

LCQ1: Policy on and support for street sleepers

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-chun and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question :

In the past four years, the number of street sleepers registered with the Social Welfare Department rose from 746 to 1 127 (representing a 50 per cent increase) and, among them, the number of female street sleepers rose from 35 to 104 (representing a two-fold increase). Moreover, the findings of a survey on homeless people who stay overnight in fast food restaurants operating 24 hours a day have shown that there were 57 such type of homeless people across the territory in 2013, whereas the number in four districts alone was 384 at the end of last year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will conduct a survey on the number of street sleepers (including homeless people) across the territory as well as the districts and locations where they sleep or stay, so as to provide reference when a policy on street sleepers is formulated;
- (2) whether it has studied the causes for the rise in the number of female street sleepers in recent years, and whether it will enhance the support for them, such as increasing the number of accommodation places provided for them; and
- (3) whether it will, by making reference to the service model of the Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams in New York, set up a dedicated department to deal with the issue of street sleepers and send out outreach workers to show them care, provide immediate assistance as well as arrange long-term accommodation; if so, of the implementation timetable?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1) To keep track of the demand for social welfare support services of street sleepers, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been collecting information about the particulars of street sleepers in Hong Kong, including the number of street sleepers and their street-sleeping locations, through the SWD's service units and four non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving street sleepers. The relevant information is captured in the SWD's "Computerised Street Sleeper Registry" and will be updated continuously. The SWD will also review the methods for collecting data from time to time to ensure data

accuracy, and make reference to the relevant data for the purpose of service planning.

(2) The SWD did not conduct analysis on the reasons of changes in the number of street sleepers based on their gender. The number of female street sleepers in 2017-18 was 104. To address the emergency and short-term accommodation needs of street sleepers, the SWD provided 20 additional subvented hostel/shelter places in 2016-17 through deploying additional resources, of which five were female places, thus increasing the total number of subvented female places to 31. Together with the 132 female places provided by other NGOs on a self-financing basis, the total number of female hostel/shelter places provided is 163.

Besides facing the same problems and needs as male street sleepers, female street sleepers are more in need of social and emotional support to improve the motivation for receiving services and to change their street sleeping lives. In view of the increasing number of female street sleepers, in addition to increasing the number of female hostel/shelter places, the Integrated Services Teams for Street Sleepers (ISTs) subvented by the SWD have also enhanced the support facilities of their hostel/shelter places and, through early intervention and counseling during their stay in the hostel/shelter, strengthen their confidence and ability to re-integrate into the community.

(3) Street sleeping is a complex social problem, involving policies and work of various bureaux and departments. Various government departments and service units in districts have been collaborating closely to support street sleepers and improve their motivation for receiving support, with the hope to encourage them to quit street sleeping as soon as possible. The SWD is concerned about the welfare needs of street sleepers and has been providing them with appropriate social welfare support services.

At present, the SWD subvents three NGOs to each operate an IST to provide street sleepers with integrated services, including emergency shelter or short-term accommodation, emergency fund, personal care (e.g. bathing, haircut and meal arrangement), counselling, long-term accommodation arrangement, employment support and service referrals, etc. The ISTs also conduct day and late-night outreaching visits to approach street sleepers for early identification of their needs and render them the assistance needed. However, street sleeping may be due to various reasons. Personal factors and changes in socio-economic situation aside, street sleepers usually require more time before they will accept the services and make a change to re-integrate into the community. The ISTs will therefore render appropriate assistance to the street sleepers in accordance with the situation of each individual case.

The SWD considers that the existing strategies and support services can overall respond to the social welfare needs of street sleepers, but will continue to monitor the situation closely and take appropriate measures in response to the changing needs for social welfare services.

LCQ7: Resumption and maintenance of private streets

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

In 1986, the Government launched a programme for the resumption and maintenance of private streets (the Resumption Programme) with a view to improving environmental hygiene. Between 1986 and 1995, 166 private streets were selected and included in the Resumption Programme. As at the end of last year, among such streets, 70 were resumed by the authorities, nine were pending assessment by the Buildings Department and the remaining had been deleted from the Resumption Programme for a number of different reasons (including issues relating to compensation claims). Some members of the public have relayed that a number of private streets (e.g. some private streets in Kowloon West which have never been included in the Resumption Programme) have serious environmental hygiene problems, and some of such streets have become the hotbed for activities such as retail operations occupying street space, vehicle parking and dumping of construction waste and refuse. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of private streets that have been resumed to date by the authorities under the Resumption Programme, and the assessment results and follow-up work in respect of the aforesaid nine private streets;
- (2) of the respective numbers of complaints received by various government departments in the past three years concerning environmental hygiene problems of private streets; the major contents of the complaints received by the Highways Department and the Transport Department and the ways by which such complaints were handled respectively;
- (3) as the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will, where resources permit, respond to the requests of the District Councils (DC) to provide routine street-cleaning service for private streets and related rear lanes with persistently poor hygiene conditions, of the number of private streets for which FEHD provided such cleaning service in each of the past three years (with a breakdown by DC district);
- (4) as the authorities will conduct urgent repair works for private streets to ensure public safety, of the number of occasions on which such works were carried out by the authorities in each of the past three years (with a breakdown by DC district); the party who mainly bore the relevant costs;
- (5) whether the authorities will review the work on improving the

environmental hygiene of private streets; if so, of the details;

(6) whether the authorities will conduct a detailed survey on the environmental hygiene conditions of all private streets in Hong Kong; if not, of the reasons for that; if so, the details including whether targeted follow-up measures will be taken; and

(7) as quite a number of private streets currently have cave-ins or are in a state of dilapidation, etc., whether the authorities will review comprehensively the management of private streets (especially those open for public use) and study the provision of incentives to encourage the owners concerned to surrender the title of the streets to the Government; whether the authorities will strengthen communication with the owners' corporations concerned so as to improve the management of private streets?

Reply:

President,

In 1986, the Government launched a Private Street Resumption Programme (the Programme) to co-ordinate departmental efforts in resuming private streets which were under multiple ownerships and with serious environmental problems caused by the lack of management and maintenance. The aim of the Programme is to improve the conditions of private streets with environmental hygiene problems.

This Programme has a policy principle, i.e. resumption of private streets should not involve compensation payments by the Government, as compensation claims often involve legal processes that are long and costly and whose outcomes are uncertain. It is therefore more worthwhile to give priority to other areas of work.

Upon the launch of this Programme, a Private Street Resumption Committee (the Committee), chaired by representative of Home Affairs Department (HAD), was set up to co-ordinate the efforts of nine government departments in resuming the private streets. These nine departments are the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Buildings Department (BD), the Drainage Services Department (DSD), the Fire Services Department (FSD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Highways Department (HyD), the Housing Department, the Lands Department (LandsD) and the Transport Department (TD). The Government resumed and improved the private streets included in the Programme under the provisions of the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance (Cap 370).

Based on the information provided by District Offices from 1986 to 1995, the Committee has considered 166 private streets under the Programme. Of the 166 private streets, 70 of them had been resumed and repaired, and 79 of them had been deleted from the Programme. The deletion of the 79 streets was based on various considerations, including the street conditions having improved, or resumption of these streets would involve compensation claims issue which could not meet the policy principle of the Programme. Of the remaining 17 streets, six have been assessed and it is confirmed that compensation claims

might be involved. Resumption need for another two streets no longer exists as the streets have been redeveloped. For the remaining nine streets, they are pending the assessment results of possible compensation claims and other matters by the BD.

After consulting the BD, DSD, FEHD, HyD, LandsD, TD and the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), our reply to the seven parts of the question raised by Hon Vincent Cheng is as follows:

(1) 70 private streets have been resumed to date by the authorities under the Programme. For the remaining nine private streets in the Programme, the assessment of possible compensation claims is still underway.

(2) The BD, DSD, FEHD, LandsD and HKPF do not compile statistics on the number of complaints concerning environmental hygiene problems of private streets. The TD has also advised if it receives complaints about environmental hygiene of private streets, the complaints will be referred to relevant departments which are responsible for environmental hygiene for follow-up.

So far as the HyD is concerned, the number of complaints received regarding road maintenance of private streets for the past three years is set out below:

2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan to May)
5	8	13	23

If the location in question is confirmed to be related to repairs in private streets, the relevant departments will inform the land owners to do the repair works. If owners of private streets cannot organise themselves to carry out urgent environmental improvement works, the relevant departments will, depending on the situation, conduct urgent remedial works to ensure public safety.

(3) In the past 3 years, the number of private streets with cleansing services provided by the FEHD, breakdown by district, are tabulated below:

District	Number of private streets with cleansing services provided by the FEHD			
	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan to May)
Central & Western	7	7	7	7
Wan Chai	9	9	9	9
Eastern	13	13	20	20
Yau Tsim Mong	6	6	6	6
Sham Shui Po	1	1	1	1
Kowloon City	12	12	15	15

(4) The HyD has not carried out any urgent repair works in private streets for the past three years. The BD and DSD, on the other hand, do not compile such statistics.

(5) and (6) The management, cleansing and repair of common areas of private premises (including private streets and private rear lanes) are the responsibilities of the owners concerned. Given the complex ownership of private streets and rear lanes, and the prerequisite of protecting public health, if the hygiene conditions remain poor and if resources permit, the FEHD will address the requests of the District Councils and consider providing routine street-cleansing service for private streets and private rear lanes with environmental hygiene problems. At present, the FEHD provides routine street cleansing service for 58 private streets in the territory to maintain environmental hygiene.

(7) Private streets are private properties. The management and maintenance responsibilities of private streets rest with the land owners. Under normal circumstances, the Government will not be involved in the management of private properties, including private streets. The Government will only provide assistance to property owners under exceptional circumstances and where significant public interest is involved.

Resumption of private streets is not the only way to improve the environmental hygiene of the streets. The owners are in the best position to manage the private streets. In this light, the Government will assist the owners and residents to form owners' corporations or mutual aid committees. The District Offices of HAD will continue with their co-ordinating role to assist the residents and government departments to follow up the issues and, depending on the situation, make improvement.

Red flag hoisted at Shek O Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (July 4) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Shek O Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at the beach.

Red flag hoisted at Kwun Yam Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (July 4) that the Environmental Protection Department has classified the water quality at Kwun Yam Beach in Islands District as Grade 4, which means the beach is not suitable for swimming. The red flag has been hoisted. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at the beach until further notice.

ICAC Complaints Committee Annual Report tabled in LegCo

The 2017 Annual Report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Complaints Committee was tabled in the Legislative Council today (July 4). The report gives a summary of the Committee's work in 2017.

The Committee is tasked with the responsibility of monitoring the handling of non-criminal complaints against the ICAC and its officers. The Committee takes an independent view of the ICAC's investigation findings on the complaints received, reviews the ICAC's procedures which may lead to complaints, and makes recommendations for improvement.

In 2017, the Committee received 24 complaints involving 100 allegations against the ICAC or its officers. Among the allegations received in 2017, 48 per cent were related to misconduct, 42 per cent to neglect of duties and 9 per cent to abuse of power by ICAC officers. The remaining 1 per cent was related to inadequacies of ICAC procedures.

The ICAC submits investigation reports to the Committee after conducting full investigations on complaint cases, while assessment reports are submitted for complaints which do not warrant full investigation. During 2017, the Committee held three meetings to consider the investigation reports on 23 complaint cases received in 2016 or 2017. These complaints contained a total of 49 allegations. Three allegations in three of these complaints were found to be substantiated or partially substantiated, and the four ICAC officers concerned were given appropriate advice by senior officers. In the year, the Committee also considered and endorsed nine assessment reports. Preliminary assessment showed that there were no grounds or justifications in these complaints that would warrant formal investigation,

and the Committee agreed that no further investigative action should be taken.

In the course of considering the complaints, both the Committee and the ICAC scrutinised the internal procedures, guidelines and practices of the ICAC. After careful examination of the issues identified in the investigation reports considered during 2017, the ICAC organised more briefing sessions and strengthened the training of frontline officers to enhance their vigilance and knowledge in the use of information technology for duty purposes, security classification of documents and their handling, dealing with difficult requests of complainants, making appropriate case referrals and handling of items seized during search operations. Furthermore, the ICAC reviewed the practices for handling confidential correspondence and promulgated some updated internal instructions in this regard.

The annual report of the Committee is available on the Administration Wing website (www.admwing.gov.hk/eng/links/icac.htm) and also at the ICAC's regional offices.