

COMMUNITY SPORTS COMMITTEE

Report on the Proposals to Improve the Arrangements for the Booking and Allocation of Recreation and Sports Facilities of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Purpose

This paper aims to report to Members on the results of the public consultation on the improvement measures recommended in the Direct Investigation Report of the Office of The Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) on the booking and allocation of the recreation and sports facilities of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the proposed improvement measures to be implemented by the LCSD.

Background

2. The LCSD submitted a consultation paper (CSC Paper 6/12) on the proposals to improve the arrangements for the booking and allocation of recreation and sports facilities under the management of the LCSD to seek Members' comments on 27 November 2012. The LCSD undertook at the meeting to submit a report to Members as well as to report on the implementation of the improvement measures upon completion of the public consultation.

Results of the Consultation on the Proposed Improvement Measures

3. In view of the strong demands for recreation and sports facilities, the LCSD is committed to improving the booking and allocation mechanism to meet the needs of different parties and prevent abuse of facilities. As the improvement measures recommended by the Ombudsman will affect the arrangements for public use of the sports facilities, the LCSD carried out a comprehensive public consultation in late 2012. The consultation exercise included sending official to attend meetings of the relevant committees under the 18 District Councils (DCs) to seek the views of Members on the improvement measures from 24 October to 18 December 2012, writing to national sports associations (NSAs) and sports organisations, and uploading a consultation paper onto LCSD's website and the Public Affairs Forum of the Home Affairs Bureau for public information and to invite public views on the improvement measures.

4. According to the views collected, the 18 DCs supported the improvement measures aimed at improving the arrangements for the booking and allocation of recreation and sports facilities and stepping up efforts to curb touting activities. In addition, the LCSD received a total of 73 responses to the proposed improvement measures from organisations and the public, namely 4 NSAs, 43 members of the public via LCSD's website, and 26 members of the public via the Public Affairs Forum of the Home Affairs Bureau. Most of them agreed that measures should be taken to improve the arrangements for the booking and allocation of facilities.

5. In order to have a better understanding of public views on the improvement measures regarding booking of fee-charging leisure venues, the LCSD conducted a questionnaire survey of facility users in major recreation and sports facilities such as sports centres, tennis courts and turf football pitches managed by the LCSD from 14 to 16 December 2012. A total of 2 900 valid questionnaires were received. More than half of the respondents agreed to the following:

- (a) shortening of the advance booking period for individual hirers from 30 days to 10 days (57.2%);
- (b) reduction of the maximum booking hours for fee-charging facilities for individual hirers (64.3%); and
- (c) imposition of penalties on individual hirers who commit booking irregularities (66.9%).

6. As for the improvement measures against abuse of the "stand-by" arrangement, which grants free use of facilities to "stand-by" users, the public expressed distinctly diverse views. Among all the valid questionnaires received, around 30% of the respondents (including the users of football pitches and those of other facilities) disagreed with the cancellation of the "stand-by" arrangement for football pitches. Among the users of football pitches alone, about 58% opposed the cancellation. A breakdown of the views received is set out below:

Cancellation of the "stand-by" arrangement for football pitches	Views of all respondents (including users of facilities other than football pitches) (2 900 persons)			Views of users of football pitches (517 persons)		
	The original hirers	"Stand-by" users	Total	The original hirers	"Stand-by" users	Total
Agreed	46.2%	2.3%	48.5%	29.4%	7%	36.4%
Disagreed	28.1%	4.7%	<u>32.8%</u>	39.1%	18.5%	<u>57.6%</u>
No comment	16.9%	1.9%	18.8%	3.7%	2.3%	6%

7. A closer examination of the reasons for not agreeing to the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches shows that most respondents (44.6% of the users of football pitches, 55.7% of all users) were concerned that the cancellation might result in the facilities being left unused, thus causing wastage of venue resources. Given the strong demand for football pitches and the difficulties faced by the public in booking these facilities, the LCSD understands that the users of football pitches hoped to use the pitches through the “stand-by” mechanism when they failed to book the venues in advance. Therefore, it is not difficult to see why more users of football pitches disagreed with the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches. However, having regard to the views of all respondents, it is noted that those who agreed to the cancellation (48.5%) have outnumbered those who opposed the cancellation (32.8%) (please refer to paragraph 8(d) below).

Major Improvement Measures to be Implemented

8. Since the majority of the respondents supported and agreed with the proposed improvement measures, upon completion of the modification of the Leisure Link System (LLS), the LCSD will progressively implement these measures as soon as practicable in the light of the actual operation. The major **improvement measures** concerning the booking arrangements for individual hirers are as follows:

(a) **Shortening the advance booking period for individuals from 30 days to 10 days (paragraph 10 of the Executive Summary of the Investigation Report)**

Having considered the views of the DCs and relevant organisations and the findings of the questionnaire survey conducted in December last year at major leisure facilities under its management, the LCSD concluded that the majority of the public agreed to the shortening of the advance booking period for individual hirers to 10 days. Therefore, the LCSD proposes that the advance booking period for individual hirers should be shortened from 30 days to 10 days and expects that the proposed arrangement will be implemented upon completion of the modification of the LLS in mid-June this year.

(b) **Reducing the maximum booking hours for fee-charging facilities for individual hirers (paragraph 13 of the Executive Summary of the Investigation Report)**

At present, individual hirers are allowed to book a maximum of 2 hours

during peak hours and 4 hours during non-peak hours per day for the same type of fee-charging facility at the **same venue**. For turf football pitches, the quota for booking by individuals is 1 session per day. In response to the recommendations of the Ombudsman and the support given by the stakeholders and questionnaire respondents (64.3%) for reducing the maximum booking hours for fee-charging facilities for individual hirers, the LCSD proposes that the maximum booking hours for individual hirers should be reduced to 2 sessions per day during peak hours for the **same type of facility**. The daily quota is applicable to not only the **same facility at the same venue**, but also the **same type of facility** at all leisure venues. The existing arrangement of a maximum of 1 session per day for turf football pitches will remain unchanged. Since the provision of facility during non-peak hours can normally meet the demand of the public, we propose to maintain the current quota for non-peak hours (i.e. 4 hours per day for the same type of facility at the **same venue**). The LCSD expects that the improvement measures will be implemented as soon as the modification of the LLS is completed in **2013-14**.

(c) **To impose penalties on individual hirers who fail to show up for their booked sessions or commit other irregularities (paragraphs 32, 35 and 36 of the Executive Summary of the Investigation Report)**

A vast majority of the views received supported the imposition of administrative penalties on individual hirers who have committed irregularities, i.e. suspending their rights to book leisure facilities for a certain period of time. The LCSD expects that the measure will be put in place upon completion of the modification of the LLS in **the first half of 2014**. The penalties are as follows:

- (i) **Hirers repeatedly fail to show up for their booked sessions and make prior cancellation over a period of time** – The hirer who, on two occasions in 30 days, fails to take up the booked session and notify the LCSD of the cancellation of booking at least 1 day in advance will be suspended from booking all land-based fee-charging facilities for **90 days**.

- (ii) **Hirers are engaged in unauthorised transfer of user permits** – Since unauthorised transfer of user permits involves touting activities and the comments received during the consultation called for stiffer penalty, the LCSD proposes that hirers who are found to be engaged in unauthorised transfer or touting of user permits should be immediately suspended from booking all land-based fee-charging facilities for 180 days.
 - (iii) **Hirers abuse the concessionary rates in making bookings** – Taking into account the views of the DCs that the efforts to curb abuse of concessionary rates in making bookings should be stepped up, the LCSD proposes that the period of suspending an offender from booking all land-based fee-charging facilities should be extended from the original proposal of 90 days to 180 days, in order to achieve deterrent effect.
- (d) **Cancelling the arrangement of granting free use of facilities to “stand-by” users of football pitches on a trial basis (paragraph 32 of the Executive Summary of the Investigation Report)**

The LCSD proposes that the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches should be cancelled on a trial basis for the following reasons:

- (i) All 18 DCs supported that the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches should be cancelled on a trial basis. Most DC Members agreed that as football is a team sport and most venues have only one football pitch, it is uncommon that a group of players would wait at a pitch as “stand-by” users. Nevertheless, available information shows that the number of sessions taken up by “stand-by” users accounts for approximately one-third of the overall booked sessions. The situation is unusual and gives rise to the suspicion that touting activities may be involved and the “stand-by” arrangement may be abused.
- (ii) According to the findings of the questionnaire survey conducted by the LCSD in major recreation and sports facilities, we noticed that members of the public, particularly “stand-by” users of football pitches, held different views about cancelling the “stand-by” arrangement. Among the 517 questionnaires received at football pitches, about 58% did not agree to the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches. As mentioned above, given the strong demand for football pitches and the difficulties faced by the public in booking these facilities, the users of football pitches hoped to use the pitches through the “stand-by” mechanism when they failed to book the venues in advance. Therefore, it is natural that more users of football pitches disagreed with

the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches. However, having regard to the views of all respondents, it is noted that those who agreed to the cancellation (48.5%) have outnumbered those who opposed the cancellation (32.8%).

Taking into account the views of the DCs and those collected in the questionnaire survey, and the fact that “touting” is a serious existing problem for football pitches, the LCSD **proposes that when the shortening of advance booking period for individual hirers to 10 days is implemented in June this year, the cancellation of “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches should be launched on a trial basis at the same time** for a period of six months. It is believed that following the decline of touting activities, it will be easier for the public to book football pitches through the normal booking channels. Nevertheless, given the diverse views of the public on the arrangement, the LCSD will closely monitor the situation and assess whether cancelling the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches will give rise to the venues being left unused and thus resulting in wastage. We will collect data on the utilisation of venues three months after the introduction of the trial measure (i.e. in September 2013) for preliminary analysis and will conduct a comprehensive review six months after the introduction of the trial measure (i.e. in late 2013) in order to decide whether the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches should be cancelled on a long-term basis.

9. Regarding other improvement measures recommended by the Ombudsman, the LCSD will take them forward progressively after completing the modification of the LLS or making detailed arrangements for their implementation. The progress of the work carried out by the LCSD regarding the improvement measures recommended by the Ombudsman is detailed at **Annex I**.

10. The timetable for the improvement measures implemented and to be implemented by LCSD is set out in **Annex II**.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to note this paper and comment on the improvement arrangements stated in paragraphs 8 and 9 above.

**Progress of the Work Carried Out by
the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in Response to
the Improvement Measures Recommended by the Ombudsman on the
Booking Arrangements for Recreation and Sports Facilities**

Recommendation of the Ombudsman	Progress
(a) <u>Touting</u> – 11 items	
<p>(1) Consider shortening the advance booking period for individuals to, for example, 7, 10 or 14 days.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 10 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The 18 District Councils (DCs) agreed to the shortening of the advance booking period for individual hirers. ● A questionnaire survey was conducted in major leisure venues in mid-December 2012. A total of 2 900 valid questionnaires were received, in which about 57.2% of the respondents agreed to the shortening of the advance booking period for individual hirers to 10 days. ● The LCSD proposes that the advance booking period for individual hirers should be <u>shortened</u> from 30 days <u>to 10 days</u>. The required upgrading of the existing Leisure Link System (LLS) is expected to be <u>completed in June 2013</u>.
<p>(2) Consider reducing the maximum booking hours allowed for individuals (e.g. by limiting the combined total number of hours each day, each week or each month, etc. for different facilities and venues).</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 13 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At present, individual hirers are allowed to book a maximum of two hours during peak hours and four hours during non-peak hours per day for the same type of fee-charging facility at the <u>same venue</u>. For turf football pitches, the quota for booking by individual hirers is one session per day. ● The recommendations of the Ombudsman, the views of the shareholders and the result that about 64.3% of the respondents in the questionnaire survey agreed to the reduction of the maximum booking hours for fee-charging facilities for individual hirers have been taken into account.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LCSD proposes that the booking quota for individual hirers should be reduced to a maximum of two sessions during peak hours per day for the same type of facility. This daily quota is applicable to not only the <u>same facility in the same venue</u>, but also the <u>same type of facility</u> at all leisure venues. The quota of a maximum of one session per day for individual hirers of turf football pitches will remain unchanged. • Since the provision of facilities during non-peak hours can normally meet the demand of the public, we propose to maintain the current quota for non-peak hours (i.e. four hours per day for the same type of facility at the <u>same venue</u>). • The LCSD expects that the proposed improvement measures will be implemented in 2013/14 as soon as the modification of the LLS is completed.
(3)	<p>Consider requiring individuals to use their identity cards only as identity documents for booking of venues (only individuals without identity cards may use their passports).</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 15 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting from 20 August 2012, only Hong Kong Identity (HKID) Card is accepted for application for Leisure Link Patron (LLP) registration. No other documents (e.g. travel documents) can be used as identity proof for online registration. • We are making arrangements to improve the existing LLP registration system and planning to launch a re-registration exercise in the second quarter of 2014 for more than 760 000 existing patrons to use their HKID Cards to re-register with a view to weeding out multiple registrations.
(4)	<p>Consider introducing the arrangement for immediate payment for telephone reservations.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 18 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We put in place some interim improvement measures in 2012. Telephone reservation for recreation and sports facilities has to be made at least three days in advance and confirmed by payment at least one day before the day of use. Moreover, sessions for which telephone reservation has been cancelled will be posted on the Leisure Link website at 1 a.m. on the following day. These sessions will be available for booking from 7:30 a.m. on the same day through telephone, the Internet, booking offices or self-service kiosks on a first-come-first-served basis.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the long run, the LCSD is exploring the feasibility of introducing immediate payment arrangement for telephone reservation in order to make available on-the-spot confirmation of booking. However, given the limited availability of the systems that can support this mode of payment and a lack of such mode of operation within the Government, we are now endeavouring towards finding a feasible option that can meet the requirements regarding financial arrangement, security and privacy, etc. and ensure the achievement of reasonable cost effectiveness for the sake of proper use of public money. The improvement measure is still under deliberation and is expected to be implemented in 2014/15.
(5)	<p>Consider taking administrative measures to curb the touting activities carried out by touts taking advantage of the priority booking rights enjoyed by limited companies.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 20 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<p>The LCSD has established a working group to review the existing arrangement for organisations to make priority bookings in the capacity of a limited company and an organisation registered as a society, and the priority they enjoy. The existing penalty system for breaching the Conditions of Use by organisations will also be reviewed. The review is expected to be completed by 2013/14.</p>
(6)	<p>Review the reallocation arrangement for hirers affected by bad weather, for instance, shortening the 60-day advance booking period or cancelling the special arrangement of reallocation.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 23 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To minimise the abuse, the LCSD proposes to shorten the existing 60-day reallocation period offered to hirers due to the closure of venues in bad weather following the shortening of the advance booking period for individual hirers. Upon the shortening of the advance booking period of leisure facilities for individual hirers from 30 days to 10 days, the existing reallocation period offered to hirers arising from cancellation of booking in bad weather can be reduced from 60 days to <u>15 days</u>. For example, for an original booking on 1 July affected by bad weather, the hirer concerned <u>may book another venue that is still available in the 15 days from the original day of use, i.e. from 1 July to 15 July</u>. • The arrangement is expected to be implemented upon the completion of the upgrading of the LLS in June 2013.

<p>(7)</p>	<p>Requiring staff to strictly follow the verification procedure to check the identity documents of all venue users.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 28 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To prevent unauthorised transfer of booked facilities, the LCS D has stated clearly in the Conditions of Use that hirers are required to produce their identity documents for verification at the check-in counters. ● In response to the public’s concerns about possible abuse and touting activities, we have instructed all venue staff to strictly follow the verification procedure to check the identity documents of all hirers starting in 2011. They are also reminded about the documents that will be accepted as identity documents. Hirers are required to produce the identity documents used at the time of booking for verification purpose. Users who are not the registered hirers will not be allowed to sign in. ● Venue staff will continue to strictly follow the verification procedure to check the identity documents of venue users to prevent abuse of facilities and curb the transfer of user permits.
<p>(8)</p>	<p>Review the “stand-by” mechanism, including considering charging fees on “stand-by” users or abolishing the “stand-by” mechanism on a trial basis at facilities/venues where the problem is serious.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 32 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<p>The LCS D proposes that the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches should be cancelled on a trial basis for the following reasons:</p> <p>(i) All the 18 DCs expressed their support for the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches on a trial basis. A majority of DC members agreed that as football was a team sport and most venues had only one football pitch, it was uncommon that a group of players would wait at a pitch as “stand-by” users given that they could not foretell if the original hirer would not show up. Nevertheless, available information showed that the number of sessions taken up by “stand-by” users accounted for approximately one-third of the overall booked sessions. The situation was unusual and gave rise to the suspicion that touting activities might be involved and the “stand-by” arrangement might be abused.</p>

(ii) According to the questionnaire survey conducted by the LCSD at major leisure facilities, it was noted that the public, especially the “stand-by” users of football pitches, held diverse views on the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangements. Among the 517 questionnaires received from users of football pitches, about 58% disagreed with the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches. Given the strong demand for football pitches and the difficulties faced by the public in booking these facilities, the users of football pitches hoped to use the pitches through the “stand-by” mechanism when they failed to book the venues in advance. This resulted in more users of football pitches disagreeing with the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches. However, having regard to the views of all facility users, it is noted that those who agreed to the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches (48.5%) have outnumbered those who opposed the cancellation (32.8%). With the cancellation of the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches, it is expected the abuse of facilities and touting activities will decline.

In consideration of the factors stated above, the LCSD **proposes that when the shortening of advance booking period for individual hirers to 10 days is implemented in June this year, the cancellation of “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches should be launched on a trial basis at the same time** for a period of 6 months. It is believed that following the decline of touting activities, it will be easier for the public to book football pitches through the normal booking channels. Nevertheless, given the diverse views of the public, the LCSD will closely monitor the situation to assess whether cancelling the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches will give rise to the venues being left unused and thus resulting in wastage. We will collect data on the utilisation of venues 3 months after the introduction of the trial measure (i.e. in September 2013) for preliminary analysis and will conduct a comprehensive review 6 months after the introduction of the trial measure (i.e. in late 2013) in order to decide whether the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches should be cancelled on a long-term basis.

<p>(9)</p>	<p>Consider imposing penalties on individuals who fail to show up for their reserved sessions. (Please refer to paragraph 32 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In view that the 18 DCs and the majority of respondents supported the imposition of penalty on individual hirers who had committed irregularities, the LCSD proposes to suspend the offenders' right to book leisure facilities. The improvement measure is expected to be implemented upon completion of the modification of the LLS in the first half of 2014.
<p>(10)</p>	<p>Impose administrative penalties, such as suspending the eligibility to make bookings for a certain period of time, on individual hirers who are engaged in unauthorised transfer of user permits. (Please refer to paragraph 35 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The penalties are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) <u>Hirers repeatedly fail to show up for their booked sessions and make prior cancellation over a period of time</u> The hirer who, on 2 occasions in 30 days, fails to take up the booked session and notify the LCSD of the cancellation of booking at least 1 day in advance will be suspended from booking all land-based fee-charging facilities for <u>90 days</u>.
<p>(11)</p>	<p>Consider actively stepping up efforts to investigate suspected cases and imposing appropriate administrative penalties when touting activities are blatant. (Please refer to paragraph 36 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) <u>Hirers are engaged in unauthorised transfer of user permits</u> Since unauthorised transfer of user permits involves touting activities and the comments received during the consultation called for stiffer penalty, the LCSD proposes that hirers who are found to be engaged in unauthorised transfer or touting of user permits should be immediately suspended from booking all land-based fee-charging facilities for <u>180 days</u>. (iii) <u>Hirers abuse the concessionary rates in making bookings</u> Taking into account the views of the DCs that the efforts to curb the abuse of concessionary rates in making bookings should be stepped up, the LCSD proposes that the period of suspending an offender from booking all land-based fee-charging facilities should be extended from the original proposal of 90 days to <u>180 days</u>, in order to achieve deterrent effect.

(b) <u>Booking by individuals</u> – 4 items		
(12)	<p>Review the arrangement for block booking quotas in order to enhance transparency and improve the availability of venues for booking by individuals, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● setting quotas for the most popular time slots; and ● increasing the transparency of the bookings made by the HAB and LCSD (for example, setting separate quotas or including them in the quotas for booking by organisations). <p>(Please refer to paragraph 41 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<p>The LCSD has established a working group to review the existing arrangements for block booking quotas (including those of the HAB and LCSD) for peak hour sessions. The measures under consideration include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● setting a prime time booking quota for facilities with a relatively higher usage rate, such as the arenas of sports centres and artificial turf football pitches. According to the usage patterns of the two types of facilities, the prime times for the arenas in sports centres and artificial turf football pitches are 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. – 11 p.m. respectively. ● expediting the review of the detailed arrangements, the setting of a prime time booking quota, and the enhancement of transparency. ● studying the detailed arrangements for block booking quotas of the HAB and LCSD in order to enhance the transparency.
(13)	<p>Upgrading the LLS (paragraph 44 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The LCSD completed Phase I of the LLS upgrade project in March 2012. Since the upgrade, the loading of the central processing unit of the system has dropped from about 90% to below 40% on average in the first 5 minutes from 7 a.m. during the peak hours, indicating a significant improvement. The average number of online transactions processed during the period has increased by 56% from 360 to 560, while the waiting time at booking counters has been reduced by about 36% from 14 minutes to 9 minutes on average. ● Upon completion of Phase II of the LLS upgrade project in mid-2013, the speed of processing online bookings will be further enhanced.
(14)	<p>Consider providing a computerised system for the booking of non-fee charging facilities.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 46 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<p>The LCSD has started a feasibility study, which is expected to be completed in 2013/14, and will consider whether to provide booking service through the LLS for non-fee charging facilities on the recommendations of the study report.</p>

(15)	<p>Consider making the signing in arrangement more flexible, such as allowing a hirer to authorise at the time of booking another user to sign in.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 48 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is initially projected that the number of hirers failing to sign in personally will decline significantly after the advance booking period for individual hirers is shortened in June 2013 as the hirers will be more certain whether they can use the booked venues. ● The LCSD will assess the effectiveness of the measure of shortening the advance booking period for individual hirers after its implementation, and examine whether the arrangement of allowing more than one user to sign in may lead to abuse or touting activities.
(c) <u>Booking by organisations</u> – 3 items		
(16)	<p>Review the existing guidelines and adopt improvement measures to better communicate with organisations.</p> <p>(Please refer to the 2 recommendations in paragraph 52 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The LCSD sent an e-mail to all District Leisure Services Offices in April 2012 to remind their venue staff to follow the “Booking Procedures for Use of Recreation and Sports Facilities” when giving replies to the organisations applying for block booking. To avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, notifications on the arrangement and situation of the applications must be provided in writing when communicating with the organisations. ● In addition, the LCSD will incorporate the proposed improvements into the revised “Booking Procedures for Use of Recreation and Sports Facilities” after reviewing the booking arrangements and identifying the arrangements that require modification.
(17)	<p>Consider shortening the notice period for cancellation of booking by organisations.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 55 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<p>At present, organisations that intend to cancel their booked sessions must notify the LCSD 40 days before the day of use to facilitate the release of the sessions for booking by individuals 30 days in advance. Those who fail to do so will receive an advisory letter or default notice under a penalty system. It is agreed that after the shortening of the advance booking period for individuals, the notice period for cancellation of booking by organisations should be shortened accordingly to suit the operation of organisations. The LCSD has set up a working group to review the penalty for the organisations that fail to use their booked sessions, and will revise the arrangement after completion of the review. The proposed improvement measure is expected to be finalised in 2013/14.</p>

(d) <u>The use of venues</u> – 3 items		
(18)	<p>Consider simplifying the procedure for cancelling individual bookings, including making arrangements for online cancellation, cancellation by telephone and refund after cancellation.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 58 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<p>The LCS D implemented the improvement measure on 18 December 2012 to allow LLS patrons to cancel their bookings online using their personal passwords instead of completing the cancellation procedure at the venues in person.</p>
(19)	<p>Review the penalty for organisations failing to use the booked venues.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 60 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<p>The LCS D will shorten the notice period for cancellation of booking by organisations after the advance booking period for individual hirers is shortened. By that time, the penalty for organisations failing to use the booked venues will also be reviewed with a view to minimising the wastage of venue resources arising from organisations' failure to use the booked venue without giving timely notice of cancellation. The review is expected to be completed in 2013/14.</p>
(20)	<p>Adjust the opening hours of venues to increase supply, including opening artificial turf football pitches earlier in the morning or adjusting slightly the time reserved for nurturing natural turf pitches.</p> <p>(Please refer to paragraph 61 of the Executive Summary)</p>	<p>After reviewing the existing opening arrangements for football pitches, the LCS D is of the view that the opening hours of the turf football pitches should not be adjusted at this stage for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The LCS D has planned to build more artificial turf pitches in the coming three years to meet public demand (the number will be increased from 30 pitches in late 2012 to 39 pitches in 2015). (ii) If the pitches open earlier at 7 a.m., the football activity may cause noise nuisance to the residents in the neighbourhood. (iii) DCs will be consulted on the change of opening hours of the artificial turf football pitches depending on the usage pattern of and the demand for venues in the respective districts. (iv) At present, the venue staff of football pitches will adjust and increase the number of sessions available according to the weather conditions, growth of grass, and the maintenance arrangements for the individual venues.

**Implementation Timetable for the Improvement Measures
Recommended by the Ombudsman
on the Booking Arrangements for Recreation and Sports Facilities
of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

(A) Items implemented

Date of Implementation	Item
Mid-2011	Venue staff were further reminded to strictly follow the “Conditions of Use of Recreation and Sports Facilities” when checking the identity documents of venue hirers.
September 2011	The first phase of the interim measures aimed at improving the arrangements for telephone reservation was implemented. Sessions of facilities released by telephone reservation would be posted on the Leisure Link website on the day following the cancellation of reservation and be made available for booking at a designated time on a first-come-first-served basis.
March 2012	Phase I of the upgrade project for the Leisure Link System was completed to ease the network congestion during the morning peak hours.
April 2012	Venue staff were further reminded to follow the “Booking Procedure for Use of Recreation and Sports Facilities” when handling the applications for block bookings made by organisations and giving replies on the applications.
June 2012	The second phase of the interim measures aimed at improving the arrangements for telephone reservation was implemented. Members of the public were required to make telephone reservation for recreation and sports facilities at least 3 days in advance and confirmed by payment at least 1 day before the day of use.
August 2012	Only Hong Kong Identity Cards would be accepted for application for registration as Leisure Link Patrons.
December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The procedure for cancelling bookings by individual hirers was simplified and made available online. ● Online booking service for outdoor tennis courts was made unavailable 1 hour before the start of a session. ● A comprehensive public consultation exercise was launched, including sending officials to attend meetings of the 18 District Councils, writing to national sports associations and sports organisations, uploading the consultation paper onto the LCSD’s website and the Public Affairs Forum of the Home Affairs Bureau, as well as conducting a questionnaire survey at major recreation and sports facilities managed by the LCSD.

(B) Items to be implemented in 2013-14

Estimated Date of Implementation	Item
April to May 2013	To launch Phase II of the upgrade project for the Leisure Link System
June 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To shorten the advance booking period for individual hirers from 30 days to 10 days ● To shorten the existing reallocation period offered to hirers arising from cancellation of booking in bad weather from 60 days to 15 days ● To cancel the “stand-by” arrangement for football pitches on a trial basis for a period of 6 months
2013-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To impose administrative penalties on individual hirers who commit irregularities ● To reduce the maximum booking hours for fee-charging facilities for individual hirers during peak hours ● To review the arrangement for organisations to make priority bookings in the capacity of a limited company and an organisation registered as a society, and the priority they enjoy ● To review the arrangements for block booking quotas for organisations for peak hour sessions ● To conduct a feasibility study on the provision of computerised service for the booking of non-fee charging facilities ● To consider shortening the notice period for cancellation of booking by organisations ● To review the penalty for organisations failing to use the booked sessions

(C) Items to be implemented in or after 2014

- To launch a re-registration exercise for more than 760 000 existing Leisure Link Patrons to use their Hong Kong Identity Cards to re-register
- To explore the introduction of immediate payment arrangement for telephone reservation in order to make available on-the-spot confirmation of booking
- To consider making the signing-in arrangement more flexible for individual hirers