



## District Administration

The District Administration Scheme commenced in 1982 with the establishment of a district board and a district management committee in each of the districts in Hong Kong. The aim of the scheme is to achieve a more effective coordination of government activities in the provision of services and facilities at the district level, ensure that the Government is responsive to district needs and problems and promote public participation in district affairs. From July 1, 1997 to December 31, 1999, the former district boards were replaced by provisional district boards. With effect from January 1, 2000, 18 district councils have been established to replace the provisional district boards.

**The Role of the Home Affairs Department:** The Home Affairs Department is responsible for the District Administration Scheme, community building and community involvement activities, minor environmental improvement projects and minor local public works, and the licensing of hotels and guesthouses, bedspace apartments and clubs. It promotes the concept of effective building management and works closely with other government departments to consistently improve the standard of building management in Hong Kong. It monitors the provision of new arrival services and identifies measures to meet the needs of new arrivals. It also disseminates information relating to and, where necessary, promotes the public's understanding of major government policies, strategies and development plans; and collects and assesses public opinion on relevant issues affecting the community. These responsibilities are discharged primarily through the 18 district offices covering the whole of Hong Kong.

**The Role of the District Officer:** As head of each district office, the district officer is the representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government at the district level. He has the responsibility of overseeing directly the operation of the District Administration Scheme in the district. He is charged with implementing and coordinating the execution of district programmes, ensuring that the advice of the district council is properly followed up, and promoting residents' participation in district affairs. In addition, he is required to maintain close liaison with different sectors of the community and reflect their concerns and problems to the Government. It is his duty to ensure that district problems are resolved promptly through inter-departmental consultation and cooperation. Also, he acts as a link between the district council and departments and serves as a mediator between them when problems arise.

The district officer is also involved with the community at every level. He has a role to mediate in the resolution of disputes between corporate bodies and residents. He performs an advisory and liaison role in providing

assistance to building management bodies. He operates a public enquiry service to enable the community to have easy access to services and information provided by government. In emergency situations, the district officer is responsible for coordinating various departments' efforts on the ground for ensuring the effective provision of relief services.

**The Role of District Councils:** District councils play an essential advisory role on district matters and issues affecting the whole of Hong Kong as appropriate. The functions of a district council are:

- (a) to advise the Government on:
  - matters affecting the well-being of the people in the district;
  - the provision and use of public facilities and services within the district;
  - the adequacy and priorities of government programmes for the district; and
  - the use of public funds allocated to the district for local public works and community activities;
- (b) where funds are made available for the purpose, to undertake:
  - environmental improvements within the district;
  - the promotion of recreational and cultural activities within the district; and
  - community activities within the district.

The district councils also advise on the management of community halls, which should be in the best interest of the local residents.

The district councils initiate, organise and sponsor community involvement projects and activities aimed at enhancing community spirit and social cohesion and promoting the well-being of people in the districts. These range from large-scale district festivals to the formation of local youth choirs and dance troupes. They have also achieved notable success in improving the local environment by undertaking minor environmental improvement projects such as the provision of rest gardens, rain shelters and amenity planting. In the 2006/07 financial year, \$173.5 million has been allocated for the district councils.

**Consultation with District Councils:** Departments send representatives to district council meetings, to consult them and, where appropriate, act on their advice and keep them informed of government policies and programmes in general and, more specifically, of the work of departments in the district and local matters that are likely to affect the livelihood, living environment or well-being of the residents within a district.

**Composition of District Councils:** The third-term district councils, comprising 534 members (405 elected, 102 appointed by the Chief Executive and 27 ex officio who are chairmen of the rural committees in the New Territories), commenced on January 1, 2008. The distribution of seats is as follows:

<i>Hong Kong and Kowloon:</i>	<i>Number of Seats</i>
Central & Western	19
Eastern	46
Kowloon City	27
Kwun Tong	42
Sham Shui Po	26
Southern	21
Wan Chai	14
Wong Tai Sin	31
Yau Tsim Mong	20
Sub-total:	246
<i>New Territories:</i>	
Islands	22
Kwai Tsing	36
North	25
Sai Kung	30
Sha Tin	46
Tai Po	26
Tsuen Wan	24
Tuen Mun	37
Yuen Long	42
Sub-total:	288
Total:	534

**District Management Committees:** The district management committee in each district is chaired by the district officer. It is a government committee consisting of representatives of the core departments in the district, and provides a forum for departments to discuss and resolve district problems. It responds positively to the advice and requests of the district council and submits a comprehensive written report on its work to each meeting of the district council.

To enhance communication between the district management committee and the district council, the district council chairman, vice chairman and chairmen of district council committees are invited to join district management committee as members.

**Area Committees:** Area committees were formed in districts in 1972 primarily to promote public participation in the Keep Hong Kong Clean Campaign and Fight Violent Crime Campaign. Nowadays, the functions of area committees are to encourage public participation in district affairs, to advise and assist in the organisation of community involvement activities and the implementation of government-sponsored initiatives, and advise on issues of a localised nature affecting the area. Throughout the years, area committees have played an important role in the districts and in providing a link between the local community and the district office.

Area committee members are appointed by the Director of Home Affairs and are drawn from a wide spectrum of the community including district council members of the area concerned. At present, there are 65 area committees throughout Hong Kong. In general, each area committee serves an area with a population, including residents and mobile population (workers, shoppers, tourists etc.), of about 80 000 to 100 000.

**Mutual Aid Committees:** A mutual aid committee is a voluntary body formed by the residents of a building.

Mutual aid committees were promoted initially in private multi-storey buildings, and quickly extended to public housing estates, industrial buildings, temporary housing and squatter areas. As at December 2007, there were 2 883 mutual aid committees throughout Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories.

The primary aims of a mutual aid committee are to promote a sense of friendliness, mutual help and responsibility among members, and to promote better security, a better environment and, generally, more effective management within the building. These committees provide a channel of two-way communication between the Government and the residents on matters affecting the well-being of the individual and the community and also provide opportunities for residents to participate in community activities.

**Owners' Corporation:** An Owners' Corporation is a legal entity formed under the Building Management Ordinance by the owners of a private building. Owners' corporations are statutory bodies vested with certain legal powers to facilitate the management of a building. At the end of December 2007, there were 8 394 owners' corporations throughout Hong Kong, among which 6 564 were formed with the assistance of the district offices.