$1.4m spent on entertainment events

The Urban Council spent over $1.4 million to present 1,183 entertainment events which attracted more than 850,000 people in the 1974-75 financial year.

This year, said the Chairman of the Urban Council, Mr A. de O. Sales, a sum of $1.7 million had been budgetted for entertainment presentations.

"Planning is going on for an even more ambitious outdoor programme in the years to come," he said.

Mr Sales was speaking on the development of the council's public entertainment programmes over the past eight years.

When it started in 1968-69, Mr Sales said nearly $100,000 was spent.

In the previous eight years, there was only a very small budget allocation and it was hardly ever used.

Mr Sales said this only came to the notice of the council when it was asked if it would agree to its deletion.

"Instead, it led the council to put it to good use in earnest.

"The initiative was taken at once to stage events likely to interest young people during their summer holidays," he said.

Mr Sales, however, pointed out that the programme only came into its own as a permanent activity when the council achieved direct control over its own finances two years ago.

In 1973-74, he said, there were 898 events which cost over $665,000 and attracted over 650,000 people.

He said this outdoor entertainment policy may have been an innovation for Hongkong when it was conceived and put into effect. But, it had now become a way of life in the densely populated districts and accepted by the council as part of its public policy.

At present, Mr Sales said, investigation is taking place to improve the council's entertainment programmes and a thorough study of costs is also being carried out.

But, he stressed, there are limits to what can be done under prevailing circumstances such as the heavy concentration of people and the lack of suitable venues.

For this reason, he said, a mobile stage had become part of the equipment and where conditions warrant, more open-air stages will be built.