

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CSTB281

(Question Serial No. 1855)

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Horticulture and Amenities

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Vincent LIU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism

Question:

Regarding the tree management work undertaken by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in the past 3 years, would the Government inform this Committee of the following:

- (1) What is the number of trees currently managed by the LCSD?
- (2) Please list the (i) establishment, (ii) strength, (iii) number of new recruits, (iv) wastage of manpower, (v) number of retirees and (vi) number of staff members having opted for extension of service of the tree management personnel under the LCSD, with a breakdown by rank and grade.
- (3) What are the number of outsourced service contracts awarded by the LCSD and the annual expenditure involved for tree management work?
- (4) There are concerns over the fact that the LCSD does not request information, including those on staff attendance, time records and project items undertaken, from outsourced tree management service contractors upon completion of works, rendering it difficult for the Department to assess the cost-effectiveness of service contracts. Given this, will the Government consider reviewing such a practice? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?
- (5) What are the number and types of tree work training courses organised by the LCSD for its staff, as well as the number of course attendees? and
- (6) Will the Government consider inviting experienced arborists from the Mainland to share and exchange experience in horticulture and amenities management with the tree management personnel across departments in a bid to enhance their technical expertise in tree management? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon CHAU Siu-chung (LegCo internal reference no.: 10)

Reply:

- (1) As at February 2024, the number of trees managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is 543 000.
- (2) A breakdown of the establishment and strength of the tree management personnel under the LCSD by rank and grade is set out below. Given members of these grades will be deployed to posts not specifically tasked with tree management, the LCSD does not keep information on the number of new recruits, wastage of manpower, number of retirees and number of staff members having opted for extension of service.

Grade	Rank	As at 31 March 2022		As at 31 March 2023		Projected as at 31 March 2004	
		Establishment	Strength	Establishment	Strength	Establishment	Strength
Leisure Services Manager	Senior Leisure Services Manager	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Leisure Services Manager	9	9	9	9	9	9
	Assistant Leisure Services Manager I	24	24	24	24	24	24
Amenities Assistant	Senior Amenities Assistant	18	18	18	16	18	18
	Amenities Assistant I	40	39	40	40	40	40
	Amenities Assistant II	35	34	35	35	35	34
Senior Artisan (General Duties)		34	33	34	33	34	30
Artisan (General Duties)		68	55	68	61	68	64
Workman I		34	34	34	29	34	29

- (3) The LCSD engages outsourced horticultural contractors to assist with the daily horticulture maintenance, which includes tree maintenance and maintenance for shrubs, groundcovers, lawns and trees. Such being the case, we are unable to provide a breakdown on the expenditure incurred by tree maintenance alone. The total expenditure involved is as follows:

Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (projected)
Annual expenditure (\$ million)	252	250	245

- (4) Various contractual requirements are defined by the LCSD based on the needs and nature of tree work, with tenders setting out in detail the service specifications, performance targets and standards, manpower ratios of various service personnel, as well as the qualifications, experience, training and skills required for the jobs. Under the current tree management contracts with the LCSD, contractors are required to submit photos accompanying their work reports, as evidence of completed work and satisfaction with contractual requirements. The LCSD has also developed a contract management guideline to ensure contractors attained the service performance indicators and complied with contractual requirements. Aside from regular on-site or surprise inspections, supervisory staff from the LCSD will also arrange meetings with the contractors so as to monitor the performance of contractors and their staff. If contractors are found to be non-compliant with contractual requirements, the contractors in question will be issued verbal advice or advisory letters by venue management staff under the contractual terms. For severe cases, default notices will be issued and a fee will be deducted from the monthly service fee in the form of liquidated damages. Follow-up actions such as suspension of service or termination of contract will also be considered and taken as appropriate. Besides, the venue management staff will conduct monthly assessments on the performance of the contractors to ensure that they comply with all the contract provisions and meet the contractual requirements. On the whole, the LCSD has put in place measures and made use of management tools to monitor service quality, with a view to ensuring that the tree management work is up to the required standards in terms of quantity, quality and costs.
- (5) The number and types of tree work training courses organised by the LCSD for its staff, as well as the number of course attendees are tabulated below:

Year	2021-22 ¹		2022-23		2023-24	
	No. of courses	Participants	No. of courses	Participants	No. of courses	Participants
In-house training courses ²	98	1 406	127	2 042	128	2 107
Training by local institutes/tree experts ³	44	973	48	1 633	66	1 485
Overseas specialist training programmes	1	3	1	2	2	8
Total	143	2 382	176	3 677	196	3 600

Notes

- ¹ In response to the preventive measures for COVID-19, some in-house courses, courses organised by local institutes and tree experts, as well as an overseas specialist training programme, originally scheduled for 2021-22 had to be postponed. The numbers of courses and attendees were therefore lower than those in 2022-23 and 2023-24.
- ² In-house training courses include practical and theory training on arboriculture, tree risk assessment and tree work.
- ³ These refer to diploma and certificate programmes and seminars/tree conferences organised by the Development Bureau, local institutes and tree experts.

- (6) The Government creates platforms for local, Mainland and overseas experts and scholars to share knowledge and experiences in all areas of urban forestry by convening regular meetings of the Urban Forestry Advisory Panel and organising the Hong Kong International Urban Forestry Conferences. Tree management personnel across various departments have also taken part and conducted exchanges in such advisory panel meetings and conferences to enhance their tree management capabilities.

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