

Administrative nerve centre serves millions in new towns

TO cope with rapid development in the new towns built during the past 20 years, the Regional Council was set up to administer a wide range of municipal services needed by the 2.4 million residents of these growth areas.

The Regional Council was formally established in April, 1986, after a year of preparatory work by the Provisional Regional Council.

A financially autonomous body, the council's chief source of revenue is a share of rates collected by the Government in the council area.

Other sources include market stall rentals, licence fees, fees collected for services and the use of facilities, and income from the investment of surplus funds.

In the 1990-91 financial year, about 68 per cent of total revenue came from rates.

Total revenue amounted to about \$2.16 billion while total expenditure was about \$1.75 billion.

Spanning nine districts across the territory, the council area includes Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, Tuen

An inter-linking chain of committees keeps services flowing to municipal areas which have mushroomed around Hongkong over the past 20 years. CATHERINE CHAN examines the Regional Council's internal structure, its funding and its activities.

Mun, Yuen Long, the North District, Tai Po, Sha Tin, Sai Kung and the islands.

The council's activities cover environmental hygiene, public health, sanitation, liquor licensing, provision of recreation, sports and cultural facilities and services.

The council comprises 36 members. Twelve are directly elected, nine are representatives from the nine districts boards and 12 are appointed by the Governor. The remaining three are *ex-officio* members — the chairman and vice-chairman Heung Yee-kuk.

The council chairman, vice-chairman and other office bearers are elected by the council members.

Four select committees meet monthly to decide on policy matters. All meetings held under the auspices of

the council are open to the public.

The environmental hygiene select committee is responsible for policy on general sanitation and hygiene, pest control, offensive trades, food premises, abattoirs, markets, hawkers, cemeteries, waste collection and licensing, excluding liquor.

The recreation and culture select committee supervises fee levels and the development of recreational, sports and cultural services and facilities.

The capital works select committee advises on priority works projects and studies gazetted statutory draft town plans which may affect the council's interests.

The finance and administration select committee controls and manages the

council's finance and other resources.

A liquor licensing board meets quarterly to advise on the granting of liquor licences.

A tender sub-committee under the finance and administration select committee deals with all tenders and a review sub-committee under the environmental hygiene select committee handles complaints and appeals on licensing matters.

Nine geographically based district committees meet every two months to deal with the provision of services and advise on the management of council facilities.

The Regional Services Department is the executive arm of the Regional Council and is headed by a director and two deputies.

The operations branch has four divisions — environmental hygiene, leisure services, culture and entertainment, and transport.

Five divisions fall under the administration branch — administration, planning, finance and supplies, information, and management services.