

Information Note

Bills Committee Formed on 16 October 2020 to Study the Waste Disposal (Charging for Municipal Solid Waste) (Amendment) Bill 2018

Administration's Response to Various Issues Raised by Members

Purpose

This paper aims to set out the Administration's response to various issues raised by Members at previous meetings of the captioned Bills Committee.

Preparatory Period before the Implementation of MSW Charging

2. To facilitate a gradual adaptation to Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) charging and drive behavioural changes among the community, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) originally proposed to put in place a preparatory period of 12-18 months after the passage of the Waste Disposal (Charging for Municipal Solid Waste) (Amendment) Bill 2018 ("the Bill") in order to provide appropriate time for the Government, various stakeholders and members of the public to prepare for the implementation of MSW charging. Members have suggested that the general public might need a longer preparatory period to adapt to MSW charging and cultivate waste reduction habits in their daily lives.

3. We agree to put in place a preparatory period of 18 months as a basic arrangement. During the preparatory period, we will pay close attention to various aspects of the community, particularly the progress of economic recovery after the pandemic, and the level of preparation among different stakeholders, etc. We may extend the preparatory period as appropriate if considered necessary. As regards the specific commencement dates of the legislations, the EPD will report to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Environmental Affairs (EA Panel) on the progress of our work during preparatory period and consult the EA Panel on the commencement dates of the legislations at an opportune time. Upon obtaining the support of the EA Panel, the subsidiary legislations in relation to the relevant commencement notices will be published in the Gazette subject to negative vetting procedure of the LegCo.

Provision of Free Designated Garbage Bags

4. According to the current proposal, MSW charging will be levied through the dual modes of (a) charging by designated garbage bags/designated labels and (b) charging by weight-based “gate-fee”. Overall speaking, some 80% of the daily MSW disposed of at landfills will be collected through designated garbage bags. Members have suggested that the Government might consider providing more assistance during the initial stage of the implementation of MSW charging so as to facilitate the general public to adapt to the arrangement of using of designated garbage bags for proper waste disposal.

5. To facilitate the general public to adapt to the use of designated garbage bags and cultivate proper waste disposal habits with these bags, the Government will consider proposals in relation to provision of free designated garbage bags during the initial stage of implementation.

Food Waste Collection

6. Upon the implementation of MSW charging, all MSW delivered to refuse transfer stations, refuse transfer facilities and landfills for handling will be subject to MSW charging under the dual modes of charging set out in paragraph 4 above. Members have expressed concerns on the implications of the implementation of MSW charging on various trades for example catering trade would bear additional costs for handling of food waste, and have called for relevant support from the Government.

7. As for food waste collection, the Government has launched the Pilot Scheme on Food Waste Collection to provide free collection and delivery of food waste to food waste recycling facilities for turning waste into energy or resources progressively according to the progress of the expansion of downstream food waste recycling facilities. The Government also plans to arrange free collection and delivery of food waste properly separated from catering trade to food waste recycling facilities progressively upon the implementation of MSW charging. In other words, if the catering trade practised separation of food waste properly, those food waste which would be sent to food waste recycling facilities would not be subject to MSW charges. This arrangement will be same as the case whereas recyclables properly recycled by the general public would not be subject to MSW charges (for example delivering

recyclables to GREEN@COMMUNITY). That said, all other MSW being disposed of would be subject to MSW charges pursuant to the legislation.

Advice Sought

8. Members are invited to note the Administration's response and offer views.

**Environmental Protection Department
March 2021**