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Panel on Home Affairs

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 14 June 2013

Tin Sau Bazaar

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the setting up of Tin Sau Bazaar in Tin Shui Wai ("TSW") and summarizes the views and concerns of members of the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") on the subject.

Background

2. According to the Administration, the rental increase in shopping malls and markets in TSW, which had in turn led to high commodity prices and affected the livelihood of local residents, had been an on-going concern to the Yuen Long District Council ("DC") and residents in the district in recent years. There were also calls for the Government to increase local employment opportunities in TSW by establishing an open bazaar to boost the local economy. In the light of this, the Government had actively explored ways with different interested groups to address the needs of TSW residents. In response, the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals ("TWGHs") submitted a proposal to the Government, indicating its interest in operating an open bazaar in TSW on a non-profit-making basis.

3. On 1 September 2012, the Chief Secretary for Administration announced the proposal of setting up an open bazaar at Tin Sau Road with about 200 stalls to be operated and managed by TWGHs. According to the proposal, TWGHs would set up a social enterprise which would lease the stalls in the bazaar at lower rents to small businesses for selling daily necessities. In the

Administration's view, the bazaar would not only provide goods at low prices for local residents, but also encourage the self-reliance of the underprivileged and help boost the local economy.

4. At its meeting on 14 December 2012, the Panel was briefed by the Administration on the work plan and progress of the proposal to set up an open bazaar in TSW. Members were advised that the bazaar would be named "Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Tin Sau Bazaar", and that TWGHs had been granted a short-term tenancy for a period of five years to run the bazaar at a site adjacent to the Tin Sau Road Park on Tin Sau Road. TWGHs had started accepting applications for a stall operating licence on 1 November 2012 and the selection of stall operators was expected to be completed by December 2012 and results announced in January 2013. Members further noted that the bazaar was scheduled to start operation in early February 2013 before the Chinese New Year.

Members' concerns

5. The major views and concerns expressed by members on the proposed establishment of Tin Sau Bazaar in TSW are summarized below.

Objective of the proposed open bazaar

6. Members in general welcomed the proposal to set up an open bazaar in TSW which, in their view, could provide local residents with more shopping choices, keep down the prices of daily necessities, boost the local economy and create employment opportunities in the district. They also expressed support for the development and promotion of open-air bazaars with local and unique characteristics, and urged the Administration to formulate a long-term policy on the development of local community economy bazaars and consider the need for extending the proposed project in TSW to other districts.

7. The Administration explained that the proposal to set up a district open bazaar in TSW was a specific measure aiming at addressing the specific needs of residents in TSW North. The Administration would take into account the unique circumstances of individual districts in considering the need for establishing open bazaars in other districts, having regard to the experience gained in operating Tin Sau Bazaar in TSW. In so doing, the Administration considered it necessary to look into the local demand and whether suitable sites were available, and to carefully assess the traffic impact, noise and environmental hygiene and management problems.

8. Some members considered that while the proposed open bazaar could assist the grassroots in achieving self-reliance and help alleviate the poverty problem in TSW, the Administration should draw up a territory-wide strategy and policy on poverty alleviation. The Administration responded that the proposal was not meant as a project aiming at alleviating poverty. The Government had established the Commission on Poverty to, among others, examine the current poverty situation and causes of poverty in Hong Kong, and review the existing policies and formulate new policies to achieve the objectives of preventing and alleviating poverty.

Hawking activities in the Morning Bazaar along the TSW Nullah

9. Concern was raised that TWGHs was only granted a five years' short-term tenancy to run the bazaar at Tin Sau Road. In view of the fact that most patrons visiting the existing Morning Bazaar along the TSW Nullah hoped to buy daily necessities at low prices, some members urged the Administration to adopt a lenient approach and allow the hawking activities along the TSW Nullah to continue to exist even after Tin Sau Bazaar had come into operation. There was a suggestion that the Administration should allow some of the stalls in Tin Sau Bazaar to operate in the form of "dawn market" so as to maintain continuity of the Morning Bazaar.

10. According to the Administration, the tenancy of the site of Tin Sau Bazaar was renewable subject to a future review on the public acceptability of Tin Sau Bazaar and the need for its continued existence, as well as the agreement of the Yuen Long District Lands Office and TWGHs. Members were further advised that over the years, there had been complaints about the noise and environmental hygiene problems caused by the hawking activities in the Morning Bazaar along the TSW Nullah. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department had been adopting the approach of giving warning to the hawkers concerned before taking enforcement actions. It would continue to adopt the above approach and monitor the situation along the TSW Nullah after Tin Sau Bazaar had come into operation.

Criteria for allocation of stalls

11. Members noted that TWGHs had received over 3 800 applications for a stall operating licence, which far exceeded the number of stalls available in Tin Sau Bazaar (i.e. around 190 stalls). They enquired about the criteria to be adopted for selecting suitable stall operators, and the measures to be put in place to safeguard the interest of the needy people and ensure that the selection process would be conducted in a fair and impartial manner. Concern was also expressed about the possible occurrence of bid rigging.

12. The Administration advised that TWGHs had formed a committee for selecting suitable stall operators and the eligibility criteria for allocation of stalls respectively to organization applicants and individual applicants had been drawn up. To enhance the uniqueness, diversity and attractiveness of Tin Sau Bazaar, TWGHs proposed that subject to the endorsement of the selection committee, applications for stall operating licences to run a business with creativity and characteristics or providing services most needed by the local people in the district (e.g. shoe repair and locksmith services), would be given additional scores during the process of application assessment. Priority would also be given to needy people (including those with low income, on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, unemployed, with employment difficulties such as new arrivals/ethnic minorities, or with financial difficulties due to special reasons) referred by social workers. To prevent bid rigging, TWGHs would require the stall tenants to be responsible for running the stalls and the transfer of stall operating licences would not be permitted.

13. An enquiry was raised about whether and how the Administration would assist the failed applicants. Members were advised that TWGHs was actively exploring the feasibility of organizing a holiday bazaar, with additional stalls to be rented out only on holidays and on a short term basis. To add vibrancy to Tin Sau Bazaar, hawkers selling goods/commodities with characteristics would be welcomed.

Management of Tin Sau Bazaar

14. Members were concerned about whether residents' representatives and representatives of stall tenants would be engaged in the management of Tin Sau Bazaar. Concern was also expressed about the measures to be taken by the Administration to complement the establishment of Tin Sau Bazaar.

15. The Administration and TWGHs advised that since the announcement of the proposal, the Yuen Long District Office and TWGHs had been actively communicating with various stakeholders, including DC members, Area Committee members, representatives of Morning Bazaar hawkers, non-government organizations and residents' groups. After the opening of Tin Sau Bazaar in early February 2013, TWGHs would continue its communication with relevant stakeholders and hold management meetings on a regular basis to exchange views with representatives of stall tenants for the purpose of reviewing and identifying improvements to the management of the bazaar. Measures to facilitate its smooth operation, including improvements to traffic supporting facilities and the provision of a loading and unloading area near the entrance of the bazaar on Tin Sau Road, would also be adopted.

16. Members noted that Tin Sau Bazaar would operate from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm daily and be divided into several zones, each of which comprising stalls selling specific types of goods, including the dry goods zone, wet goods zone, services/gifts zone and special stalls zone. Some members raised queries about whether such rigid and inflexible operation mode was appropriate for open bazaars which were supposedly designed for bringing vibrancy and vitality to the local community, and called on the Administration to allow a greater degree of flexibility in the operation of Tin Sau Bazaar. The Administration explained that wet goods stalls (including fruit stalls and vegetables stalls) and dry goods stalls would require different support facilities. The zoning plan proposed for Tin Sau Bazaar was meant to facilitate the conduct of business and visitor flow within the bazaar.

Latest development

17. Upon the Panel's request, the Administration provided an information paper to update members on the progress of the Tin Sau Bazaar in April 2013. Members note that the Bazaar commenced operation on 1 February 2013. There are 152 stalls in the Bazaar for renting to individuals on a monthly basis, as well as 30 stalls for renting to organizations and four stalls operated by TWGHs. Members have also been advised that TWGHs and the Government have been closely monitoring the operation of the Bazaar and listening to the views of the stall operators. With the assistance of the relevant government departments, TWGHs has implemented a series of measures to enhance the operating environment and competitiveness of the Bazaar. Examples of such measures include installation of additional drainage points and surface channels to improve the capacity of rainwater disposal in the Bazaar, installation of large sun umbrellas to improve the shading in the Bazaar, enhancement of publicity and display of directional signs for the Bazaar in the nearby railway stations, and provision of business skills training programmes to stall operators.

18. At the Council meeting of 5 June 2013, a written question was raised on the operation of Tin Sau Bazaar and the related enhancement measures introduced by the Administration and TWGHs. The question and the Administration's reply are in **Appendix I**.

19. The Panel will discuss with the Administration the operation of Tin Sau Bazaar at the meeting on 14 June 2013.

Relevant papers

20. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council's website is in **Appendix II**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
11 June 2013

Press Releases

LCQ12: Tin Sau Bazaar

Following is a question by the Hon Alice Mak and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Ms Florence Hui, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

The Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Tin Sau Bazaar (Tin Sau Bazaar) in Tin Shui Wai, which is set up with the facilitation of the Government and under the operation and management of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs), has commenced operation for nearly four months. It has been reported that the business of the stalls in the Bazaar is dull owing to the unsatisfactory conditions of its infrastructure and ancillary facilities (e.g. problems of serious accumulation of water at the site after heavy rain, insufficient power supply and inadequate publicity, etc.). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows (i) the respective numbers of stalls which have been rented out and left vacant, (ii) the total patronage and average weekly patronage, (iii) the average weekly turnover of each stall, (iv) the respective numbers of stall operators who have surrendered their tenancy and those who will do so soon, and (v) the number of stalls which have been surrendered and rented out again, since Tin Sau Bazaar has commenced operation;

(b) as the Architectural Services Department started to install additional surface channels in Tin Sau Bazaar in April this year, whether the authorities have assessed the impact of such works on the stall operators; of the number of stall operators who needed to suspend business while the works were in progress; whether the authorities have arranged any temporary venues for them to display and sell their goods, as well as granted them rental waiver/reduction or compensation; if they have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(c) whether the Home Affairs Department has discussed with TWGHs and the Yuen Long District Council since April this year the further enhancement of the ancillary facilities in Tin Sau Bazaar (e.g. laying floor tiles, beautifying the stalls, etc.); if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(d) of the details of the publicity efforts made by the Government for Tin Sau Bazaar in the past half year (including the expenditure and manpower involved); the details of the publicity efforts to be made by the Government in the coming 12 months (including whether it will step up publicity efforts and organize more activities to attract patronage to the Bazaar, as well as the projected expenditure and manpower involved)?

Reply:

President,

Tin Sau Bazaar (the Bazaar) is operated by the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs) on a non-profit-making basis. The objective of the Bazaar is to provide more shopping choices for local residents, develop the local economy and create local employment.

There are 152 stalls in the Bazaar for renting to individuals on a monthly basis, as well as 30 stalls for renting

to organisations and four stalls operated by TWGHs. The stalls for individuals cover 27 specialty trades that meet the needs of the community, as well as those selling clothing and footwear, foodstuffs and grocery items, etc.

Regarding the four parts of the question, the reply is as follows:

(a) All 182 stalls in the Bazaar have been rented out successfully. According to the statistics of TWGHs, as at May 23, the total patronage was about 252 800 and the average weekly patronage was about 15 800 during a period of 109 business days (around 16 weeks) since the Bazaar commenced operation on February 1 this year. There are generally more visitors to the Bazaar during the weekends than on weekdays. As the stall operators have not submitted any data on their turnover to TWGHs, we do not have any information in this regard. As at May 23, a total of three stall operators, who rented the stall on individual basis, had surrendered their tenancy. TWGHs is making arrangement for the applicants on the waiting list to rent the three stalls.

(b) To improve the capacity of rainwater disposal in the Bazaar, the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) had installed about 30 additional drainage points on site in early April 2013. ArchSD has also started to install an additional surface channel at each major aisle and carry out corresponding local floor leveling since late April. The installation works for additional surface channels are carried out by three phases, with the first phase completed in early May. The second and third phases are expected to complete before July. When the black rainstorm signal was in force on May 22, no flooding occurred in the Bazaar and the situation of excessive accumulation of water had significantly improved, showing that the works have achieved the purpose of rainwater disposal.

ArchSD and TWGHs have carefully assessed the effect of the drainage improvement works on the stall operators before implementation. For safety reasons, TWGHs has arranged the stall operators in the affected areas to suspend business during the works. It has also granted rental waiver for the period of suspension plus two additional days to all affected stall operators.

(c) TWGHs and the Government have been closely monitoring the operation of the Bazaar, and have been listening to the requests and views of stall operators, District Council members and other stakeholders. For instance, views were collected through regular liaison meetings with the stall operators of the Bazaar, while TWGHs' staff, including social worker stationed at the Bazaar, listen to opinions and provide the stall operators with assistance. At present the patronage of the Bazaar and its attractiveness to consumers in both Tin Shui Wai (TSW) and other districts have room for improvement. Details of the enhancement measures and the assistance provided by Government departments are set out below:

(i) As mentioned above, ArchSD has been carrying out installation works for additional surface channels to improve the capacity of rainwater disposal in the Bazaar.

(ii) To improve the shading in the Bazaar, TWGHs has installed 13 large sun umbrellas on site since early April this year. It is now exploring the installation of curtains at the stalls.

(iii) TWGHs is considering the purchase of large outdoor fans for improving the comfort of shoppers during the summer.

(iv) TWGHs has worked with the power company to enhance power supply for about 60 stalls by reallocating electricity and

planned to enhance the power supply of remaining stalls. TWGHs will closely monitor the change in power consumption on site and apply to the power company for additional cables if necessary.

(v) In response to requests for selling chilled/ frozen meat in the Bazaar, TWGHs has applied to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department for a Fresh Provision Shop Licence with a view to introducing chilled/frozen meat stalls. The application is now being processed.

(vi) TWGHs has secured the consent of the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTRC) to display directional signs for the Bazaar in the nearby railway stations. The location of the Bazaar has been shown on the maps in Tin Shui Wai Station of the West Rail (WR), as well as in Tin Sau and Tin Yat Stations of the Light Rail (LR). MTRC has also displayed directional signs for the Bazaar at the entrances and exits of Tin Sau LR stations and will display directional signs at the entrances and exits of Tin Yat Station in due course.

TWGHs will continue to gather proposals on the enhancement of the ancillary facilities in the Bazaar through various channels and consider them. The Government departments will also continue to provide appropriate assistance in this regard.

(d) As regards publicity, TWGHs has put up publicity banners near the Bazaar and on various streets in TSW. It has also applied to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department for putting up such banners in Tin Sau Road Park. Besides, TWGHs distributes promotional leaflets at locations with high pedestrian flow, such as shopping arcades close to the Bazaar, WR and LR stations, major bus stops, etc. to promote the products and specialty stalls of the Bazaar; and posts promotional posters at the housing estates in the district. TWGHs will advertise the Bazaar on buses and through promotional videos to be broadcast inside the buses. Upon completion of the relevant improvement works, TWGHs will invite the media to report on the Bazaar. TWGHs is responsible for the above publicity efforts and the related expenditure.

Since late March, TWGHs has organised the "Tin Sau Arts Fair" with booths of handicrafts and games every Saturday with a view to attracting more visitors. Customers who have spent \$10 or more in the Bazaar may take part in the "Arts Fair" for free. Furthermore, TWGHs organised two training workshops on business skills in April to enhance the related skills of the stall operators. A total of 141 stall operators attended the two workshops. TWGHs will continue to organise different seminars on the retail market in order to sharpen stall operators' understanding of the market and the procurement of more competitive products with a view to attracting customers.

Since February this year, TWGHs and the Yuen Long District Office (YLDO) have held various community involvement activities respectively in the Bazaar and the adjacent Tin Sau Road Park to attract and engage the local residents. In respect of YLDO, the community involvement activities concerned have been planned previously. Now that the Bazaar or Tin Sau Road Park is being selected as the venue for holding the activities, no additional expenditure or manpower is involved. One of the community involvement activities held by YLDO was the "Yuen Long District Youth Festival Kick-off Ceremony 2013" at Tin Sau Road Park on May 5. YLDO also plans to organise activities such as the opening ceremony of "Colourful Life@Yuen Long" and "Tin Shui Wai North Area Committee Healthy Living Carnival cum Prize Presentation Ceremony" at the same venue later this year.

TWGHs and the Government hope to attract more visitors to the Bazaar through the above-mentioned enhancement measures and improve the operating environment of the Bazaar as well as the

business skills of the stall operators. TWGHs and the Government will continue to closely monitor the operation of the Bazaar.

Ends/Wednesday, June 5, 2013

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Relevant papers on Tin Sau Bazaar

Committee	Date of Meeting	Papers
Panel on Home Affairs	14.12.2012 (Item VI)	Agenda CB(2)321/12-13(03) Minutes
Panel on Home Affairs	-	CB(2)1060/12-13(01)
Council meeting	5.6.2013	Written question raised by Hon Alice MAK on "Tin Sau Bazaar"

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