

COMMUNITY SPORTS COMMITTEE

Promoting Community Participation in Sports Through Better Use of Sports Facilities

PURPOSE

This paper is to seek Members' views on the proposed measures to promote the use of facilities in sports centres and squash centres with a view to encourage community participation in sports activities.

BACKGROUND

2. At present, the LCSD manages 85 sports centres providing various indoor recreation and sports facilities. The main facility provided in a sports centre is the main arena, which is a multi-purpose court suitable for playing various games such as badminton, basketball and volleyball. Other facilities in a sports centre may include activity rooms, children playrooms, dance rooms, fitness rooms, squash courts and table tennis tables. Apart from sports centres, the Department also manages 17 squash centres providing mainly squash court facilities. All sports centres and squash centres open daily throughout the year except during the Chinese New Year holidays.

3. Under Audit Report No.43 of the Director of Audit on the Provision and Management of Indoor Recreational and Sports Facilities presented to the Legislative Council in November 2004, the Director of Audit has highlighted that the usage of the main arenas, squash courts and fitness rooms should be improved. The usage rates of these facilities in 2002/03 were —

- (a) the average usage rate of the main arenas was 65.3%;

- (b) the average usage rates of squash courts was 25.1%; and
- (c) in 2002-03, the usage rates of fitness rooms were compiled on the basis of the number of hours used per room. Prior to the release of the Audit Report, Audit recommended that the LCSD should revise the basis for recording the usage rates of its fitness rooms on the basis of the number of users in each hourly time slot against the capacity of each room. With effect from 1 April 2004, the LCSD has started to record usage on this basis. The overall usage rate of fitness room in April 2004 was 18.2%. The actual usage rates ranged from 4.1% to 47%.

CURRENT MEASURES TO PROMOTE UTILISATION

4. In a bid to boost up the usage of these facilities, the LCSD has been adopting a number of improvement measures. These include—

(a) Decoration of Sports Centres

To decorate the sports centres as well as to publicize the local sports stars, we have displayed poster size photographs of local sports stars at our sports centres and squash centres so as to improve the environment;

(b) Enhancement of Services of Fitness Rooms

New and modern fitness equipment as well as TV sets and background music are provided at fitness rooms with a view to improving the services and the atmosphere of the environment;

(c) Multi-use of Squash Courts

Up to now, a total of 152 out of 321 squash courts managed by the LCSD have been made available for hire as table tennis room and activity rooms for different functions, e.g. yoga, fitness exercise,

marital art training, Tai Chi practice, small group games, etc. To meet the needs of users for various activities, we have provided curtains at squash courts with glass back wall to protect privacy of users, storage space for use by regular hirers, exercise mat for yoga activities, portable mirror and PA system for dance activities, etc.

(d) Conversion of Under-utilized Squash Courts into Other Uses

In addition to the multi-use of squash courts, we have also permanently converted some less popular squash courts into other uses to meet the specific needs of the users at the venues—

No. of Squash Courts	Other Usages
52	Table tennis rooms
9	American Pool rooms
3	Children’s play rooms
2	Fitness room
2	Indoor archery cum activity room cum table tennis
1	Climbing wall
1	Dance room

(e) Free Use Scheme

To maximize the usage of sports facilities and promote sports among students and elderly, the LCS D has introduced the Free Use Scheme allowing schools, national sports associations, district sports associations and subvented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to apply for free use of some sports facilities during non-peak hours, such as the main arenas, activity rooms, squash courts, hockey pitches, outdoor bowling greens and obstacle golf course since September 2000.

(f) *Outreaching*

We have deployed venue managers to sports centres. Apart from managing the facilities and organizing recreational programmes, one of their major tasks of the venue managers is to publicize the facilities of the sports centres to potential users such as local organizations, schools, owner's corporations, elderly and youth centres through outreaching and organizing fun days to promote the awareness of the facilities.

(g) *Programmes*

With a view to making full use of the facilities in sports centres and to promoting healthy living amongst senior citizens, a 'Healthy Elderly Scheme' is currently provided, in collaboration with NGOs, for people aged 60 or above during special sessions, i.e. from 7am to 3pm, on weekdays excluding public holidays.

Under the Scheme, senior citizens are welcome to take part in recreation and sports programmes free of charge, such as practicing in social dance, table-tennis, badminton, indoor lawn bowls and gateball etc. Elderly ambassadors and volunteers coming from NGOs will also be invited to offer supporting services to the senior citizens. In 2004/05 and 2005/06, a total of 545 and 592 activities under the Scheme were organized/planned for 49,890 and 53,700 senior citizens respectively.

Apart from organizing squash training programmes, the LCSD supports the running of special programmes to promote the sport of squash and to nurture more potential squash players. Special programmes such as Mini-squash Promotional Campaign, Squash Talent Foundation Programme, Young Athletes Squash Training Scheme and School Squash Programmes are provided for over 13,130 and 13,770 youngsters in 2004/05 and 2005/06 respectively.

Moreover, the LCSD also supports the development of squash through the 18 community squash clubs formed. In 2004/05 and 2005/06, a total of 96 and 116 sports events were offered/ planned by these clubs with the support of LCSD. We have plans to work proactively with the Hong Kong Squash in the formation of more community squash clubs in 2005/06.

REVIEW OF USAGE OF THE FACILITIES

5. With the continuous efforts and the multi-prong approach to promote the usage of the indoor facilities, the average usage rates of the main arenas of sports centres and squash courts have improved as follows—

- (a) the average usage rates of main arenas have increased by over seven percentage points, i.e. from 65.3% in 2002/03 to 72.4% in 2004/05. Details are at **Annex A**;
- (b) the average usage rates of squash courts have increased by 6.9 percentage points, i.e. from 25.1% in 2002/03 to 32% in 2004/05. Details are at **Annex A**.
- (c) As regards fitness rooms, the average monthly usage rates have remained more or less the same ranging from 16% to 19% during the year of 2004/05. Details are at **Annex B**.

PROPOSED MEASURES TO FURTHER PROMOTE THE UTILIZATION OF THE FACILITIES

6. With a view to further improve the usage of these facilities, the following measures will be explored—

- (a) *Relaxation of Booking Procedure for Use of the Facilities*

The purpose of the relaxation is to facilitate bona-fide associations to help maximize the use of our facilities. Under the current booking policy for use of recreation and sports facilities, block booking of

facilities are accepted to facilitate organizational hirers to organise activities/ training programmes three to 12 months in advance depending largely on the status of the organizations.

At present, only activities organized by the LCSD, Home Affairs Bureau, schools and those local international events, championships, leagues and training organized by Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong (SF & OC), China, National Sports Associations (NSA), Community Sports Clubs (CSC) and District Sports Associations (DSA), etc. are allowed to reserve sports facilities up to 12 months in advance. For leagues and training organised by other organizations, including bona-fide associations and corporations (i.e. those organizations that are registered with Certificate of Incorporation under the Companies Ordinance; or Certificate of Registration of a Society under the Societies Ordinance), facilities can only be reserved up to three months in advance.

We intend to relax the period for block booking for this category of hirers from three months to six months in advance. The longer period of advance block booking will provide more flexibility and certainty to bona-fide associations for planning their activities / programme to be organized at our facilities. To ensure that other priority users, such as schools, NSAs, CSCs and DSAs can secure the facilities for organizing leagues and training during peak hours, the relaxation of the block booking period will only be applied to (i) the non-peak hours of activity rooms, and main arenas of sports centres as there is unmet demand by priority users for the facilities during peak hours, and (ii) all hours i.e. both peak and non-peak hours for squash courts and fitness rooms due to their relatively lower usage even during peak hours.

(b) To open up LCSD fitness rooms

The purpose of the proposed arrangement outlined below is to open up the LCSD fitness rooms to all members of the public.

The LCSD now manages a total of 64 fitness rooms distributed in 18 districts. All of these fitness rooms are provided with a range of fitness equipments suitable for aerobic exercise (e.g. treadmills, exercise bikes, rowing machines, steppers etc.) as well as anaerobic exercise (e.g. weight-bearing equipments). In view of the safety implications in using fitness equipment for anaerobic exercise, casual users of the fitness rooms must now possess a Fitness Gold Card through taking an assessment test of using fitness equipment by the LCSD.

It is considered that the requirement to possess a Fitness Gold Card before a person can use the fitness room equipment is not very user-friendly and will discourage casual users. To allow flexible use of the existing facilities by casual users, it is proposed to re-distribute the fitness equipment provided in fitness rooms in the following manner—

- (a) we will designate some fitness rooms in each district as “multi-gym fitness centres”, where a whole range of fitness equipment including those for aerobic and anaerobic exercise will be provided to serve those users with Fitness Gold Card;
- (b) the remaining fitness rooms in each district will be converted into “aerobic fitness centres”, where only aerobic fitness equipment with clear user instructions will be provided. These facilities can be used by the casual users.
- (c) If the utilization rate of some fitness rooms are extremely low, we may consider converting them into other gainful uses, such as children’s play room or dance room.

The proposed arrangement allows the general public to make better use of our aerobic fitness centres. As the potential hazard in the

use of aerobic fitness equipment is minimal, no assessment test for users would be required for using the aerobic fitness room. To facilitate the proper use of the aerobic fitness equipment, written and video instructions introducing basic techniques of using the equipment will be provided at these rooms.

As a parallel measure to enhance the services provided in the multi-gym fitness centres, we will explore to provide resident fitness instructors during designated hours to offer professional and personal coaching services to users.

With these arrangements, the need of both casual users and the existing Fitness Gold Card holders or serious multi-gym users should be addressed.

(c) Further Structural Conversion of Squash Court into other gainful uses

With the endorsement of respective District Councils, the LCSD has planned to further demolish some under-utilised squash centres and convert the sites into outdoor basketball court, or landscape open space to meet local needs. In addition, for those sports centres with unmet demand for activity room and are feasible for structural conversion, the partition walls between two adjacent squash courts will be taken down for conversion into an activity room. Details of the proposed conversion works are at **Annex C**.

PRESENTATION

7. Members are invited to comment on the proposed measures presented in this paper.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
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