For discussion
On 18 December 2001

LEGCO PANEL ON FOOD AND ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE

Review of Hawker Control Operations

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to brief Members on the outcome of the staff consultation on the Report of the Comprehensive Review of Hawker Control Operations ("the Report") of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department's ("FEHD"). We would also report on the latest development regarding the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Report.

BACKGROUND

2. FEHD took up the responsibilities for hawker control on 1 January 2000 upon the reorganization of municipal services. Taking into account the need to align the different policies, organizational structures and operational systems between the urban area and the New Territories, and to update the modus operandi and human resource deployment of Hawker Control Teams ("HCTs") to improve upon their effectiveness, FEHD embarked on a comprehensive review of hawker control operations in July 2000. The purpose of the review was to identify ways in which hawker control operations can be improved and the management of HCTs strengthened.

3. At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene on 17 July 2001, FEHD informed Members of the initial recommendations of the Comprehensive Review and that staff consultation had then just started. Members asked FEHD to report on the outcome of the staff consultation in due course.

Staff Consultation

4. The Report was issued to the staff in mid-July 2001 for a one-month consultation period. By the end of August, nine staff unions and seven individuals have given their views in writing. Staff unions supported the recommendations relating to improving the management of human resources, but had doubts about the revised squad structure and modus operandi for hawker control operations for fear that they may affect operational efficiency. Discussions were held with the staff

unions subsequent to the staff consultation and it was agreed that the recommendations can be followed up by classifying them in the following way —

Category A	:	Recommendations which, in view of their merits, should be pursued.
Category B	:	Recommendations which should be tried out to test their practicality.
Category C	:	Recommendations which should not be pursued for the time being.

Category A: Recommendations to be pursued

5. Staff supported the proposed measures to strengthen the human resource management of the Hawker Control Officer ("HCO") grade as a key to boost service quality. To this end, action is in hand to implement proposals such as enhancing training programmes for each rank, upgrading performance management to ensure fair and honest appraisals, setting up a posting committee to increase transparency and improving staff uniform to enhance the image of the grade.

6. A number of proposals to enhance the operational aspects of hawker management such as setting up a surveillance and intelligence checking system in all districts to monitor hawker movement, improving communication equipment for HCTs, and enhancing facilities in HCT depots have likewise been well received by staff and are being followed up expeditiously. The following recommendations should likewise be implemented –

(a) regularizing break times by HCT staff to recuperate after a period of field operations; and

(b) introducing a revised discipline code and dress code to give guidelines to staff on conduct and discipline, as well as on how to wear the uniforms properly

These recommendations are conducive to ensuring discipline and operational efficiency.

Category B: Recommendations to be Tried Out

7. The Report recommends that a revised squad structure of HCTs for sector patrol for the entire territory should be implemented, with regularized patrol frequencies in respect of areas with varying degree of hawker problems. The Report also recommends improved enforcement strategies which would enable sector patrol squads to concentrate on patrolling the streets while the raiding teams to focus on enforcement actions against unlicensed hawkers and licensed hawkers

and shop owners who cause substantial obstruction. The Report also proposed a new structure for raiding teams, with three teams in each district (1 functional team in each of the day and night shift and 1 team as relief). A revised modus operandi relating to arrest, seizure and prosecution of hawkers was also proposed.

8. To test the practicality of these proposals, they would be piloted in selected districts. One district from each of the three operations divisions have been chosen for the pilot scheme. They are Wanchai, Sham Shui Po and Kwai Tsing. These districts have been selected because they contain a relatively balanced mix of licensed hawkers, unlicensed hawkers and illegal shop extension cases to allow a realistic assessment to be made on the effectiveness of the proposals. The pilot scheme would commence in January 2002 and last for three months, at the end of which an assessment would be carried out before a decision is taken as to whether or not the proposed squad/team structure and modus operandi would be extended to other districts.

Category C: Recommendations not to be Pursued For the Moment

9. The Report recommended that consideration be given to retitling the name of the grade in order to fully reflect the duties performed by HCOs. Staff did not favour this idea and would like to maintain the present title. The proposal of pre-setting a percentage of performance ratings was considered too rigid and thus not supported by staff. On the operational side, they had reservation about taking enforcement action against fixed pitch hawkers when the "tolerated display area" is exceeded on the ground that it would be difficult to apply a uniform tolerated enforcement limit against different ground situations. We have carefully considered staff views on these issues and agreed that these recommendations should not be pursued for the time being.

WAY FORWARD

10. The above Category A recommendations would be implemented as soon as possible. We would assess the outcome of the pilot on the Category B recommendations at the end of the three-month trial period which will commence in January 2002. We would maintain close dialogue with staff unions and would take into account their views in the process. We would also closely monitor the hawker situation on the ground to ensure that adequate measures are taken to achieve effective management.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
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