

LCQ20: Working arrangements for correctional staff

Following is a question by Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Sonny Au, in the Legislative Council today (June 20):

Question:

It is learnt that the wastage rates of correctional staff have remained persistently high in recent years. As at the end of February this year, a total of 316 rank and file correctional staff members retired, resigned or were transferred out in the 2017-2018 financial year, representing a wastage rate of 6.8 per cent, hitting a record high in five years. On improving the work arrangements and environment for correctional staff, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Correctional Services Department (CSD) has been providing rehabilitative services to persons in custody for more than 20 years, whether the authorities will provide special allowances to frontline staff who have completed a diploma in social work programme, certificate course in social work, certificate course in psychological approaches in working with offenders or other courses recognised by CSD and the Qualifications Framework; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether the authorities will, on the premise that the number of weekly working hours remains unchanged, extend the five-day work week arrangement to all correctional staff to enable them to have more rest time, and use this work mode as the basis for calculating the number of leave days to be deducted when they take vacation leave; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether the authorities will provide transport for correctional staff working in remote correctional institutions to commute to and from work so as to reduce their commuting time; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) given that while the authorities will, under extremely adverse weather conditions, arrange means of transport to pick up correctional staff to accommodation facilities to perform sleep-in standby duty, some means of public transport still maintain limited services under such conditions at present, whether the authorities will cancel the sleep-in standby duty arrangement and instead arrange means of transport to pick up staff at designated places to commute to and from work; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) whether the authorities will, in view of the fact that the social environment and service demand have changed, consider reviewing, enhancing

and shortening the recruit training programmes for correctional staff, so that those staff members may perform frontline duties as early as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(6) whether the authorities will consider reducing the weekly working hours of correctional staff from the current 48 hours to 44 hours in order to enhance their quality of life; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(7) whether the authorities will deploy resources and manpower for building "smart prisons", including the introduction of smart wristbands which can monitor the pulse rates of persons in custody and a closed circuit television system with facial recognition features in order to provide a safer custodial environment, thereby reducing the workload of frontline staff; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(8) as some correctional staff members have relayed that the foot protection capability of the leather shoes they wear will be undermined with the wear and tear of the shoes, causing strain injuries to them, whether the authorities will proactively consider improving the design of these shoes in accordance with ergonomics and by adopting advanced materials; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(9) given that as the gates in correctional institutions are mainly installed with mechanical locks at present, it is time-consuming to lock and unlock them and extensive and complicated procedures are involved in the safe keeping and transfer of keys, of the progress of the authorities' work to replace the locks of the gates in individual correctional facilities with electric locks; whether various correctional institutions will completely switch to using electric locks; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(10) as some correctional staff members have recently relayed to me that the staff common rooms in correctional institutions are small with insufficient number of beds and facilities, of the authorities' specific improvement measures?

Reply:

President,

Correctional staff have all along been dedicated and diligent in performing their duties, ensuring a safe and secure custodial environment and helping persons in custody rehabilitate. They have made significant contributions to the law and order and public safety of the society over the years. The Correctional Services Department (CSD) has always attached great importance to staff welfare and treatment. Various measures have been adopted to attract and retain talent to meet the continuous demand for manpower resources.

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr Hon Elizabeth

Quat is as follows:

(1) CSD is committed to providing appropriate rehabilitation programmes for persons in custody to help them rehabilitate and reintegrate into society after serving their sentences. With a view to enhancing the professionalism of correctional staff and the quality of rehabilitation services, CSD encourages its staff to pursue further studies. CSD has been co-organising the Advanced Diploma in Applied Social Sciences (Corrections) programme with the School of Professional and Continuing Education of the University of Hong Kong for its staff and 405 staff have been sponsored to enrol in the programme. In addition, CSD sponsors frontline staff to enrol in the Certificate in Social Work for Correctional Services Officers programme and 592 staff have been sponsored.

(2) CSD has, where practicable, changed the shift arrangements in some correctional institutions, including implementing trials on the five-day work week, to enable colleagues to have more rest days, thereby promoting better work-life balance and reducing overall commute time, under the principle of no reduction in the conditioned hours of service. The trials are still in progress and CSD will review their effectiveness when appropriate. CSD is also studying the feasibility of other shift arrangements and will try out such arrangements in other suitable institutions. In the process, correctional staff will be fully consulted.

(3) As some of the correctional institutions are located in remote areas where public transport services are inadequate, CSD provides transport for correctional staff between designated locations and the relevant correctional institutions, thereby reducing their commute time. For instance, CSD currently arranges transport for correctional staff of Cape Collinson Correctional Institution, Tai Lam Correctional Institution, Tai Lam Centre for Women, Siu Lam Psychiatric Centre, Lo Wu Correctional Institution, Shek Pik Prison, Sha Tsui Correctional Institution and Tong Fuk Correctional Institution for commuting between these institutions and designated locations at specific timeslots respectively. CSD will, having regard to the ancillary public transport services for the institutions, discuss with the departments concerned the feasibility of providing transport for correctional staff to and from correctional institutions as appropriate.

(4) At present, correctional staff are required to stand by in the accommodation facilities near the correctional institutions during a typhoon. To facilitate staff to return to the accommodation facilities under inclement weather conditions, CSD arranges transport to pick up staff from designated locations to the concerned accommodation facilities within two hours after the Hong Kong Observatory has made the Pre-No. 8 Special Announcement. This arrangement ensures smooth handover of duties among staff of different shifts and that the security and normal operation of correctional institutions can be maintained during a typhoon. Taking into account the fact that public transport is now more convenient than in the past, CSD set up a working group in January 2018 to fully review whether the existing arrangement of standby in accommodation facilities during a typhoon should be suitably adjusted.

(5) CSD is conducting a comprehensive review of its induction courses, which will be refined from time to time having regard to operational needs. For example, CSD has introduced virtual reality scenario training to enhance trainees' capabilities in dealing with contingencies in correctional institutions through different training scenarios and settings, with a view to providing newly recruited correctional staff with more appropriate training.

(6) The current conditioned hours of work for correctional staff is 48 hours per week. Under the existing Government policy, a proposal to reduce the conditioned hours of work would only be considered if it complies with the three prerequisites of cost neutrality, no additional manpower, and maintaining the same level of service to the public, as well as the "same grade (or rank), same conditioned hours of work" principle. Having regard to the above prerequisites, the management, operation, schedules and custodial arrangements of persons in custody at correctional institutions, CSD has no plan for the time being to adjust the conditioned hours of work for correctional staff. That said, CSD will continue to explore possible measures for improving the work environment of correctional staff, which include introducing new technologies and streamlining existing procedures, and pilot different shift arrangements such that frontline staff can have more rest time.

(7) CSD will introduce various appropriate technologies from time to time to enhance operational efficiency, having regard to operational needs. For example, a project of "Replacement of Core Information Technology Systems with the Integrated Custodial and Rehabilitation Management System" is being implemented. For this purpose, CSD engaged a contractor in May this year to carry out the related work. The project is expected to be completed by 2022. Moreover, CSD is exploring how the use of information technology can further improve its operations, with a view to providing a safer and more secure custodial environment. This includes exploring the feasibility of applying motion analysis surveillance technology, location surveillance system technology, etc. by conducting small-scale tests.

(8) The shoes correctional staff wear while on duty have several functional characteristics, e.g. water-proof, breathable, arch supporting, breathable and shock absorbing insoles, etc. The slip and wear resistance of the soles has been accredited to meet internationally recognised standards. The overall design and specifications have already balanced the needs for wearing comfort and occupational safety and health of colleagues. At present, the life cycle of the shoes is 15 months. CSD will make arrangements for colleagues who need to have their shoes replaced earlier than scheduled according to established procedures. Furthermore, the Monitoring Group on Implementation of Field Dress of CSD will also regularly review and enhance the staff's uniforms and accoutrement, with a view to meeting operational needs and enhancing the occupational safety and health of colleagues.

(9) CSD has all along enhanced and improved ageing correctional facilities having regard to practical needs. It has installed electric locks security

systems in newly built and redeveloped correctional institutions, including Lo Wu Correctional Institution and Tai Lam Centre for Women (redevelopment area). In addition, the projects of installing electric locks security systems in Tai Lam Centre for Women (non-redevelopment area) and Stanley Prison are now in progress and are expected to be completed by the end of 2020 and 2025 respectively. CSD will also continue to study the feasibility of installing electric locks security systems in other correctional institutions.

(10) CSD is now upgrading the overnight accommodation for correctional staff by phases. The relevant renovation works in individual institutions have been completed. Moreover, CSD has recently provided newly designed beds for trial use by colleagues and is collecting their views.

Fraudulent websites and phishing emails related to Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited on fraudulent websites and phishing emails, which has been reported to the HKMA. Hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#) for ease of reference by members of the public.

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information to the websites concerned or has conducted any financial transactions through the websites should contact the bank concerned using the contact information provided in the press release, and report to the Police or contact the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

LCQ9: Lifeguard manpower and water quality of public swimming pools

Following is a question by Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (June 20):

Question:

Recently, a number of swimming pool complexes under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) were wholly or partially closed temporarily due to an insufficient number of lifeguards on duty. Some lifeguard unions have estimated that 900 lifeguards will be needed to fully meet the needs during the swimming season. However, there are only a total of some 400 full-time and part-time lifeguards at present. On the other hand, there have been reports from time to time in recent years about the poor water quality of public swimming pools and its potential perils to swimmers' health. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the staff establishment, strength and number of vacancies of lifeguards of LCSD (including civil service lifeguards and non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards) in the past three years, and set out a breakdown by name of public swimming pool complex/beach and the District Council (DC) district to which the complex/beach belonged, as well as by peak and non-peak swimming season;

(2) of the details of partial or whole closures of public swimming pool complexes/beaches (including the reasons for and number of closures and the types of facilities involved) each month in the past three years, and set out a breakdown by name of public swimming pool complex/beach and the DC district to which the complex/beach belonged;

(3) of the attendance of various public swimming pool complexes in each of the past three years, and set out a breakdown by mode of admission (i.e. paying the normal rate, paying the concessionary rate, holding a monthly ticket and being a group user), name of public swimming pool complex and the DC district to which it belonged;

(4) given that several new swimming pools will be completed in the coming several years and that some existing swimming pools will be converted into heated pools and have their service hours extended, whether the authorities have reviewed the staff establishment, grade structure, remuneration and promotion prospect of lifeguards, and the recruitment ratio of civil service lifeguards and non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards, so as to ensure that there will be sufficient lifeguards on duty;

(5) of the number of complaints received by LCSD in each of the past three years about the water quality of swimming pools, and set out a breakdown by name of public swimming pool complex and the DC district to which it belonged, as well as by content of complaint; and

(6) as some studies have pointed out that the urea content in the water of public swimming pools is on the high side, posing potential perils to public health, whether the current filtering systems at public swimming pools are effective in filtering out urea; whether LCSD will consider making urea content in the pool water one of the parameters to be monitored; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Currently, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) manages 44 public swimming pools, 41 gazetted public beaches, and five water sports centres across the territory. The safety of swimmers has always been the prime concern for LCSD in arranging the manpower of lifeguards. My reply to the six parts of the question is as follows:

(1) A breakdown of the staff establishment, strength and vacancies of lifeguards at swimming pools/beaches in the past 3 years by district is tabulated at Annex 1.

(2) LCSD will consider closing the entire swimming pool complexes or suspend the lifeguard services at beaches in response to unexpected incidents such as inclement weather, water pollution at swimming pools/beaches, urgent repair works, red tide, oil spill or unexpected absence of lifeguards, etc. Details on the closure of the entire swimming pool complexes or the suspension of lifeguard services at beaches for the reasons mentioned above in the past three years are at Annex 2. In daily operation, swimming complexes will also be partially suspended in response to factors such as regular alternate inspections and maintenance, partial failure of facilities, manpower resources of lifeguards, usage pattern of swimmers, possible impact to outdoor facilities due to adverse weather conditions like lightning, thunder, rainstorm and water pollution (such as presence of vomitus), etc. Detailed statistical figures on partial suspension of swimming pools are not available. Besides, there is no partial closure of beaches.

(3) A breakdown of the attendances at public swimming pools in the past three years by district and swimming pool is tabulated at Annex 3.

(4) LCSD attaches great importance to human resource management of lifeguards for the sake of swimmer's safety. The department is actively reviewing the establishment and remuneration of lifeguards and has implemented a number of policies and management measures to ensure adequate lifeguards are available to provide services at swimming pools and beaches. Regarding the manpower ratio of civil service lifeguards to non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards, the review needs to consider various factors, such as the operating hours of swimming pools and beaches in a year and during swimming season, the number of swimmers, the manpower demand due to increasing number of swimming facilities in future, etc. Generally speaking, civil service lifeguards are employed for service needs which are steady throughout the year while non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards are employed for service needs which are seasonal in nature. In the past few years, there has been a steady increase in the number of civil service lifeguards and there is also an increased number of non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards. Details of the human resources policies, management measures and the growth in the number of lifeguards are at Annex 4.

(5) A breakdown of the number of complaints received by LCSD about pool water quality by district and swimming pool is tabulated at Annex 5.

(6) LCSD attaches great importance to the hygiene of public swimming pools. Pool water of its public swimming pools is continuously circulated, filtered and sterilised throughout the opening hours. Making reference to the guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (the Guidelines), LCSD has drawn up parameters for monitoring the water quality of its public swimming pools. Such parameters include, among other things, the Free Residual Chlorine, pH value, total bacteria count, E. coli, Vibrio cholerae and turbidity of pool water. According to the Guidelines, urea content is not one of the parameters to be monitored for pool water. In addition, LCSD consults the Department of Health from time to time on issues relating to hygiene and health. To ensure that the hygiene of pool water is up to standard, apart from taking water samples for testing of residual chlorine levels and pH value on an hourly basis during opening hours, LCSD has also assigned accredited laboratories to conduct testing on the pool water of its swimming pools on a weekly basis to ascertain that the water quality is up to the relevant standard. Furthermore, publicity efforts have also been stepped up to urge swimmers to observe personal hygiene, including reminding them not to pollute pool water and to go through a shower and visit the toilet before swimming, etc.

Composite Interest Rate: End of May 2018

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (June 20) the composite interest rate at the end of May 2018.*

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, increased by 6 basis points to 0.46% at the end of May 2018, from 0.40% at the end of April 2018 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The rise in composite interest rate reflected increases in the weighted funding costs for both deposits and interbank funds during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of May 2018 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk). The next data release is scheduled for 19 July 2018 and will provide the composite interest rate at the end of June 2018.

* The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong

Kong dollar interest bearing liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of deposit and other debt instruments, and Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90% of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.

LCQ13: Supply of tap water to remote villages

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (June 13):

Question:

It has been reported that as remote villages such as Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun, Chau Tau in Tung Ping Chau and Mui Tsz Lam in Sha Tin currently have no supply of tap water, residents of those villages can get fresh water only from the storage cisterns in these villages and the hillside streams nearby. However, those water sources dried up last month due to the very hot weather, causing the residents to suffer from a lack of water supply and making it necessary for the Water Supplies Department to transport fresh water to solve the problem temporarily. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the name of the villages yet to be supplied with tap water and the population of each of the villages, and set out the information by District Council district;
- (2) of the number of times in the past three years for which the authorities transported fresh water to remote villages temporarily and the expenditures involved, broken down by name of village;
- (3) of the number of times to date this year for which the authorities transported fresh water to remote villages temporarily and the quantity of water supplied, broken down by name of village;
- (4) whether it will make good use of the fiscal surplus by constructing tap water supply systems for remote villages or improve the water storage facilities therein, so as to reduce the occurrence of a lack of fresh water supply to the residents; and

(5) whether it will review the criteria used for determining if tap water supply systems should be constructed for remote villages?

Reply:

President,

At present, the treated water supply networks cover about 99.9 per cent of the population of Hong Kong. Areas that do not have treated water supply are mainly remote villages with sparse population. Although these villages do not have treated water supply, they have access to systems that supply stream or well water for domestic consumption. These supply systems have been in use for many years. Most of them are under the maintenance of the Home Affairs Department (HAD). The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department also regularly monitors and tests the quality of the stream or well water in these villages to ascertain their suitability for potable consumption. In the event of these water sources becoming depleted or insufficient, the Government will provide assistance. For example, the HAD will transport potable water to villages with water shortage to meet the needs of villagers. The WSD will also provide necessary assistance, such as providing water tanks and potable water.

The reply to the Hon Kenneth Lau's question is as follows:

(1) The villages currently do not have treated water supply and their respective estimated population are listed in the Annex.

(2) Between 2015 and 2017, the Government transported potable water, on an ad hoc basis, to remote villages for a total of 46 times at a cost of around \$475,000. A breakdown of the details by villages is at below.

| District Council | Village Name | Number of times of transporting potable water | Costs (HK\$) |
|------------------|----------------|---|--------------|
| Tai Po | Tung Ping Chau | 2 | 2,280 |
| Islands | Po Toi Island | 44 | 472,400 |

(3) From January 1 to June 8 this year, the Government transported potable water, on an ad hoc basis, to remote villages for a total of 21 times and at a volume of 88.5 cubic metres. A breakdown of the details by villages is at below.

| District Council | Village Name | Number of times of transporting potable water | Volume of water (m3) |
|------------------|----------------|---|----------------------|
| Tai Po | Tung Ping Chau | 4 | 14.5 |
| Islands | Po Toi Island | 15 | 67.5 |

| | | | |
|----------|-------------|---|-----|
| Tuen Mun | Tin Fu Tsai | 2 | 6.5 |
|----------|-------------|---|-----|

Note: Tsing Shan Tsuen in Tuen Mun is not in the list of remote villages in Annex. However, due to the insufficient water pressure to some locations of higher terrain in the village, the WSD transported potable water for some of the residents for one time in May, the amount of water transported is 1.5 cubic meters.

(4) & (5) The remote villages that do not have treated water supply have sparse populations and are far away from both urban areas and existing treated water supply network. If treated water supply systems are to be constructed for these remote villages, low water consumption may lead to stagnant water in water mains and hence resulting in the deterioration of water quality. Moreover, the per capita capital cost for the construction of treated water supply systems for these villages would be high. The Government has been monitoring the water supply situations of these remote villages. The WSD has been continuously exploring possible options to solve the above issues and will regularly review the situations. In fact, the WSD has been completing treated water supply systems for remote villages in recent years, such as Tung Ah, Tung Ah Pui, Ngan Hang and Nan Lai Wan in South District, Sham Ah Shui on Lantau Island and Yuen Tun Ha in Tai Po. The WSD will continue to closely monitor and regularly review the situations of the remote villages that do not have treated water supply, for example the latest population and nearby developments, and will also study various solutions to tackle the problem of deterioration of water quality due to low water consumption, including exploring exploitation of water sources to supplement existing raw water sources.

In addition, the HAD will continue to improve the existing water storage facilities for these remote villages, such as relaying water pipes and installing additional water storage facilities to meet the needs of the villagers.