG is a government manual of criteria for determining the scale, location and site requirements of various land uses and facilities. Its purpose is to provide general guidelines to ensure that, during the planning process, the Government will reserve adequate land to facilitate social and economic development and provide appropriate public facilities to meet the needs of the public. It also provides an equitable basis for the allocation of scarce land resources.*

Note 2: *The HKPSG states that open space is “a statutory land use zone for the provision of open space and recreation facilities for the enjoyment of the general public”, and recreation open space is “the outdoor open-air space which is used principally for active and/or passive recreation use, developed either by the public or private sector, and is counted towards the open space standard of provision”. It also states that the two terms “open space” and “recreation open space” are used interchangeably in the HKPSG. In general, open space should be open-air with limited building site coverage.*

Introduction

- (a) a minimum of 10 ha per 100,000 persons (i.e. 1 m² per person) for district open space (Note 3); and
- (b) a minimum of 10 ha per 100,000 persons (i.e. 1 m² per person) for local open space (Note 4).

Regional open space (Note 5) is provided as a “bonus” above the minimum standard. However, in the metro area, 50% of the regional open space provision can be counted as district open space (Note 6). While open space is generally allocated for the enjoyment of the general public, it may be developed by the public or private sector. In addition, many outdoor amenities (such as country parks managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department) are not countable towards the open space standard of provision under the HKPSG (see Note 11 to para. 1.8).

1.4 As stated in the HKPSG, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is primarily responsible for the development and management of public open space and purpose-built recreation facilities. A large part of the open space is landscaped as the LCSD’s parks and gardens, which are classified into the following main categories:

Note 3: *District open spaces are medium-size sites (where possible at least 1 ha) which provide facilities for the core activities and for passive recreation to meet the needs of a district population. In rural villages and small residential developments in the rural areas, there is no requirement for the provision of district open space.*

Note 4: *Local open spaces are smaller sites (where possible at least 500 m²) in urban areas which are more passive in nature and provide sitting-out areas and children playgrounds to serve the neighbourhood population. Such spaces should be located within short walking distance from the residents intended to be served, preferably within a radius of not more than about 0.4 kilometre.*

Note 5: *Regional open spaces are large sites (at least 5 ha) provided at prominent locations in the urban areas (e.g. the Victoria Park), at the urban fringe areas or in proximity to major transport interchanges. They provide facilities with a greater scope than the core activities and serve the wider recreational needs of the territorial population and tourists.*

Note 6: *According to the HKPSG, this acknowledges the high level of “out of district” workers or visitors who use recreation open space in these districts.*

- (a) ***Sitting-out areas and gardens.*** These are small amenity areas (not more than 1 ha in size). They consist mainly of passive recreation facilities such as pavilions, arbours and sitting benches (see Photograph 1);
- (b) ***Playgrounds.*** These are small amenity areas (not more than 1 ha in size). They consist mainly of active recreation facilities such as children's play equipment, basketball courts and soccer pitches (see Photograph 2);
- (c) ***Parks.*** These are large amenity areas (more than 1 ha in size). They consist of a variety of passive and active recreation facilities, such as landscaped gardens, sports grounds and skateboard arenas (see Photographs 3 to 5); and
- (d) ***Promenades.*** These are passive amenity areas situated along the water front. They can be a free-standing facility or located inside a park (see Photograph 6).

Introduction

Photograph 1

Arbours and sitting benches in a sitting-out area



Source: LCSD records

Photograph 2

Game courts in a playground



Source: LCSD records

Photographs 3 to 6

Recreation facilities in the Tsing Yi Northeast Park

Photograph 3



Landscaped garden

Photograph 4



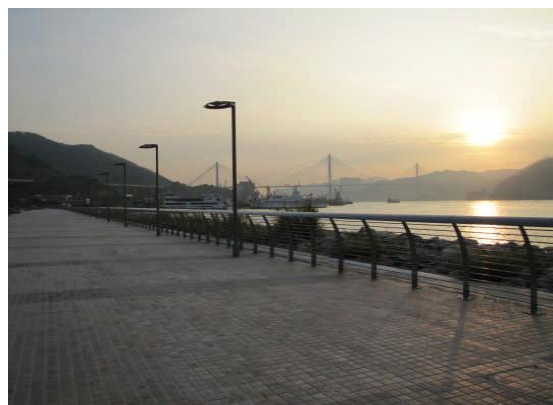
Sports ground

Photograph 5



Skateboard arena

Photograph 6



Promenade

Source: LCSD records

Introduction

1.5 Certain open space is not developed into the LCSD's parks and gardens. Examples are outdoor recreation facilities in public housing estates managed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority, open space in private residential developments, and beaches managed by the LCSD.

1.6 The LCSD's parks and gardens are designated as public pleasure grounds under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) and managed under the Pleasure Grounds Regulation (Cap. 132BC — Note 7). Pursuant to the Regulation, the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services manages the parks and gardens through the LCSD's Leisure Services Branch, which has 18 District Leisure Services Offices (District Offices) located in different districts of the territory. District Office staff, as keepers of parks and gardens under the Pleasure Grounds Regulation, oversee the daily operation of their responsible parks and gardens, and help enforce the Regulation. An organisation chart of the Leisure Services Branch is at Appendix A.

1.7 As at 31 December 2012, the LCSD managed 1,503 parks and gardens (including 25 major parks — Note 8) which had a total area of 973 ha (see Appendix B for details). The management of these parks and gardens is one of the significant components of the LCSD's "recreation and sports" programme (Note 9). About 5,100 staff (comprising 1,700 District Office staff and 3,400 contractor staff) were directly involved in the park/garden daily operation. According to the latest

Note 7: *The Pleasure Grounds Regulation regulates the operation of parks and gardens (e.g. hours of opening and closing). It also prohibits certain behaviour of the public in parks and gardens (e.g. littering and putting feet on seats).*

Note 8: *A major park is one that meets any two of the following criteria:*

- (a) park size not less than 5 ha;*
- (b) having special features (e.g. special architectural design and historical background); and*
- (c) high patronage.*

Examples include the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens, the Victoria Park, and the Tai Po Waterfront Park.

Note 9: *According to the LCSD's Controlling Officer's Report, the estimated expenditure for "Programme (1): Recreation and Sports" for 2012-13 was about \$3 billion.*

survey conducted by the LCSD in 2008, 73% and 63% of respondents were satisfied with the LCSD's parks and children playgrounds respectively (Note 10).

Audit review

1.8 The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review to examine the LCSD's development and management of its parks and gardens (Note 11). The audit focused on the following areas:

- (a) planning and provision of park and garden facilities (PART 2);
- (b) inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens (PART 3);
- (c) repair and maintenance of facilities (PART 4);
- (d) performance measurement and reporting (PART 5); and
- (e) way forward (PART 6).

Note 10: *In the survey, respondents who had used park and garden facilities in 2008 were requested to rate their level of satisfaction by a 5-point scale from "1" (very dissatisfied) to "5" (very satisfied). The proportions of respondents who rated "4" (satisfied) or above for parks and children playgrounds were 73% and 63% respectively.*

Note 11: *Some public outdoor amenities, which are not classified as the LCSD's parks and gardens, have a different nature and are not covered in this review. Such facilities are not countable towards the open space standard of provision under the HKPSG (see para. 1.3), examples include:*

- (a) *green space (e.g. country parks managed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department). The prime function of green space is for conservation of the natural environment and for amenity and visual purposes; and*
- (b) *stadia, holiday camps and water sports centres managed by the LCSD. Stadia are designed for association football matches and athletic events with a large seating capacity (e.g. above 5,000).*

Introduction

Audit has found that there are areas where improvements can be made, and has made a number of recommendations to address the issues.

Acknowledgement

1.9 Audit would like to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance and full cooperation of the staff of the LCSD and the Planning Department (PlanD) during the course of the audit review.

PART 2: PLANNING AND PROVISION OF PARK AND GARDEN FACILITIES

2.1 This PART examines issues relating to the planning and provision of park and garden facilities. Audit has found room for improvement in the following areas:

- (a) planning for the provision of park and garden facilities (paras. 2.2 to 2.17);
- (b) implementation of park and garden projects (paras. 2.18 to 2.26);
- (c) development of a park site in Kwai Chung (paras. 2.27 to 2.35);
- (d) transfer of facilities from the Home Affairs Department (paras. 2.36 to 2.42);
- (e) creating a new look for parks and gardens (paras. 2.43 to 2.49); and
- (f) provision of sports facilities in parks and gardens (paras. 2.50 to 2.54).

Planning for the provision of park and garden facilities

2.2 Provision of open space starts with town planning undertaken by the PlanD. Sites are zoned for various purposes (e.g. open space, residential, commercial, etc.) through Outline Zoning Plans which are approved by the Chief Executive in Council. Existing/planned open spaces are zoned “Open Space” or included in other land use zones such as “Residential”, “Commercial”, “Industrial” and “Comprehensive Development Area” zones on these plans. As stated in the HKPSG, site reservations on town plans do not automatically justify the inclusion of the facilities in implementation programmes. The inclusion of a project in implementation programmes and the upgrading of implementation priority require separate justifications and decisions within the context of the Government’s resource allocation system. Furthermore, all capital works projects including those on open space are subject to public consultation and the funding approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo) or the Financial Secretary acting under delegated power.

Planning and provision of park and garden facilities

2.3 The LCSD's parks and gardens are recreation open space for the public. The HKPSG provides that the standard for the provision of open space in urban areas is a minimum of 2 m² per person, apportioned as local open space of 1 m² per person and district open space of 1 m² per person (see para. 1.3). The two types of open spaces are intended to serve different purposes and catchment areas. As stipulated in the HKPSG, the planning standard should be applied with a degree of flexibility, having regard to various factors (e.g. location, function, accessibility and population characteristics of the district). In this regard, apart from making reference to the HKPSG standard, in planning for the provision of park and garden facilities, the LCSD also takes into consideration other factors such as:

- (a) views of District Councils (Note 12);
- (b) movement of population;
- (c) changing needs of the community (e.g. public aspirations for more open space);
- (d) utilisation rates of the existing facilities; and
- (e) availability of resources.

Note 12: *District Councils are established under District Councils Ordinance (Cap. 547). A District Council is established for each of the 18 districts in the territory to advise the Government on:*

- (a) matters affecting the well-being of the people in the district;*
- (b) the provision and use of public facilities and services within the district;*
- (c) the adequacy and priorities of Government programmes for the district; and*
- (d) the use of public funds allocated to the district for local public works and community activities.*

2.4 According to a paper submitted to the LegCo Panel on Development by the Development Bureau in November 2008 (Note 13), the provision of open space to the public totalled 1,810 ha.

Management information on open space

2.5 As mentioned in paragraph 1.4, the LCSD is primarily responsible for the development and management of public open space. The LCSD keeps information on open space under its management at the district level. However, for open space in non-LCSD venues which are not managed by the LCSD, it may not be able to have the most updated information. In this regard, Audit noted that the LCSD did not regularly compile comprehensive information on the provision of open space (including both LCSD and non-LCSD venues), neither at the district level nor at the territory level as a whole. Audit considers this less than satisfactory because, in the absence of such management information, the LCSD is not able to keep a close watch on the overall provision of open space vis-à-vis the HKPSG standard. In particular, any shortfalls in the overall provision of open space in individual districts may not be identified in a timely manner for the attention of the LCSD to facilitate its planning of park and garden facilities.

Mechanism for collecting relevant information

2.6 The LCSD is not the only provider of open space. Of the 1,810 ha of open space mentioned in the LegCo paper of November 2008 (see para. 2.4), a significant proportion (51% or 927.2 ha) was provided in non-LCSD venues (e.g. outdoor recreation facilities in public housing estates and private residential developments). Table 1 shows the provision of open space in LCSD venues and non-LCSD venues as at November 2008.

Note 13: *In November 2008, the Development Bureau set out in a paper the preliminary findings and recommendations of a review concerning the provision of public open space in private developments. The paper, which included an Annex providing information on the provision of open space as per the HKPSG, was submitted to the LegCo Panel on Development for discussion in December 2008.*

Planning and provision of park and garden facilities

Table 1

Provision of open space (November 2008)

Provider of open space	Venue of open space	Area	
		(ha)	(%)
<i>LCSD venue</i>			
LCSD	Parks and gardens	825.2	46%
	Other than parks and gardens (e.g. beaches)	57.6	3%
		882.8	49%
<i>Non-LCSD venue</i>			
Hong Kong Housing Authority	Outdoor recreation facilities in housing estates	654.9	36%
Other parties (e.g. private sector, other government departments and non-governmental organisations)	Outdoor recreation facilities in residential developments and other public areas (e.g. amenity areas)	272.3	15%
		927.2	51%
Total		1,810.0	100%

Source: LegCo paper of November 2008 and Audit analysis of LCSD records

2.7 Audit noted that the LCSD might have difficulties in readily collecting comprehensive information on open space in non-LCSD venues. Given the significant magnitude of open space involved in non-LCSD venues (see para. 2.6), comprehensive information is crucial for the LCSD to keep watch on the overall provision of open space and to consider its new park and garden projects. Upon Audit's request in November 2012, the LCSD provided Audit with the latest records of open space. Audit noted that LCSD could not provide updated records of open space in non-LCSD venues. Apparently, the position had not been updated since 2008 (after the issue of the 2008 LegCo paper — see para. 2.4). There was a risk

that the LCSD had been using outdated information of non-LCSD venues for monitoring the provision of open space, and for planning the provision of park and garden facilities.

Different interpretations of the definition of open space

2.8 In November 2008, when preparing the LegCo paper on open space, it was noted that the total open space according to records of the LCSD differed from that of the PlanD (Note 14). Table 2 shows the discrepancy.

Note 14: *A key role of the PlanD is to guide the use and development of land. A Deputy Director of the PlanD chairs the Planning Standards Sub-Committee, which is established under the Committee on Planning and Land Development. The Sub-Committee coordinates the formulation and revision of the HKPSG. The Committee approves the formulation and revision.*

Planning and provision of park and garden facilities

Table 2

**Open space in LCSD venues
as recorded by the LCSD and the PlanD
(November 2008)**

Department	Recorded area of open space in LCSD venues (ha)	Area overstated/ (understated) compared with the correct figure	
		(ha)	(%)
(a) LCSD	1,299.5	416.7	47%
(b) PlanD	876.6	(6.2)	(1%)
(c) Discrepancy ((a) – (b))	422.9		
(d) Agreed correct figure (Note)	882.8		

Source: LCSD and PlanD records

Note: This was the figure eventually agreed between the two departments (see para. 2.9).

2.9 The LCSD and the PlanD liaised with each other to reconcile their figures and found that the discrepancy was mainly due to the LCSD's different interpretation of the definition of open space in relation to the HKPSG (Note 15). The LCSD and the PlanD eventually agreed that the correct figure of open space in LCSD venues was 882.8 ha prior to the issue of the LegCo paper. However, based on Audit's scrutiny of Public Works Subcommittee papers for new park and garden projects after 2008, it appeared that the LCSD had continued to use its own set of open space figures in planning new park/garden facilities, without checking and agreeing them with the PlanD.

Note 15: For example, according to the HKPSG, water sports centres and camp sites should not be regarded as open space. However, the LCSD recorded these facilities as open space.

Variations in the provision of open space

2.10 Audit noted that in June 2012, the PlanD invited the LCSD to provide input for comprehensive updating of the database for open space in 18 districts. The LCSD provided the PlanD with relevant information by two batches in July and August 2012 respectively. Upon Audit's enquiry in February 2013, the PlanD advised that the updating of the existing provision and requirement of open space was nearing completion. The updating was based on the 2011 Hong Kong Population Census. As regards the updating of information on the planned provision of open space, the PlanD was awaiting the latest population projections by districts based on the 2011 Hong Kong Population Census (expected to be completed by June 2013). According to the PlanD, information on the provision of open space (both LCSD and non-LCSD venues) vis-à-vis the HKPSG standard, similar to that presented in the LegCo paper of 2008 (see paras. 2.4 and 2.6), would be available later in 2013.

2.11 In the absence of more updated information, Audit analysed the provision of open space by districts as at November 2008 (see Table 3). The analysis showed that the overall provision of open space in the territory was 2.6 m² per person, apportioned as 0.99 m² of district open space per person and 1.61 m² of local open space per person. At the district level, there were shortfalls in open space in 11 districts, i.e. overall shortfalls in two districts (Central and Western District, and Wan Chai District), and shortfalls in either local open space or district open space in 9 other districts. Besides, there were variations in the per-capita provision of open space among districts, ranging from:

- (a) for district open space, a shortfall of 0.64 m² per person (Kwai Tsing) and 0.58 m² per person (Yuen Long) to 0.52 m² per person (Tai Po) and 1.37 m² per person (Islands) above the minimum requirement; and
- (b) for local open space, a shortfall of 0.40 m² per person (Central and Western) and 0.39 m² per person (Yau Tsim Mong) to 1 m² per person (Tuen Mun) and 2.07 m² per person (Islands) above the minimum requirement.

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Table 3

Audit analysis of provision of open space (November 2008)

District	Provision of open space			Provision of open space above/(below) minimum requirement (Note)		
	District open space (a) (m ² per person)	Local open space (b) (m ² per person)	Total (c) = (a) + (b) (m ² per person)	District open space (d) = (a) - 1 (m ² per person)	Local open space (e) = (b) - 1 (m ² per person)	Total (f) = (c) - 2 (m ² per person)
Islands	2.37	3.07	5.44	1.37	2.07	3.44
Tai Po	1.52	1.77	3.29	0.52	0.77	1.29
Tuen Mun	1.22	2.00	3.22	0.22	1.00	1.22
Sha Tin	1.14	1.96	3.10	0.14	0.96	1.10
Southern	1.16	1.60	2.76	0.16	0.60	0.76
Wong Tai Sin	0.80	1.94	2.74	(0.20)	0.94	0.74
Sham Shui Po	1.37	1.36	2.73	0.37	0.36	0.73
North	0.74	1.87	2.61	(0.26)	0.87	0.61
Kwun Tong	0.74	1.80	2.54	(0.26)	0.80	0.54
Kowloon City	1.47	0.95	2.42	0.47	(0.05)	0.42
Tsuen Wan	1.01	1.37	2.38	0.01	0.37	0.38
Kwai Tsing	0.36	2.00	2.36	(0.64)	1.00	0.36
Eastern	0.97	1.30	2.27	(0.03)	0.30	0.27
Yau Tsim Mong	1.60	0.61	2.21	0.60	(0.39)	0.21
Yuen Long	0.42	1.69	2.11	(0.58)	0.69	0.11
Sai Kung	0.47	1.58	2.05	(0.53)	0.58	0.05
Wan Chai	0.97	0.88	1.85	(0.03)	(0.12)	(0.15)
Central and Western	1.15	0.60	1.75	0.15	(0.40)	(0.25)
Overall	0.99	1.61	2.60	(0.01)	0.61	0.60

Source: LegCo paper of November 2008 and Audit analysis

Note: According to the HKPSG, the standard for the provision of open space is a minimum of 2 m² per person, apportioned as follows: (a) a minimum of 1 m² per person for district open space; and (b) a minimum of 1 m² per person for local open space (see para. 1.3).

2.12 While there might be constraints (e.g. shortage of land in built-up areas) in the provision of open space, the LCSD, as the department primarily responsible for the development and management of public open space (see para. 2.5), needs to better prioritise the provision of park and garden facilities to improve the situation of individual districts, particularly those with shortfalls in local or district open space provision.

2.13 As can be seen from Table 3, Central and Western District and Wan Chai District had shortfalls in the overall provision of open space. Upon enquiry, the PlanD informed Audit in February 2013 that, based on the planned population, sufficient land had been reserved and planned for more open space in the two districts (e.g. through Central Reclamation Phase III, the waterfront open space in Wan Chai North and a park provided under a hotel development project in Wan Chai). Audit however noted that according to government planning statistics (Note 16), the proportion of population aged 65 or above in the two districts would increase in future (from 14% in 2012 to 21% by 2019 for Central and Western, and from 16% in 2012 to 22% by 2019 for Wan Chai). According to the HKPSG, there is potential demand for more passive open space (e.g. parks and gardens) near home as a result of the ageing population. With increasing demand for passive open space from their ageing population, the two districts' shortfalls in provision of open space may worsen in future. There is a need for timely actions to better cater for their needs.

Audit recommendations

2.14 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Planning should expedite the updating of information on the provision of open space (LCSD and non-LCSD venues), both at the district level and at the territory-wide level (see para. 2.10).**

Note 16: *The statistics were published in the report entitled "Projections of Population Distribution, 2010-2019" which was released in December 2010.*

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2.15 Audit has also *recommended* that the Director of Planning and the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should consider establishing a mechanism under which the PlanD and the LCSD liaise with each other on a periodic basis so as to update relevant information on the provision of open space in both LCSD and non-LCSD venues.

Response from the Administration

2.16 The Director of Planning has said that:

- (a) another round of updating of information on the provision of open space for 18 districts in the territory is in progress (see para. 2.10). The PlanD and the LCSD would work as partners in conducting the updating exercise; and
- (b) it would be a joint effort of the PlanD and the LCSD to establish a mechanism on updating relevant information on a periodic basis.

2.17 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendation in paragraph 2.15. She has said that the LCSD will work closely with the PlanD to establish the proposed mechanism.

Implementation of park and garden projects

2.18 The LCSD seeks the assistance of the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD — Note 17) in the implementation of park and garden projects. The ArchSD takes up the role as works agent, provides technical support to the LCSD (e.g. in District Council consultations and in seeking funding approval from LegCo). The ArchSD also conducts tendering exercises for project works.

2.19 When the construction works of a project are near completion, the LCSD and the ArchSD will conduct pre-handover site inspections to identify construction defects. The LCSD will also identify any necessary improvement works (e.g. safety-related works) having regard to site conditions. After completion of rectification works for major defects and major improvement works, the facility will be handed over to the LCSD for opening to the public. To ensure smooth implementation of projects, the LCSD and the ArchSD liaise with each other through such means as telephone calls, emails, memos and project-based liaison meetings. The two departments also hold high-level Projects Review Meetings (see para. 2.22) to oversee the overall position of various projects.

Long lead time in commissioning park and garden facilities

2.20 Audit examined 10 recent park/garden projects with a construction cost of over \$50 million each (Note 18). Audit noted that in six projects, when the park/garden facilities were opened to the public, considerable time (lead time — ranging from 5.5 months to 13.5 months) had elapsed since the target dates of works completion (set at the time of funding approval). Table 4 shows the details. Audit could not ascertain from LCSD records detailed reasons for the long lead time.

Note 17: *A function of the the ArchSD is to provide professional project management services and technical advice to the Government in relation to government-funded facilities.*

Note 18: *The projects were completed in the past three years from 2010 to 2012.*

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Table 4

Lead time before opening of six park/garden facilities

Project	Event (Date)			Lead time (No. of months)		
	Target works completion	Actual works completion	Facility opened	Delay in/ (advancing of) works completion	Time elapsed after works completion (Note)	Total
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(b) vs. (a)	(c) vs. (b)	
Po Kong Village Road Park	Nov. 2010	Nov. 2010	Jan. 2012	0	13.5	13.5
On Fuk Street Playground	Jan. 2012	May 2011	Dec. 2012	(8)	19	11
Jordan Valley Park	Dec. 2009	Mar. 2010	Aug. 2010	3	4	7
Tsing Yi Northeast Park	Oct. 2009	Mar. 2010	May 2010	5	2	7
Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park	Dec. 2009	Apr. 2010	June 2010	4	2	6
Ngau Chi Wan Park	Mar. 2010	Feb. 2010	Sep. 2010	(1.5)	7	5.5

Source: Audit analysis of LCSD records

Note: During this period, the park/garden facilities were handed over to the LCSD (see para. 2.19)

2.21 Park and garden projects are implemented to provide recreation open space for the enjoyment of the general public. Members of the public, particularly the local community, have high expectation for the timely commissioning of the parks/gardens. Any long lead time (e.g. due to works delays) for commissioning parks and gardens will fall short of the public expectation. For projects with long lead time, there is a need for the LCSD to ascertain the underlying reasons, and take measures to expedite the commissioning of its parks and gardens in future.

Inadequate liaison with the ArchSD

2.22 The LCSD has intended that works issues of park and garden projects are to be deliberated at Projects Review Meetings (Note 19). Audit noted that Projects Review Meetings were not always held in a timely manner. Case 1 at Appendix C shows an example.

2.23 In Case 1, works issues had caused delays in the handover of park facilities. The works issues also required follow-up actions (rectification of construction defects) after the handover. However, it appeared that Projects Review Meetings were not held in a timely manner to facilitate the provision of high-level input from the senior management of the LCSD and the ArchSD. Such input could help address the unresolved works issues. This was not conducive to enhancing the timeliness of the commissioning of parks and gardens for public use.

Note 19: *As agreed between the LCSD and the ArchSD, the terms of reference of Projects Review Meeting are as follows:*

- (a) to review the progress, planning and implementation of the LCSD's capital works and minor works projects; and*
- (b) to discuss and assist in resolving issues related to the planning and commissioning of the LCSD's capital works and minor works projects.*

Members of Projects Review Meeting include directorate staff of the LCSD and the ArchSD.

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2.24 In this connection, Audit noted that in the first Projects Review Meeting held in 2006, it was agreed that future Projects Review Meetings were to be held on a quarterly basis. However, Audit's review of the meetings held after 2006 revealed that only 3 (27%) of the 11 meetings held after 2006 were held on a quarterly basis (see Appendix D).

Audit recommendations

2.25 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **ascertain the underlying reasons for cases with long lead time in commissioning parks and gardens, and take effective measures to expedite, as far as practicable, project implementation in future; and**
- (b) **consider, in consultation with the ArchSD, enhancing liaison between the LCSD and the ArchSD (e.g. holding Projects Review Meetings on a more timely basis) to help monitor and resolve works issues arising from the implementation of park and garden projects.**

Response from the Administration

2.26 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

- (a) the LCSD and the ArchSD conduct pre-handover site inspections to identify defects (see para. 2.19). The LCSD will also identify any necessary improvement works (e.g. safety-related works) having regard to the site conditions and users' safety requirements. Such improvement works are commonly required for capital works projects given their scale and complexity (e.g. bicycle parks). After completion of rectification works for major defects and major improvement works, the facility will be handed over to the LCSD for preparing the opening to the public. Having a time gap between the completion of works and the opening of the facility is thus not uncommon or unreasonable;

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- (b) the LCSD has looked into the cases mentioned in Table 4 in paragraph 2.20. In brief, for some of the cases, the lead time was caused by unforeseen incidents such as inclement weather, unsatisfactory performance of the works contractors/sub-contractors, etc. In some other cases, the lead time was related to necessary improvement works to ensure safety;
- (c) the LCSD will take necessary measures to shorten the lead time, as far as practicable, in project implementation in future; and
- (d) regarding enhancing liaison between the LCSD and the ArchSD to help monitor and resolve works issues arising from the implementation of park and garden projects, the LCSD will follow up the matter with the ArchSD.

Development of a park site in Kwai Chung

2.27 In 2000, the LCSD took over the Kwai Chung Park development project. The Park site, covering an area of about 27 ha, was located in the former Gin Drinkers Bay Landfill site. Phase I development of the Park had been completed at the time of takeover, which provided the Park with basic facilities (e.g. access road, footpath, lighting facilities and administration office). Owing to the potential landfill gas problems, the Park had not been formally opened to the public. Further development of the site was pending.

2.28 In 2008, about 4 ha of the Kwai Chung Park site were assigned to a national sports association (NSA — Note 20) for building a bicycle park (BMX park). Construction of the BMX park was completed in 2009 (Note 21), which became a competition venue for the East Asian Games held in the year.

2.29 As at December 2012, further development had not yet commenced for the rest of the Kwai Chung Park (about 23 ha, i.e. total site area of 27 ha less 4 ha used as a BMX park). The Kwai Chung Park was still not open to the public as the LCSD's park and garden facilities. Photograph 7 shows a recent picture of the Park site. Photograph 8 shows an unused office building located at the site. A chronology of key events in the development of the Park site is summarised in Table 5.

Note 20: *An NSA is a member association of the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China.*

Note 21: *The NSA obtained a land licence from the Government to operate the BMX park on a self-financing basis. The Hong Kong Jockey Club provided funding for building the park.*

Photograph 7

Kwai Chung Park site



Source: Photograph taken by Audit on 1 February 2013

Photograph 8

Unused office building located at the Kwai Chung Park site



Source: Photograph taken by Audit on 1 February 2013

Table 5

Chronology of key events in the development of a park site in Kwai Chung (1979 to 2012)

Year	Key event	
<i>Background</i>		
1979	1.	The Gin Drinkers Bay Landfill was closed.
1980	2.	The site (27 ha) was handed over to the former New Territories Development Department for development.
1989	3.	Phase I development of the site (Kwai Chung Park) was completed. Basic facilities were built (e.g. access road, footpath, lighting facilities and administration office).
1992	4.	The Park was handed over to the former Regional Services Department (Note) for further development.
	5.	Due to potential landfill gas problems, the Park had not been formally opened to the public. Phase II development of the Park was withheld.
1994 to 1998	6.	Airport railway was under construction. The railway went across the Park. Development of the Park was held in abeyance.
1999 and 2000	7.	The Park was handed over to the Environmental Protection Department for conducting landfill restoration works.
	8.	The Environmental Protection Department completed the restoration works and commenced the aftercare works.
<i>Development responsibility taken over by the LCSD</i>		
2000	9.	The LCSD took over the Phase II development project of the Park.
2001 and 2002	10.	The LCSD explored developing the Park into a football training centre, but found that the proposal did not work due to site constraints.

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Table 5 (cont'd)

Year	Key event	
2003 to 2009	11.	<p>The LCSD explored different development options, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) opening the part of the Park facing Tsuen Wan Road to the public; (b) developing a community garden cum sitting-out area in the Park; (c) developing a model car racing track in the Park; (d) developing a multi-purpose lawn in the Park; and (e) developing a part of the Park into a leisure ground (including a cycling ground). <p>However, the options could not go ahead due to various reasons (see Case 2 in para. 2.32 for example).</p>
	12.	<p>Approval was given for an NSA to develop a BMX park (4 ha) in the Kwai Chung Park site. The NSA obtained funding from the Hong Kong Jockey Club and constructed the BMX park.</p>
2009 and 2010	13.	<p>Another NSA proposed to develop cricket pitches at the Kwai Chung Park site on a self-financing basis.</p>
	14.	<p>The NSA withdrew the proposal owing to financial considerations.</p>
2010	15.	<p>The LCSD put on hold the planning work for the development of the Kwai Chung Park. A large part (about 23 ha, i.e. 27 ha less 4 ha used as a BMX park) has been left unused.</p>

Source: LCSD records

Note: The Regional Services Department was dissolved in 1999. Its functions relating to leisure and cultural services continued to be provided by the LCSD.

Putting development on hold despite district demands

2.30 Over the years, there has been demand for more park and garden facilities in Kwai Tsing District, where the Kwai Chung Park is located (Note 22). According to the LegCo paper of November 2008, there was a 33.4 ha shortfall in the district open space of Kwai Tsing District. This shortfall was equivalent to 0.64 m² per person in the District (see Table 3 of para. 2.11). The Kwai Tsing District Council has expressed concerns about the late development of the Kwai Chung Park. At a recent meeting of a sub-committee of the District Council held in October 2012, Council members urged the LCSD to develop the remaining part of the Kwai Chung Park.

2.31 In spite of the district demands, LCSD records indicated that planning work for the development of Kwai Chung Park had been put on hold since 2010. Audit considers it unacceptable for a large park site of 27 ha to be left basically unused (except for a small part used as a BMX park — see items 12 and 15 of Table 5 in para. 2.29) for such a long time (more than 20 years since basic facilities were built for the site in 1989 — see item 3 of Table 5). In particular, some 12 years have elapsed since 2000 when the Environmental Protection Department completed the landfill restoration works and the LCSD took over the Phase II development project (see items 8 and 9 of Table 5). There is a need for the Administration to draw lessons from this case (see also paras. 2.32 and 2.33).

Park development not adequately funded

2.32 Audit noted that the LCSD had explored different options for the development of the Kwai Chung Park (see item 11 of Table 5). However, the

Note 22: *To meet the demand, the LCSD built 12 new parks and gardens in the District from 2000 to 2012. These 12 parks/gardens had a total area of 18 ha.*

LCSD made attempts to develop the Park through a number of minor works projects (Note 23). Since funds available for a minor works project are limited, the small scale of each project might not be adequate to match with the large size of the Park. Case 2 at Appendix E shows an unsuccessful attempt by the LCSD to build a cycling ground in the Kwai Chung Park site through a minor works project.

2.33 In fact, the District Council also did not support the development of the Kwai Chung Park through minor works projects. At a meeting of a sub-committee of the District Council held in February 2008, Council members considered that the opening of the Kwai Chung Park should be a territory-wide project, and that the project should not be funded by the district's minor works vote (see also Note 23 to para. 2.32). The LCSD would need to explore alternative sources of funding for the future development of the Kwai Chung Park site.

Audit recommendations

2.34 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **taking account of district needs, devise an action plan for the future development of the Kwai Chung Park site, with a view to putting it into gainful use as soon as practicable; and**
- (b) **explore alternative sources of funding for the future development of the Kwai Chung Park site.**

Note 23: *Government works projects are funded by the Capital Works Reserve Fund. Block allocations under the Fund are available for conducting minor works within certain thresholds. For example, district-based works projects (costing up to \$30 million each) implemented by District Councils for improving local facilities, living environment and hygienic conditions in the territory may be charged to one of the block allocations under the District Minor Works Programme. Individual minor works projects do not need to go through the Government's capital works Resource Allocation Exercise, nor do they need to obtain the approval of the Finance Committee.*

Response from the Administration

2.35 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

- (a) in December 2010, the District Facilities Management Committee of the Kwai Tsing District Council was informed that the development of the Kwai Chung Park would be put on hold. The LCSD then actively followed up the planning work of another project to which priority for implementation was accorded;
- (b) there are constraints in developing public facilities on a restored landfill site. To follow up the future development of the Kwai Chung Park site, the LCSD consulted the District Facilities Management Committee of the Kwai Tsing District Council on 26 February 2013. District Council members noted that development of the site should adopt mitigation measures, and lighting of candles and fire setting should be prohibited. In view of the constraints, District Council members made several proposals on the future development of the site. Taking into account their comments, the LCSD would discuss with the relevant office of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) with a view to formulating development options for consideration by the District Council in due course; and
- (c) subject to the development plan endorsed by the Kwai Tsing District Council, the LCSD would explore suitable source of funding for the development of the Kwai Chung Park site.

Transfer of facilities from the Home Affairs Department

2.36 Apart from the LCSD, the HAD also provides recreation and leisure facilities in districts (Note 24). Such facilities are implemented through minor works programmes. In 2006, the Government decided to transfer certain facilities (e.g. sitting-out areas) from the HAD to the LCSD for better management and maintenance. The two departments reached an agreement that some 170 facilities would be transferred with effect from 1 January 2007. The LCSD would designate the facilities (ex-HAD facilities) as public pleasure grounds under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (see para. 1.6) where feasible.

2.37 In 2011, Audit conducted a review on minor works programmes of the HAD (Note 25). Audit noted, among other things, that there was a delay in the designation of the ex-HAD facilities as public pleasure grounds. Audit had recommended that the designation process should be speeded up to enable the LCSD to better manage and maintain the facilities. The LCSD accepted the recommendation.

Ex-HAD facilities pending designation as public pleasure grounds

2.38 As at December 2012, the LCSD had gazetted the designation of over 100 ex-HAD facilities as public pleasure grounds. However, the designation of 55 ex-HAD facilities remained outstanding. Upon enquiry in January 2013, the LCSD informed Audit that there were issues in 16 ex-HAD facilities which had yet to be resolved (e.g. unauthorised construction and consultation with the locals). For the remaining 39 (i.e. 55 less 16) facilities, gazetting of their designation would be done by phases. Table 6 shows the 55 outstanding cases.

Note 24: *The HAD's key mission is to enhance communication between the Government and the people of Hong Kong and to facilitate the development of District Administration. The Department facilitates and promotes the work of District Councils. It also implements minor local works projects and building management initiatives to improve the community's living environment.*

Note 25: *Results of the review was published in Chapter 8 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 57 of October 2011.*

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Table 6

**Ex-HAD facilities pending designation as public pleasure grounds
(December 2012)**

Status	No. of facilities
To be designated as public pleasure grounds shortly	9 (16%)
To be designated as public pleasure grounds later	30 (55%)
Issues not yet resolved	16 (29%)
Total	55 (100%)

Source: LCSD records

2.39 In January and February 2013, Audit made site inspections of 10 ex-HAD facilities for which designation as public pleasure grounds was pending (Note 26). The objective was to ascertain the general conditions of the ex-HAD facilities, and to see whether improvements had been made in their management since Audit's last review of 2011 (see para. 2.37). Audit found that, apparently, there were still cases of suspected abuse/misuse of the ex-HAD facilities. Some cases might be related to the misuse of government land. Photographs 9 to 12 show examples of such cases. To facilitate effective management of the ex-HAD facilities under the Pleasure Grounds Regulation (see also Note 7 to para. 1.6), the LCSD needs to resolve the outstanding issues with the relevant departments with a view to expediting the designation process.

Note 26: *Of the 16 facilities with unresolved issues (see Table 6), Audit selected 8 (50%) for inspection. Of the other 39 (55 less 16) facilities without unresolved issues, Audit selected 2 (5%) for inspection.*

Photographs 9 to 12

**Examples of suspected abuse/misuse of ex-HAD facilities
(with unresolved issues)**

Photograph 9



**Suspected unauthorised erection of
a shelter and car-parking at
Facility A**

Photograph 10



**Suspected unauthorised
car-parking at Facility B**

Photograph 11



**Posting of a notice
at the entrance to Facility C**

Photograph 12



**Notice showing non-villagers' access
to Facility C was denied**

Source: Photographs taken by Audit on 29 January and 7 February 2013

Audit recommendations

2.40 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **for ex-HAD facilities without unresolved issues, expedite their designation as public pleasure grounds under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance; and**
- (b) **for those with unresolved issues, take necessary steps to sort out the issues in collaboration with the relevant departments (e.g. Lands Department for cases involving unauthorised construction) with a view to designating the facilities as public pleasure grounds.**

Response from the Administration

2.41 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

- (a) for ex-HAD facilities with unresolved issues, the LCSD would endeavour to resolve the issues in collaboration with relevant departments and to designate the facilities as public pleasure grounds where the situation permits; and
- (b) should the land status issue could not be resolved after concerted efforts, the LCSD will remove the venues from the list.

2.42 The Director of Lands has said that the Lands Department stands ready to advise the HAD and the LCSD on land administration matters as they take forward the transfer of facilities between the two departments.

Creating a new look for parks and gardens

2.43 In his 2010-11 Policy Address, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region announced an initiative to allow arts and culture to reach out to the community by displaying in parks, open spaces and government office buildings visual art pieces created by budding artists, students or teams. Following the Policy Address, the LCSD initiated a “Park Déco” pilot project to enhance the look of its parks and gardens through new design (Note 27). In May 2011, the first phase of Park Déco was completed at the Quarry Bay Park (see Photograph 13). In September 2012, the second phase was completed at the Cornwall Street Park (see Photograph 14).

Photographs 13 and 14

New design of two parks through Park Déco

Photograph 13



Quarry Bay Park

Photograph 14



Cornwall Street Park

Source: LCSD records

Note 27: *Park Déco had two key elements, namely:*

- (a) installing innovative and creative park furniture for public enjoyment; and*
- (b) adopting a new set of design and wording for park signage.*

Design parameters yet to be finalised

2.44 Park Déco was a pilot project. The LCSD intended to draw up a set of design parameters for park furniture and signage based on the public's feedback. Such parameters would be used as a reference for new parks or renovating existing parks in the future. As at December 2012, the LCSD was still considering the draft design parameters, which had yet to be finalised.

2.45 Early finalisation of the design parameters would help provide timely input for upgrading other parks and gardens. This is particularly important, because Park Déco was an initiative to address the commitment in the 2010-11 Policy Address, namely, to allow arts and culture to reach out to the community (see para. 2.43). So far, Park Déco was implemented in only two parks (Quarry Bay Park and Cornwall Street Park). In February 2013, the LCSD informed Audit that the concept of Park Déco had also been applied in some new park projects. However, there is a need to apply the concept to upgrade the design of more parks/gardens, given the large number of parks/gardens in the territory (1,503 as at December 2012).

Good practices to be adopted for future projects

2.46 To help implement Park Déco, the LCSD had engaged a design collaborator for each park under the project. The collaborators actively involved the public (e.g. through surveys) at different stages of the project, as follows:

- (a) ***Before the design stage.*** Public views were collected to help draw up the park design;
- (b) ***During the design stage.*** Mock-up park furniture was made and shown to the public. Public views were collected before the design was finalised; and
- (c) ***After project implementation.*** Public feedback on the project was collected in order to evaluate the project outcomes.

2.47 The LCSD noted from public feedback that Park Déco was well-received. In Audit's view, engaging the public in making suggestions and seeing through the development stage helped promote a sense of ownership, which contributed to the project success. Audit however noted that similar engagement of the public at different project stages was uncommon for other park and garden projects of the LCSD. According to the LCSD, it had adopted different forms of public engagement to collect views from the public when planning for new open space projects. For example, value management workshops were held whenever necessary to invite participation of various stakeholders (e.g. members of relevant District Councils) at early planning stage before commencement of design work for new parks. Audit also noted that, in spite of the generally satisfactory responses from the public about the LCSD's parks and gardens (see para. 1.7), members of the public had from time to time expressed concerns about park and garden facilities not meeting their needs.

Audit recommendations

2.48 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **finalise as soon as possible the design parameters for park furniture and signage developed from the pilot implementation of Park Déco, with a view to facilitating the upgrading of park and garden design; and**
- (b) **consider adopting the good practice used by design collaborators in the pilot implementation of Park Déco, i.e. actively engaging the public during different stages of park and garden projects, so as to better meet public expectations.**

Response from the Administration

2.49 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

- (a) the LCSD aims to finalise the design parameters in April 2013;

Planning and provision of park and garden facilities

- (b) meanwhile, in view of the experience and favourable public response received for Park Déco, the LCSD has issued guidelines to its 18 District Offices on the replacement of existing signage and notices in major parks and playgrounds with user-friendly designs in similar vein as those used in Park Déco. The replacement programme will start in March 2013 and be implemented by phases; and

- (c) the LCSD will adopt the good practice used in Park Déco when conducting public engagement for new and renovated park projects.

Provision of sports facilities in parks and gardens

2.50 Sports facilities (e.g. football pitches) are provided for use by the general public in many parks/gardens. In July 2011, the Ombudsman (Note 28) commenced a Direct Investigation into the mechanism and arrangements for the booking and allocation of the LCSD's sports facilities (including those located in parks/gardens). The Ombudsman identified areas for improvement and made a total of 22 recommendations in his investigation report of September 2012 (Note 29).

Improvement measures not yet fully implemented

2.51 The LCSD sought the views of District Councils in relation to the Ombudsman's recommendations. In November 2012, in a paper submitted to a District Council Sub-committee, the LCSD stated, among other things, that improvement measures on the recommendations might involve major changes to the existing booking procedures. In-depth studies of the related issues and consultation of stakeholders would need to be conducted. Accordingly, the LCSD would map out detailed arrangements for the improvement measures. Upon enquiry, the LCSD informed Audit in February 2013 that the LCSD had taken improvement measures on 8 of the 22 recommendations.

2.52 It is important that the LCSD takes prompt measures to address the areas for improvement in facility booking and allocation. This will help better meet the LCSD's pledge to providing safe and good quality recreation facilities for the public (see para. 3.7).

Note 28: *The Ombudsman was appointed by the Chief Executive pursuant to the Ombudsman Ordinance (Cap. 397) to investigate complaints against government departments/agencies and major public organisations for alleged maladministration.*

Note 29: *The recommendations related to areas such as curbing touting activities, booking by individuals, booking by organisations, and use of venues.*

Audit recommendation

2.53 Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should expedite the follow-up actions on improvement areas in the booking and allocation of sports facilities (including those located in parks and gardens).

Response from the Administration

2.54 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendation. She has said that:

- (a) the LCSD had already formulated an implementation plan for the Ombudsman's recommendations;
- (b) apart from the 8 improvement measures (see para. 2.51) which had been partially or fully implemented, 3 will be implemented with effect from June 2013, and another 8 will be implemented within 2013-14; and
- (c) the remaining 3 measures will be implemented subject to the outcome of feasibility studies or be considered after implementation of other improvement measures.

PART 3: INSPECTION AND MONITORING OF PARKS AND GARDENS

3.1 This PART examines the LCSD’s inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens, focusing on the following areas:

- (a) routine inspections (see paras. 3.2 to 3.9);
- (b) inspection practices of District Offices (see paras. 3.10 to 3.17); and
- (c) annual structural inspections (see paras. 3.18 to 3.22).

Routine inspections

3.2 The LCSD engages contractors to provide cleaning and other services (e.g. security guard services in some venues) for its parks and gardens. LCSD staff are also stationed in some parks and gardens to help look after the venues (e.g. handling the booking of facilities — see paras. 2.50 to 2.52).

3.3 The LCSD requires its 18 District Offices (see para. 1.6) to conduct routine inspections of parks and gardens in their responsible districts. According to LCSD guidelines, two key objectives of routine inspections (Note 30) are to:

- (a) check the performance of LCSD ground staff and contractor staff; and
- (b) ensure that facilities in parks and gardens are safe, clean and serviceable for use by the public.

Note 30: *Other objectives of routine inspections are to ensure that the procedures and code of practice are properly followed and implemented, and to collect feedback from ground staff for management review.*

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

User feedback on park cleanliness and security

3.4 According to the LCSD's 2008 survey, most respondents were satisfied with its parks and gardens (see para. 1.7). However, to many respondents, some service areas of parks and gardens just attained an "average" rating or below (Note 31). In particular, 33% and 38% of respondents' ratings did not attain a "satisfied" level for cleaning services of parks and children's playgrounds respectively. Besides, 53% and 56% of respondents' ratings did not attain a "satisfied" level for security services of parks and children's playgrounds respectively. The report on the survey results stated, among other things, that:

- (a) "it is worth noting that about 30% of users rated average in the aspects of cleanliness of washrooms and cleanliness of other facilities in the parks"; and
- (b) regarding respondents' view on the duties of security staff for the parks, "it was noted that a significant proportion (22.5%) claimed 'have not seen/don't know' or 'no comment'".

3.5 Users have also expressed their dissatisfaction through complaints. For example, from January 2011 to June 2012, the 18 District Offices received some 5,000 complaints about parks and gardens. Of these complaints, the majority (80%) were about facilities (e.g. cleanliness and conditions of facilities) and order and control (e.g. users conducting non-permitted activities) in parks and gardens (Note 32).

Note 31: *A 5-points scale was used in the survey ("1"— "very dissatisfied", "2" — "dissatisfied", "3" — "average", "4" — "satisfied" and "5" — "very satisfied"). In other words, with a rating of "3" or below in a service area, the service did not attain a "satisfied" level.*

Note 32: *Of these complaints, some 3,200 had been categorised by the LCSD. Audit analysed the 3,200 complaints and found that 51% were about facilities and 29% were about order and control.*

Examples of inadequacies

3.6 During the period January to February 2013, Audit made site visits to 30 parks and gardens (Note 33) paying special attention to the cleanliness and conditions of their facilities as well as the maintenance of order and control in the venues. Audit found that they were generally in order. However, some cases of inadequacies were observed during Audit's site visits, for example:

- (a) **Potential hazards.** Photograph 15 shows a water hose left unattended on the playground (near a playground slide), which might trip up children. According to LCSD guidelines, water hoses should be properly placed after use. The guidelines require that overhanging of water hoses across footpaths and roads should be avoided under all circumstances. Photograph 16 shows a worn-out fixture next to a handrail, which might cut users' hands. Photographs 17 and 18 show a bench with a loosened part, which posed a falling hazard. Timely actions had not been taken by LCSD staff to remove the potential hazards or cordon off the affected areas; and

- (b) **Control inadequacies.** Photograph 19 shows a wire fence which appeared to have been vandalised. Similar signs of vandalism were found at other parts of the fence. Photograph 20 shows the hanging out/drying of personal stuff in a venue, which should not be allowed (see Photograph 21). There was doubt as to whether proper control of the venues had been maintained.

Note 33: *From November 2012 to January 2013, Audit visited three District Offices, namely, Eastern District Office (Hong Kong region), Wong Tai Sin District Office (Kowloon region) and Kwai Tsing District Office (New Territories region). Audit reviewed their inspection practices and examined their inspection records for the period April to October 2012 (latest available). In January and February 2013, Audit visited a total of 30 parks and gardens in the responsible districts of the Offices.*

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

Photographs 15 to 18

Examples of potential hazards in parks and gardens

Photograph 15



Water hose left unattended near a playground slide

Photograph 16



Damaged fixture

Photograph 17



Bench with loosened part

Photograph 18



Loosened part

Source: Photographs taken by Audit on 15 and 17 January 2013

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

Photographs 19 to 21

Examples of control inadequacies

Photograph 19



Wire fence which had possibly been vandalised

Photograph 20



Hanging out/drying of personal stuff near official signage of a garden

Photograph 21



Signage showing "No drying of linen and clothes"

Source: Photographs taken by Audit on 15 January 2013

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

3.7 The above examples highlighted room for improvement in the LCSD's routine inspections with a view to achieving the intended objectives mentioned in paragraph 3.3. The various cases of inadequacies noted during Audit's site inspections, though not widespread, still fall short of public expectation for safe, clean and serviceable park and garden facilities. In its Controlling Officer's Report, the LCSD has pledged to provide safe and good quality recreation facilities for the public. To better meet its pledge, the LCSD needs to look into the situation and take measures to improve the effectiveness of its routine inspections.

Audit recommendation

3.8 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should take measures to improve the effectiveness of District Office inspections of parks and gardens, with a view to ensuring that park and garden facilities are always safe, clean and serviceable for use by the public.**

Response from the Administration

3.9 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendation. She has said that:

- (a) the LCSD only provided "static staff" to station in major parks and gardens and those provided with fee charging facilities (see also para. 3.2). Among the some 1,500 parks and gardens managed by the LCSD, less than 10% have "static staff". Therefore, it is not unreasonable to have significant proportion of respondents claiming "have not seen/don't know" or "no comment" on the duties of security staff (see para. 3.4(b)). That said, district management will arrange regular inspections/visits to the facilities concerned;
- (b) to further enhance the services, the LCSD has reminded staff to follow the prevailing guidelines to carry out regular inspections to venues to ensure that park and garden facilities are safe, clean and serviceable for use by the public; and

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

- (c) regarding the inadequacies observed during Audit's site visits:
 - (i) the irregularities/damaged facilities at Photographs 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20 have been rectified/repared. Staff have been reminded to follow and to take action in accordance with LCSD guidelines; and
 - (ii) for the damaged facilities at Photograph 19, repair works would be completed by the ArchSD in March 2013.

Inspection practices of District Offices

3.10 Routine inspections of parks and gardens are generally carried out by staff of the Amenities Assistant grade (inspection officers) who are stationed in District Offices. Park and garden users found to be conducting non-permitted activities during inspections will be warned. Recalcitrant offenders may be prosecuted (Note 34). To help inspection officers carry out their duties, the LCSD has laid down guidelines on areas such as planning of inspection routes, frequency of inspections, and documentation of inspection results. The guidelines also include a “checklist on inspections” (standard checklist) which provides inspection officers with guidance on inspection procedures.

3.11 During the period November 2012 to January 2013, Audit visited three District Offices (see also Note 33 to para. 3.6) to examine their inspection practices. The three District Offices had a total of 31 inspection officers for carrying out routine inspections.

Variations in practices of District Offices

3.12 Audit noted that the three District Offices had different practices. Table 7 shows a summary of the practices.

Note 34: *In 2011-12, the LCSD took prosecution action in 181 cases.*

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

Table 7

Inspection practices of three District Offices

Practice		District Office adopted the practice for inspection officers		
		Eastern District	Kwai Tsing District	Wong Tai Sin District
<i>Planning inspections</i>				
1.	Standards were set for the frequency of inspections	No (Records did not show the frequency of planned/actual inspections)	No (Frequency of inspecting a park/garden varied from time to time according to operational needs)	Yes (parks/gardens to be inspected daily)
2.	Inspection routes were laid down in a plan and approved by supervisors of inspection officers	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Conducting inspections</i>				
3.	The standard checklist in LCSD guidelines was used by inspection officers during inspections	No	No	No
4.	A checklist (other than the standard checklist) was used by inspection officers during inspections of toilets/changing rooms	No	No	Yes
<i>Recording inspection results</i>				
5.	Details (e.g. date of inspection and results) were documented for every inspection conducted	No (Note)	Yes	Yes

Source: Audit enquiries during visits to District Offices and analysis of LCSD records

Note: The District Office recorded inspection details in registers. Of the 103 parks and gardens it oversaw, the registers for 14 parks and gardens could not be located for audit examination. A total of 31 registers were kept for the remaining 89 (i.e. 103 less 14) parks and gardens. The registers (also called "occurrence books" by District Office staff) were basically intended for recording irregularities identified during inspections. Inspections which had no findings might not be recorded in the registers.

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

3.13 It is noteworthy that some practices adopted by the District Offices were not conducive to bringing about the inspection outcome (see para. 3.7), as follows:

- (a) ***Infrequent inspections.*** Two District Offices did not have standards for inspection frequency (see item 1 of Table 7);
- (b) ***Inspection plans not formulated.*** District Offices need to oversee a large number of parks and gardens (totalled 1,503 as at December 2012). In this regard, LCSD guidelines state that it is more effective to adopt a risk-based approach for conducting inspections (Note 35). In one District Office, inspection routes were not planned beforehand (see item 2 of Table 7). Without proper planning, it was unlikely that inspections could be systematically conducted having due regard to various risk factors;
- (c) ***Standard checklist not used for inspections.*** The LCSD guidelines did not require inspection officers to check items by items against the standard checklist. None of the three District Offices had used the checklist during inspections (see item 3 of Table 7 — Note 36). Some inspection officers used another checklist for inspecting toilets/changing rooms (see item 4 of Table 7). While inspection officers might be experienced, there was a risk that essential matters might be overlooked, given the multifarious details which required attention during inspections (Note 37); and
- (d) ***Inspections not adequately documented.*** In one District Office, inspection records were incomplete (see item 5 of Table 7). The records did not provide basic information (e.g. inspection dates and related findings) about every inspection conducted. Such records were inadequate for supervisory control and monitoring (e.g. to see whether inspection officers conducted in a timely manner all the inspections assigned), nor did such records provide a sound basis for compiling

Note 35: *LCSD guidelines state that “it is more effective to adopt an approach taking into account complaints, problem areas identified, and other relevant factors in determining the inspection routes”.*

Note 36: *In January and February 2013, Audit accompanied inspection officers of the three District Offices to conduct 15 inspections.*

Note 37: *A total of 148 items were to be checked according to the LCSD standard checklist.*

management information for planning future inspections (e.g. to find out the proportion of inspections which resulted in irregularities being identified).

Information technology not used

3.14 The LCSD did not make arrangements for District Offices to make use of information technology (Note 38) in managing and conducting routine inspections.

3.15 In the three District Offices visited by Audit, inspection-related information (e.g. planned inspections, inspection checklists and details of inspections conducted) was generally kept manually. For example, in the Eastern District Office (see para. 3.13(d)), 31 manual registers were kept for the routine inspections conducted. It was difficult for the District Office to compile accurate and timely management information based on these manual records for planning and monitoring routine inspections. Given the large number of manual records kept by the 18 District Offices, it is even more difficult for the LCSD to compile territory-wide management information about routine inspections.

Audit recommendations

3.16 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **review the practices of the 18 District Offices in the management and conduct of routine inspections, paying particular attention to the need for:**
 - (i) **a minimum inspection frequency;**
 - (ii) **systematic planning of inspections taking account of relevant risk factors (e.g. complaints and problem areas previously identified);**

Note 38: *Information technology refers to the application of computers and telecommunications equipment to store, retrieve, transmit and manipulate data.*

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

- (iii) **adopting a suitable inspection checklist for conducting and documenting inspection work; and**
 - (iv) **properly recording all the inspections conducted; and**
- (b) **consider using information technology to help LCSD staff manage and conduct routine inspections, for example:**
 - (i) **computerising inspection records and related information; and**
 - (ii) **using mobile/handheld devices to help inspection officers make reference to the inspection checklist and record their inspection results.**

Response from the Administration

3.17 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

- (a) the LCSD has reminded staff to follow the prevailing inspection guidelines. The LCSD will review the guidelines taking into account the audit recommendations, the operational needs and resources availability; and
- (b) regarding using information technology to help manage and conduct routine inspections, the question of proportionality will need to be carefully considered. Given that the LCSD has over 1,500 parks and gardens, the use of information technology to conduct routine inspections will have significant financial and resource implications for the Department. The LCSD shall explore the feasibility of using information technology when mobile devices become more affordable and when resources are available.

Annual structural inspections

3.18 The LCSD has set up a Technical Unit (see also Note 41 to para. 4.2) to help maintain playground equipment. LCSD guidelines require that the Technical Unit should conduct an annual structural inspection of playground equipment (including sports equipment). The aim is to establish the overall level of safety of the equipment. As at June 2012, the LCSD's parks and gardens had some 4,300 sets of playground equipment which were subject to annual structural inspections.

Annual structural inspections generally not conducted

3.19 Audit examined the records of annual structural inspections for 30 parks/gardens (Note 39). These parks/gardens had a total of 394 sets of playground equipment. Table 8 shows that, in the past five years from 2008 to 2012, none of the playground equipment had been inspected five times as required. In particular, a large number (306 sets or 78%) of the playground equipment had never been structurally inspected during the period. This is a cause for concern as faulty playground equipment poses a safety risk to users who are mainly young children. Although inspection officers may inspect playground equipment during routine inspections, such inspections, which are conducted by non-technical people, are no substitute for structural inspections.

Note 39: *The parks/gardens were selected from the responsible districts of the three District Offices visited by Audit (see para. 3.11). Each of these parks/gardens had at least one set of playground equipment.*

Inspection and monitoring of parks and gardens

Table 8

**Conduct of annual structural inspections for 30 parks/gardens
(2008 to 2012)**

No. of times the park/garden was inspected	Park/garden		Playground equipment involved	
	(No.)	(%)	(Set)	(%)
5	0	0%	0	0%
4	0	0%	0	0%
3	0	0%	0	0%
2	0	0%	0	0%
1	6	20%	88	22%
0	24	80%	306	78%
Total	30	100%	394	100%

Source: *Audit analysis of LCSD records*

3.20 Upon Audit's enquiry in February 2013, the LCSD explained that, in view of the large number of venues and some 4,300 sets of playground equipment under the purview of the Technical Unit, the Unit was facing a problem of shortage of technical staff (Note 40) for conducting structural inspections. Moreover, while annual structural inspections were not conducted as required, technical staff of the Unit still inspected playground equipment when they visited venues in relation to repair and maintenance works of the equipment (e.g. when equipment defects were reported by District Office staff — see para. 4.3).

Note 40: *The Technical Unit had an establishment of six technical staff.*

Audit recommendations

3.21 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **ascertain the extent of LCSD playground equipment not being checked annually for structural soundness, with a view to drawing up a priority list of high-risk equipment taking into account such risk factors as:**
 - (i) **results of routine inspections conducted by District Offices;**
 - (ii) **the time elapsed since the equipment being last inspected; and**
 - (iii) **any relevant public complaints;**
- (b) **in planning the Technical Unit's structural inspections, give priority to inspecting high-risk equipment on the priority list;**
- (c) **review the adequacy of the manpower of the Technical Unit for conducting structural inspections; and**
- (d) **ensure that adequate structural inspections are conducted for playground equipment in future.**

Response from the Administration

3.22 **The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:**

- (a) **the LCSD has reviewed the pledge for inspection and will adopt a risk-based approach to conducting structural inspections;**
- (b) **taking account of Audit's views and other factors (e.g. target users and complaints received), the LCSD proposes to prioritise its play equipment into three risk categories, namely, high-risk equipment, medium-risk equipment and low-risk equipment. Structural inspections will be prioritised according to the risk levels of the play equipment;**

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- (c) other measures will also be implemented, such as:
 - (i) carrying out structural inspections alongside visits to venues; and
 - (ii) outsourcing part of the structural inspection work through service contracts where resource permitting; and
- (d) the LCSD will monitor the manpower of the Technical Unit closely and arrange to bid for the necessary resources.

PART 4: REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF FACILITIES

4.1 This PART examines the repair and maintenance of facilities in the LCSD's parks and gardens, and suggests measures for improvement in the following areas:

- (a) repair and maintenance works (paras. 4.2 to 4.12); and
- (b) follow-up of overdue repair and maintenance works (paras. 4.13 to 4.20).

Repair and maintenance works

4.2 The LCSD, in collaboration with the Government's works departments, namely the ArchSD and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD — through the Electrical and Mechanical Services Trading Fund), is responsible for the repair and maintenance of its park and garden facilities. The LCSD's Technical Unit (Note 41) also engages contractors to carry out repair and maintenance works. Periodic refurbishment of park and garden facilities is conducted in accordance with maintenance plans of the works departments and the LCSD.

4.3 From time to time, District Office staff inspect the facilities, and report to the Technical Unit/works departments any defects found. According to the LCSD's guidelines and practices, after defects are reported, repair and maintenance works should be completed within a target time frame agreed between the LCSD and the works departments/contractors. The LCSD stipulates in its guidelines the normal time frames for completing repair and maintenance works (see Table 9).

Note 41: *The Technical Unit is an office within the LCSD's Leisure Services Branch. The Unit is headed by a Structural Engineer and assisted by technical staff (Clerks of Works) and other clerical staff. The Structural Engineer and technical staff are seconded from the ArchSD.*

Repair and maintenance of facilities

Table 9

Time frames stipulated in LCSD guidelines for completing normal repair and maintenance of park and garden facilities

Facilities	Examples of facilities (Note 1)	Time frame for completing works (Note 2)
Buildings located in parks and gardens (including the ancillary facilities)	Toilets and changing rooms	12 days
Electrical and mechanical equipment	Electric lights and filtration plants	7 working days
Playground equipment	Safety matting and Tai Chi wheels	2 weeks

Source: LCSD records

Note 1: Repair and maintenance works for some facilities are conducted through contractors.

Note 2: These are the normal time frames for completing repair and maintenance works. Depending on the situation, the target time frame may differ. A shorter time frame may be set for urgent repair (e.g. three days for completing repairs of damaged building facilities which greatly affect the operation of a venue). On the other hand, a longer time frame may be set for works of a larger scale (e.g. four months for total replacement of playground equipment in a venue).

Works not completed in a timely manner

4.4 Audit's review of the records of repair and maintenance works for three District Offices (Note 42) showed that a significant proportion (34% or 86 cases) of repair and maintenance works of playground equipment had not been completed within the target time frame set for the cases (see Table 10). The works in these cases were conducted through the Technical Unit.

Note 42: *From November 2012 to January 2013, Audit visited three District Offices (Eastern District Office, Wong Tai Sin District Office and Kwai Tsing District Office) and examined their records of repair and maintenance works commenced during the period April to October 2012. For works relating to buildings and ancillary facilities, and electrical and mechanical equipment, Audit examined the records for a total of 12 parks/gardens (2,009 cases of repair and maintenance works in total). For works relating to playground equipment, Audit examined the records for all the 234 parks/gardens in the districts (254 cases of repair and maintenance works in total).*

Repair and maintenance of facilities

Table 10

**Timeliness in completion of repair and maintenance works
of playground equipment for three District Offices
(December 2012)**

Timeliness against the target time frame set for the case	Repair and maintenance works commenced during the period April to October 2012				
	(No. of cases)		(%)		
Work completed within the target time frame	159	} 86	62%	} 34%	
Work completed after the target time frame:					
— Not more than 30 days	63		25%		
— Over 30 days (Note 1)	23		9%		
Subtotal	245		96%		
Timeliness cannot be ascertained (Note 2)	9		4%		
Total	254		100%		

Source: Audit analysis of LCSD records

Note 1: In one case, the repair and maintenance work was completed 128 days after the target time frame.

Note 2: The repair and maintenance records did not provide sufficient information (e.g. the actual date of completion of works — see para. 4.17) for ascertaining the timeliness in completion of works.

Repair and maintenance of facilities

4.5 Audit also noted that the normal time frames stipulated in LCSD guidelines (see Table 9) were sometimes not adopted as the target time frames. In some cases, more time might be needed to complete the repair and maintenance works, many of which were related to buildings and ancillary facilities, and electrical and mechanical equipment. Upon enquiry in March 2013:

- (a) the ArchSD informed Audit that:
 - (i) the ArchSD worked on an “agreed time scale” with other departments, which would vary depending on various factors, such as complexity of the works, the area affected, etc.; and
 - (ii) owing to reasons beyond the control of the ArchSD (e.g. quality of repair requested by the departments and constraints imposed on working in occupied venues by the departments), the “agreed time scale” was subject to revision through further agreement. There was generally no delayed case; and

- (b) the EMSD informed Audit that:
 - (i) while the EMSD strived to complete the works within the normal time frame of 7 working days for electrical and mechanical equipment, there were circumstances that the repair might take longer time;
 - (ii) such circumstances included the need to seek support from other parties in the provision of builder’s work or excavation work, to schedule the repair work at a time to suit the operation need of the venue, and to source or await delivery of spare parts; and
 - (iii) in those cases, the EMSD would provide a written explanation to the concerned venue management.

4.6 According to the information provided to Audit by the ArchSD and the EMSD in March 2013, of the 2,009 cases of repair and maintenance works examined by Audit at District Offices relating to buildings and ancillary facilities, and electrical and mechanical equipment (see also Note 42 to para. 4.4), 82 cases required a longer time frame/scale (e.g. up to 255 days). Of these cases, 13 were related to buildings and ancillary facilities, and 69 were related to electrical and mechanical equipment.

Repair and maintenance of facilities

Public expectation for quality facilities

4.7 Damaged facilities cause inconvenience and may pose safety risks to users of parks and gardens (see Photograph 22).

Photograph 22

Damaged playground equipment in a park awaiting repair



Source: Photograph taken by Audit on 24 December 2012

4.8 The long time taken to repair damaged facilities in some cases (particularly repair and maintenance of playground equipment — see Table 10) falls short of public expectation for quality park and garden facilities. According to LCSD records, damaged facilities in parks and gardens are a common cause for public complaints. From January 2011 to June 2012, there were about 750 public complaints about damaged facilities in parks and gardens. Case 3 at Appendix F shows one such example in which a member of the public lodged a complaint with the LCSD about its tardiness in repairing damaged playground matting. The complainant subsequently lodged the case with the Ombudsman. The repair and

maintenance works for the damaged matting were eventually completed some 10 months after the case was first reported to the Technical Unit. In March 2013, the LCSD informed Audit that the Ombudsman had concluded that the LCSD had tried its best efforts to push the contractor to rectify the damaged matting. However, the Ombudsman had also remarked that the LCSD was partly responsible for the delay.

4.9 In this regard, Audit noted that District Office staff and the Technical Unit had liaised with the contractor about the conduct of repair and maintenance works for the damaged matting. However, their actions failed to expedite the works. Apparently, a major cause of delay in this case was the lack of spare parts for the repair and maintenance works (see paras. 3 and 4 of Appendix F). In this regard, Audit noted that while it was the practice of the Technical Unit to maintain a stock of spare parts for playground equipment, the stock was not always adequate for contingency uses, as evidenced by Case 3. Records of the Technical Unit showed that, as at December 2012, its stock of spare parts comprised only 12 commonly-used items. Upon enquiry, the Technical Unit informed Audit in February 2013 that the number of components for playground equipment varied between types/brands/models. The Technical Unit could not ascertain the total number of components/spare parts involved. Audit considers that given the large number of components/spare parts, there is a need to ensure the adequacy of the level of contingency stock of commonly-used spare parts. Besides, to better meet public expectation for prompt repair and maintenance of damaged facilities, the LCSD also needs to improve its follow-up of overdue cases (see paras. 4.13 to 4.20).

Audit recommendations

4.10 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **in consultation with the ArchSD and the EMSD:**
 - (i) **ascertain the reasons for the significant proportion of cases which were not completed within the target time frames for repair and maintenance works of playground equipment; and**

Repair and maintenance of facilities

- (ii) **review the appropriateness of the target time frames for different types of repair and maintenance works of park and garden facilities, taking account of the reasons for delays identified in (i) above and the public expectation for prompt repair works; and**
- (b) **take measures to ensure that repair and maintenance works of park and garden facilities are completed promptly, including regularly reviewing the level of the contingency stock of commonly-used spare parts kept by the Technical Unit, in order to ensure that adequate spare parts are always available for conducting repair and maintenance works.**

Response from the Administration

4.11 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

- (a) repair and maintenance of play/sports equipment not completed within the target time frames is mainly due to the less than satisfactory performance of contractor/supplier, longer time for the production and delivery of playground equipment from overseas, and inclement weather;
- (b) there is room for adjusting the target time frames. The LCSD would discuss with the works departments concerned with a view to setting more reasonable time frames for different types of repair and maintenance works of park and garden facilities;
- (c) the LCSD has reminded its staff to enhance the monitoring of repair and maintenance works and reiterated that the relevant guidelines, including the target time frames for completing works, should be adhered to. Cases beyond the required target time frames should be escalated to managers or even the directorates for follow-up actions with the ArchSD and the EMSD as deemed necessary;

Repair and maintenance of facilities

- (d) on storage of spare parts, the Technical Unit has been expanding the number of items of spare parts as well as the quantity of each item to be stored. Additional storage space had been secured for keeping the spare parts and procurement is also underway. The Technical Unit will continuously assess the need to procure new items for use from time to time; and
- (e) further measures will be implemented to ensure that repair and maintenance works are completed promptly (e.g. the Technical Unit would reprioritise its tasks so as to focus the resources on repair and maintenance works/structural inspection jobs).

4.12 The Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services has said that the EMSD will continue to support the LCSD to review the mechanism for handling repair of electrical and mechanical equipment at the venues with a view to enhancing the quality of service to the public.

Follow-up of overdue repair and maintenance works

4.13 The LCSD requires its staff to monitor repair and maintenance works for park and garden facilities, including the follow-up of cases which have not been completed within the target time frames (i.e. overdue cases). In this regard, District Offices are required to report overdue cases to the LCSD headquarters management through quarterly returns. Appendix G summarises the LCSD's follow-up actions on overdue cases.

Inadequate management information on overdue cases

4.14 Audit's examination of the District Offices' quarterly returns submitted to the LCSD's headquarters management for 2012 showed that there were only three overdue cases. However, none of the 23 overdue cases (with a delay of more than 30 days each — see Table 10 in para. 4.4) identified by Audit during the examination of repair and maintenance records of playground equipment had been included in the returns.

4.15 Upon enquiry, the LCSD informed Audit in January 2013 that it was the LCSD's requirement for District Offices to include in the overdue returns only cases which could not be resolved at the district level. Audit considers this less than satisfactory. Without complete information on overdue cases, the LCSD headquarters management is not able to determine whether follow-up actions (e.g. providing guidance and direction) need to be taken at the senior management level (see Appendix G).

Unclear guidelines for works of playground equipment

4.16 Before December 2012, the LCSD's practices in the follow-up of overdue repair and maintenance works of playground equipment were not laid down. In December 2012, during the course of this audit review, the LCSD formalised the practices by issuing a guideline. Audit welcomes the LCSD's initiative. However, the guideline does not clearly define what constitutes "long overdue" cases (see Appendix G). The LCSD needs to lay down a clear definition of long overdue cases for the purpose of triggering follow-up actions by the senior management (see Appendix G).

Incomplete records of repair and maintenance works

4.17 District Offices keep records of their repair and maintenance works. Audit found that in the three District Offices examined by Audit (see para. 4.4), they recorded in log books details (e.g. particulars of defects to be rectified and actual completion date) of repair and maintenance works for buildings and electrical and mechanical equipment. Based on these records, the District Offices prepared quarterly returns of overdue cases to the LCSD headquarters management (see para. 4.13). However, the log books had not been properly maintained in some cases (e.g. actual completion dates not recorded). Moreover, for repair and maintenance works of playground equipment, no log books were used. The District Offices only kept such documents as copies of the defects report forms and orders issued to the works contractors. As a result, of the 2,263 cases of repair and maintenance works examined by Audit, the timeliness in 185 cases (8%) could not be ascertained (including 9 cases related to playground equipment — see Table 10 in para. 4.4). The incomplete repair and maintenance records (particularly for playground equipment) were not conducive to the effective monitoring of overdue cases.

Audit recommendations

4.18 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **in consultation with the ArchSD and the EMSD, review the adequacy of the mechanism for the follow-up of overdue repair and maintenance works for parks and gardens;**
- (b) **lay down a clear definition of long overdue cases which require the follow-up actions of the LCSD headquarters management; and**
- (c) **ensure that District Offices keep adequate records (including target completion date and actual completion date) of their repair and maintenance works.**

Response from the Administration

4.19 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

- (a) the LCSD will review with the ArchSD and the EMSD the mechanism for following up or escalating overdue repair and maintenance works to the senior level; and
- (b) the LCSD shall update the existing guidelines on the proper record of repair and maintenance works and regularly remind District Offices of the importance of record keeping.

4.20 The Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services has said that the EMSD will continue to support the LCSD to review the mechanism for handling repair of electrical and mechanical equipment at the venues with a view to enhancing the quality of service to the public.

PART 5: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

5.1 This PART examines the LCSD's performance measurement and reporting relating to the management of parks and gardens.

Performance measures

5.2 Performance measurement includes developing and reporting performance measures. It helps enhance the performance, transparency and accountability of an organisation. The LCSD has included in its Controlling Officer's Report a number of performance measures, some of which are related to its parks and gardens. Table 11 shows the key performance measures.

Table 11

**Key performance measures relating to
the LCSD's management of parks and gardens**

Key performance measures	2010	2011	2012
<i>Target</i>	Target	(Actual)	(Actual) (Planned)
(a) Average usage rate of natural turf pitches (%)	100	100	100
(b) Average usage rate of artificial turf pitches (%)	80	73	73
<i>Indicator</i>	(Actual)	(Actual)	(Estimate)
(c) Children's playgrounds (No.)	695	697	702
(d) Major parks (see also Note 8 to para. 1.7) (No.)	25	25	25

Source: LCSD Controlling Officer's Report

Lacking outcome indicators

5.3 A key objective of managing parks and gardens is to provide safe and good quality recreation facilities for the public (see para. 3.7). However, none of the performance measures in the LCSD Controlling Officer's Report can adequately indicate the extent to which this objective has been met. The LCSD needs to consider developing and publishing more useful outcome indicators to improve its accountability and transparency.

User surveys not conducted since 2008

5.4 According to overseas good practices in managing parks and gardens, a useful outcome indicator is user satisfaction level. Audit noted that the LCSD last conducted a user satisfaction survey for parks and playgrounds in 2008, which was already more than four years ago (see para. 1.7). The LCSD needs to consider conducting more regular surveys to better gauge the level of user satisfaction on its parks and gardens. Such surveys can also help the LCSD assess the changing needs of the community for park and garden facilities (e.g. the demand for cycling grounds and pet gardens).

Inadequate performance information on utilisation rates

5.5 As mentioned in paragraph 2.3(d), utilisation rates of the existing facilities are one of the key factors the LCSD takes into consideration in planning for the provision of park and garden facilities. However, apart from the usage rates of some sports facilities located in parks and gardens (see items (a) and (b) of Table 11), the LCSD did not have comprehensive performance information on the utilisation rates of parks and gardens. In this connection, Audit noted that according to the LCSD's survey (see para. 1.7), 51% of the respondents had not used the LCSD's park facilities in 2008. This provided an indirect measure of the public's utilisation of park facilities. However, in the absence of targets/benchmarks set by the LCSD or comparative figures for other time periods, Audit is not able to draw any meaningful conclusion from such measure of utilisation.

Audit recommendations

5.6 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should consider:**

- (a) **conducting periodic surveys to gauge the level of:**
 - (i) **the public's utilisation of park and garden facilities; and**
 - (ii) **user satisfaction on the parks and gardens managed by the LCSD; and**
- (b) **developing and publishing relevant outcome indicators and utilisation information (e.g. results of the surveys in (a) above) on the LCSD website for enhancing transparency and accountability in the management of parks and gardens.**

Response from the Administration

5.7 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that the LCSD will:

- (a) **conduct surveys regularly to gauge the level of utilisation of park and garden facilities and user satisfaction. The LCSD is planning to conduct the next survey in 2013-14; and**
- (b) **upload the findings of the surveys on its website to enhance transparency and accountability in the management of parks and gardens.**

PART 6: WAY FORWARD

6.1 This PART examines the way forward for the future development of parks and gardens.

Competing demands for land

6.2 In Hong Kong, land is a valuable and scarce resource. As stated in the HKPSG, “pressure for land is extreme in Hong Kong and it must be recognised that there are competing demands for land”. Currently, the shortage in land supply for housing development is one of the priority issues to be tackled by the Government. In the 2013 Policy Address, a number of measures were announced to increase land supply in the short to medium term for housing development, including the proposed rezoning for residential developments of sites intended for other uses (e.g. green belt areas, government, institution or community sites, and industrial sites).

Provision of land for open space development

6.3 According to the HKPSG, the Government acknowledges that recreation stems from a basic human need for activities which are essential to the mental and physical well-being of the individual and the community as a whole. Recreation is therefore regarded as an essential activity for which land must be allocated (see para. 1.2). In this connection, the LCSD is primarily responsible for the development and management of public open space, mainly in the form of park and garden facilities (see para. 1.4). It is worth noting, however, that the LCSD is not the only provider of open space. About half of the open space is provided in non-LCSD venues (see para. 2.6), mainly outdoor recreation facilities in public housing estates (provided by the Hong Kong Housing Authority) and private residential developments (provided by the private sector).

Inadequate management information for planning the provision of parks and gardens

6.4 In planning for the provision of park and garden facilities, apart from making reference to the HKPSG standard, the LCSD also takes into account factors mentioned in paragraph 2.3(a) to (e). However, in this review, Audit found that the

LCSD might not have comprehensive management information (notably regarding open space in non-LCSD venues) for planning its provision of public open space in the form of park and garden facilities.

6.5 In paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7, Audit noted that the LCSD might have difficulties in readily collecting information on open space in non-LCSD venues (e.g. open space provided by the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the private sector). There was a risk that the LCSD might not be able to keep a close watch on the overall provision of open space (notably in non-LCSD venues), which should have been duly taken into account in its planning for the provision of parks and gardens.

6.6 In paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5, Audit also noted that the LCSD did not conduct, on a periodic basis, surveys to obtain relevant user feedback (e.g. user satisfaction level) and assess the public's utilisation of parks and gardens. There was a risk that the LCSD might not be able to take into due consideration such factors as changing needs of the community and utilisation rates of the existing facilities (see para. 2.3(c) and (d)) in planning for the provision of parks and gardens.

6.7 To further improve the development of parks and gardens in future, the LCSD needs to review the adequacy of its information management practices, with a view to ensuring that comprehensive management information is collected from various stakeholders (including other providers of open space and users of parks and gardens).

Provision of open space above the HKPSG minimum standard

6.8 The HKPSG stipulates that the standard for the provision of open space in urban areas is a minimum of 20 ha per 100,000 persons (or 2 m² per person), apportioned into a minimum of 10 ha per 100,000 persons (or 1 m² per person) for district open space and local open space respectively. The HKPSG serves to provide an equitable basis for the reservation of land for the open space provision, and to guide the planning and distribution of these facilities. It sets out the minimum requirements only and also stipulates other equally essential considerations that should be taken into account in planning the open space provision, including historical factor, public commitment, geographical location, geographical

Way forward

distribution, quality and function of open spaces, characteristics of the site and neighbourhood, etc. which are different from district to district. According to the PlanD, a pragmatic and flexible approach should be adopted to interpret the figures on open space provision.

6.9 In this review, Audit has taken stock of the position on the provision of open space in Hong Kong, and found that numerically, the overall provision is generally sufficient to meet the HKPSG standard (see paras. 6.10 to 6.13).

6.10 In a paper of November 2008 submitted by the Development Bureau, the LegCo Panel on Development was informed that the public and private sectors together provided a total of 1,810 ha of open space in the territory (see para. 2.4). An Annex to the paper also provided information on the existing and planned provision of open space. Table 12 summarises the information provided in the Annex regarding the provision of open space. Appendix H shows the detailed information at the district level.

Table 12
Provision of open space
(November 2008)

		Existing provision			Existing and planned provision		
		District open space	Local open space	Total	District open space	Local open space	Total
(a)	Total provision (Note) (ha)	688	1,122	1,810	1,253	1,383	2,636
(b)	Minimum requirement pursuant to the HKPSG (ha)	697	697	1,394	778	778	1,556
(c)	Provision above minimum requirement (ha) (c) = (a) – (b)	(9)	425	416	475	605	1,080
(d)	Percentage (d) = (c)/(b)	(1%)	61%	30%	61%	78%	69%
(e)	Provision per person (m ²)	0.99	1.61	2.60	1.61	1.78	3.39

Source: LegCo paper of November 2008

Note: The LegCo paper mentioned that the figures were provided by the PlanD from the planning point of view. Both the public sector (mainly the LCSD and the Hong Kong Housing Authority) and the private sector contributed to the provision of open space. The figures for planned provision were estimated on the basis of the planned population (according to known and planned residential developments) and the planned land use of undeveloped land.

6.11 Table 12 shows that, as at November 2008, the existing provision of open space was 2.6 m² per person, which was above the minimum standard of 2 m² per person set out in the HKPSG. The total provision of 1,810 ha of open space exceeded the minimum provision of 1,394 ha by 416 ha (30%). Audit notes that, similar to other planning standards, the HKPSG only stipulates a minimum standard for the provision of open space. According to the Administration, the HKPSG does not prohibit the provision of open space over and above the prescribed standards should suitable opportunities arise. In this regard, public concerns about provision of open space have generally focused on shortfalls at the district level, and the means to meet the shortfalls.

Way forward

6.12 Table 12 also shows that, according to the projections made in November 2008, if all the areas reserved as open space are so developed, the existing and planned overall provision of open space would reach 2,636 ha and would exceed the minimum provision of 1,556 ha by 1,080 ha (69%). The existing and planned overall provision of open space would be 3.39 m² per person, some 70% more than the minimum standard of 2 m² per person.

6.13 Appendix H shows that, based on the existing and planned provision figures, all the 18 districts would exceed the minimum requirement in the overall provision of open space. The provision of open space exceeding the minimum requirement would range from 2.3 ha (Wan Chai) to 112.1 ha (Yuen Long). In response to the above observations, in March 2013, the PlanD pointed out that it would not be appropriate to take a quantitative approach by comparing the provision of open space against the HKPSG minimum requirement and deeming the provision above the minimum requirement as excessive.

6.14 In this regard, Audit also noted that in four districts (Central and Western, Wan Chai, Kwai Tsing and Yau Tsim Mong), there would still be shortfalls to be met in either district or local open space provision (see Appendix H).

Review on sites reserved for open space development

6.15 The provision of open space some 70% above the minimum standard (see para. 6.12) raises a question as to whether an optimal allocation of valuable land resources has been made for the provision of open space. According to Table 12, as at November 2008, there was a total of 826 ha (2,636 ha less 1,810 ha) of open space reserved for the purpose (Note 43).

6.16 Upon Audit's enquiry, the PlanD advised in February 2013 that it had been exploring various measures to increase housing land supply and had submitted various proposals for consideration by the Steering Committee on Land Supply (Note 44). Among other measures, the PlanD has been reviewing the undeveloped open space sites with a view to identifying suitable sites for residential development.

6.17 As a large part of the open space sites was originally reserved for the future development of parks and gardens, the LCSD needs to be duly consulted. Among other things, the following factors need to be taken into consideration:

- (a) justifications for the provision of open space over and above the HKPSG standards (see para. 6.11). For example, as can be seen from Table 3 in paragraph 2.11, many districts still had shortfalls in the provision of either district or local open space;
- (b) competing demands for land from other priority uses (see para. 6.2);
- (c) the provision of substantial open space by the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the private sector in public housing estates and private residential developments respectively (see paras. 6.3 and 6.5);
- (d) views of District Councils (see para. 2.3(a));

Note 43: *The 826 ha did not include open space (in the form of outdoor recreation facilities in public housing estates) that might be developed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority in future under its public housing building programme.*

Note 44: *The Steering Committee on Land Supply, chaired by the Financial Secretary, is responsible for coordinating plans to develop and supply all land in the territory to address the changing demand.*

Way forward

- (e) changing needs of the community (see paras. 2.3(c) and 6.6). As mentioned in paragraph 2.13, there is potential demand for more passive open space near home as a result of the ageing population (Note 45);
- (f) utilisation rates of the existing park and garden facilities (see paras. 2.3(d) and 6.6);
- (g) the policy consideration of harbourfront enhancement (Note 46);
- (h) geographical distribution of open space; and
- (i) land with low prospect for implementation as open space.

Audit recommendations

6.18 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should review the adequacy of the LCSD's information management practices, with a view to ensuring that adequate management information is collected from various stakeholders (including other providers of open space and users of parks and gardens) for planning the future development of parks and gardens (see paras. 6.4 to 6.7).**

Note 45: *According to the population projections in July 2012 by the Census and Statistics Department, the proportion of population aged 65 or above in Hong Kong would rise markedly from 13% in 2011 to 30% in 2041.*

Note 46: *The Government's policy on harbourfront enhancement is a key consideration to be taken into account on the provision of open space in harbourfront areas. The Harbour Planning Principles and Guidelines have been adopted in considering land use proposals and development/redevelopment projects in the harbourfront areas. For example, the Guidelines provide that "a continuous promenade of adequate width should be provided along the entire harbourfront areas, as far as practicable" and "use of vacant land for temporary public open space purposes pending permanent development is encouraged so as to maximise opportunities for public enjoyment".*

6.19 Audit has also *recommended* that, in conducting the review on sites reserved for open space development (see para. 6.16), the Director of Planning should, in collaboration with the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services, critically assess the future effective use of lands reserved for open space development, taking into account relevant factors (see para. 6.17(a) to (i)).

Response from the Administration

6.20 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with the audit recommendations in paragraphs 6.18 and 6.19. She has said that:

- (a) she agrees that there should be a mechanism under which the PlanD and the LCSD liaise with each other on a periodic basis so as to update relevant information on the provision of open space. The LCSD will make reference to the updated information, the information gauged in LCSD surveys (see para. 5.7), and consultation with stakeholders (see para. 2.49(c)) in planning future park and garden facilities; and
- (b) the LCSD will continue to give its views to the PlanD on effective use of lands reserved for open space development having regard to the relevant factors (see para. 2.3).

6.21 The Director of Planning has said that:

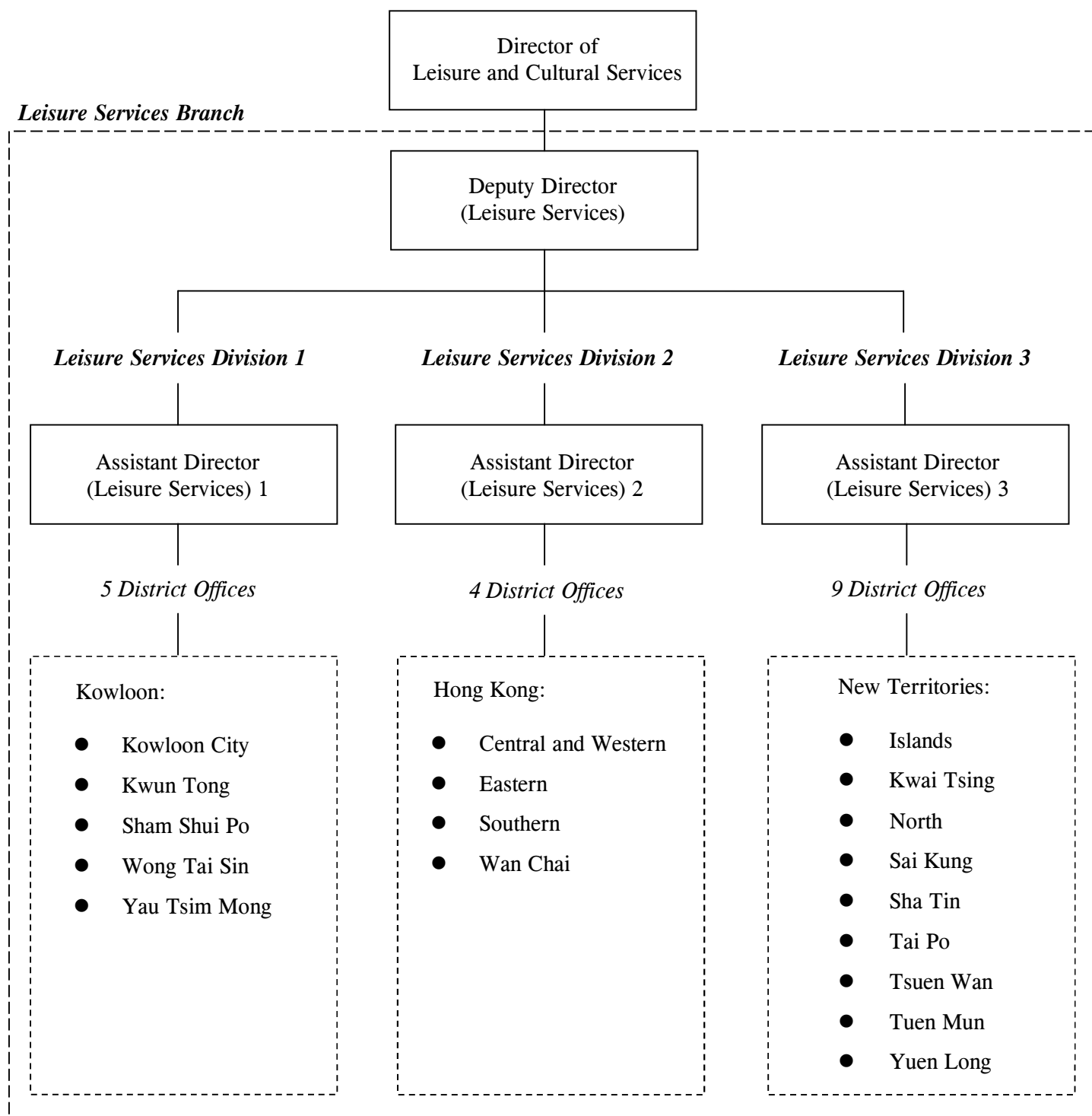
- (a) as review of planned land uses including open space is an ongoing planning task to meet the changing needs of the community and rising public aspirations, the PlanD is willing to review the sites zoned for open space development in consultation with the LCSD, as recommended in paragraph 6.19;
- (b) it is the PlanD's ongoing work to review the planned land uses and conduct site search for priority uses like housing developments, and propose amendments to the Outline Zoning Plan when opportunity arises to meet the changing needs of the community. The whole process would invite inputs from concerned parties including the LCSD on the open space related issues. The PlanD is in the process of taking forward the rezoning of seven "open space" sites (about 15 ha) mainly to residential use;

Way forward

- (c) the PlanD has also undertaken ongoing review on sites zoned “open space” which may not be suitable for open space development. For example, the “open space” sites in Hung Mui Kuk in Sha Tin District are on hilly terrain and would unlikely be developed as open space. These sites may be more appropriately rezoned to “green belt” when opportunity arises. Besides, there are also sites which are zoned “open space” to serve special purposes, such as noise buffer along major roads/highways (e.g. the “open space” sites along Yuen Long Highway). These sites may be rezoned to other non-noise sensitive uses when opportunity arises with a view to better utilising the land resources; and
- (d) there are open spaces with different purposes, unique background or different functions in various districts, the provision of which are not purely based on the HKPSG. For example, some large parks (such as the Victoria Park and the Hong Kong Park) and open space/promenades in some harbourfront districts (such as the Pak Shek Kok Promenade in Tai Po District and the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade including the Avenue of Stars in Yau Tsim Mong District) are serving the territorial population and even the tourists.

6.22 The Secretary for Home Affairs agrees with the LCSD’s comments in paragraph 6.20. He has said that the overall planning and monitoring of land use including sites zoned “open space” rests with the PlanD, and the LCSD has no authority nor capacity to monitor non-LCSD sites.

**Leisure Services Branch
Organisation chart
(31 December 2012)**



Source: LCSD records

**LCSD's parks and gardens in 18 districts
(31 December 2012)**

District	Park/garden	
	Number	Area (ha)
Hong Kong		
Central and Western	116	56
Eastern	103	69
Southern	73	68
Wan Chai	76	27
Kowloon		
Kowloon City	86	71
Kwun Tong	109	79
Sham Shui Po	58	64
Wong Tai Sin	53	79
Yau Tsim Mong	97	46
New Territories		
Islands	71	16
Kwai Tsing	78	62
North	137	39
Sai Kung	49	25
Sha Tin	86	71
Tai Po	73	54
Tsuen Wan	63	38
Tuen Mun	74	56
Yuen Long	101	53
Total	1,503	973

Source: LCSD records

Case 1

Reviewing works progress of Tsing Yi Northeast Park project (April 2010 to January 2011)

1. In April 2010, a Projects Review Meeting was held. It was reported at the meeting, among other things, that there were delays in the works progress of a project (Tsing Yi Northeast Park project — Note 1). According to the latest assessment, project would be completed by the end of April 2010.
2. In March 2010, project works were completed. The Park was handed over to the LCSD in May 2010, about one month after the intended date in April 2010. The Park was opened to the public in the same month. However, there were construction defects pending rectification by the works contractor.
3. From June to December 2010, due to financial disputes between the works contractor and its sub-contractors, the construction defects had still not been fully rectified.
4. In January 2011, another Projects Review Meeting was held. It was already more than 8 months after the intended handover date of the Park (April 2010 — see para. 1 above), and the rectification of construction defects had not yet been completed after a lapse of more than 7 months (Note 2).

Source: LCSD records

Note 1: The project was to develop a site at Tsing Yi into the Tsing Yi Northeast Park. The project commenced in November 2007. According to the target date set at the time of funding approval, construction works should be completed in October 2009.

Note 2: In November 2011, the major defects were eventually rectified.

**Projects Review Meetings held
(December 2012)**

Date of meeting	Time elapsed since last meeting (No. of days)	Meetings held within about 3 months (Yes/No)
12.9.2006 (Note)	Not applicable	Not applicable
19.1.2007	129	No
20.4.2007	91	Yes
26.7.2007	97	Yes
9.10.2007	75	Yes
27.5.2008	231	No
23.10.2008	149	No
28.4.2009	187	No
26.11.2009	212	No
15.4.2010	140	No
7.1.2011	267	No
29.11.2011	326	No

Source: Audit analysis of LCSD records

Note: This was the first Projects Review Meeting.

Case 2

Developing a cycling ground in the Kwai Chung Park (August 2006 to April 2007)

1. In August 2006, after receiving an NSA's proposal for building a BMX park in the Kwai Chung Park site (see para. 2.28), the LCSD considered also to build a cycling ground (4,100 m²) in the Kwai Chung Park to tie in with the proposal.
2. In December 2006, the LCSD restricted the cycling ground to 3,100 m² in order to make it a minor works project.
3. In April 2007, knowing that the cost of the project would still exceed the threshold for minor works, the LCSD further reduced the cycling ground to 1,600 m², but the estimated cost still far exceeded the threshold. The ArchSD advised that further reduction of the site area would render the project not cost-effective. In the event, the project did not go ahead.

Audit comments

4. Audit considers that the development of Kwai Chung Park through minor works projects might not be appropriate.

Source: LCSD records

Case 3

Tardiness in repairing damaged playground matting in a park

1. In July 2011, staff of Wong Tai Sin District Office found that many pieces of matting in Ngau Chi Wan Park's playgrounds were warped. The staff reported the case to the Technical Unit. The Technical Unit requested the contractor (Note 1) who provided warranty for the matting to rectify the defect.
2. In August 2011, the contractor undertook to complete the repair and maintenance works for the matting in September 2011.
3. In October 2011, the works had not commenced as the contractor was awaiting the delivery of replacement matting from the manufacturer. The Technical Unit issued two warning letters (Note 2) to the contractor.
4. In November and December 2011, the contractor was still awaiting the delivery of replacement matting and did not carry out the works.
5. In December 2011 and January 2012, noting the prolonged period of damage of the matting, a member of the public lodged two complaints/enquiries about the situation. The LCSD replied that the works would be completed in March 2012.
6. In February 2012, the complainant noted that the condition of the matting had worsened. He lodged a third complaint with the LCSD about the situation. He further lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman about the case.
7. In March 2012, the Technical Unit issued another warning letter (Note 2) to the contractor.
8. In May 2012, the contractor carried out the repair and maintenance works which took seven days to complete.

Audit comment

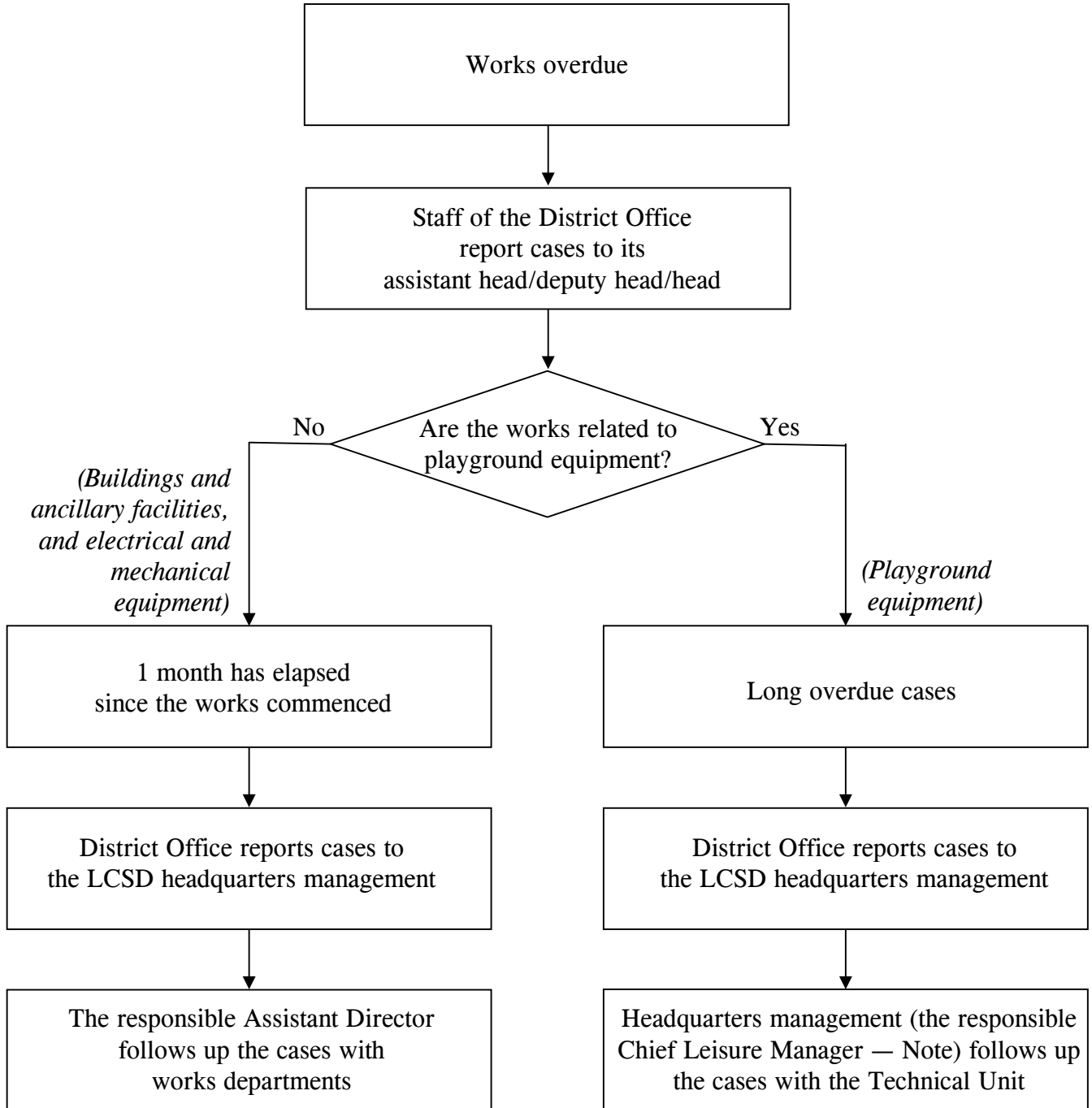
9. It was unacceptable that it took the LCSD and the contractor some 10 months (July 2011 to May 2012) to complete the repair and maintenance works for the damaged matting.

Source: LCSD records

Note 1: The contractor provided warranty through a contract entered with the ArchSD.

Note 2: The warning letters stated the punitive actions which the LCSD would take on the contractor (e.g. arranging other parties to carry out the repair and maintenance works at the contractor's expenses, and putting on record the contractor's unsatisfactory performance).

**Follow-up of overdue repair and maintenance works
 (December 2012)**



Source: Audit analysis of LCSD records

Note: As at December 2012, the LCSD had six Chief Leisure Managers at its headquarters to oversee District Offices' management of parks and gardens. Each Chief Leisure Manager oversaw three District Offices, and reported to the responsible Assistant Director of the LCSD's Leisure Services Branch.

Appendix H
(paras. 6.10, 6.13 and
6.14 refer)

**Existing and planned provision of open space by districts
(Projections made in November 2008)**

	District	Existing and planned provision (ha)	Provision above/(below) the HKPSG minimum requirement		
			District open space (ha)	Local open space (ha)	Total (ha)
1	Yuen Long	245.3	37.8	74.3	112.1
2	Islands	155.0	69.9	39.7	109.6
3	Sha Tin	240.0	31.9	73.3	105.2
4	Tuen Mun	221.5	44.4	59.5	103.9
5	Kwun Tong	231.6	35.3	62.3	97.6
6	Tai Po	135.3	38.4	31.9	70.3
7	Kowloon City	164.5	55.3	12.0	67.3
8	Kwai Tsing	158.7	(9.0)	67.1	58.1
9	Wong Tai Sin	140.4	11.4	44.8	56.2
10	North	119.9	12.0	43.3	55.3
11	Sai Kung	152.9	20.8	29.9	50.7
12	Southern	99.8	12.9	31.3	44.2
13	Eastern	156.8	15.3	25.3	40.6
14	Tsuen Wan	98.0	22.3	17.1	39.4
15	Yau Tsim Mong	105.4	45.1	(7.7)	37.4
16	Sham Shui Po	119.2	13.7	11.1	24.8
17	Central and Western	57.1	13.2	(9.3)	3.9
18	Wan Chai	34.1	3.5	(1.2)	2.3
	Overall	2,635.5	474.2	604.7	1,078.9

Source: LegCo paper of November 2008

Remarks: The LegCo paper mentioned that the figures were provided by the PlanD from the planning point of view. Both the public sector (mainly the LCSD and the Hong Kong Housing Authority) and the private sector contributed to the provision of open space. The figures for planned provision were estimated on the basis of the planned population (according to known and planned residential developments) and the planned land use of undeveloped land.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ArchSD	Architectural Services Department
Audit	Audit Commission
District Office	District Leisure Services Office
EMSD	Electrical and Mechanical Services Department
ha	Hectares
HAD	Home Affairs Department
HKPSG	Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines
LCSD	Leisure and Cultural Services Department
LegCo	Legislative Council
m ²	Square metres
NSA	National sports association
PlanD	Planning Department