

HKMA's reply

The HKMA attaches great importance to the accessibility of basic banking services for the general public, and has been encouraging the banking industry to put the spirit of “financial inclusion” into practice when developing their banking networks. A few years ago, the HKMA started to analyse the situation of the coverage of banking networks near public housing estates (PHEs) via onsite visits and based on information of physical banking networks. The analysis shows that a dozen or so PHEs in different districts in Hong Kong do not have traditional branch services within walkable distances. The HKMA has already recommended to the banking industry that priority should be accorded to strengthening the basic banking services in these PHEs when planning their branch networks. In addition to physical branches, it should be noted that with technological advancement, the HKMA has been actively encouraging banks to make use of new technology and operation modes to supplement their existing banking networks. Individual banks have introduced “mobile branches”, video teller machines, etc, to provide basic banking services to PHE residents. Some self-service banking centres also have staff stationed there to assist customers in personal banking services and provide assistance to those in need. With the banking industry's enhancement in the provision of basic banking services in PHEs, the evolving changes in branch networks and the completion of newly constructed PHEs, the analysis results will be updated from time to time accordingly. The HKMA will continue to maintain close communication with the banking industry to study and implement plans to further improve basic banking services in PHEs. The HKMA will also facilitate communication between the industry and LINK if there are difficulties for banks in finding suitable locations for branches in the shopping centres of PHEs.

From time to time, the HKMA discusses with the banking industry about introducing specific measures to assist the use of basic banking services by customers with disabilities, including encouraging banks to provide more voice navigation ATMs to facilitate customers with visual impairment to access ATM services more easily and independently. One of the note-issuing banks has responded positively recently by progressively adding a number of voice navigation ATMs in Hong Kong. The two banks currently providing voice navigation ATMs have consulted the groups serving people with visual impairment, including Hong Kong Blind Union and The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, during the development of these ATMs in order to ensure that the comments from people with visual impairment are taken into account regarding the functionalities and locations of the ATMs. The HKMA has recently

reminded the banks concerned to maintain communication with the relevant stakeholders to collect feedback and conduct periodic reviews on the effectiveness, as well as continue to enhance the assistance provided to customers with disabilities to facilitate their access to basic banking services.

The HKMA's regulatory requirements on general banking operations and risk management are also applicable to "mobile branches". We have also provided comments on the locations and services of the "mobile branches" while the two note-issuing banks have collected feedback from customers. Majority of the users of "mobile branches" expressed that "mobile branches" facilitate them to use banking services more conveniently. The HKMA will continue to follow up with the banks concerned on the provision of services by the "mobile branches" as well as customers' usage and feedback, requiring the banks concerned to continue to monitor, review and seek to enhance the services of the "mobile branches".