

WOMEN' S COMMISSION
A Strategic Policy for Sports Development

INTRODUCTION

This paper briefs and invites Members' views on the Report of Home Affairs Bureau (HAB)'s Sports Policy Review Team, which is now released for public consultation. We hope the report will provide a basis for wider discussion in the community before a detailed strategic policy for sports development in Hong Kong over the next five to ten years is drawn up.

BACKGROUND

2. Following the dissolution of the Provisional Municipal Councils (PMCs), the HAB has taken on the responsibility for the allocation of government funding for sports development and promotion as well as coordinating overall sports policy. Some interim measures were made to delineate more clearly the respective roles of the three key organisations in sports development, namely, the Hong Kong Sports Development Board (SDB), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC). Despite such effort, it is widely considered that there is a need for a fundamental review to improve the current administrative structure and policy-making function for sport in Hong Kong. With this in mind, the Secretary for Home Affairs pledged in the context of his 2000 Policy Objectives to begin work in 2001-02 on drawing up a strategic blueprint.

SPORTS POLICY REVIEW

3. As far as the strategy for sports development is concerned, our overall objectives are to :-

- (a) develop a strong sporting culture and encourage people to adopt sport as part of an active lifestyle;
- (b) achieve greater excellence in sport by providing more support to our elite athletes; and
- (c) raise our international profile on sport with a view to gaining

wider recognition and hence creating new opportunities for economic growth.

4. The HAB established in April last year a review team which has conducted a comprehensive review of the sports policy of Hong Kong. The review team has conducted extensive consultation with the local sports community and researched into the sporting structure and practices in other places. The findings of the review are now published in a report, which outlines the direction for future sports policy in the following areas:-

- (a) public participation in sport;
- (b) student sport;
- (c) support for disabled athletes;
- (d) venue planning and development;
- (e) high performance sport;
- (f) the administrative structure for sport; and
- (g) public funding for sport.

A copy of the report is at Annex. The main findings and recommendations of the report are summarized below.

(A) *Public Participation in Sport*

5. Locally commissioned research shows that sports participation is generally low, particularly among young people and the 35-55 age group. Studies also show that there is increased obesity among the young school children and higher incidence of heart disease among middle-aged people. As reported in the Hong Kong Cardiovascular Risk Factor Prevalence Study 1995-96, 58% of men and 49% of women in Hong Kong were considered overweight. In the case of women, it is worth noting that a survey conducted by the Baptist University of Hong Kong found that only 13.9% of women (slightly lower than that of men) exercised at least twice a week and for more than 20 minutes. As more and more women in Hong Kong have joined the workforce, they are faced with more challenges and pressure in handling their dual roles as financial earner as well as carer for their family and children. Given that regular physical activity can provide clear health benefits and psychological benefits, promoting social interaction and easing tension and stress, women should be encouraged to participate more in regular physical activity so as to invest a healthier lifestyle.

6. The report has suggested that strategies be formulated to encourage wider participation in sport through :-

- (a) a more pro-active approach to promoting sports programmes aimed at particular target groups of various levels of ability;
- (b) a more client-oriented and user-friendly approach to the design and management of public sports venues;
- (c) an aggressive programme for establishing a network of community sports clubs with bases at public venues;
- (d) greater emphasis on district level participation in sport such as organising a multi-sports inter-district games with District Sports Association in the 18 Districts;
- (e) organising more major international sporting events in order to develop a strong local sporting culture; and
- (f) the establishment of a Sports Promotion Task Force in the LCSD to co-ordinate relevant initiatives.

(B) Student Sport

7. Despite much work done by various organisations to encourage students to take part in and develop an interest in sport, there is no single body co-ordinating the development of sporting opportunities for students and there is no defined strategy for matching the development of sports facilities, whether in schools or in nearby public venues, to the needs of students. To address these problems, the report has suggested that :-

- (a) a Student Sport Co-ordinating Committee be established to develop an integrated framework for student participation in sport from primary I to tertiary education levels;
- (b) expand the service of LCSD's School Sports Programme (SSP) to cover all schools in the SAR and establish a dedicated resource centre for the programme;
- (c) schools to increase PE time in the curriculum, for example, from two lessons to three lessons weekly, to facilitate more sporting opportunities for students;
- (d) venue planning and management practices, whether in public facilities or in schools and tertiary institutions should cater in part for the needs of students; and

- (e) provide greater recognition to student athletes who have excelled in sport.

(C) Support for Disabled Athletes

8. Our disabled athletes have achieved very good results in international competitions. However, there are concerns that there is still shortage of full-time coaching support for disabled athletes and inadequate ancillary facilities at public venues for their training as well as insufficient recognition and publicity for their achievements. To maintain a high level of support for our disabled athletes, the report has recommended the following :-

- (a) the possibility of providing full-time coaches for disabled athletes should be explored;
- (b) better publicity on use of funds to support disabled athletes and continued recognition of their achievements should be given; and
- (c) allow for better accessibility and provide adequate ancillary facilities for the training of disabled athletes when planning and designing public sports venues.

(D) Venue Planning and Management

9. Hong Kong has a good range of well located public sports venues for local use but they are not of a sufficiently high standard to host world class international events. Besides, the planning, design and management policies are not conducive to creating a sporting environment, and are often inadequate to meet the needs of users.

10. In terms of the planning and management of public venues for local sports promotion and development, the report has suggested the following areas for change :-

- (a) the adoption of a more strategic approach to venue planning, taking account of the need of the community and the potential for further sports development in Hong Kong;
- (b) more flexible forms of design for public venues;
- (c) provide temporary sports facilities on sites with no firm timetable for full development of permanent sports venues;

- (d) maximise private sector involvement in venue design, construction and management in order to benefit from the greatest possible range of expertise and resources in the private sector; and
- (e) a more responsive approach by venue managers to the requirements of the public and sports organisations in booking and using of public facilities.

11. Regarding the building of major sports facilities, the HAB commissioned a consultancy study in 2000 to assess the need for building major new sports venues in order to improve Hong Kong's capacity to host major international events. The study established the need for the construction of a new 50,000 seats stadium in South East Kowloon and a new 5,000 – 10,000 seats multi-purpose indoor arena in Lai Chi Kok, West Kowloon to replace respectively the Hong Kong Stadium and Queen Elizabeth Stadium. In assessing the case for building major new venues, the review team feels that it is important to take a forward-looking perspective. Hong Kong's current collection of major facilities, built mostly in the 1980s, are largely inadequate for hosting major international events and will be seriously outdated within this decade. The team has hence recommended that -

- (a) technical and financial feasibility studies for the new stadium and multi-purpose indoor arena should be conducted. The proposed studies should explore new delivery modes, such as public/private partnership, planning parameters and development options, in order to enhance the financial viability and sustainability of the facilities; and
- (b) consider how best to deliver other venues for "Xtreme Games" (such as skateboarding and in-line skating), ice sports, motorsports and water-based sports.

(E) High Performance Sport

12. In the past decade, Hong Kong's elite athletes have performed with increasing success in the international sports arena. The highlight of recent years was the gold-medal winning performance of our top windsurfer Ms LEE Lai-shan at the 1996 Olympics Games. In addition, there have been many outstanding achievements by our local sports women who rank highly in the world in squash, disabled sports and wushu. In March 2002, there were about 217 female scholarship athletes (representing 40% of the total scholarship athletes) entitled for high performance training in HKSI. With the increasing number of sports women pursuing high performance training, we should provide more support and encouragement for them who have played a more active and greater role in the sports sector. The report has suggested that :-

- (a) improvements be made to a number of sports venues and the use of facilities in universities/tertiary education institutions to improve the training environment for top athletes;
- (b) reprioritise the resource allocation available for sports science and medicine;
- (c) draw up an “Athlete’s Plan” to provide full-time high performance athletes with financial, educational and career guidance support;
- (d) strengthen the coaching infrastructure;
- (e) enhance ties and exchange of training opportunities with Mainland sports professionals;
- (f) invest more resources in the development of team sports; and
- (g) encourage sports organisations to develop attractive incentives for commercial sponsorship of high performance athlete training.

(F) The Administrative Structure for Sport

13. The review team has identified the following problems with the current administrative structure :-

- (a) a perceived overlap and lack of clarity in the delineation of responsibilities between LCSD and SDB; and
- (b) the lack of a clear central authority responsible for overall policy, planning, coordination and monitoring of sports development.

14. The rationale behind the setting up of SDB in 1990 was to create a system whereby Government could contribute to the development of sport and recreation through funding an independent organisation which would act on behalf of the Government in dealing with the voluntary sports sector and taking up responsibility in areas such as disbursement of public funds, research, sports science and international affairs relating to sport. However, both SDB and the two former MCs provided funding to NSAs and organised campaigns to promote sports participation. There was clear overlap between the work of SDB and the two former MCs. The situation has improved following the dissolution of the two Provisional MCs (former MCs) and the setting up of LCSD. Attempts have been made to delineate more clearly their respective responsibilities using the promotional and developmental approach. Nevertheless, there remains a question on whether it is necessary to have two

distinct public bodies for the promotion and development of sport, provision of funding to NSAs and sports-related researches.

15. The other issue is about the lack of a clear central authority that could set longer term strategic goals. After the dissolution of the two PMCs, we have reviewed the membership of SDB in the hope that the expanded Board could take up the strategic role of advising Government on the formulation of a sports policy and coordinating the sports sector for the implementation of long term plans on sports development. Unfortunately, SDB's capacity in sports planning and development is limited as almost all public sports venues are managed by LCSD. Besides, all matters appertaining to the Olympic and Asian Games are the prerogative of the SF&OC. Furthermore, the Board is loaded with many executive responsibilities that prevent it from focusing on strategic planning and policy issues.

16. To ensure an efficient, properly co-ordinated and integrated approach to the use of public resources so as to create an environment within which all Hong Kong people can achieve their sporting objectives, the review team has recommended the setting up of a Sports Commission responsible for strategic policy planning and overall coordination, and proposed three possible options for achieving this, including:-

- (a) expanding the role of the SDB and upgrading it to a Sports Commission;
- (b) establishing a new Sports Commission to advise on strategic planning and policy and help coordinate the work of the SDB and LCSD. Consequently, the role and functions of SDB will be narrowed to focus on elite training and high performance sport; and
- (c) establishing an over-arching Sports Commission to advise on strategic policy planning and funding as well as to coordinate key activities in the sports sector. The SF&OC may take over from SDB the latter's marketing and promotional functions. The SDB would be dissolved and high performance training would be entrusted to a reconstituted Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI).

17. For option (a), there is the risk that the Commission, primarily an expanded SDB, will lack a clear identity of itself which is necessary for it to command a leading and coordinating role in the sports sector. Option (b) would meet the need for a body to help directing efforts to develop sport strategically but would be seen as creating one more layer of bureaucracy, adding administrative cost and causing inefficiency. Under option (c), the role of each stakeholder will be more clearly defined. The Sports Commission would be responsible for drawing up the strategic plan and policies for sports

development, and monitoring the implementation of the plan. The HKSI would be a focal point for the development of elite sport and sports science. LCSD would act as Government's main agent in promoting sport at the wider community. The SF&OC should be well placed to conduct SAR-wide promotional and marketing campaigns. Possible saving generated from the dissolution of SDB can be more usefully put to elite training and other sport-related services. However, this option involves some institutional and legislative changes.

18. The review team considers that there are clearly advantages with option (c) from the structure, roles and functions as well as resource allocation points of view. As any changes in the current administrative structure for sport is a key part of the review of sports policy, it is important that we listen to the views of the wider Hong Kong community before a decision is made.

(G) Public Funding for Sport

19. The review team considers that it is important to have a clear indication of the appropriate source of funding and administrative support for NSAs' programmes and activities. The current arrangements, whereby NSAs are required to first decide whether their activities are promotional (funded by the LCSD) or developmental (eligible for support from the SDB) causes confusion and excessive administrative effort, both for these organisations and for the two funding bodies. Another problem identified by the review team is a lack of sufficient funding for organising major international sports events locally. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the funding arrangement for sport, the report has recommended that: -

- (a) there should be one funding body to support the work of NSAs ;
- (b) re-evaluate the choice and number of "Focus" sports for elite training programmes at the HKSI with a view to optimising resources.
- (c) the funding mechanism and criteria for subventing the NSAs should be reviewed to ensure a fairer allocation of resources and the funding procedures should be simplified; and
- (d) strengthen funding support to NSAs for staging international events.

20. The above recommendations should go a long way in encouraging more widespread participation in sport and raising the profile as well as interest on sport at all levels in the community. A stronger local sporting culture and greater success of our elite athletes would in turn help put Hong Kong in the international sports map, thereby create new opportunities for economic growth.

21. The report is now released for wide public consultation for a period of two months until the end of July 2002. Our aim is to gather as wide a range of views as possible before we draw up the detailed blueprint for our future sports development policy.

ADVICE SOUGHT

22. Members' views on the findings and recommendations of the Report are most welcome.

Home Affairs Bureau
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