

**For discussion  
on 4 April 2005**

**LegCo Subcommittee  
to Study the Streamlining of Food Business Licensing**

**Work of the Buildings Department in  
Processing Applications for Food Business Licences**

**Purpose**

This paper presents the information relating to the processing of food business licence applications by the Buildings Department as requested by the Subcommittee at its meeting on 2 March 2005.

**Procedures for compliance with building safety requirements**

2. Upon receipt of a referral from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), Buildings Department (BD) will retrieve the approved building records of the premises and conduct site inspection to assess the suitability of the premises from building safety point of view.
3. Based on the findings from desk study and from site inspection, BD will formulate the building safety requirements for the issue of a provisional licence and the additional requirement(s), if any, for the issue of a full licence according to the 3-tier system for verification of compliance.
4. Under the 3-tier system, building safety requirements are graded into categories 1, 2 and 3. The applicant and his authorized person/registered structural engineer would certify direct to FEHD for compliance with Category 1 and Category 2 requirements respectively. For Category 3 requirements, the authorized person/registered structural engineer would need to report to BD for verification of compliance with the requirements.
5. Flow charts showing BD's involvement in the processing of

food business licence applications are at Appendices A and B for reference.

### **Time taken by BD to provide copies of building plans to food business licence applicants**

#### *Plan Viewing Applications*

6. The Building Information Center (BIC) of the BD administers applications for viewing of building records of existing buildings. For food business licence applicants, the BIC has committed to make building records available for inspection within 4 working days<sup>1</sup> upon the receipt of the application. In the last 3 years, the BIC was able to achieve a performance of an average of 92% in meeting the 4 days target. The table below provides details of the performance achievements:

Year	2002	2003	2004
Number of applications for viewing of building records	2,768	3,303	4,169
% of applications processed within 4 working days	94%	89%	92%

#### *Copying of Building Records*

7. Where an applicant applies for a copy of building records after inspection of the same, a copy of such building records will normally be ready for collection on the date of payment of the requisite fee if such payment is made before 4:00 pm on weekdays or before 11:30 am on Saturdays. Only in special circumstances, such as mending of the original plans being required prior to copying, would the copy be provided on the following day.

8. Where an applicant applies for a copy of the building records of particular premises without having first inspected such records, the BIC will retrieve the relevant files and identify the records for the applicant. If the

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<sup>1</sup> Including Saturday

application is related to licensing matters, the BIC will endeavour to make the copy of such records for the applicant within 4 working days.

**Time taken by BD to provide comments on food business licence applications and time taken by BD to provide responses to revision of plans or alternative proposals**

9. For restaurant, cold store and factory canteen licence applications under FEHD's Application Vetting Panel (AVP) System, BD has pledged to process 95% of these cases within 14 working days. The following table provides statistics on the performance of new AVP cases in the last 3 years:

Year	No. of AVP Cases processed	No. of Cases processed within 14 Working Days	Average Processing Time
2002	1046	995 (95%)	12.1 working days
2003	1145	1071 (94%)	12.8 working days
2004	1287	1229 (95%)	10.9 working days

10. For new applications for other types of food business licences, the internal performance target of BD is to process 85% of these cases within 28 working days. Statistics on the performance for this category of applications in the last 3 years are tabulated below:

Year	No. of Cases processed	No. of Cases processed within 28 Working Days	Average Processing Time
2002	265	186 (70.2%)	26.7 working days
2003	322	259 (80.4%)	24.5 working days
2004	331	279 (84.3%)	21.8 working days

11. Notwithstanding the fact that the current interdepartmental agreement for the processing of revised plans of AVP cases is 30 working days, BD has introduced an internal performance target to process 85% of the revision of plans or alternative proposals for restaurant, cold store and

factory canteen licence applications within 14 working days. Statistics on performance in the last 3 years are as follows:

Year	No. of Cases processed	No. of Cases processed within 14 Working Days	Average Processing Time
2002	1479	1214 (82.1%)	12.9 working days
2003	1293	998 (77.2%)	13.2 working days
2004	1846	1531 (83%)	11.8 working days

12. For revision of plans or alternative proposals for other types of food business licences, the internal performance target of BD is to process 85% of these cases within 28 working days. Statistics on performance in the last 3 years are as follows:

Year	No. of Cases processed	No. of Cases processed within 28 Working Days	Average Processing Time
2002	196	166 (84.7%)	19.9 working days
2003	174	150 (86.2%)	21.6 working days
2004	196	179 (91.3%)	16.8 working days

### **Number of food business licence applications processed by BD, time taken and manpower**

13. The Licensing Unit (LU) of the BD advises the licensing authorities on the suitability of premises for various uses such as food business premises, places of public entertainment inside buildings, child-care centers and non-purpose built schools<sup>2</sup>.

14. The LU is supervised by a Chief Building Surveyor who also performs supervisory role in other areas. The LU comprises 2 Senior Building Surveyors, 9 Building Surveyors, 9 Survey Officers, 1 Senior Structural Engineer, 1 Structural Engineer, 1 Technical Officer and 9 clerical

<sup>2</sup> Currently, food business licences and places of public entertainment licences for the Disney project under construction are being taken care of by the New Buildings Section.

staff. One Building Surveyor and one Survey Officer form a district team to process licence applications in respect of their district. The structural engineering staff provide supporting structural advice to the Building Surveying teams. An organization chart is at Appendix C.

15. The LU processed 7,428, 6,857 and 7,743 applications in 2002, 2003 and 2004 respectively. The numbers of cases related to food business premises (including alteration plans submitted after the issue of a licence) in the same 3 years were 4,469, 4,423 and 5,170 respectively. It is estimated that the processing of these cases contributes to 70% of the workload of the LU.

16. The numbers of new food business licence applications and revised plans processed by BD and the time taken in the past three years are tabulated as below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of new applications or revised plan</b>	<b>Average Processing Time</b>
2002	2986	13.8 working days
2003	2934	14.5 working days
2004	3660	12.7 working days

### **Advice Sought**

17. Members are invited to note the information set out above.

**Buildings Department**  
**March 2005**