

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)590/19-20
(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, 10 December 2019, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan (Deputy Chairman)
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon AU Nok-hin
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan
- Members absent** : Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Hon HUI Chi-fung

Public Officers : Item IV
attending

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

Miss Diane WONG Shuk-han
Deputy Director (Environmental Hygiene)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr FORK Ping-lam
Assistant Director (Operations) 3
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr LEE Ming-wai
Pest Control Officer-in-charge
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Item V

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

Miss Erica NG Lai-man, JP
Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2

Ms Chelsea WONG Wing-chee
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Ms Teresa CHEUNG Shuk-kau
Senior Principal Executive Officer (Food)
Food and Health Bureau

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

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

Mr Clement HAU
Council Secretary (2) 2

Miss Cally LAI
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

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I. Confirmation of minutes
(LC Paper No. CB(2)324/19-20)

The minutes of the policy briefing held on 29 October 2019 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since the last meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(2)328/19-20(01))

2. Members noted that since the last meeting, the Secretariat had issued a joint letter dated 22 November 2019 from Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki, Hon Dennis KWOK, Hon Alvin YEUNG, Hon Tanya CHAN and Hon Jeremy TAM concerning the impacts of the Police's deployment of tear gas rounds in dispersal operations on the community.

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)329/19-20(01) and (02))

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 14 January 2020 at 2:30 pm:

- (a) Proposed injection into the Fishing Moratorium Loan Scheme;
and
- (b) Promotion of green burial.

4. The Deputy Chairman said that members of the public were concerned about the future supply of private niches and the progress of the Private Columbaria Licensing Board in processing applications for a licence or other specified instruments for operating a private columbarium after the enactment of the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) ("PCO"). She suggested that the Administration should update members also on issues relating to the implementation of PCO and the supply of private niches at the regular meeting in January 2020.

5. The Chairman advised that an item "Implementation of the Private Columbaria Ordinance" had already been included in the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion (i.e. item 7 of LC Paper No.

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CB(2)329/19-20(01)) and the Administration planned to update members on the subject in the first quarter of 2020. Considering the Deputy Chairman's suggestion, the Chairman instructed the Clerk to liaise with the Administration after the meeting to see whether it stood ready to brief members on matters relating to the implementation of PCO at the regular meeting in January 2020.

(Post-meeting note: Members were informed of the Administration's reply vide LC Paper No. CB(2)394/19-20 issued on 12 December 2019 that it was ready to discuss "Implementation of the Private Columbaria Ordinance" in March 2020. With the agreement of the Chairman, the number of items to be discussed at the January meeting remained as two.)

IV. Rodent control work

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)329/19-20(03) and (04))

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") briefed members on the progress of rodent control work undertaken by government departments and the rodent control measures to be stepped up, as detailed in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)329/19-20(03)). Pest Control Officer-in-charge, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("PCOic/FEHD") said that upon recommendation of the World Health Organization, FEHD invited a British anti-rodent expert to visit Hong Kong in early November 2019. With the aid of power-point presentation, PCOic/FEHD highlighted the advice given by the British expert on improvement in anti-rodent work and the initial trial results of FEHD's application of thermal and night-vision cameras with artificial intelligence analytical function to enhance surveillance of rodent infestation since April 2019.

(Post-meeting note: The softcopy of the power-point presentation materials was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)376/19-20(01) on 10 December 2019.)

7. Members noted the background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(2)329/19-20(04)).

Effectiveness of the rodent prevention and control work

8. Dr Priscilla LEUNG, Mr Steven HO, Mr KWOK Wai-keung, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan, Mr Andrew WAN, Mr Wilson OR and Mr Kenneth LAU were gravely concerned about the worsening rodent infestation problem in various districts across the territory. They expressed dissatisfaction that FEHD and relevant departments had not been proactive

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enough in tackling the rodent problem in the community. They criticized that almost all of the rodent prevention and control measures mentioned in the Administration's paper were old measures, and some of the initiatives recently implemented by relevant departments (e.g. local repaving of back alleys and enhanced anti-rodent operations in selected public markets) were limited in scale and not effective in combating rodent infestation.

9. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr Andrew WAN and Mr Vincent CHENG opined that the increase in the numbers of live rodents caught and dead rodents collected by FEHD in 2019 was an indication of the seriousness of the rodent problem across the territory, rather than an improvement in FEHD's rodent control work. Mr Steven HO urged FEHD to tackle rodent infestation at source by improving the environmental hygiene conditions in various districts.

10. Mr Kenneth LAU considered that FEHD's anti-rodent work was not effective as only about 200 live rodents had been caught per month in each district since the commencement of the territory-wide cleansing campaign from May 2019. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that he had received complaints from some residents living in Kwai Fong that rodent problem resurged in the district after the completion of the territory-wide cleansing campaign.

11. Dr Priscilla LEUNG strongly requested FEHD and relevant departments to conduct large-scale and intensive anti-rodent operations in all 18 districts concurrently for a longer period, so as to maximize and sustain the Government's efforts in combating rodent infestation. She also suggested that anti-rodent experts from neighbouring cities (such as Guangzhou) be invited to advise the Administration on the strategies to be adopted in conducting the territory-wide anti-rodent operations.

12. Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Mr Wilson OR criticized that there was a lack of coordination among various departments in carrying out anti-rodent operations. Prof Joseph LEE asked how FEHD would evaluate the effectiveness of its anti-rodent work carried out in 2019. In Prof LEE's view, it was necessary for FEHD to take a leading role in coordinating the rodent control work of different departments and proactively discuss with the District Councils ("DCs") the strategies and measures to be adopted for tackling the rodent problem in various districts and preventing rodent-borne diseases in the community.

13. USFH responded that FEHD and relevant departments had made concerted efforts in launching the territory-wide cleansing campaign and anti-rodent operations in designated target areas. During the campaign, the numbers of enforcement actions taken and rodents caught had increased, whereas the number of rodent-related complaints had decreased. USFH admitted that there was room for further improvement in rodent prevention

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and control work. FEHD and the relevant departments would continue to adopt multi-pronged strategies to combat rodent infestation, improve the environmental hygiene conditions in various districts and strengthen collaboration with various sectors including DCs.

14. USFH further said that the Anti-mosquito Steering Committee was re-organized and upgraded as the Pest Control Steering Committee ("PCSC") in July 2018. PCSC coordinated and synergized the pest control efforts of three bureaux and 19 government departments, through providing high level direction. This apart, FEHD had been maintaining close liaison with other departments and providing them with technical support as well as training in the implementation of effective pest control measures in venues or areas under their purview. For instance, FEHD had provided contract templates on pest control for follow-up actions by contract management units in various departments so that clauses relating to pest control could be included in the new contracts.

15. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan expressed concern on how PCSC would strengthen inter-departmental coordination of various bureaux and departments in carrying out rodent prevention and control work. Mr Wilson OR suggested that DC members be invited to monitor and advise on the anti-rodent work implemented at the district level. USFH responded that the Administration would consider Mr OR's suggestion at the district level. Under the coordination of PCSC, additional resources had been allocated to a number of departments for carrying out enhanced pest control work in areas under their respective purview. PCSC had set three targets for the 2019 work plan, namely enhancement of prevention, coordination and surveillance.

16. The Deputy Chairman noted that the British expert had confirmed the effectiveness of the anti-rodent methods currently adopted by FEHD and suggested that minor adjustments be made to the placing of rodent traps and the use of baits. She, however, was doubtful on whether the existing anti-rodent measures and methods were as effective as perceived by the British expert. Dr Priscilla LEUNG and Mr Steven HO both expressed concern that the British expert might not be familiar with Hong Kong's climate and local people's living habits. This might affect the expert's understanding of the rodent problem in Hong Kong and assessment of the effectiveness of anti-rodent operations conducted by various departments.

17. USFH assured members that while FEHD would make reference to the observations of the British expert, it would work out suitable measures for rodent control based on experience and the actual situation of Hong Kong.

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18. The Administration was requested to provide the following information after the meeting:

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- (a) a copy of the report provided by the British expert; and
- (b) the Administration's views, stance and comments on the advice provided by the British expert; and whether it would consider inviting more experts from the relevant field from the Mainland or other neighbouring regions where the climate, environment and people's living habits were similar to Hong Kong's to provide expert advice on rodent prevention and control.

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19. Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed concern about the effectiveness of the pest control work delivered by service contractors. He asked how FEHD monitored the contractors' performance. USFH responded that it was the intention of FEHD to manage the performance of outsourced pest control teams by contracts. As mentioned earlier, FEHD had provided contract templates on pest control for follow-up actions by contract management units in various departments. At Dr KWOK's request, the Administration would revert in writing on whether performance standards would be set for monitoring and evaluating the pest control work delivered by service contractors.

20. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen asked whether FEHD had compiled any statistics (e.g. the species and sizes of rodents found in Hong Kong) for assessing the rodent problem in the community. In response, PCOic/FEHD said that sewer rats and house rats were species commonly found in Hong Kong. The weight of sewer rats caught by FEHD in routine operations usually ranged from 200 to 300 grams and that of house rats from 150 to 200 grams.

Effectiveness of anti-rodent methods and devices adopted

21. Mr Wilson OR asked how the Administration would sustain its efforts in rodent prevention and control at the district level after the completion of the territory-wide cleansing campaign. As rodents had a very high reproductive rate, Mr OR asked whether the Administration had devised any plans or strategies to control the breeding of rodents. Mr Steven HO raised similar questions. Mr KWOK Wai-keung suggested that consideration could be given to providing a monetary reward to encourage public participation in anti-rodent work.

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22. PCOic/FEHD responded that FEHD would continue to adopt multi-pronged strategies (including improving environmental hygiene and stepping up rodent disinfection) to eliminate the fundamental survival conditions of rodents, namely food, harbourage and passages. At Mr Steven HO's request, the Administration would revert in writing whether new measures, technologies and strategies, other than those mentioned in the

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Administration's paper, would be adopted to improve the effectiveness of FEHD's rodent prevention and control work.

23. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan said that the vacant stalls and ventilation ducts in fresh markets had become rodents' harbourage points. Given the seriousness of the rodent problem in various districts, the Administration should consider conducting intensive anti-rodent operations in all FEHD's managed public markets. Deputy Director (Environmental Hygiene)/FEHD ("DD(EH)/FEHD") responded that in July 2019, a three-month intensive anti-rodent operation was put on trial in FEHD's Lai Wan Market, Ap Lei Chau Market and Kam Tin Market. In addition to these three markets, FEHD would conduct enhanced intensive anti-rodent operations in the coming three months in Lockhart Road Market, To Kwa Wan Market and Sha Tin Market with reference to expert advice. FEHD would conclude its experience and consider conducting intensive anti-rodent operations in other FEHD-managed public markets in view of the ground situation.

24. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen enquired about the effectiveness of the three-month intensive anti-rodent operation in Lai Wan Market, Ap Lei Chau Market and Kam Tin Market and the resources required for conducting such kind of anti-rodent operation. In his view, the Administration should extend the scheme to all public markets if resources permitted. PCOic/FEHD responded that since public markets were crowded in day time and many stall tenants had concerns about the use of rodent traps and poisonous baits during business hour, testing of rodent trapping devices and setting of baits could only be carried out after business hour and at night. This arrangement involved the coordination of pest control teams and outsourced cleansing workers.

25. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan noted that FEHD had all along been using raw sweet potatoes as baits for rodent monitoring. As there had been criticisms that raw sweet potatoes might not be attractive to rodents, she considered that FEHD should review the effectiveness of using raw sweet potatoes as monitoring baits and explore other more effective baits.

26. PCOic/FEHD responded that sweet potatoes were mainly placed at selected areas as monitoring baits to detect the extent of rodent activities for compiling Rodent Infestation Rate ("RIR") under the rodent surveillance programme. Depending on the actual circumstances, pest control workers might use other baits (e.g. BBQ pork) with cage traps for controlling rodents. As rodents were omnivorous with food choices depending on environmental conditions, time, weather, etc., no single type of food was particularly appealing to them in any circumstance. The British expert recommended the use of break back trap. When using cage trap, the expert suggested using different baits at the same time and areas to attract rodents. FEHD would examine the effectiveness of using mixed rodent baits and break back traps

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through tests in Lockhart Road Market, To Kwa Wan Market and Sha Tin Market in the coming few months.

27. Mr Andrew WAN considered that rodent proofing structures should be installed in all public rental housing ("PRH") estates. He enquired about the Administration's progress in this area of work. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that in May 2019, the Buildings Department ("BD") promulgated a guideline to the building professionals and registered contractors on incorporating rodent proofing design in new private buildings and carrying out rodent control work in construction and demolition sites. In June 2019, the Architectural Services Department ("ArchSD") promulgated a similar design guide on government works and buildings. FEHD, in conjunction with BD, ArchSD and the Housing Department ("HD"), organized a talk in November 2019 to brief the trade on the relevant guidelines. The attendees included building professionals from private sectors. The rodent proofing design introduced in these guidelines, which aimed at long-term rodent prevention and control, was applicable to construction of new buildings and renovation of existing buildings. HD would make reference to the relevant guidelines in reviewing and installing rodent proofing facilities at suitable locations in PRH estates.

28. Mr Vincent CHENG hoped that FEHD and relevant government departments could continue to step up cleansing work and rodent disinfestation after the completion of the territory-wide cleansing campaign. Mr CHENG showed a photo of a large amount of garbage accumulated on the rooftops/patio areas of some old buildings. He urged FEHD and relevant departments to provide assistance to residents/owners in their cleansing and anti-rodent work in private lanes and "three-nil" buildings. DD(EH)/FEHD advised that the case referred to by Mr CHENG had been handled by relevant departments in August 2019 but the problem resurged. FEHD was exploring with relevant departments on how the environment hygiene problem in "three-nil" buildings and private lanes could be better tackled. The Administration would update members if there was any progress in this area of work.

29. Mr CHU Hoi-dick expressed concern about the piling up of refuse and food waste on the ground near refuse collection points in rural areas, causing obstruction and creating a breeding ground for rodents. He asked how FEHD would tackle this problem.

30. Assistant Director (Operations) 3/FEHD ("AD(Ops)3/FEHD") responded that apart from stepping up cleansing services, FEHD had installed Internet Protocol cameras at refuse dumping black spots to step up surveillance on illegal dumping of refuse and had set up dedicated teams to strengthen enforcement actions against public cleanliness offences including illegal refuse dumping. Individual cases involving dumping of refuse

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near refuse collection points in rural areas could be referred to FEHD for follow-up. To enhance the service quality at refuse collection points and to improve the environmental hygiene, FEHD was planning to upgrade, on a trial basis, the facilities at existing aluminium refuse collection points and bin sites in rural areas. This would include introducing "sensor-operated easy-thrown aluminium refuse collection points" and "solar-powered compacting refuse bins", with a view to increasing the storage capacity of refuse collection facilities in rural areas, providing enough space for refuse disposal and reducing environmental nuisance.

31. Mr Kenneth LAU considered that the Administration should step up anti-rodent work in rural areas. He asked whether FEHD would conduct intensive anti-rodent operations in villages and assist villagers in installing rodent proofing structures in their houses. AD(Ops)3/FEHD responded that additional manpower and resources had been deployed for anti-rodent work in villages and rural areas. Depending on the actual circumstances, FEHD might launch anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in rural areas.

32. Mr CHU Hoi-dick said that improper dumping of food remains by food premises in back alleys was a common food source for rodents. Noting that Phase 1 of the Organic Resources Recovery Centre ("O-PARK1") located at Siu Ho Wan of North Lantau had started receiving food waste from commercial and industrial sources for recycling since July 2018, Mr CHU asked whether FEHD would explore with the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") the feasibility of collecting food waste from food premises in the city area for recycling in O-PARK1.

33. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that in support of the Government's waste reduction initiatives, FEHD had been participating actively in the Food Waste Recycling Partnership Scheme organized by EPD by providing EPD with source-separated food waste collected from public markets for recycling. For food premises, the operators normally engaged garbage collectors to collect and deliver food waste to the nearby public refuse collection points. To improve environmental hygiene and prevent rodent infestation, FEHD had stepped up enforcement against irregularities of food premises such as food preparation at rear lanes and improper handling/disposing of refuse.

34. The Chairman said that public markets provided a breeding ground for rodents, and many food premises operators had complained that rodents got out from nearby public markets and sneaked into their food premises. In the Chairman's view, FEHD should focus on eliminating rodents' food sources and hiding places in public markets, in order to tackle the problem at root.

Application of new technology in rodent control

35. Noting that rodent trapping devices driven by pressurized gas (A24)

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had been put to test in some public markets, Mr Andrew WAN and Ms CHAN Hoi-yan enquired about the test results and whether the Administration would continue to use this particular device.

36. PCOic/FEHD responded that a total of 15 A24 rodent trapping devices had been procured for trial tests in a wet market, but they were not too effective in luring rodents despite the use of different baits during the six-month trial. It was mainly because the A24 rodent trapping devices were not specifically designed to catch sewer rats which were commonly found in Hong Kong, the habits of which were different from those rodents found in other habitats. As the performance of A24 rodent trapping devices was in no way better or more effective than traditional cage traps, FEHD decided not to adopt this tool for routine anti-rodent operations.

37. Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Mr Andrew WAN and Mr Wilson OR asked whether FEHD would consider introducing other new technologies for rodent control. PCOic/FEHD responded that the Administration was open-minded about applying new technologies/methods in anti-rodent work. If suitable technologies for rodent control were identified, the Administration would conduct tests to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of the technologies and examine whether the technologies were suitable for wider use in Hong Kong after the trial. FEHD would strengthen the cooperation with the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and local universities and invite companies and academics to explore technologies that could track rodents' activities for both control and surveillance purposes, with a view to implementing long-term effective and comprehensive rodent control measures.

38. Mr KWOK Wai-keung opined that as initial trial results had shown that thermal and night-vision cameras were able to monitor rodent activities effectively, the Administration should extend the trial scheme to other districts as soon as possible. USFH said that the Administration would consider more extensive use of such technologies if the results of further tests on them proved to be satisfactory.

Rodent surveillance programme

39. The Deputy Chairman recalled that there was a chapter on pest surveillance programmes in the Director of Audit's Report No. 63 published on 31 October 2014. In relation to rodent surveillance, the Director of Audit had recommended that FEHD should, among others, (a) consider widening the network of surveyed areas selected for the rodent surveillance programme and (b) review the effectiveness of Rodent Infestation Survey ("RIS") in providing surveillance information for planning and evaluation of pest control work. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the Administration's progress of implementing the recommendations made in the said Director of

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Audit's Report. She also asked whether there were internationally adopted standards for evaluation of rodent surveillance and control work.

40. In response, PCOic/FEHD advised that FEHD had reviewed the locations and coverage of baiting points in all districts. In 2020, the number of surveyed areas selected for conducting RIS under the rodent surveillance programme would be increased from 41 to 50. In reply to the Deputy Chairman's further enquiry about the reasons for not setting baits in public markets for rodent surveillance, PCOic/FEHD explained that the purpose of RIS was to detect locations with rodent activities for target control actions. As there were plenty of food in fresh markets rendering them very attractive to rodents, control actions had been taken place in fresh markets. Since there was continuous evaluation on the effectiveness of the control operations, there was no need to conduct RIS inside the markets. The ratio of baits (placed inside fresh markets) bitten by rodents might not genuinely reflect the actual rodent infestation in fresh markets. For more effective rodent surveillance, outdoor areas such as residential areas, rear lanes and the surrounding areas of a number of fresh markets were selected for setting baits for the purpose of detecting the extent of rodent activities.

41. PCOic/FEHD further advised that at present, there was no internationally adopted rodent infestation index. FEHD had devised RIR and the corresponding actions at different levels with reference to overseas practices and the actual situation and experience of Hong Kong. Compared with the rodent surveillance programmes of other countries (e.g. Singapore and the United Kingdom), the geographical coverage of surveyed areas for rodent surveillance in Hong Kong was already quite extensive. In assessing the effectiveness of anti-rodent operations conducted, FEHD would take into account a host of indicators, including trapping rate, the numbers of live rodents caught and dead rodents collected.

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42. The Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to provide the following information in writing:

- (a) a list of the existing 41 areas selected for conducting RIS under the rodent surveillance programme as well as the new areas to be included in the expanded list which would take effect from 2020 for the purpose of conducting RIS; and
- (b) whether consideration would be given to including fresh markets and FEHD-managed public markets into the rodent surveillance programme for conducting RIS.

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Threat of human infection of rat Hepatitis E virus ("HEV")

43. Ms Claudia MO, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan and Mr Kenneth LAU were concerned that since the detection of the world's first case of human infection of rat HEV in Hong Kong in September 2018, a number of rat HEV infection cases were found in Hong Kong within a short time span. Besides, it was reported that since November 2019, four cases of plague had been confirmed on the Mainland, involving people living in Beijing and Inner Mongolia. These members expressed worries that as rodent infestation was serious in various districts, there would be an outbreak of rat HEV or other rodent-transmitted diseases in Hong Kong. Ms MO sought information on the latest situation of human infection of rat HEV in the territory.

44. USFH responded that so far, a total of eight cases of human infection of rat HEV had been found in Hong Kong. Upon notification of the cases, the Centre for Health Protection ("CHP") of the Department of Health had immediately commenced epidemiological investigations to identify the potential sources and routes of infection, which however could not be confirmed based on the available epidemiological information. CHP's investigations were still in progress. After confirming the eight cases, FEHD had immediately conducted intensive anti-rodent operations in the vicinity of the patients' residence.

45. USFH further said that according to the latest information from the National Health Commission ("NHC") and the Health Commission of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, all close contacts of the four patients remained asymptomatic and were released from medical surveillance. CHP would maintain close liaison with NHC to monitor the latest situation of plague on the Mainland. CHP had all along been disseminating health information, including preventive measures of plague, to members of the public through different publicity channels. The preventive measures of plague and related information were available on CHP's website. Since plague was transmitted from an infected animal (mainly rodents) to humans through the bite of infected animal's fleas, CHP had reminded travellers to avoid visiting plague-endemic areas and heighten their vigilance against rodents.

46. Prof Joseph LEE expressed concern that it had been reported that flea infestation was serious in sub-divided units and old residential/industrial buildings due to poor building and hygiene conditions. He enquired about the Administration's disinfestation efforts in districts where flea problem was serious, with a view to preventing the spread of rodent-transmitted diseases through fleas. USFH responded that rat fleas were carriers of diseases such as plague. FEHD conducted annual rat-flea survey to assess the potential plague risk for humans. The results showed that the infestation of fleas remained at a safe level.

Motions proposed by members

47. The Deputy Chairman, Mr Andrew WAN, Mr Vincent CHENG and Mr CHU Hoi-dick indicated their intention to move motions under this discussion item. The Chairman ruled that the motions proposed respectively by these members were directly related to the agenda item and members present agreed that the motions should be dealt with.

Motion 1

48. The Chairman put the following motion moved jointly by Mr Andrew WAN and the Deputy Chairman to vote:

(議案中文措辭)

本事務委員會強烈要求政府，加強與大學或科技機構合作，以新型技術加強防治鼠患工作，以改善滅鼠成效；同時強制所有私人及政府建築物和住宅大廈加入防鼠為本的建築設計技術，進一步遏止鼠患問題。

另外，政府除加強社區清潔、教育和滅鼠等工作外，應訂立滅鼠工作的具體工作承諾和指標，以強化有關工作力度和加強監管進度，改善防治鼠患效益。

(English translation of the motion)

This Panel strongly requests the Government to enhance the cooperation with universities or technology organizations to step up its rodent control work by applying new technologies so as to improve the effectiveness of anti-rodent work; and to make it a mandatory requirement for all private and government buildings as well as residential buildings to incorporate building design with rodent proofing features to further curb the problem of rodent infestation.

Moreover, the Government should, apart from strengthening its work in the areas of community cleansing, education, anti-rodent operations, etc., also set specific performance pledges and indicators for anti-rodent work so as to intensify its relevant work and strengthen its monitoring of work progress with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of rodent control measures.

49. The Chairman invited members to vote for or against the motion by a show of hands. Twelve members voted for the motion, and no member voted against it or abstained from voting. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

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Motion 2

50. The Chairman put the following motion moved by Mr Vincent CHENG and seconded by Mr Steven HO to vote:

(議案中文措辭)

本事務委員會促請政府把「全城清潔」行動恆常化，盡快完成檢討追蹤鼠患的調查方法，並增撥資源完善治理蟲鼠機制。另外，政府必須加強支援舊樓區公用地方如後巷及私家街的清潔工作、優化及持續監督公共屋邨潔淨服務及增設定期的績效評估。

(English translation of the motion)

This Panel urges the Government to regularize the territory-wide cleansing campaign, expeditiously complete its review of the survey methodology for tracking rodent infestation and allocate additional resources to refine the pest control mechanism. Moreover, it is incumbent upon the Government to strengthen its support in cleaning up the common areas (such as rear lanes and private streets) in districts with higher concentration of aged buildings, enhance and continuously monitor the cleansing services for public rental housing estates, and establish a mechanism for conducting regular performance assessment.

51. Thirteen members voted for the motion, and no member voted against it or abstained from voting. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

Motion 3

52. The Chairman put the following motion moved by Mr CHU Hoi-dick to vote:

(議案中文措辭)

本事務委員會要求食物及衛生局徹底改革鄉郊垃圾收集系統，防止垃圾於垃圾站周邊的地面堆積，吸引老鼠繁殖。

(English translation of the motion)

This Panel requests the Food and Health Bureau to revamp the refuse collection system in rural areas, so as to prevent the piling up of refuse

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on the ground near refuse collection points since it will provide a breeding environment for rodents.

53. As all the 13 members present voted in favour of the motion, the Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

Motion 4

54. The Chairman put the following motion moved by the Deputy Chairman to vote:

(議案中文措辭)

本事務委員會促請政府加強以下措施以防治鼠患：

- (i) 擴大全港監察鼠患計劃下的監察地點覆蓋網絡，將監察點數目由現時 41 個，增加至少 3 倍；及
- (ii) 監察鼠患地點應包括全港公眾街市及私營街市。

(English translation of the motion)

This Panel urges the Government to step up the following rodent control measures:

- (i) the network of surveyed areas selected for the territory-wide rodent surveillance programme should be widened through increasing the number of surveillance areas by at least three times from the existing level of 41; and
- (ii) rodent surveillance areas should include public and private markets across the territory.

55. As all the 13 members present voted in favour of the motion, the Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

V. Proposed making permanent of one supernumerary post of Senior Principal Executive Officer in the Food Branch of the Food and Health Bureau

(LC Paper No. CB(2)329/19-20(05))

56. USFH said that the justifications for making permanent an existing supernumerary post of Senior Principal Executive Officer ("SPEO") (D2) in the Food Branch of the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB") had been provided

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in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)329/19-20(05)). He appealed to members' support for the staffing proposal.

Proposed making permanent of a supernumerary SPEO post

57. Mr Steven HO recalled that two directorate posts had been created under the Food Branch of FHB since the Fifth Legislative Council to cope with the increased workload under the food safety portfolio. These posts included: (a) one permanent post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (D3) designated as Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2 ("DSFH(F)2"), created since 2013; and (b) one supernumerary SPEO post, designated as SPEO(Food), created in 2017. While acknowledging the importance of further enhancing the Administration's work in ensuring food safety and other related policies and measures, he questioned whether the staffing proposal to make the post permanent now was well justified. In his view, the demarcation of FHB's work on food safety was not clear and delineation of duties among its staff not distinct. Citing the implementation of the export control of powdered formulae as an example, Mr HO opined that the matter was not merely a food safety or food supply issue as it also involved measures to combat parallel trading activities which fell outside the purview of FHB. In Mr HO's view, excessive control over food safety had adverse impact on food supply, as evidenced in the reduced supply from the Mainland of live pigs and hairy crabs to Hong Kong in recent years. Mr HO said that at the present point of time, it was premature for the Administration to propose making permanent the SPEO(Food) post. He suggested that the Administration might consider extending the supernumerary SPEO post for another two to three years.

58. Echoing Mr Steven HO's view, the Chairman expressed dissatisfaction with the Administration's work in ensuring the stability of food supply over the past few years. He considered that FHB should be prudent in manpower planning to avoid duplication of resources. The Chairman said that he objected to the proposal to make permanent the SPEO(Food) post as the justifications for which were far from convincing.

59. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan enquired (a) whether the duties of the proposed permanent SPEO(Food) post could be taken up by other Principal Assistant Secretaries ("PASs") in the Food Branch of FHB; and (b) whether the Food Branch was expected to deal with increasingly complex food safety policy issues and new initiatives, necessitating the conversion of the existing supernumerary SPEO(Food) post to permanent establishment.

60. In response, USFH and DSFH(F)2 made the following points:

- (a) safeguarding food safety was a long-term and important task. The Food Branch of FHB was responsible for policy formulation

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of all matters relating to food safety. Since 2008, the Food Branch of FHB had conducted more than 10 legislative exercises to introduce or amend regulations related to food safety, including prohibiting inappropriate level of melamine in food, regulating nutrition composition and nutrition labelling of infant formula, regulating nutrition labelling of follow-up formulae and prepackaged food for infants and young children, and enhancing the regulatory control and updating the standards for metallic contamination in food. As to future work, the Food Branch of FHB was working on proposals to update the regulatory regime of harmful substances in food, including industrially-produced trans fat and mycotoxins, as well as other harmful substances like erucic acid and benzo[a]pyrene in edible fats and oils. The Administration planned to consult the public on the proposals in 2020;

- (b) apart from policy formulation, the Administration needed to tackle food incidents and keep a close eye on the multi-faceted development of food supply and food safety issues internationally and in major food supplying economies as well as the ever-changing behaviour of food consumption and food handling in the community, so as to ensure that the monitoring and regulatory regime was in line with the international practice and the food consumption behaviour of the local community, thereby safeguarding public health;
- (c) alternatives to the current proposal of making the supernumerary SPEO post permanent had been considered. The Administration had carefully examined whether the duties of the proposed permanent SPEO(Food) post could be shared out by the other three PASs in the Food Branch of FHB. After considering their heavy schedules and existing workload, the Administration was of the view that it was difficult for them to take up the work of SPEO(Food) without affecting the discharge of their existing duties; and
- (d) as the existing establishment of the Food Branch of FHB was not sufficient to cope with the increased workload under the food safety portfolio, it was necessary to make permanent the existing supernumerary SPEO post, so as to strengthen the directorate support of the Food Branch to deal with the increasingly complex food safety policy issues and new initiatives.

61. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan said that in view of the foregoing, she supported the proposal to make permanent the existing supernumerary post of SPEO in the Food Branch of FHB.

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62. Mr CHU Hoi-dick said that he had yet come to a decision on whether to support the staffing proposal. Noting that the duties of the post holder would cover the formulation of policies in relation to organic food, he asked whether the Administration had any plan to set up statutory standards for organic food, or even to provide organic certification services in Hong Kong which were currently provided by the Hong Kong Organic Resource Centre ("HKORC"). Mr CHU further said that the United Nations had recently recommended people to reduce meat consumption and switch to plant-based diet, for the ultimate goal of fighting climate change. He asked whether the work of SPEO(Food) would cover the adoption of these recommendations.

63. DSFH(F)2 responded that the Administration would, instead of introducing legislation to regulate the production and sale of organic food, continue to enhance public education on organic food. With funding support from the Administration, HKORC made great efforts in raising public awareness on organic certification and labelling through various channels, including organizing publicity and educational activities such as the Organic Day and the Organic Ambassador Training Scheme. As regards the promotion of plant-based diet, DSFH(F)2 said that as the Government's main policy objectives in respect of food were to safeguard food safety and stability of supply, the Administration would continue to ensure that all food for sale in Hong Kong was fit for human consumption and complied with the legal requirements.

64. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that at this point of time, he did not support the staffing proposal. In his view, FHB should, instead of proposing the creation of directorate posts, create more professional and technical posts, so as to strengthen its capabilities in food safety management and food import control. It was particularly important for FHB to enhance the functions and ensure the effective operation of the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS"), through conducting more inspections at boundary control points and taking more food samples for testing at various levels of the supply chain. Since the Police had, in the past few months, frequently fired tear gas to disperse demonstrators, with some fired near food premises and markets (including the Yau Ma Tei Wholesale Fruit Market), Dr KWOK expressed grave concern about the impact of the residues of tear gas on public health and food safety. He asked whether the Administration had conducted any tests to see whether food had been contaminated by tear gas chemicals/residues.

65. USFH responded that given the widespread public concern about food safety, coupled with the fact that Hong Kong was a liberal and free market with a complex food supply chain providing a wide variety of food from all over the world, any major food incidents could have an extensive impact on Hong Kong. Management of such incidents involved coordination with various Government departments as well as food safety authorities outside

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Hong Kong. Such work required substantive policy guidance and support from directorate officers, and hence the need to make permanent the SPEO(Food) post. In response to the public's concern that food might be contaminated by tear gas or other substances, CFS had already issued the "Advice to the Public on Contaminants and Food Safety" in November 2019, providing advice to members of the public on how to prevent contamination of food and handle contaminated food.

Other issues: food import control

66. The Deputy Chairman said that Members belonging to the Democratic Party had all along considered that the Administration should deploy sufficient resources and manpower for food surveillance and sample testing work to ensure food safety. Expressing concern that it was reported by the media that some unscrupulous traders on the Mainland might use pigs infected with African Swine Fever to make chilled/frozen or processed/preserved pork products, she enquired about the measures taken by the Administration to prevent contaminated pork products from entering the local food supply chain and whether CFS would enhance inspection and testing of samples of pork products at the boundary control points. The Deputy Chairman further requested the Administration to make arrangements for Panel members to visit the Man Kam To Food Control Office to better understand CFS' food surveillance work in respect of food imported from the Mainland.

67. DSFH(F)2 responded that CFS would ensure that all live pig consignments and imports of chilled/frozen pork products from the Mainland were accompanied by valid health certificates. To enhance work efficiency and to strengthen the verification of information on the health certificates, CFS and the Mainland Customs would establish an electronic data exchange system for transmission of information of health certificates for meat and meat products. To combat illegal importation and smuggling of foods, CFS would continue to work in collaboration with the Customs and Excise Department ("C&ED"), including mounting joint operations. In 2019, C&ED had so far detected nine cases of smuggling of frozen meat and seized 980 tonnes of frozen meat, which was already 1.3 times of the total quantities seized over the last 10 years. In addition, between January and November 2019, CFS had instituted 327 prosecutions against illegal importation of meat by passengers into Hong Kong. CFS would continue with various efforts to safeguard food safety, including imposing control at source, monitoring the procedures and conducting tests.

Conclusion

68. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that members belonging to the Liberal Party did not support the staffing proposal. Among those

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members who did speak, (a) only Ms CHAN Hoi-yan supported the proposal to make permanent the existing supernumerary post of SPEO in the Food Branch of FHB; (b) two members, namely Mr Steven HO and Dr KWOK Ka-ki, indicated that at the present point of time, they did not support the proposal; (c) Mr CHU Hoi-dick said that he had yet come to a decision on whether to support the staffing proposal; and (d) the Deputy Chairman had not indicated the position of the Democratic Party.

VI. Any other business

69. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:26 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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