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**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 11 January 2011**

**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.

4. The Finance Committee approved on 14 July 2009 a commitment of \$289.8 million for the launch of a series of environmental hygiene improvement initiatives to tackle HSI.

## **Past discussions**

### The initiatives

5. 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.

### Creation of job opportunities

6. 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. Members were advised at the meeting on 9 March 2010 that as at 31 January 2010, the seven departments had created a total of more than 2 700 temporary positions for implementing the various initiatives.

7. On the number of positions employed by contractors and on non-civil service contract terms, the Administration advised that all temporary workers of FEHD and MD were employed by contractors. The contractors of DSD and AFCD had employed 80 and 27 temporary workers respectively. HAD had created 49 temporary jobs and another 150 temporary jobs were created by non-governmental organizations and contractors. LCSD had employed 100 temporary workers and its contractors had employed another 280 temporary workers. For SWD, 1 550 full-time/part-time temporary cleansing workers were employed by the subvented welfare units.

### Cleaning up of environmental hygiene blackspots

8. 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 black spots and sustain efforts to clean up the blackspots concerned.

9. Members were subsequently advised at the meeting on 9 March 2010 that all the black spots had been removed from the list in February 2010 after thorough cleansing. Concern was raised about the actions taken by the Administration to sustain efforts to prevent environmental hygiene black spots from recurring. The Administration assured members that although the allocation of some \$300 million to the seven departments to enhance environmental hygiene in the fight against HIS was one-off, the efforts to enhance environmental hygiene by these departments would continue. While it could not be ruled out the possibility of environmental hygiene black spots recurring in future, swift actions would be taken by LCSD, HAD, or FEHD, where appropriate, to eradicate these black spots.

#### Delineation of responsibilities among departments

10. Concern was also 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.

11. 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.

12. On the question of whether there were duplication of efforts in the cleansing services provided by FEHD and HAD for private buildings without management bodies, the Administration advised that depending on the environmental hygiene conditions of these buildings, it was possible that some buildings might need additional cleansing by HAD or FEHD or both. FEHD and HAD worked in coordinated manner to avoid duplication of efforts.

#### **Recent development**

13. When the Panel was briefed on the progress on the initiatives taken to enhance environmental hygiene to combat HSI at the meeting on 9 March 2010, members requested the Administration to report to the Panel

after the completion of various initiatives launched by the seven departments to enhance environmental hygiene. The Administration will brief the Panel on the final report of initiatives taken at the meeting on 11 January 2011.

### **Relevant papers**

14. A list of relevant papers and documents is in the **Appendix** for members' reference. The papers and documents are available on the Legislative Council website at <http://www.legco.gov.hk>.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
6 January 2011

## Relevant Papers/Documents

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Papers</u>
Finance Committee	14 July 2009	Administration's paper FCR(2009-10)38 <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/fc/fc/papers/f09-38e.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/fc/fc/papers/f09-38e.pdf</a>  Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. FC11/09-10 <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/fc/fc/minutes/fc20090714.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/fc/fc/minutes/fc20090714.pdf</a>
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	22 June 2009	Administration's paper LC Paper No. CB(2)1940/08-09(01) <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fseh/papers/fe0622cb2-1940-1-e.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fseh/papers/fe0622cb2-1940-1-e.pdf</a>  Administration's supplementary information paper LC Paper No. CB(2)2091/08-09(01) <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fseh/papers/fe0622cb2-2091-1-e.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fseh/papers/fe0622cb2-2091-1-e.pdf</a>  Administration's supplementary information paper LC Paper No. CB(2)2162/08-09(01) <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fseh/papers/fe0622cb2-2162-1-e.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fseh/papers/fe0622cb2-2162-1-e.pdf</a>  Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. CB(2)2611/08-09 <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fseh/minutes/fe20090622.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fseh/minutes/fe20090622.pdf</a>
	9 March 2010	Administration's paper LC Paper No. CB(2)1026/09-10(03) <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/fseh/papers/fe0309cb2-1026-3-e.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/fseh/papers/fe0309cb2-1026-3-e.pdf</a>

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Papers</u>
		Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. CB(2)1184/09-10 <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/fseh/minutes/fe20100309.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/fseh/minutes/fe20100309.pdf</a>

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