

For Discussion
on 22 June 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Funding for enhanced measures to step up environmental hygiene to combat human swine influenza

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the proposal to provide additional funding of \$300 million for enhanced measures to step up environmental hygiene in the fight against human swine influenza (HSI), having regard to developments on both the global and local fronts.

Background

2. On 11 June 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the level of swine influenza pandemic alert from Phase 5 to Phase 6, signifying that the world was at the start of an influenza pandemic. As at 16 June 2009, 79 countries/areas have officially reported over 37 000 confirmed cases of HSI.

3. In Hong Kong, the Emergency Response Level under the Government's Preparedness Plan for Influenza Pandemic has been activated since the confirmation of the first imported case of HSI on 1 May 2009

concerning a businessman from Mexico. Based on the recent development of the transmission of HSI, Hong Kong cannot be spared of local transmission. The strategy for preventing and controlling HSI focuses on the following:

- a) enhancing surveillance and controlling the disease at the border control points and in the community;
- b) stepping up responses in hospitals and clinics and enhancing capacity;
- c) mobilising the community to step up disease prevention efforts;
- d) maintaining transparency of information;
- e) fostering collaboration with WHO, Mainland and overseas health authorities; and
- f) ensuring adequacy of legal powers in disease control.

4. In this connection, the Financial Secretary (FS) announced on 26 May 2009 that the Government had earmarked \$300 million for stepping up environment hygiene measures as well as the relevant public education and promotion work in the fight against HSI. FS also indicated that the Government would provide full financial support to ensure that additional funding is available if the developments of the pandemic demand new or enhanced measures.

5. Upon the emergence of the first the first cluster of local HSI cases on 11 June 2009, the “Fight Against Pandemic” campaign is gradually transiting from the containment phase to a new mitigation phase. As at 16 June 2009, there were a total of 118 confirmed cases in Hong Kong, 80 of which were imported cases and 37 were local cases while the status of the remaining case (whether imported or local) could not be determined.

Ongoing measures for improvement in environmental hygiene

6. On the health side, the Government has been carefully deploying its disease control strategies taking account of developments locally and internationally in the fight against HSI. At the same time, the Government has all along remained on high alert and has taken prompt and comprehensive action in the battle against HSI on the environmental hygiene front. Since the initial outbreak of HSI in Mexico earlier this year, all government bureaux and departments have deployed their existing staff and resources to step up cleansing and disinfection of their offices as well as premises and facilities under their management. For instance, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has stepped up the cleansing of streets and roads, public markets, public toilets, etc. The Housing Department has increased cleansing and disinfection frequency at public rental housing estates and encouraged members of Estate Management Advisory Committees to participate in floor washing campaigns. The Lands Department (LandsD) has undertaken a programme to maintain cleanliness and cut grass on all Government fenced-up sites. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has allocated additional resources to its subvented welfare service units under various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for stepping up their cleanliness and precautionary measures against HSI. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has enhanced the cleanliness of leisure and cultural venues/facilities while the Home Affairs Department (HAD) has increased the frequency of cleansing at community halls/community centres and public enquiry service centres. Other departments, which may have lesser direct contact with the public have at the same time stepped up cleanliness of their offices, stocked up sufficient surgical masks and disinfectants in its preparedness plan against the pandemic.

7. Apart from the efforts of the Government, the full involvement of the community is vital to promoting a cleaner and healthier living environment as well as fortifying our fight against HSI. To call for pro-active community participation, the Government has published a guide to personal, home and environmental hygiene entitled “Keep Clean, Be Healthy”. A total of 2.5 million copies of the booklet were sent to all households by Hong Kong Post and uploaded onto government websites in mid-May.

8. The Government has also provided extra resources for 18 districts, schools, etc., and joined hands with District Councils (DCs), public utilities, public transport operators, NGOs and various business associations to promote a clean and healthy environment. For instance, the Transport Department has been closely monitoring public transport operators’ implementation of appropriate precautionary measures. The LandsD has requested members of the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong to step up cleansing and disinfection of the private shopping centres and other facilities under their management. The District Offices, in consultation with the DCs, have also rolled out various cleansing and publicity activities with an additional allocation of \$500,000 to each district.

9. To maximise public awareness, a “Clean Hong Kong Day” was held on 10 May 2009 with over 80 activities organised territory-wide, and over 200 activities being organised in the weeks and months thereafter, to keep the environment clean and to promote good personal and environmental hygiene. As part of the campaign, FEHD has selected 105 blackspots throughout the territory with the involvement of DCs, and have arranged major clean-up operations to address environmental hygiene problems at these spots. They include both public areas as well as private rear lanes which are accessible to members of the public. FEHD has completed the first round of clean-up

operations in all blackspots, which will be followed by subsequent upkeeping work in the future. To achieve lasting improvements, FEHD has liaised with other relevant departments (such as the Highways Department and the Buildings Department) to arrange re-paving of broken pavements/road surfaces, repairing of defective pipes, etc. FEHD will continue to work closely with DCs to review and update the list of blackspots.

Funding for enhanced measures to step up environmental hygiene

10. Maintaining good personal and environmental hygiene is the first line of prevention against the spread of diseases. Since the outbreak of HSI, while the Government has been making every endeavour to improve public hygiene, there have been rising awareness and increasing concerns regarding personal and environmental hygiene on the part of the community. In the light of the latest developments on the spread of HSI in the community, the need to further enhance our efforts on the prevention front has become imminent. In this connection, with the proposed allocation of \$300 million announced by the FS on 26 May 2009, we intend to step up environmental hygiene measures as well as the relevant public education and publicity work in the fight against HSI.

11. We propose to launch a number of initiatives lasting for about 12 months, at a cost of \$300 million, involving the Drainage Services Department (DSD), FEHD, HAD, LCSD, SWD, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and Marine Department (MD). We plan to seek the approval of the Finance Committee on the funding proposal in early July. These initiatives are outlined as follows: -

(a) DSD: Additional cleansing of underground drains and sewers

DSD will carry out additional cleansing works to some underground drains and sewers in blockage-prone areas, including some rear lanes in congested old urban areas (such as Mong Kok and Wan Chai) as well as the downstream drains and sewers of all hospitals, major Government clinics and markets, so as to minimise the risk of occurrence of unhygienic sewage overflows. The projected cost of these measures is \$15 million in total. A detailed cost breakdown is at Enclosure 1.

(b) FEHD: Enhancing cleansing of environmental hygiene blackspots, public toilets etc. and promotion of HSI precautionary measures and personal health and hygiene

FEHD will enhance cleansing and disinfection services in public markets, public toilets, rear lanes and private tenement buildings, and the provision of related publicity and education materials. The private contractors hired by FEHD will provide further cleansing and disinfection services in public markets; street washing services to rear lanes in the vicinity of licensed food premises, hawker concentrated areas and markets; cleansing services for aqua privies and public toilets without attendants; and one-off clean-up services to common parts of private tenement buildings without Owners' Corporations / Mutual Aid Committees¹. To address the problem of environmental hygiene blackspots in different districts, FEHD will

¹ FEHD and HAD will coordinate their clean-up services to common parts of private buildings without management bodies, with a view to optimising the use of resources.

engage contractors to step up and sustain cleansing and disinfection work at these target locations. The projected cost of these measures is \$96 million in total. A detailed cost breakdown is at Enclosure 2.

(c) HAD: Environmental hygiene improvement and community involvement projects

HAD will implement environmental hygiene improvement and related community involvement projects. In implementing the district-based projects, HAD will take into account district circumstances and consult the respective DCs. NGOs and contractors will be engaged as necessary in implementing these projects. Examples of these projects include:-

- cleansing services for common areas of private buildings without management bodies;
- cleansing services for the dwelling places of the under-privileged, such as singleton elderly;
- distribution of hygiene packets and promotional materials; and
- district-based and territory-wide promotional activities, such as organising seminars on personal/environmental hygiene and roving exhibitions.

The projected cost of these measures is \$40 million in total. A detailed cost breakdown is at Enclosure 3.

(d) LCSD: Promoting HSI precautionary measures and personal health and hygiene in the leisure and cultural venues

LCSD will employ Health Ambassadors (HAs) to help step up environmental hygiene and related public education and promotion work for leisure and cultural venues in the fight against HSI. The HAs will promote precautionary measures against HSI and publicise personal health and hygiene. The HAs will also assist in monitoring the cleansing and disinfection work in various venues, with a view to enhancing environmental hygiene in the leisure and cultural venues. The projected cost of this scheme is \$38 million in total (see Enclosure 4).

(e) SWD:: Strengthening cleansing service of subvented welfare service units

SWD will provide additional resources for some 1 800 welfare service units under its subvention to hire cleansing service or employ part-time or temporary helping hands to strengthen general cleansing service and enhance environmental hygiene as appropriate. Each of the welfare service units will determine the scope and type(s) of environmental hygiene measures to suit their specific requirements. The aim is to increase the capability of welfare service units in the prevention of infections among service users and staff. The projected cost of the initiative is \$92 million (see Enclosure 5).

12. Apart from the above funding proposals to be submitted to the Finance Committee, we will also implement the following initiatives, the funding approval for which will be dealt with by the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) under delegated authority –

(a) AFCD: Additional cleansing of country park facilities and enhancing hygiene of government wholesale food markets

AFCD will maintain and improve the cleanliness of the country park facilities, and the environmental hygiene of wholesale food markets under its management. The projected cost of these measures is \$5.8 million in total. A detailed cost breakdown is at Enclosure 6.

(b) MD: Additional cleansing and maintenance services to cross-boundary ferry terminals, Marine Refuse Collection Points and other concerned water areas

MD will maintain and improve the cleanliness of the cross-boundary terminals, and the environmental hygiene of Marine Refuse Collection Points and other concerned water areas. The projected cost of these measures is \$4.1million in total. A detailed cost breakdown is at Enclosure 7.

13. To cater for any unforeseen increase in costs, we have additionally provided about 3% of the projected cost of each initiative for the departments as contingency funding. The proposed initiatives (all expected to span around 12 months), as well as their projected costs and total costs (including associated contingencies) are summarised as follows –

Initiative	Projected Cost (\$ million)	Total Cost* (\$ million)
(a) DSD: Additional cleansing of underground drains and sewers	15.0	15.5
(b) FEHD: Enhancing cleansing of environmental hygiene blackspots, public toilets etc. and promotion of HSI	96.0	99.0

precautionary measures and personal health and hygiene		
(c) HAD: Environmental hygiene improvement and community involvement projects	40.0	41.2
(d) LCSD: Promoting HSI precautionary measures and personal health and hygiene in the leisure and cultural venues	38.0	39.1
(e) SWD: Strengthening cleansing service of subvented welfare service units	92.0	95.0
(f) AFCD: Additional cleansing of country park facilities and enhancing hygiene of government wholesale food markets	5.8	6.0
(g) MD: Additional cleansing and maintenance services to cross-boundary ferry terminals, Marine Refuse Collection Points and other concerned water areas	4.1	4.2
Total	290.9	300.0

* Total cost is the projected cost plus about 3% contingency.

Advice Sought

14. Members are invited to note the ongoing measures for environmental hygiene improvement and offer any views on the proposals set out in this paper. We plan to seek funding approval of the Finance Committee in early July for the departments involved to take forward the above initiatives.

Food and Health Bureau

June 2009

**Estimated Expenditure on
Additional Cleansing of Underground Drains and Sewers
(Drainage Services Department)**

	\$ million
Contracting out expenses:	13.3
Administration cost: (including employing temporary staff)	1.7
Total:	15.0

Note –

All expenditure will be incurred in 2009-10 and 2010-11 starting from July 2009 over a 12-month period.

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**Estimated Expenditure on
Enhancing Cleansing of Environmental Hygiene Blackspots,
Public Toilets etc. and Promotion of Human Swine Influenza
Precautionary Measures and Personal Health and Hygiene
(Food and Environmental Hygiene Department)**

	\$ million
Enhancing cleansing and disinfection services in public markets:	17.5
Enhancing street washing services:	12.0
Enhancing cleansing services for aqua privies and public toilets:	8.5
One-off clean-up services to common parts of private tenement buildings without Owners' Corporations/Mutual Aid Committees:	31.0
Enhancing the clean up of environmental hygiene blackspots and sustaining the enhanced level of public cleansing services:	23.0
Publicity and educational programmes on personal, domestic and environmental hygiene:	4.0
Total:	96.0

Note –

All expenditure will be incurred in 2009-10 and 2010-11 over a 12-month period.

**Estimated Expenditure on
Environmental Hygiene Improvement and
Community Involvement Projects
(Home Affairs Department)**

	\$ million
Engagement of contractors for providing cleansing services:	18
Engagement of non-governmental organisations (including up to 10% administrative overheads) for providing cleansing services and organising voluntary/promotional activities:	7
Employment of temporary staff to support administrative work in provision of cleansing services, and organise promotional activities:	6
Various promotional activities (e.g. distribution of hygiene packets, organising seminars and roving exhibitions):	9
Total:	40

Note –

All expenditure will be incurred in 2009-10 and 2010-11 over a 12-month period.

**Estimated Expenditure on
Promotion of Human Swine Influenza Precautionary Measures and
Personal Health and Hygiene in Leisure and Cultural Venues
(Leisure and Cultural Services Department)**

	\$ million
Employment of temporary staff:	38

Note –

All expenditure will be incurred in 2009-10 and 2010-11 over a 12-month period.

**Estimated Expenditure on
Strengthening Cleansing Service of Subvented Welfare Service Units
(Social Welfare Department)**

	\$ million
Hire of cleansing service/ Employment of cleansing workers	92

Note –

The provision is for strengthening general cleansing service of some 1800 welfare service units providing subvented or subsidised services

**Estimated Expenditure on
Additional Cleansing of Country Park Facilities
and Enhanced Hygiene of Government Wholesale Food Markets
(Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department)**

	\$ million
<u>Additional cleansing of country park facilities</u>	
Upgrading toilet facilities in country parks:	2.50
Enhancing cleansing of country park facilities:	0.50
Sub-total:	3.00
 <u>Enhancing hygiene of government wholesale food markets</u>	
Enhancing cleansing and disinfection of toilets:	0.65
Enhancing refuses collection:	1.25
Enhancing general cleansing of market drains, public roads and lifts:	0.85
Provision of protective clothing and ancillary materials:	0.05
Sub-total:	2.80
 Total	 5.80

Note –

All expenditure will be incurred in 2009-10 and 2010-11 over a 12-month period.

**Estimated Expenditure on
Additional Cleansing and Maintenance Services to Cross-boundary Ferry
Terminals, Marine Refuse Collection Points
and Other Concerned Water Areas
(Marine Department)**

	\$ million
<u>Contracting out expenses</u>	
Cross-boundary Ferry Terminals:	0.9
Marine Refuse Matters:	2.5
Sub-total:	3.4
 <u>Equipment cost</u>	
Cross-boundary Ferry Terminals:	0.2
Marine Refuse Matters:	0.5
Sub-total:	0.7
 Total:	 4.1

Note –

All expenditure will be incurred in 2009-10 and 2010-11 starting from July 2009 over a 12-month period.