

District Administration

The District Administration Scheme commenced in 1982 with the establishment of a District Board and a District Management Committee (DMC) 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 (DCs) were 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, rural public works and district minor works programmes, 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 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 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 (DO) represents the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government at the district level and oversees the operation of the District Administration Scheme in the district. The DO implements and coordinates the execution of relevant district programmes, ensures that the DC's advice is properly followed up, and promotes residents' participation in district affairs. In addition, the DO maintains close liaison with different sectors of the community and reflects their concerns and problems to the Government.

The DO acts as a link between the DC and government departments, facilitates communication between them, and also helps to facilitate the handling of district problems promptly through inter-departmental consultation and cooperation.

The DO is also involved with the community at every level and mediates in disputes between corporate bodies and residents. The DO performs an advisory and liaison role in assisting building management bodies and operates a public enquiry service to give the community easy access to government services and information. In emergencies, the DO is responsible for coordinating different departments' efforts on the ground to ensure the effective provision of relief services.

The Role of District Councils: DCs play an essential advisory role on district matters and issues affecting the whole of Hong Kong as appropriate. The functions of a DC 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:
 - minor works within the district to improve local facilities, living environment and hygienic conditions;
 - the promotion of recreational and cultural activities within the district; and
 - community activities within the district.

The DCs also participate in managing some district facilities, including community halls, public libraries, leisure grounds, sports venues, public swimming pools and beaches.

The DCs 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 include large-scale district festivals and activities to promote sports and culture, to care for the disadvantaged groups, and to foster inter-cultural understanding, etc. They have also achieved notable success in improving the local environment by undertaking district minor works projects such as the provision of rest gardens, rain shelters and amenity planting. In 2018-19, \$461.6 million has been provided for DCs to carry out community involvement projects and activities, including an additional \$20.8 million in each of the five years from 2015-16 to 2019-20 for further strengthening the support for DCs in promoting arts and cultural activities in the districts. An annual provision of \$340 million under a dedicated capital works block vote has also been provided for DCs to implement district minor works projects. In addition, a one-off grant of \$100 million for each district, or \$1.8 billion in total for all districts, has been earmarked for district councils to carry out signature projects. An additional one-off grant of \$200 million has also been earmarked for preparatory work for the signature projects in all districts.

Consultation with District Councils: Departments send representatives to DC 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 fifth-term DCs, comprising 458 seats (431 elected seats and 27 ex officio seats assumed by chairmen of the rural committees in the New Territories), commenced on January 1, 2016. The distribution of seats is as follows:

<i>Urban areas:</i>	<i>Number of Seats</i>
Central & Western	15
Eastern	35
Kowloon City	24
Kwun Tong	37
Sham Shui Po	23
Southern	17
Wan Chai	13
Wong Tai Sin	25
Yau Tsim Mong	19
	458
Sub-total:	208
 <i>New Territories:</i>	
Islands	18
Kwai Tsing	30
North	22
Sai Kung	29
Sha Tin	39
Tai Po	21
Tsuen Wan	20
Tuen Mun	30
Yuen Long	41
	250
Sub-total:	250
Total:	458

District Management Committees: The 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 responds positively to the advice and requests of the DC and submits a comprehensive written report on its work to each meeting of the DC.

To enhance communication between the DMC and the DC, the DC chairman, vice chairman and chairmen of DC committees are invited to join the DMC as members. In the light of the positive outcome and support from the community in respect of the pilot scheme introduced by the Home Affairs Department in Sham Shui Po and Yuen Long between April 2014 and August 2015, the Government has extended the scheme to 18 districts in the fifth-term DCs and renamed it as "District-led Actions Scheme" (DAS). With an additional annual funding of \$63 million, DAS aims to tackle district problems which are long-standing, of large magnitude, and complex, as well as to capitalise on local

opportunities. It provides the respective DMCs chaired by DOs with the decision-making power to tackle problems relating to district management, environmental hygiene and enhance the living quality in the communities, with the advice given by the DCs on the work priorities.

Area Committees: Area committees were formed in 1972 primarily to promote public participation in the Keep Hong Kong Clean Campaign and the Fight Violent Crime Campaign. Nowadays, the functions of area committees are to promote 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 Government.

Area committee members are appointed by the Director of Home Affairs and are drawn from a wide spectrum of the community including DC members of the area concerned. At present, there are 63 area committees in Hong Kong.

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 and industrial buildings. At the end of April 2018, there were 1 702 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 make available 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 March 2018, there were 10 711 owners' corporations throughout Hong Kong, among which 8 639 were formed with the assistance of the district offices.