

**Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council
Public Hearing on Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 73
14 December 2019**

**Planning, provision and management of public toilets by
the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department**

Opening Remarks by the Secretary for Food and Health

Chairman,

Public toilets are municipal facilities provided to meet the need of the public and tourists for toilets. The HKSAR Government has attached importance to and allocated more resources in the past two years to improve both the hardware and software of public toilets. As set out in the Chief Executive's Policy Agenda last year, the facilities and services of public toilets located at tourist spots would be improved. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has completed comprehensive refurbishment or facelifting works for 20 out of the 23 target public toilets. As announced in the Budget this year, the Government will allocate \$600 million for expediting the implementation of the Public Toilet Refurbishment Programme, under which refurbishment or facelifting works for about 240 public toilets will be carried out by phases in the coming five years. FEHD is working closely with the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) with works expected to commence firstly for 42 public toilets this year.

2. I am grateful for the Audit Commission's constructive comments on FEHD's public toilets. FEHD and ArchSD accept the audit recommendations in general. I am also pleased to learn that the Audit Commission appreciates the efforts of the two departments to accelerate public toilet refurbishment works starting from the current financial year. Based on the experience gained this year, i.e. the first year of the Programme, FEHD and ArchSD will further speed up the refurbishment of public toilets.

3. Besides improving the hardware, FEHD has also endeavoured to improve the daily management of public toilets, including stepping up

site inspections, surprise checks and examination of job records, as well as monitoring the work and performance of contractors. FEHD has also set up dedicated deep cleansing teams from March this year to perform regular deep cleansing services for public toilets with high utilisation rates in various districts.

4. Meanwhile, FEHD is implementing various schemes to improve hygiene, enhance management and achieve timely maintenance of public toilets through the application of technologies. From February last year, FEHD has used infrared technology to count the utilisation rates of public toilets, a technology that the Audit Report also recommends its enhanced use. FEHD expects to complete the counting of nearly 800 public toilets within this year. Besides, FEHD has been working with ArchSD and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) from the second quarter of this year to develop a mobile application to record and transmit repair and maintenance requests so as to follow up such work and monitor its progress in a more systematic manner. FEHD put the mobile application on trial use together with ArchSD in November this year, and will conduct trials with EMSD next year. These efforts coincidentally match the audit recommendation of using information technology to keep records of repair and maintenance requests for public toilets.

5. While FEHD and ArchSD have made great efforts in recent years to improve the hardware and management of public toilets, we agree that there is still room for improvement in this area. I have asked FEHD to follow up the audit recommendations actively so as to provide the general public with public toilet services that better meet their need. We will also continue to urge members of the public to be considerate and civic-minded when using public toilets.

6. I now invite the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene to make key responses to the recommendations in the Audit Report on the planning, provision and management of public toilets. Thank you, Chairman.