

District Governance

The policy objective of the Government in district governance is to build a harmonious community and enhance the sense of achievement and satisfaction of the people. In order to enhance the efficacy of district governance, the Government announced proposals on improving governance at the district level in May 2023 to reform the District Councils (DCs) and strengthen the district governance structure. With the support of the Legislative Council (LegCo), the District Councils (Amendment) Bill 2023 was passed in July 2023 and the District Councils (Amendment) Ordinance 2023 was published in the Gazette and came into effect on 10 July 2023.

The reformed DCs are positioned as district advisory and service bodies which are not organs of political power as provided in the Basic Law. They should accord top priority to national security, fully implement the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong” and fully manifest executive-led governance, so as to assist the Government in improving the efficacy of district governance and in enhancing people’s sense of achievement and satisfaction.

The Role of the Home Affairs Department: The Home Affairs Department is responsible for promoting district governance, community building and community involvement activities, rural public works and district minor works programmes, as well as the licensing of hotels and guesthouses, bedspace apartments and clubs. The Department also promotes proper building management and works closely with other government departments to improve the standard of building management in Hong Kong. In addition, the Department provides support services for the new arrivals from the Mainland and ethnic minorities to help them integrate into the community. It also disseminates information relating to and, where necessary, promotes the public’s understanding of major government policies, strategies and development plans; and, where necessary, assists bureaux and departments in collecting and assessing public opinion on relevant issues affecting the community. These responsibilities are also discharged through the 18 district offices covering the whole of Hong Kong.

Strengthening the District Governance Structure: As part of the reform to improve district governance, the Government set up in July 2023 the Steering Committee on District Governance (SCDG) and the Task Force on District Governance (TFDG) to facilitate coordination at the central level and to improve district governance capabilities and efficacy. Chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, the SCDG formulates overall strategies, policies and measures of district governance. Chaired by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, the TFDG coordinates and steers the district work of various policy bureaux and departments and monitors and coordinates inter-departmental or cross-district issues.

The Role of the District Officer: Hong Kong is divided into 18 districts, with each district’s District Officer (DO) representing the Government at the district level. The DO is the head of the relevant district office, and also serves as Chairman of the DC, Commander of “Care Teams”, and Chairman of the District Management Committee. The DO promotes communication between the Government and the public; connects and cares for the people so as to build a

harmonious and inclusive community; provides public enquiry services; implements the Community Involvement Programme and District-led Actions Scheme; addresses district issues in collaboration with relevant government departments and community groups; provides assistance to building management bodies; and conducts minor works programmes and signature projects in the community etc. In emergencies, the DO is responsible for coordinating different departments’ efforts on the ground to ensure the effective provision of emergency support services in the district.

The Role of District Councils: As the Chairman of the DC, the DO leads the DC in executing its statutory functions :

- (a) to be consulted by the Government on the district affairs affecting the livelihood and living environment in the District and well-being of the people in the District;
- (b) to collect the views of the people in the District in respect of an issue specified by the Chairman of the District Council, and to submit to the Government a summary of the views collected and the suggested corresponding measures;
- (c) to establish a regular communication mechanism with the people in the District, to meet with them and listen to their views regularly;
- (d) to support, and assist in, the promotion of laws and Government policies in the District, and assist the Government in carrying out various consultation, publicity and liaison activities, such as district forum;
- (e) to assist in the smooth delivery of cultural, recreational, environmental sanitary and other services relating to the interests of the people in the District under the coordination of the Government;
- (f) to apply for funding for projects and activities relating to the functions of DCs such as —
 - (i) projects and activities for the purpose of promotion of sports, arts and culture;
 - (ii) local events and celebration events; and
 - (iii) greening and volunteer;
- (g) to provide services for people in the District, such as consultation and case referral services;
- (h) to cooperate with other consultation and service organisations in the District under the coordination of the Government to achieve the best results in serving the people in the District; and
- (i) to undertake any other matters as commissioned by the Government from time to time.

Consultation with District Councils: Departments send representatives to DC meetings, to consult them on the district affairs affecting the livelihood and living environment in the District and well-being of the people in the District and keep DCs informed of government policies and programmes that are likely to affect their respective Districts.

Composition of District Councils: The seventh-term DCs commenced on 1 January 2024. The DCs are comprised of 470 seats, including 179 appointed seats, 176 District Committees constituencies seats, 88 District Council geographical constituencies seats and 27 ex officio seats assumed by chairmen of the rural committees in the New Territories. The distribution of seats is as follows:

<i>Hong Kong and Kowloon:</i>	<i>Number of Seats</i>
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Central & Western	20
Eastern	30
Kowloon City	20
Kwun Tong	40
Sham Shui Po	20
Southern	20
Wan Chai	10
Wong Tai Sin	20
Yau Tsim Mong	20

Sub-total: 200

New Territories:

Islands	18
Kwai Tsing	32
North	24
Sai Kung	32
Sha Tin	42
Tai Po	22
Tsuen Wan	22
Tuen Mun	32
Yuen Long	46

Sub-total: 270

Total: 470

District Management Committees: The District Management Committee (DMC) in each district is chaired by the DO. 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 takes into account the advice and requests of the DC.

The "District-led Actions Scheme" (DAS) has been implemented in 18 districts since 2016-17 to address long-standing problems and capitalise on opportunities in the districts. Implemented initiatives include projects on improving environmental hygiene and managing public spaces, for instance, handling shop front extensions, enhancing anti-mosquito efforts and clearing illegal bicycle parking, etc; as well as projects that enhance the living quality of residents and community facilities in response to the unique circumstances and needs of respective districts, such as promoting and improving the fire safety of the buildings.

District Fight Crime Committees: District Fight Crime Committees (DFCCs) were established in September 1976. DFCCs play an important role in the battle against crime by reviewing the situation at district level and reflecting community concerns about law and order issues. DFCCs help foster community awareness of crime prevention and encourage community participation in combating crime through publicity programmes carried out in the districts. Each district has one DFCC.

District Fire Safety Committees: From March 1998, District Fire Safety Committees (DFSCs) have been set up in the districts by phases. DFSCs actively promote fire prevention and other building safety issues, promote public education and publicity in areas of fire prevention and building safety, as well as promote and assist in organising fire drills in cooperation with owners' corporations. Each district has one DFSC.

Area Committees: Area Committees (ACs) have been set up in the districts by phases since 1972. ACs promote public participation in district affairs, advise and assist in the organisation of community involvement activities and the implementation of government-sponsored initiatives, and

advise on issues that affect the area. At present, there are 71 ACs in Hong Kong.

Community Involvement Programme: With a view to promoting community building and district harmony, the Home Affairs Department implements the Community Involvement Programme in 18 districts to provide funding to Government departments, Non-governmental Organisations, DCs or Committees/ Working Groups under DCs/District Offices for implementing projects and activities relating to the promotion of sports, arts and culture, local events and celebration events, as well as greening and volunteer work, etc.

Owners' Corporation: An owners' corporation is a legal entity formed under the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344) by the owners of a private building and is vested with certain legal powers to facilitate the management of a building. At the end of December 2023, there were about 11 400 owners' corporations throughout Hong Kong, among which about 9 300 were formed with the assistance of the district offices.