

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1336/20-21

(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 11 May 2021, at 2:30 pm in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS (Chairman)
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Public Officers : Item III

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Dr LEUNG Siu-fai, JP
Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Mr Amor WONG Yiu-tuen
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 3

Mr Peter MA Wai-chung
Assistant Director (Agriculture)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Mr Edward LOK Wai-shing
Senior Agricultural Officer (Farm Development)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Item IV

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Gilford LAW Sun-on
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2

Mrs Avia LAI WONG Shuk-han, JP
Head, Private Columbaria Affairs Office
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr Raymond WANG Man-chiu
Assistant Director (Private Columbaria)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr Eric TSAI Yu-sing
Assistant Director (Grade Management and Development)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Clerk in attendance : Miss Josephine SO
Chief Council Secretary (2) 2

Staff in attendance : Ms Wendy LO
Senior Council Secretary (2) 2

Miss Cally LAI
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

Action

I. Information papers issued since the last meeting
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1035/20-21(01) and CB(2)1068/20-21(01))

Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting:

Action

- (a) Letter dated 27 April 2021 from Dr Junius HO regarding the Government of Japan's decision to start releasing radioactive water from the devastated Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean within two years; and
- (b) Administration's response to Dr Junius HO's letter dated 27 April 2021.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1057/20-21(01) and (02))

2. Members agreed to discuss the following two items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 8 June 2021 at 2:30 pm:

- (a) Progress update on the enhancement of the information technology systems of the Centre for Food Safety; and
- (b) Food import control.

3. Ms Elizabeth QUAT suggested that when briefing the Panel on the Administration's work in control and surveillance of food imports at the next regular meeting, the Administration should provide members with more information on the impact of the Government of Japan's plan to discharge radioactive water from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean on the safety of food imported from Japan.

4. The Chairman said that at the June meeting, it might be more appropriate for the Administration to give an overview of its work relating to safeguarding the safety of food imported from various places as well as the relevant import control and surveillance measures adopted. The impact of the discharge plan on food safety should be separately discussed by the Panel at an appropriate time. Members agreed to the Chairman's suggestion.

III. Progress of the initiatives under the New Agriculture Policy
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1057/20-21(03) and (04))

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") briefed members on the implementation progress of the major initiatives under the New Agriculture Policy including the establishment of the Agricultural Park ("Agri-Park"), as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1057/20-21(03)). Members

Action

noted the updated background brief entitled "Issues relating to the proposed establishment of the Agricultural Park" (LC Paper No. CB(2)1057/20-21(04)) prepared by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat.

Issues relating to the establishment of the Agri-Park

Progress of establishing the Agri-Park

6. Noting that the construction works for establishing Phase 1 of the Agri-Park would be completed in phases from end 2021 to 2023, Ms Elizabeth QUAT opined that the progress of developing the Agri-Park was too slow. Mr Tony TSE asked whether the Administration had assessed whether the soil and water quality of the existing farmland within the Agri-Park was suitable for agricultural purpose.

7. Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation ("DAFC") responded that in identifying the potential site for the Agri-Park, the Administration had looked for farmland which largely remained fallow and would provide relatively ready locations for starting agricultural activities. The area should remain relatively unspoiled, with soil and water quality suitable for agricultural purpose and with the essential agricultural infrastructure (such as access footpaths and irrigation channels) being available and operational. Based on these criteria, the Administration had identified a cluster of about 80 hectares ("ha") of farmland in Kwu Tung South in the New Territories, a traditional vegetable growing district with active crop farming activities, for the establishment of the Agri-Park. Active farmland in the Agri-Park site would be preserved for farming purpose as far as practicable and fallow farmland would be rehabilitated.

8. Dr CHENG Chung-tai expressed concern that it had been reported by the media that during a visit to the site of the Agri-Park Phase 1 conducted by the Conservancy Association, it was found that pebbles and construction materials to be used in formation works were being placed on the existing farmland, a number of temporary roads had been built on fallow farmland and a piece of fallow farmland had even been paved with asphalt and turned into a temporary site for storage of construction materials/parking of vehicles. He asked whether remedial actions would be taken to restore the damaged farmland.

9. DAFC responded that temporary roads had to be built for transporting construction materials to the site for carrying out formation works. After completion of the formation works, construction waste and miscellaneous articles would be removed from the site; and the Administration would carry out a soil improvement and restoration programme to ensure that all the

Action

farmland in the Agri-Park was suitable for agricultural use. Assistant Director (Agriculture), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AD(A)/AFCD") added that in April 2021, AFCD had conducted a visit to the site of the Agri-Park Phase 1 with representatives of some environmental groups and briefed them on the scope of the formation works and the details of the soil improvement programme to be carried out. In response, the environmental groups concerned accepted and gave comments on the soil improvement programme. AFCD would continue maintaining communication with them regarding the upcoming works plan for the Agri-Park Phase 1.

Admin

10. In response to the Deputy Chairman's enquiry about the respective expenditure for establishing Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Agri-Park, DAFC advised that the construction cost for establishing the Agri-Park Phase 1 (excluding land resumption cost) was \$176.6 million. The Administration was conducting preliminary studies on the development of Agri-Park Phase 2. The expenditure for establishing Phase 2 would depend on the actual design and the infrastructure facilities to be provided. At the Deputy Chairman's request, the Administration would provide supplementary information on the estimated expenditure (including the costs for land resumption and clearance, design and construction works) for the establishment of Phase 2 of the Agri-Park.

Accommodation arrangements

11. The Deputy Chairman enquired how the farmland in the Agri-Park would be allocated to farmers. DAFC responded that farmers operating within the area prior to the establishment of the Agri-Park as well as farmers affected by Government development projects within the same timeframe would be accorded priority to apply for renting farmland in the Agri-Park. The rest of the Agri-Park farmland would mainly be made available to the public through open application, with a view to encouraging and nurturing new agro-businesses to invest and explore new agricultural production methods on a commercial scale. AFCD would work out the assessment criteria and mechanism for handling applications from members of the public in due course. The standard tenancy period was five years, which could be renewed upon expiry for tenants who had fully complied with relevant terms and conditions.

12. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed concern whether and how the Administration would assist farmers displaced by Government development projects in Hung Shiu Kiu, Yuen Long South and Kam Tin South in securing farmland for rehabilitation. Dr CHENG Chung-tai noted with concern that among some 30 farmers affected by the development project in North East

Action

New Territories, 20-odd farmers had yet to decide whether they should rent farmland in the Agri-Park or apply for agricultural rehabilitation under the Special Agricultural Land Rehabilitation Scheme ("SALRS"). He asked whether AFCD and relevant departments would follow up with those farmers on re-farming options.

13. DAFC responded that according to AFCD's farm survey results, there were 15 farmers currently operating within the area of the Agri-Park Phase 1; and 13 of these farmers had already indicated intention to rehabilitate in the Agri-Park Phase 1. The Administration had hence reserved sufficient farmland to help them rehabilitate, with priority, in the Agri-Park Phase 1 in the future. The Administration had briefed the affected farmers in detail on the relocation arrangements, including the area and location of the new farmland, rental level as well as the location of lodging and storage facilities. For farmers affected by Government development projects, they could apply for re-farming under the Agricultural Land Rehabilitation Scheme ("ALRS") and SALRS which were administered by AFCD and the Development Bureau respectively. Under ALRS, AFCD served as a middleman by matching landowners with prospective tenants in order to help facilitate agreements on tenancy. At present, around 300 applicants were on the waiting list under ALRS.

Operation and management of the Agri-Park

14. Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted that the farmland within the Agri-Park would be demarcated into different areas for conventional, organic and modern technological farming, taking into account the topography, operational requirements of the types of farming operations and the micro-climate of the respective areas. She asked whether modern agricultural production methods such as "fine agriculture" (upgrading the quality of agricultural products by adopting new farming techniques) and "precision agriculture" (application of precise and correct amount of inputs like water, fertilizer, pesticides etc. to the crop at the correct time for increasing productivity and maximizing yields) would be adopted in the Agri-Park. Mr Tony TSE asked how the Administration had promoted modern technological farming operations among farmers in recent years.

15. DAFC responded that AFCD had all along been actively supporting the modernization of farming methods and the production of premium vegetables. The Agri-Park would serve as a base for experimenting new agricultural practices for commercial production and promoting the application of advanced technologies to agricultural uses, including the adoption of greenhouse technology and hydroponic farming. AFCD was also

Action

collaborating with local tertiary institutions to further improve the precision farming tools and techniques which could be adopted in the Agri-Park.

16. AD(A)/AFCD supplemented that through the establishment of the Agri-Park, the Administration aimed to help nurture agro-technology and agro-business management and facilitate knowledge transfer, with a view to enhancing productivity. AFCD would provide technical support to farmers operating in the Agri-Park and advise them on the adoption of modern farming technology. Besides, AFCD had all along been providing assistance to local farmers in adopting modern and sustainable farming methods to cultivate good quality and high-value agricultural products that could meet consumers' aspiration. For instance, on boutique farming, improved varieties including re-bred Hok Tau Pak Choi, strawberry, cherry tomato, sweet melon and water melon were introduced to the local crop farming industry. On the development of hydroponic production, AFCD was exploring with relevant stakeholders the adoption of new precision farming technologies such as using changeable spectrum grow light technology, nano bubble technology as well as automatic and computerized production systems to maintain optimal growth conditions for vegetables at lower costs.

17. Mr Tony TSE expressed concern that the proposed five-year term standard tenancy agreements for prospective tenants in the Agri-Park could not give certainty to tenants to make long-term investment in their farm production. DAFC responded that subject to their fulfilling of the agreed tenancy conditions, the tenants would be considered for tenancy renewal for another five years. It was believed that compared to general tenancy agreements with private landowners, the five-year term tenancy agreement with the renewal prospect could provide a relatively more stable environment and certainty for the farmers to continue farming and make related investments. When setting the rental level for the Agri-Park, the Administration had made reference to the median of rental level of farmlands in the vicinity. Existing farmers operating within the area considered the proposed rental level reasonable.

18. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the estimated rental income generated from letting out farmland. He also asked whether tenants of the Agri-Park could organize visits to their farms by members of the public for commercial or educational purposes. DAFC advised that the yearly rent for one dau chung (about 670 square metre) in the Agri-Park would be about \$1,000. While all farmland in the Agri-Park should be mainly used for agricultural production purpose, AFCD would consider organizing farming-related education activities, sharing sessions and experiential activities for the public in a multi-purpose centre which would come into operation upon the full completion of the Agri-Park.

Consultancy study on Agricultural Priority Areas

19. Members noted that the Administration had commissioned a consultancy study on Agricultural Priority Areas ("APAs") in late 2018 to identify relatively large areas of quality agricultural land and explore the feasibility of designating them as APAs. According to the Administration, the study would take several years to complete. The Chairman, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung, Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Mr LAU Kwok-fan and Mr Tony TSE queried why it took so long for the consultant to complete the study on APAs. They asked whether the Administration had set any targets and timetable for completing the study and starting the designation of agricultural land as APAs.

20. DAFC responded that there were about 4 300 ha of active and fallow agricultural land (either government- or privately owned) in Hong Kong. The study would make specific recommendations on the locations and scope of APAs, having regard to various factors and criteria including Government development plans, environmental conditions (such as soil quality) and infrastructure support (such as irrigation water sources, drainage and roads). The consultant was currently reviewing the existing farmland in Hong Kong and studying overseas experience, with a view to setting the assessment criteria for determining farmland for long-term agricultural use and designation as APAs. As the study covered a significant amount of agricultural land and the issues involved were more complex than anticipated, the study would take at least two to three more years to complete. USFH said that as a considerable amount of farmland suitable for agricultural use were privately owned, the consultant needed time to explore measures or incentives that were conducive to the putting of fallow agricultural land into long-term agricultural use.

21. The Administration was requested to advise on the latest progress of the consultancy study on APAs and the timetable for (a) completing the study and (b) starting the designation of farmland as APAs.

Other supportive measures

22. The Chairman considered that relevant departments should expedite the progress of handling applications for erecting agricultural structures on private agricultural land. In his view, the proposed scale of the Agri-Park was not large enough. He asked whether the Administration would consider expanding the area of the Agri-Park and allowing livestock farmers affected by Government development projects to relocate to the Park to continue operation. Dr CHENG Chung-tai opined that the Administration should

Action

provide assistance to livestock farmers in applying for relevant licences after the relocation.

23. USFH and DAFC responded that the Agri-Park was intended for admitting farmers who were engaged in crop farming on a commercial basis. AFCD would liaise with relevant bureaux and departments to handle issues arising from relocation of livestock farms affected by Government development projects and ensure that the relevant biosecurity and environmental protection requirements could be met upon relocation of the farms.

24. Mr Tony TSE asked whether AFCD had assessed the effectiveness of projects funded under the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund and the benefits to be brought to the agricultural sector by the pioneer projects. The Chairman said that relocation of livestock/poultry farms involved heavy investment, and farmers could not get any financial assistance unless they were granted ex-gratia compensation for land resumption. The Chairman asked whether the Administration would consider establishing a new fund to provide financial assistance/loans to livestock/poultry farmers affected by Government development projects, so as to facilitate the farmers' relocation of their livestock/poultry farms.

25. DAFC responded that currently, the Administration provided credit facility to farmers through three loan funds administered by AFCD, namely the J.E. Joseph Trust Fund, the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Loan Fund and the Vegetable Marketing Organization Loan Fund. The Administration would explore whether there was room to provide financial assistance to livestock farmers affected by Government development projects under those funds. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide a written response to his enquiry.

Admin

IV. Implementation of the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630)
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1057/20-21(05) and (06))

26. At the invitation of the Chairman, USFH briefed members on the implementation of the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) ("PCO"), as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1057/20-21(05)). Members noted the updated background brief on the same subject (LC Paper No. CB(2)1057/20-21(06)) prepared by the LegCo Secretariat.

Action

Processing of applications for specified instruments

27. Mr CHAN Hak-kan, Mr LAU Kwok-fan and Dr CHENG Chung-tai noted that since the commencement of PCO, the Private Columbaria Licensing Board ("PCLB") had only approved six licence applications from private columbaria and was still processing 233 applications for specified instruments (i.e. a licence, an exemption or a temporary suspension of liability ("TSOL")) submitted by 95 private columbaria (including 15 private columbaria which had been granted approval-in-principle for their applications for specified instruments). They considered that the progress of PCLB in processing applications for specified instruments was too slow and called on PCLB to speed up the relevant process. Mr LAU was of the view that the Private Columbaria Affairs Office ("PCAO") should inform operators of private columbaria in a timely manner if their applications stood a slim chance of being approved. PCAO could then focus its resources on handling the remaining applications.

28. Head, Private Columbaria Affairs Office ("H/PCAO") responded that to speed up the processing of applications for specified instruments, PCLB had set a deadline for applicants' submission of documents/information in respect of TSOL applications which were still under vetting. By the end of the extended deadline on 31 January 2021, many applicants had submitted a large number of documents, information and certificates in various domains of application requirements. As set out in the Administration's paper, PCLB had carefully examined the status of the submission of the documents/information/certificates by the end of the aforesaid deadline (i.e. 31 January 2021) by the applicants of each TSOL application which was still under vetting, and took appropriate follow-up actions based on the actual circumstances of the cases including ceasing the vetting of the whole set of applications for specified instruments submitted by two private columbaria. PCAO had also referred the documents/information/certificates submitted by other applicants to the relevant departments for vetting and provision of comments on whether the applications met the requirements under their purview. PCAO would continue to vet the applications with regard to the requirements of other domains for completion of the process as soon as possible.

29. In response to the Deputy Chairman's enquiries, H/PCAO gave an account of the eligibility requirements for and the validity periods of different types of specified instruments. Noting that the validity period of the first "Approval-in-principle for TSOL Application" was in general three years and the applicant might apply for extension of the validity period for another three years, the Deputy Chairman expressed concern how PCLB would handle cases in which the applicant, by the expiry of the validity period of the

Action

first "Approval-in-principle for TSOL Application", failed to comply with all the requirements for his/her licence/exemption application submitted together with the TSOL application.

30. H/PCAO responded that in considering whether the validity period of "Approval-in-principle for TSOL Application" should be extended at the time when it was about to expire, PCLB would take into account whether the applicant had taken, with reasonable expedition, all the necessary steps according to the action plan including the timetable (which was submitted by the applicant to comply with the TSOL application requirements and accepted by PCLB) during the validity period of "Approval-in-principle for TSOL Application" to achieve compliance with all the requirements for the licence/exemption application submitted together with the TSOL application. If the applicant could not prove to the satisfaction of PCLB that it had taken, with reasonable expedition, all the necessary steps, PCLB would not extend the validity period of the "Approval-in-principle for TSOL Application".

31. Mr CHAN Hak-kan and Mr LAU Kwok-fan considered that the application procedures for specified instruments were cumbersome. The unduly long processing time for specified instruments had affected the supply of private niches in the market, leading to a rise in the price of private niches and defeating the policy intent of regulating the operation of private columbaria and enhancing protection of consumer interests through PCO. They also expressed concern that apart from a number of requirements that must be met for various types of applications for specified instruments, PCLB had requested private columbaria to fulfill additional financial requirements when applying for a licence. According to their understanding, for instance, the licence holder of a private columbarium had to deposit in a trust fund 15% of all the proceeds from the sale of interment rights of niches if he was required to implement the financial arrangements according to the "Basic Financial Arrangements" under the "Financial Mechanism for Protection of Consumer Interests" promulgated by PCLB in November 2018. They criticized that the requirement had added undue financial burden to the trade and complicated the application procedures. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman sought details of the "Financial Mechanism for Protection of Consumer Interests".

32. In response, H/PCAO stressed that the requirements that must be met for various types of applications for specified instruments (as summarized at Enclosure I to the Administration's paper) were all statutory requirements stipulated in PCO. PCLB would not request applicants to meet unnecessary requirements when applying for specified instruments. PCLB was making its best effort to process the applications for specified instruments. However, the time that PCLB required to process the applications hinged largely on

Action

whether and when the private columbaria could meet the eligibility requirements for the respective specified instruments and submitted the required documents and information. After confirming that an application had met all application requirements, PCAO would immediately submit the application to PCLB for determination.

33. H/PCAO further said that during the scrutiny of the Private Columbaria Bill, some LegCo Members had raised concern about the measures to be put in place to protect consumer interests. The Administration had advised that PCLB would work out the financial mechanism for protection of consumer interests. To ensure that the columbarium, after being granted a licence, could continue its operation during the validity periods of the interment rights of niches sold and provide the committed services and fulfill other obligations stipulated in the sale agreements with the consumers, PCLB promulgated the "Financial Mechanism for Protection of Consumer Interests" in November 2018. Licence applicants (including non-pre-cut-off columbaria) who intended to adopt a lump sum payment/pre-payment as the payment method were required to submit the specified financial information and financial projection, which would be forwarded to PCLB's financial advisor for assessment. The financial advisor would submit a financial assessment report to PCLB for the latter to consider each application according to the criteria as set out in the "Financial Mechanism for Protection of Consumer Interests" and impose appropriate financial related licensing conditions to protect the interests of consumers when approving a licence application.

34. Mr CHAN Hak-kan recalled that the Administration had, during the scrutiny of the Private Columbaria Bill, undertaken to conduct a review of PCO in any event around three years after its enactment. He asked whether and when the Administration would kick start the said review. He also asked whether PCLB had set any performance pledges on the processing of applications for specified instruments from private columbaria and if yes, the details of the performance pledges and the specific number of days involved. The Administration was requested to provide a written response to the issues raised by Mr CHAN.

Admin

Arrangements for disposal of ashes

35. Dr CHENG Chung-tai noted that as at 15 April 2021, PCLB had refused applications for specified instruments from 26 private columbaria which failed to meet the relevant requirements. He and the Deputy Chairman asked how the Administration would safeguard the interests of those consumers who had purchased niches from the affected private columbaria.

Action

36. H/PCAO responded that as rental or purchase of private niches involved private contracts entered between members of the public and the operators of the relevant columbaria, consumers had to rely on the terms of their purchase agreement or such other documents that constituted the agreement for protection of their interests. In case of cessation of columbarium operation, the operators were required to properly dispose of any ashes interred in the private columbaria. Since the implementation of PCO, there was a total of 78 private columbaria (a) which had not submitted any applications for specified instruments or (b) whose applications for specified instruments had been refused by PCLB. Among these 78 private columbaria which had to cease operation, 13 columbaria were carrying out the prescribed ash disposal procedures in accordance with the requirements of PCO and 58 columbaria had completed the procedures and returned the ashes to those persons eligible for collection of the ashes ("eligible claimants"). Under PCO, any person who illegally operated a private columbarium or improperly disposed of ashes was liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$2 million and to imprisonment for three years; or on conviction on indictment to a fine of \$5 million and to imprisonment for seven years.

37. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung envisaged that the number of unsuccessful applications for specified instruments might increase due to applicants' failure to meet all relevant requirements. He asked, in case of cessation of columbarium operation, whether the operator concerned had to complete the ash disposal procedures within a specified period and whether any assistance would be provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") in handling the displaced ashes. Mr Tony TSE raised a similar enquiry.

38. H/PCAO responded that for a private columbarium with cessation of operation, PCAO would explain to the operator the requirements of PCO regarding the disposal of ashes and monitor the ash disposal work done by the operator to ascertain that it complied with the requirements of PCO. Under the prescribed ash disposal procedures, the operator had to notify eligible claimants to claim back the ashes within a claim period of at least 12 months. On the expiry of the claim period, the operator had to deliver any unclaimed ashes to FEHD. The unclaimed ashes would then be temporarily stored in the ash storage facilities provided by FEHD. If the ashes remained unclaimed after a certain period of time (at least 24 months), the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene, as empowered by PCO, might dispose of the ashes in a manner that he/she thought fit. So far, around 1 000 sets of unclaimed ashes had been delivered to FEHD for temporary storage.

Action

39. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed concern whether FEHD's temporary ash storage facilities were adequate for storing displaced ashes arising from cessation of columbarium operation. Mr Tony TSE asked how FEHD would provide assistance to members of the public when they encountered difficulties in disposal of ashes.

40. Assistant Director (Grade Management and Development)/FEHD responded that after collecting the ashes of the deceased from a private columbarium, members of the public might apply for a public niche if the deceased person (a) was a resident of Hong Kong at the time of his/her death and whose remains were cremated in a government crematorium within three months after his/her death; or (b) was a resident of Hong Kong for a period of at least 10 years during the period of 20 years immediately preceding his/her death and whose remains were cremated in a crematorium outside Hong Kong; or (c) was a person whose remains were lawfully exhumed and cremated in a government crematorium. Other options to dispose of the ashes included: scattering the ashes in the gardens of remembrance or at sea; and making applications for placing additional sets of ashes in niches already allocated by FEHD, the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries or private cemeteries. H/PCAO added that PCAO had published a leaflet to advise the public on the alternative means of disposal of ashes. If members of the public had any enquiries, they might contact FEHD by various means posted on the website of "Regulation of Private Columbaria".

Admin

41. The Administration was requested to provide in writing the details of FEHD's facilities for temporary storage of displaced ashes arising from cessation of operation of private columbaria, with respective number of temporary storage spaces available in each facility and photos showing the location of those temporary storage facilities.

V. Any other business

42. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:07 pm.