



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

[Translation]

30 November 2018

Clerk to Subcommittee on
Issues Relating to Public Markets
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Alice LEUNG)

Dear Ms LEUNG,

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Public Markets**

Motions passed at the meeting on 10 July 2018

Thank you for your letter of 13 July 2018. I write to provide the Government's response to the motions raised by Hon CHAN Han-pan and Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan respectively and passed at the above meeting.

Market Modernisation Programme (MMP)

We are reviewing the overall landscape of the 99 public markets, including its utilisation rate and existing facilities. In identifying candidates for projects under the MMP, the prime objective is to maximise the impact of hardware improvement. Public markets would be selected with regard to their geographical location and distribution, condition of facilities, business viability, community needs and tenants'

participation. In particular, we would seek to ensure that the location of markets to be covered under the MMP is conducive to their future business viability, and that there is a reasonable spread of such markets across the territory to benefit the community at large.

For the MMP implementation, we consider the pioneering overhaul project of utmost importance. This is because it can accomplish a feasible overall market improvement plan, serving as a model that breaks through the conventional mode and a testing platform for enhancing the MMP mechanism. The pioneering project will also set a prototype for future MMP projects.

In July this year, we commenced the consultation work with the stall tenants of the Aberdeen Market which carries 35 years of history, and we proposed a fundamental overhaul. We will strive to ascertain the scope of works and the arrangements with the sitting tenants within this year.

Air-conditioning (A/C) of markets

Regarding the issue relating to A/C charges, it is worth noting that the high capital costs of retrofitting A/C systems are already borne entirely by the Government. Landlords in private commercial venues who retrofit A/C systems, would seek to recover the capital costs through rental adjustments. Yet, the Government does not recover such capital costs. Given that tenants in public markets are in fact engaging in commercial operations, further Government subsidy on A/C charges may give rise to unfair competition between stalls in public markets and similar retail operators in private commercial premises, especially those in areas nearby. The proposal to exclude public areas of markets from the amount of A/C charges payable by tenants is inconsistent with the existing practice in all Government rental properties. Since public areas are an integral part of the market trading environment and are used by patrons of the stalls, it is a reasonable practice that the relevant A/C charges are paid by tenants, and there is no strong justification for providing further subsidy for tenants.

Overall speaking, when taking forward the management reform of public markets, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will abide by three principles -

- Public markets should principally be operating on a commercial basis;
- Stalls should be allowed to compete on a level-playing field; and
- Management of public markets should ultimately serve the public interest.

Review of Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (“HKPSG”)

The parts concerning public markets in Chapter 6 Retail Facilities in HKPSG were amended in April 2009 after review and have been used for planning purpose since then. Under the revised HKPSG, the recommended relevant factors for consideration include the population and demographic mix of the district, community needs, the presence of market facilities nearby, the number of fresh provision retail outlets available in the vicinity, etc. It is therefore more holistic than just considering the population size in the planning of public markets. When formulating or reviewing respective town plans, the Planning Department will consult the relevant bureaux and departments with a view to ascertaining if land has to be reserved for public market use. Having regard to the factors for consideration as set out in HKPSG, the Government has stated that new public markets will be built in Tung Chung (Town Centre and New Town Extension), Tin Shui Wai and Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area. We will also carefully consider the requests from other areas based on these factors.

Long-standing vacant stalls

FEHD has set up a dedicated team to formulate appropriate arrangements and carry out other review tasks on the implementation of modernisation, revitalisation and consolidation plans for existing public markets, in particular, the trade mix of market stalls, which will take wet foods as the key composition, for enhancing the overall business viability of the market. In the review, we will consider the situation of long-standing vacant stalls in a holistic manner so as to strive for achieving optimal use of land resources. In fact, owing to demographic changes, new development/redevelopment projects and competition from other fresh provision outlets, some public markets are gradually losing their attractiveness, among which some are having extremely low patronage and high vacancy rate. Closure or consolidation of these markets can release precious land resources for providing the public with other community facilities and services.

Keeping of cats

From the hygienic and epidemiological perspective, keeping cats to help tackle the rodent problem bears a certain degree of risk. Cats can spread the zoonotic diseases such as parasites, ectoparasites and toxoplasmosis, etc. through their excretion. Excretion may also lead to environmental hygiene problems and give rise to food safety issues. Moreover, if there is no proper care for the cats, there may be risk of cat flea infestation.

Despite that cats are the natural enemy of rodents and have the ability to prey on them, cats' targets of prey are not limited to just rodents but also include other small mammals, birds, reptiles, etc. Besides, keeping cats in public markets will also affect the comprehensiveness of FEHD's current rodent control strategies, including the need of removing rodent poison and traps.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

(Miss Irene CHEUNG)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene