

The 10th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group

Notes of the First Meeting

The first meeting of the 10th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the multi-purpose hall on G/F, Fire Services Headquarters Building on 24 April 2003 at 7:30p.m.

Opening Remarks

The Department welcomed all members to the first meeting of the 10th PLG and expressed votes of thanks to all of them, especially to those who had been serving since the last tenure, for sparing valuable time of their own to serve the community. Departmental representatives in attendance were introduced to all members.

Terms of Reference of the Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group

2. Members were briefed about their terms of reference, which included exchanging views on fire and emergency ambulance services provided by the Fire Services Department (FSD), monitoring whether FSD has achieved the targets set for fire and emergency ambulance services, and making suggestions to and comments on the improvement of service quality.

Arrangements for Public Liaison Group's Meetings

3. The Department indicated that at least three meetings would be held each year. The Secretary would write in advance to inform each member of the details of such meetings. Meetings would usually be held in a weekday evening at the Fire Services Headquarters Building at 6:00p.m. Members should send their proposed agenda item(s) or discussion paper(s) to the Secretary to PLG by one of the following means if they wished to raise any matter for discussion at the meeting:
 - (a) by mail to 8/F, Fire Services Headquarters Building, No.1. Hong Chong Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon

- (b) by fax to 2367 0973
- (c) by e-mail to: hkfsdenq@hkfsd.gov.hk

Confirmation of the Notes of the Last Meeting

- 4. The notes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Activities of the Public Liaison Group

- 5. Members were informed that the Secretary had passed their contact data to relevant units of the Department so that they would be invited to attend activities like passing-out parades, fire station open days, opening ceremonies of new fire stations/ ambulance depots, fire safety campaigns, etc, so as to broaden their knowledge of fire and ambulance services. Members were briefed on the above-mentioned activities and those held by the 9th PLG.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

- 6. Members noted that the Ambulance Command staff had been conducting CPR training courses in their spare time for the public free of charge. In the first quarter of 2003, a total of 467 people had received community CPR training. Enrolment of the course took place throughout the year. When there was a sufficient number of participants, training courses would be held. Currently, training courses were conducted in Sai Wan Ho, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Tsuen Wan, Castle Peak Bay and Ma On Shan. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

Out-of-Service Arrangements for Fireboat A.G.

- 7. The Department informed the meeting that after having served the public for years, Fireboat A.G. had retired. It would be taken over by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and placed in the Quarry Bay Park by

LCSD for commemoration and public visit. From 1 May 2003 onwards, items on Fireboat A.G. would be on display in an exhibition gallery at the upper level of the Redoubt in the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence for open exhibition. Members would be informed in future meetings when Fireboat A.G. was to open for public visit. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

Development and Implementation of Paramedic Ambulance Service (PAS)

8. The Department stated that the development of Emergency Medical Assistants (EMA) was smooth. At present, a total of 472 ambulance supervisors of Principal/ Senior Ambulanceman rank were qualified EMA IIs. The Department planned to increase the percentage of EMAs to 80% and 100% by the end of the first quarters of 2004 and 2005 respectively. The Department proposed to delete this item until early 2004 when members would be further informed of the progress. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

Civic Education

9. The Department stated that over 1,600 junior secondary students had participated in the Smart Teen Challenge Camp jointly organized by the Department and Education Department. The participants were required to stay overnight in the Fire Services Training School to receive fire safety training. The Camp had been a great success. According to the teachers of relevant schools, the training courses had contributed to the development of students' discipline. However, the Camp had been suspended owing to the recent outbreak of Atypical Pneumonia.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

10. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

New Fire Stations

11. The Department informed the meeting that Lau Fau Shan Fire Station-cum-Ambulance Depot was commissioned on 27 March 2003. Two more new fire stations were expected to be completed this year. The two fire stations were Sha Tau Kok Fire Station and Braemar Hill Fire Station-cum-Ambulance Depot, which would be completed in October 2003 and January 2004 respectively. The original Shau Tau Kok Fire Station was accommodated in an old government building with office space below current standard. Upon completion of the new Shau Tau Kok Fire Station, the Department would deploy a hydraulic platform to the station, which would further improve the fire services provided for the district. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

Mobile Publicity Unit

12. The Department indicated that since its commissioning on 17 November last year, the mobile publicity unit had, up to March this year, participated in a total of 45 fire prevention events, having received over 56,000 visitors. The mobile publicity unit would tour round housing estates and schools regularly to hold fire prevention exhibitions, as well as participating in other fire prevention events. Various kinds of computer games were installed on the unit, which inculcated children with fire prevention knowledge in a relaxed and interactive manner. Moreover, CD-ROMs of these games had been produced for public distribution together with promotion booklets. The CD-ROM and booklet were tabled for members' reference. The Department indicated that the mobile publicity unit, having an eye-catching outlook, was widely received and highly appealing to children, which had enhanced the effectiveness of fire prevention publicity. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

Education Centre Programme

13. The Department informed the meeting that an education centre would be built in Ma Wan, and that study tours to Tokyo and Qingdao had been organized, during which local education centres for the prevention of disasters and fire had been

visited, in the hope of identifying areas worthy of reference with respect to design. As the education centre was still at the design stage, the Department proposed to delete this item from the agenda temporarily, and would inform members of any new progress. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

Types and Price of Goods of the Welfare Section

14. The Department informed the meeting that suggestions made by members in the last meeting had been considered and the feasibility of such suggestions had also been studied. As gifts, which were small in quantity, would only be distributed during fire prevention events and they were not available for public purchase, the Department was concerned about the possibility of contractors backing out because of unsatisfactory business performance. In view of the above concerns, outsourcing was not considered appropriate. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

New Fire Appliances and Ambulances

15. The Department said that new fire appliances and ambulances would be procured by way of public tender. The latest tender exercise involved thirty ambulances, and tendering procedures had ended on 28 March 2003. The Department would embark on the procurement after the successful tenderer was selected.

The World Firefighter Games (WFG)

16. The Department stated that its bid for the 9th World Firefighter Games in 2006 was successful and briefed the meeting about the competition events. The World Governing Body of WFG came to Hong Kong for a field study when the Department was bidding for hosting the Games. Having considered that the local sports facilities were adequate and the Department's ability in organizing functions was outstanding, the World Governing Body supported the Department's application for staging this big event. The Games were initially scheduled for the period from February to March 2006 and support had been

given by relevant policy bureaux and other departments, including the Security Bureau, Civil Service Bureau, Leisure and Cultural Services Department and Tourism Commission. The Department fervently looked forward to hosting this big event, and called on members to take note of future departmental news and to take part as spectators.

New Training Facilities

17. The Department informed the meeting that the 4-storey Breathing Apparatus and Tactical Training Block had been built in the Fire Services Training School. The Department briefed the meeting about the training facilities for breathing apparatus and respective safety facilities which were provided for fire personnel. Special electronic devices would also be installed around May and June. Upon proper installation of all these facilities, the Department would arrange a visit for the members. The Department added that fire fighting was a highly dangerous job, the training for fire services personnel had to be enhanced. Over the past few years, more real-fire training and simulations of real conditions at the scene of fire had been given. As these training exercises were considerably dangerous, adequate safety facilities such as advanced electronic sensors and special ventilating equipment had to be installed to prevent accidents during training.

Any Other Business

Auxiliary Fire Services

18. A member informed the meeting of the item he had proposed in writing prior to this meeting. He suggested that the Department should follow the way of oversea fire agencies by setting up an auxiliary fire brigade of lower-paying or voluntary members to assist regular staff, with a view to alleviating current manpower shortage. He explained by quoting an example that, when an ambulance could not reach the scene of incident promptly and the caller dialed 999 again, St. John's Ambulance would reach the scene quickly. The Department thanked the member for his suggestion and pointed out that the demand for emergency ambulance service was considerably great indeed. At present, there was an average of about 1,500 calls for emergency ambulance

service daily. In the long run, the number of calls would increase by about 4.4% per annum due to the aging population. In fact, the Department had strived to provide quality ambulance service through resources optimization and management enhancement. Also, the Department was assisted by St. John's Ambulance and Auxiliary Medical Service in serving the public. However, in view of limited resources for such supporting services and efficient deployment of ambulances to the scene through Department's communication system, the example cited was incorrect. The Department further stated that the Auxiliary Fire Services (AFS) had been founded in 1945. However, in the light of the continuous advancement in fire-fighting tools, appliances and training as well as the increasingly strenuous work in fire services, there had been an overwhelming disparity between the auxiliary and regular fire services and AFS was dissolved in 1975. In view of the current economic doldrums, the general public could not afford taking long leave to receive adequate fire services training. In addition, as regular and auxiliary disciplined services had been affected by the Administration's belt-tightening, the Department would not consider setting up an auxiliary fire brigade at this stage.

19. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.

Fire Services Department
May 2003