

The 9th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group
Notes of the Fourth Meeting

The fourth meeting of the 9th Public Liaison Group was held at the multi-purpose hall on G/F, Fire Services Headquarters Building at 6 p.m. on 11 March 2003.

Confirmation of the Notes of the Last Meeting

2. The notes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Activities of the Public Liaison Group

3. Members were informed that arrangements had been made for members to visit Fireboat Elite and Lamma Island Fire Station on 5 January as well as attend the Firemen Passing-out Parade on 21 February. A member submitted a written proposal, suggesting arranging more study tours to the Mainland, including visits to successful factories, Mainland fire stations with the world's most advanced facilities, and the fire service equipment in oil fields, oil refineries or power plants etc. The Department stressed that although members' knowledge on fire services could be enriched by joining study tours, the aim of establishing the PLG was to encourage members to express their views on local fire and emergency ambulance services. Moreover, many aspects had to be taken into account when arranging study tours. However, the Department would consider the member's view.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

4. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
 - 4.1 Members noted that in 2002, the Department had provided community CPR training and CPR refresher training for 3,679 and 625 persons respectively. At present, there were adequate ambulance personnel serving as CPR instructors. Therefore, it was not necessary to arrange for Fire Safety Ambassadors to serve as instructors. Currently, CPR training courses were held in Sai Wan Ho, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Tsuen Wan, Castle Peak Bay and Ma On Shan, i.e. throughout Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. As CPR certificates were of a permanent nature, trainees might apply for refresher courses according to their individual needs.

- 4.2 A member inquired why CPR training courses were held only in Castle Peak Bay and Ma On Shan for the New Territories while no such course was held in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long. The Department explained that courses were held in Yuen Long at the initial stage. However, with the increasing number of participants in Castle Peak Bay and the relatively old facilities in Tuen Mun Ambulance Depot, courses were later held in Castle Peak Bay Ambulance Depot instead. Factors like the number of applicants, traffic condition, the facilities of the study venue had to be taken into account when determining the locations of the course held. The Department would determine the locations flexibly according to applicants' circumstances.
- 4.3 A member expressed that the Department was not efficient in processing the applications for CPR training courses. The Department responded that its practice was to inform participants on the details of courses by telephone. The member could provide the relevant information of the case to the Department for follow-up action. In addition, the Department replied that applicants had to submit completed CPR training course application forms for course arrangements to be made by the Department. [Supplementary information: while the CPR training course application forms were for the Department's official record purpose, the applicants' Chinese and English names on the application forms would be used when preparing course certificates so as to avoid any mistakes or omissions. As for the locations of the courses held, when there were sufficient number of participants in a certain district or organization at the same time, the Department would consider arranging special classes in that district. According to past records, the Department had arranged special classes in Tuen Mun, Tin Shui Wan, Cheung Chau and so on.]

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

- 5.1 Members were informed that Fireboat A.G. would be taken over by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and placed in Quarry Bay Park. At the moment, the Department, LCSD, Marine Department and Architectural Services Department were studying the out-of-service arrangements for Fireboat A.G., including transfer of assets, the planning and design of placement site, the maintenance and repair of the Fireboat and so on.

6. Development and Implementation of Paramedic Ambulance Service (PAS)

- 6.1 Members were informed that a total of 472 ambulance supervisors of Principal/Senior Ambulanceman rank were qualified as EMA IIs. The ratio of EMA ambulances would increase to 80% and 100% by the end of the first quarter of 2004 and 2005 respectively.

7. Civic Education

- 7.1 The Department informed the meeting that 1,528 junior secondary students participated the Smart Teen Challenge Camp jointly organized by the Department and Education Department from 1 April 2002 to 1 March 2003. They received fire safety training at the camp.

8. Traffic Accidents Involving Ambulances

- 8.1 The Department informed the meeting that the number of traffic accidents involving ambulances and ambulance aid motorcycles in 2002 was 109 and 21 respectively while 23 traffic accidents involving ambulances occurred in the first two months of 2003. Moreover, the Department would conduct a detailed investigation into each accident. If the accident was found to be related to driving skills, the investigation report would be passed to Driving Training School for follow-up action. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

9. Customer Satisfaction Survey

- 9.1 The Department stated that it won the Gold Prize of the 'Best Public Image Competition' in the '2002-03 Outstanding Customer Service Award' organized by the Civil Service Bureau, and the prize-presentation ceremony was held in February this year.

10. New Fire Stations

- 10.1 The Department informed the meeting that Lau Fau Shan Fire Station cum Ambulance Depot was handed over to the Department on 20 February 2003, and it would be commissioned in March or April 2003. To tie in with the 135th anniversary of the Department, a time capsule would be placed during the

opening ceremony of the station, and the capsule was scheduled to be opened 15 years later.

11. Mobile Publicity Unit

11.1 The Department stated that the new mobile publicity unit came into operation on 17 November last year. Up to February this year, the mobile publicity unit had participated in 34 fire prevention events, and received over 52,000 visitors.

11.2 A member suggested that the Department should promote fire safety by arranging the mobile publicity unit to pay calls to schools during autumn and winter, and inviting students to visit the unit. The Department replied that applicants already had to wait till May this year to secure exhibitions organized by the unit. As schools were one of the main targets of the Department for fire safety publicity, their applications would get priority treatment if there was adequate space in the school to hold the exhibition. The Department was making out a schedule jointly with the Housing Department on arranging the mobile publicity unit to promote fire safety in housing estates. Moreover, the Department would prepare booklets and computer game discs which targeted students, so that they could keep on learning fire safety knowledge after visiting the mobile publicity unit. The Department stated that it would positively consider the member's suggestion, and would distribute the booklets to members in the next meeting to obtain their opinions.

11.3 A member commented that the mobile publicity unit was the best choice in the market at the time of acquisition. The Department thanked the member for the praise, and supplemented that the Department would consider the development in the market every time it replaced its vehicles with a view to making progress with the times. The Department welcomed any suggestion from members.

12. Planning for New Fire Stations

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

13. Incident Involving Drunk Firemen Who Posed As Policemen

13.1 The Department briefed the meeting about the latest development of the case.

In response to a member's enquiry, the Department explained its procedures for carrying out disciplinary action. The Department stressed that it would carefully consider the facts of each case, and for some particularly serious cases, the Department would set up an ad hoc group to study the case and give recommendations to the Director.

- 13.2 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department replied that if an officer of the rank of Divisional Officer or above had committed an offence, the Department would submit recommendations on punishment to the Civil Service Bureau in accordance with the Public Service (Administration) Order, and a final decision would be made by the Chief Executive, not the Secretary for Security. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

14. Code of Practice or Guidelines on Gas Leakage Incidents for Frontline Staff

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

15. Education Centre Programme

- 15.1 The Department stated that representatives of the Department and Sun Hung Kai Properties Limited would go on a study tour to Tokyo and Qingdao from 8 April 2003 to 12 April 2003 respectively.

16. Types and Prices of Goods of the Welfare Section

- 16.1 The Department stated that a member had suggested that the Department should adopt market mechanism by contracting out its souvenir shop like the Police. The Department added that the Police had contracted out the operation of their souvenir shop, including the design, production and sale of police souvenirs, in a two-year contract. Besides putting the souvenirs for sale on special occasions (such as open days), purchases could also be made through the Internet, and part of the profit would go to the Police Welfare Fund. The Department stated that it would study the measures of the Police that it could take as an example.
- 16.2 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department replied that the fire appliance models were produced by individual manufacturers with their own investment. The Department thanked the member for his suggestion of

producing models of fire appliances which were out of service.

- 16.3 Another member suggested that the Department should collaborate with large model manufacturers (such as those manufacturers producing 1:24 models) to cut costs. The Department was grateful to the member for his suggestion, but explained that as the fire appliances were not designed by the Department, the model manufacturers had to obtain copyrights from the fire appliance manufacturers for using their design of the fire appliances.

17. New Fire Appliances and Ambulances

- 17.1 The Department revealed that training on the driving and operation of the aerial ladder platforms was underway and the platforms would commission service in Tung Chung Fire Station at the end of April. Moreover, the Department planned to introduce pod-like fire appliances to convey supporting equipment to the scenes of incident so as to allow greater flexibility in resources deployment and related duties. The Department also briefed members on equipment like breathing apparatus, tool box in handling nuclear and biochemical incidents as well as cleansing and sterilizing tools etc. in the pod-like appliances. In addition, tenders were being invited for the supply of 30 ambulances for the Ambulance Command to replace the old ambulance and the tender closing date was 28 March.
- 17.2 A member said that in regard to the year-end review covered by the newspaper, the information given on new appliances and ambulances was very piecemeal. She suggested that the Department could consider handing out photos to the reporters. The Department replied that the media would report on the things that were considered interesting or of market value. The information and photos of the fire appliances had already been uploaded in the web page of the Department for browsing by those interested. The Department's brand-new web page would be launched on 15 March and its design would follow the Government's guidelines by including the brand visual identity of Hong Kong ie. a powerful and energetic dragon and the three versions of the web page in English, Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese. Members could also air their views through the suggestion box of the web page.
- 17.3 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department replied that the main function of the pod-like fire appliances was to convey tools and they needed

only around 20m of space for loading purpose. The height of the frame of the appliances ranged from 1.3m to 1.6m. The engineering staff were now examining the possibility of unloading the tools with the help of a hydraulic board in the light of the height of the appliance frame. The Department briefed the meeting on the equipment in the nuclear and biochemical incident handling pod.

- 17.4 A member stated that such pod-like fire appliances were not being used in the Mainland. Such appliances normally could not render much help during the most critical moment. The Department replied that such appliances were merely used in the second line but not the front line and therefore only supporting services would be provided.

18. Mainland-HK Joint Fire Drill

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

19. The World Firefighter Games (WFG)

The meeting was informed about the Department's successful bid for hosting the 9th World Firefighter Games in 2006. There were at present over 50 events in WFG, and the Department would consider adding several events that were characteristic of Hong Kong, such as dragon boat race, martial art and orienteering etc. The event would be mainly funded by participants' and accompanying persons' registration fees and the Department would approach the commercial sectors for sponsorship. The Department had written to solicit support from relevant policy bureaux, including the Security Bureau and Civil Service Bureau, as well as other relevant Departments, such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and Tourism Commission. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department had replied that full support would be given to this big event. The Department would recruit a large number of volunteers, for example students from the language faculties of various universities, to assist in the preparation, opening ceremony and in the course of competitions.

20. Brochure on Fire Prevention in the Home

The Department told members that the brochure was being revised and it would be published in April this year. Members agreed to delete this item from the

agenda of the next meeting.

Any Other Business

21. New Training Facilities

- 21.1 The Department informed the meeting that the construction work of the Breathing Apparatus and Tactical Training Block was completed. The Block was equipped with the labyrinth training facilities with alterable layout which could simulate building layout; as well as training temperature monitoring system. Upon the proper installation of all these facilities, the Department could arrange a visit for the members. In response to a member's enquiry, the Department indicated that ex-members of the Group were also welcome to the visit.
- 21.2 A member pointed out that the revised arrangements for the extension of tenure for serving members was unfair to him. The Department explained that owing to the limited number of seats of PLG, the arrangements had been reviewed before the submission of application by members for the new tenure. In order to absorb new faces and listen to the views from different sectors, a provision was added to restrict the length of service to a maximum of two consecutive terms. A member who had served two consecutive terms but still wanted to be a PLG member could submit the application again a year later. The Department emphasized that the change was introduced in consideration of the fact that many people could not join the PLG after being waitlisted for several years and that the new extension mechanism could alleviate such problem. Thus, such arrangements were not targeted against any individual.
- 21.3 A member suggested the meeting to put the five seats of Kowloon region for serving members to the vote. The Department indicated that the selection criteria of serving members to extend their tenure had been published before the invitation of applications. Changing the selection criteria then would mean a violation of the established provisions which the Department would not support.
- 21.4 A member suggested that the meeting should vote to decide whether all serving members could extend their tenure next year. Another member objected to the suggestion and considered it unfair. The Department concluded that it was against the spirit of forming the PLG if the rules of the PLG were laid down by

members themselves. The Department was obliged to ensure that the rules were open, fair and equitable. Those who could not extend their tenure might serve as observers of the PLG. The Secretary would approach these members so as to register them as observers.

22. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.

Fire Services Department

March 2003