

立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)1026/09-10(04)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 9 March 2010

Enhanced measures to step up environmental hygiene to combat human swine influenza

Purpose

This paper gives an account of the past discussions by the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene (the Panel) on the enhanced measures to step up environmental hygiene to combat human swine influenza (HSI).

Background

2. On 11 June 2009, the World Health Organization raised the alert level for swine influenza pandemic from Phase 5 to Phase 6, signifying that the world was at the start of an influenza pandemic. 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.

3. On 26 May 2009, the Financial Secretary announced the earmarking of \$300 million for enhancing measures to step up environmental hygiene as well as the relevant public education and promotion work to combat HSI.

Past discussions

4. On 22 June 2009, the Administration briefed the Panel on the proposed allocation of \$300 million to provide additional resources for the Drainage Services Department (DSD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Home Affairs Department (HAD), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Marine Department (MD) to launch a number of initiatives lasting for about 12 months to step up environmental hygiene as well as the related promotion work in the fight against HSI. These initiatives

were outlined as follows -

- (a) additional cleansing of underground drains and sewers by DSD at an estimated cost of \$15 million;
- (b) enhanced cleansing of environmental hygiene blackspots, public toilets etc., and promotion of HSI precautionary measures and personal health and hygiene by FEHD at an estimated cost of \$96 million;
- (c) adhoc cleansing work in the community and promotional activities by HAD at an estimated cost of \$40 million;
- (d) promoting HSI precautionary measures and personal health and hygiene in the leisure and cultural venues by LCSD at an estimated cost of \$38 million;
- (e) strengthening cleansing service of welfare units subvented by SWD at an estimated cost of \$92 million;
- (f) additional cleansing of country park facilities and enhancing hygiene of government wholesale food markets by AFCD at an estimated cost of \$5.8 million; and
- (g) additional cleansing and maintenance services to cross-boundary ferry terminals, Marine Refuse Collection Points and other concerned water areas by MD at an estimated cost of \$4.1 million.

5. On the number of jobs that could be created as a result of these initiatives, the Administration advised that whilst some of the additional works created would be taken up by existing civil service staff and staff hired by outsourced contractors, additional non-civil service staff and contract staff would need to be employed by the departments concerned and outsourced contractors. It was estimated that some 36, 558, 230, 300, 29 and 42 new temporary jobs would be involved for the initiatives under DSD, FEHD, HAD, LCSD, AFCD and MD respectively. As subvented welfare units would be allowed flexibility to either hire cleansing service or employ additional part-time or temporary cleansing workers, figures for the number of new jobs to be created could not be estimated precisely.

6. As regards the cleaning up of environmental hygiene blackspots in different districts, the Administration advised that FEHD would engage contractors using the additional resources being sought to set up cleansing and disinfection work at these target locations with a view to eliminating those blackspots through sustained cleansing operations. Of the 105 environmental hygiene blackspots identified in consultation with District Councils (DCs), 21 had been cleared and removed from the list thus far. The remaining 84 had been restored to an acceptable hygiene condition. Through the new initiative and with the support of the community, it was expected that they would be properly restored to an acceptable hygiene

condition in the year to come. To achieve lasting improvement, FEHD would continue to liaise with other relevant departments, such as the Highways Department and the Building Department, to arrange re-paving of broken pavements/road surfaces, repairing of defective pipes, etc. FEHD would also continue to liaise closely with DCs to review and update the list of blackspots and sustain efforts to clean up the blackspots concerned.

7. Concern was raised as to whether there would be duplication in the public education and publicity work in the fight against HSI to be carried out by HAD and LCSD.

8. The Administration advised that HAD would liaise with DCs and non-governmental organisations on organising promotional activities to uphold personal, home and environmental hygiene. For example, seminars, roving exhibitions and other events on personal/environmental hygiene would be organised and hygiene packets, posters and other promotional materials would be distributed. On the other hand, LCSD would recruit about 350 Health Ambassadors to serve in 106 leisure and cultural venues under its management to help step up environmental hygiene and related precautionary measures as well as public education.

9. Some members criticised the Administration for failing to provide information on how the proposed new initiatives for environmental hygiene improvement in the fight against HSI would be delivered. For instance, it was only mentioned in the Administration's paper that FEHD would enhance street washing services but did not say how such services would be enhanced, where such services would be deployed, and what and when these services aimed to achieve. The Administration undertook to elaborate on the scope, deliveries and estimated cost breakdown of these proposed initiatives in writing before seeking funding approval from the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) in early July 2009.

Recent development

10. The funding proposal was approved by FC on 10 July 2009. A progress report would be submitted to the Panel in nine months' time.

Relevant papers

11. Members are invited to access LegCo website (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>) for details of the relevant papers and minutes of the meeting.