

## **Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty**

### **Promoting Community Economy through Bazaars and Social Enterprises**

#### **Purpose**

Subsequent to the discussion in January this year, this paper updates the Subcommittee on the Government's work on bazaars and social enterprises (SEs), with a view to supporting the development of the community economy and enhancing the employment opportunities of poor people.

#### **Background**

2. Street hawking creates job opportunities, while providing 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. Forging a perfect hawker policy capable of pleasing all parties at all times is a tall order. Nevertheless, despite the evolving as well as interests- and value-laden nature of hawker policy, the Government does have a duty to endeavour its best in 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 to help the socially disadvantaged become self-reliant through employment.

### **Hawker Policy/Bazaars**

5. On 2 March 2015, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) shared the Government's latest thinking on this subject with the Subcommittee on Hawker Policy (the Subcommittee) under the Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene (LC Paper No. CB(4)561/14-15(01)).

6. We propose that the further evolution of the local hawker policy should be premised on the following principles:

- (a) we should not have a policy bent on eradicating hawking for the sake of eradicating it. Regulatory and supportive measures should be put in place with a view to upholding our commitment to ensuring food safety, and maintaining a clean and hygienic living environment for the people of Hong Kong;
- (b) when seeking to deploy hawking policy as one of the means to promote small business (小本經營), we should avoid positioning the hawker trade as a form of social welfare for the disadvantaged or for poverty alleviation;
- (c) diversification of the local economy is a worthwhile cause;
- (d) we should allow room for traditional or creative cultural activities and / or handicrafts. However, the promotion of culture and tradition should not be an excuse to justify insulation from market forces;
- (e) the Government should keep an open mind towards district-led proposals on local bazaars and their mode of

operation, so long as food safety and environmental hygiene would not be compromised;

- (f) since the details of a hawking proposition often affect different stakeholders in the local community differently, we see considerable benefits of a bottom-up approach;
- (g) with district support, consideration may first be given to utilising existing fixed-pitch hawker areas, if any, in the district; and
- (h) if district-led proposals with community consensus (see points (e) and (f) above) are put up, FHB is happy to facilitate liaison with the relevant bureaux and departments.

7. There have been calls for a review of the existing policy of not issuing new fixed-pitch hawker licences. We shall keep in view the progress made in implementing the Assistance Scheme for Hawkers in Fixed Pitch Hawker Areas<sup>1</sup>, with a view to considering the optimal time for conducting such a review.

8. Subject to the support of the relevant District Councils (DCs), we are prepared to consider issuing new Dai Pai Tong licences on a pilot basis. To minimise the possible impact on food safety and environmental hygiene and avoid obstruction to common passageway, additional licensing conditions in respect of the discharge of waste water, demarcation of seating area, construction materials of the stall and use of fuel may be imposed. The pilot cases will be reviewed against such licensing conditions and community sentiment, including the views of the DCs concerned.

9. On its part, FEHD is considering 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Under this five-year Scheme started in June 2013, some 4 300 fixed-pitch hawkers may apply for financial assistance to reconstruct their hawker stall structures to higher fire safety standards or ex-gratia allowance in return for surrendering their licence.

10. In recent years, there have also been calls for the establishment of open-air bazaars with local characteristics. So long as food safety and environmental hygiene would not be compromised, the Government keeps an open mind, and has adopted a district-led approach in the choice of venue bazaars and the mode of operation, having regard to the unique circumstances of different districts. A proposal gestated within the local community would stand a much better chance of enjoying broad local support, local participation and ownership, in addition to meeting local needs. If district-led proposals with community consensus are put up, FHB will facilitate liaison with the relevant bureaux and departments.

## **Social Enterprises**

### *Community Promotion Programme of the Social Enterprise Summit*

11. The Government is committed to promoting the development of SEs in Hong Kong through a range of support services, including funding support for individual projects through the ESR Programme, support for the capacity building programmes for the SE sector provided by the SE platform organisations and implementation of initiatives to raise public awareness of SEs and promote cross-sectoral collaboration. Since 2008, as part of our efforts to enhance public awareness of SEs, the Home Affairs Bureau has provided funding support for SE organisations to organise the annual SE Summit, which has become an important platform for facilitating cross-sector partnership for SE development. To step up our efforts in promoting SEs at the district level, a community-based promotion programme was implemented as a new initiative of the SE Summit 2014. Between June and November 2014, district SE fora, seminars and workshops were organised on a pilot basis in the districts of Kowloon City, Sham Shui Po and Southern. In each of these districts, leaders from the SE and business sector have joined hands to form networks with the SEs and other organisations in the districts for fostering exchanges about and promoting the culture of “Business for Good” for a caring community. The programme also involved production and distribution of the Good Map (E-version at <http://ses.org.hk/goodmap/>), which promotes the SEs in the districts. By introducing SEs to the community and tourists, the initiative aims to encourage community partnership, with a view to promoting social

innovation. There will be ongoing activities of the community promotion programme in 2015.

12. The number of SEs in Hong Kong increased from 260 in 2008 to 450 according to the survey in 2014, and had further increased to 527 according to the survey in 2015. The service nature and targets of SEs had also been diversified.

### *ESR Programme*

13. The ESR Programme of the Home Affairs Department provides seed grants for non-profit-making organisations to set up SEs creating job opportunities for the socially disadvantaged to enhance their self-reliance and integration into the community. It has funded the establishment of around 170 SEs, covering a wide spectrum of businesses and creating a great variety of job opportunities which suit the ability and potentials of the socially disadvantaged. Over 4 000 employees have been employed by these SEs and nearly 80% were the socially disadvantaged. Besides, about 80% of the employees considered that the jobs had improved their working skills and strengthened their confidence in future employment.

### **Conclusion**

14. 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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