

Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty

Progress of Developing Bazaars and Social Enterprises

Purpose

This paper updates the Subcommittee on the latest development of the Government's work on bazaars and social enterprises (SEs).

Background

2. Street hawking creates job opportunities and may provide customers with a cheaper source of goods. In recent years, there are views from the community to retain and revitalise the hawking trade because of its traditional characteristics. However, hawking activities may cause environmental hygiene and noise problems as well as obstruction to public passageways, thus causing nuisances to nearby residents and pedestrians. In view of the above, the Government's current hawker policy is to seek to strike a reasonable balance between allowing legal hawking activities on the one hand and maintaining environmental hygiene and preventing nuisances on the other.

3. The interests involved as well as the evolving and value-laden nature of our hawker policy are such that forging a perfect balance capable of pleasing all parties at all times is a tall order. Nevertheless, the Government will give its best endeavours to striking a sensible balance that can command overall community support in the prevailing circumstances while having full regard to the concerns of the neighbourhood in the hawking areas.

4. In recent years, the Government has also been actively

promoting the development of SEs through, for example, the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership (ESR) Programme which aims at creating job opportunities to the socially disadvantaged with a view to enhancing their capability and helping them become self-reliant and integrated into the community.

Hawker Policy/Bazaars

5. As reported at the meeting of 29 June 2015, the Subcommittee on Hawker Policy (the Subcommittee) under the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene was briefed in March 2015 on the principles underpinning the Government's prevailing policy on the management of hawkers.

6. In gist, the Government seeks to formulate a hawker policy which can strike an optimal balance between allowing licensed hawking business to thrive on the one hand, and meeting other legitimate concerns in addition to ensuring food safety, environmental hygiene, and public security on the other. More specifically, we have laid out before the Sub-Committee a number of proposals that the Government is prepared to look into (on top of measures that are being pursued), as follows:

(a) Under the Hawker Assistance Scheme (HAS), all 496 hawker stalls which are located directly in front of staircase discharge points of adjacent buildings or obstructing the operation of fire engines or other emergency vehicular access have been duly relocated. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department would continue to follow up and encourage more hawkers to reconstruct their stall structures to meet the specified fire safety requirements. In the course of administering the HAS (which will run up to mid-2018), we would endeavour to identify areas which could bring about enhancement to the hawking environment. These include rationalising the overall layout of hawker areas where circumstances permit, and enhancing electrical safety;

- (b) On the question of whether we should re-issue new hawker licences to fill vacant pitches in the relevant hawker areas, the Government would carefully consider the case at a suitable time, taking into account the circumstances of individual hawker areas, including their fire safety and environmental hygiene situations, the business environment, comments of relevant departments, as well as the views of the relevant District Council (DC) and local residents;
- (c) For “Dai Pai Dong” licences, subject to the support of the relevant DCs, we are prepared to consider issuing new Dai Pai Tong licences on a pilot basis;
- (d) On the conversion of public markets with low occupancy rate into off-street cooked food centre, the Government keeps an open mind towards proposals on new modes of hawker operation. We may consider converting, on a pilot basis, an existing public market with a low occupancy rate into an off-street cooked food centre, which would provide operating space for individual cooked food vendors to provide traditional Dai Pai Tong type of cooked meals, traditional snacks or other forms of light refreshment; and
- (e) The Government keeps an open mind towards the views in recent years on the setting up of local open-air bazaars. The Government recommends that a district-led approach should be pursued, given that it will stand a better chance of success, if the unique circumstances, choice of venues and mode of operation etc. specific to individual districts are taken into account. The proposals could be raised with the Food and Health Bureau (FHB). Through liaison with the relevant Bureaux / Departments, holistic considerations could be given by the Government from the angles of food safety, environmental hygiene, public safety (including fire safety and obstruction of passageways). Provided that the above aspects are not compromised by adverse impacts, the Government will offer assistance.

7. With the support of the relevant DC, one organisation held a bazaar in Sham Shui Po District on several Sundays in August 2015. A community organisation also organised a bazaar (including cooked food stalls) in the same district during the recent Chinese New Year. In November 2015, FHB received proposals to set up local bazaars in four districts. We have written to the Chairmen of the relevant DCs in March 2016 and reiterated that if the proposals do not involve problems with food safety, environmental hygiene, public safety (including fire safety and obstruction of passageways), and where support from the relevant DC has been obtained, relevant Bureaux / Departments will offer assistance. Through liaison with the relevant Bureaux / Departments, the proposals can be appropriately followed up by the Government, having regard to the above pre-requisites.

Social Enterprises

Community Promotion Programme of the Social Enterprise Summit

8. The Government is committed to promoting the development of SEs in Hong Kong. Since 2008, as part of our efforts to enhance public awareness of SEs, the Home Affairs Bureau has been providing funding support for SE organisations to organise the annual SE Summit. A community-based promotion programme was introduced to the SE Summit since 2014 to promote the culture of “Business for Good” for a caring community. Leaders from SE and business sector join hands to form networking and exchange platforms with SEs and other organisations in the districts through district SE forums, workshops and walking tours etc. Furthermore, the SE Summit organised a community bazaar in Sham Shui Po district in 2015 as a pilot and received good responses. To further promote SEs and their collaboration with the business sector in the community level, this year the SE Summit is planning to organise another community bazaar in the Central and Western district apart from the Sham Shui Po district.

Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme

9. Since 2006, the Home Affairs Department has implemented the ESR Programme which provides funds for eligible organisations for

setting up social enterprises (SEs), thereby creating job opportunities for the socially disadvantaged to enhance their self-reliance and integration into the community. As at January 2016, the ESR Programme has funded the establishment of 176 SEs covering a wide spectrum of businesses, creating a wide variety of jobs targeting specific groups among the socially disadvantaged. So far over 4 000 persons have been employed by these SEs and nearly 80% were among the socially disadvantaged. Besides, about 80% of the employees considered that the SE jobs have enhanced their skills and strengthened their confidence in future employment.

10. Local organisations have long been actively involved in district-based SE projects. Over 60% of the 176 SEs funded by the ESR Programme are district-based projects. In the course of providing services to the socially disadvantaged, local organisations well understand their specific needs and abilities. They therefore set up SEs which could provide job opportunities that tap their potential. It is evident that the ESR Programme has effectively provided job opportunities to the socially disadvantaged in the community.

11. In pursuing the double bottom lines (i.e. to achieve the social missions and commercial sustainability), some SEs have explored new markets. They have identified interesting and innovative ways to address certain social problems and have explored new forms of business to allow the socially disadvantaged to fully display their capabilities in the workplace. New business fields or operation modes have thus emerged (e.g. escort services for the elderly, consignment shops, eco-tourism). In other words, in seeking development in new markets, the SEs have injected new business ideas, energy and momentum into the community economy.

12. In sum, the ESR Programme has helped create a number of employment opportunities to the socially disadvantaged in the community, enhancing their confidence and work skills. It has also brought new momentum to the community economy helping poverty alleviation at the district level.

Conclusion

13. The Government will continue to implement the above-mentioned measures to enhance the employment opportunities for the socially disadvantaged.

**Food and Health Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Home Affairs Bureau
Home Affairs Department**

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