

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(PL)092

(Question Serial No. 1289)

Head: (82) Buildings Department
Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses
Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (HUI Siu-wai)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

The Audit Commission published an audit report on “Buildings Department's actions on unauthorised building works” in April 2015, making a number of recommendations on improvement. In this regard:

- Has the Buildings Department (BD) followed up on the various recommendations and reviewed the manpower, administrative procedures, action plans, work objectives, etc. of the Department? If so, what are the specific details of the follow-up actions and the results of the review?
- What was the number of staff specially tasked with handling of unauthorised building works in the Department in 2014-15 and 2015-16? Will additional manpower be expected in 2016-17? If so, what is the number of additional staff, and what respective percentages do the net increase in posts, civil service posts converted from non-civil service contract positions, and professional and technical posts account for? Is there any change in the number of additional posts as compared with the number of additional posts originally applied for? As compared with 2014-15 and 2015-16, what is the change in the ratio of the manpower concerned to the workload in 2016-17?
- In 2014-15 and 2015-16, what were the respective estimated and actual numbers of removal orders and warning notices issued, the numbers of backlog cases regarding the removal and rectification of irregularities, and outstanding removal orders, and the numbers of prosecutions instigated against non-compliant removal orders? In the coming two years, will additional manpower be required to clear the backlog cases concerned?

Asked by: Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen (Member Question No. 7)

Reply:

The Buildings Department (BD) has been taking proactive action to implement the various recommendations in the said audit report and of the Public Accounts Committee in relation to unauthorised building works (UBWs). The follow-up actions are set out in detail in the relevant Government Minute tabled at the Legislative Council in October 2015.

Enforcement action against UBWs is carried out by the relevant professional and technical staff of the two Existing Buildings Divisions, the Mandatory Building Inspection Division and the Minor Works and Signboard Control Section of the BD as part of their overall duties to implement the BD's building safety and maintenance enforcement programmes. The numbers of these professional and technical staff in 2014-15 and 2015-16 are 620 and 630 respectively. In 2016-17, 36 additional professional and technical posts will be created to assist in the implementation of the above-mentioned programmes. The creation of these posts does not involve the conversion of non-civil service contract positions into civil service posts. We are not able to provide statistics on the manpower and expenditure involved solely for the enforcement action against UBWs, or calculate the change in the ratio of the manpower concerned to the workload.

The estimated and actual numbers of removal orders, warning notices and prosecutions are tabulated as follows -

	2014		2015	
	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual
No. of removal orders issued	6 000	11 816	17 000	12 918
No. of warning notices issued	300	332	300	357
No. of prosecutions instigated against non-compliance with removal orders	3 000	2 532	3 000	3 030

There were about 67 500 and 64 000 outstanding removal orders issued against UBWs as at 31 December 2014 and 2015 respectively. In the coming years, the BD will continue to closely monitor the progress and staffing requirement of the enforcement programme, and bid for additional resources if necessary under the established procedures.

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