

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 0006)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

During 2015-16, the Department will assist the Food and Health Bureau in following up the implementation of measures to enhance the liquor licensing regime. In this connection, please provide details, including the specific measures, the timetable of work, as well as the manpower and expenditure required.

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy (Member Question No. 6)

Reply:

The Government conducted a public consultation in 2011 and implemented a number of administrative measures subsequently to improve the liquor licensing regime. For instance, the LLB has in May 2013 revamped its procedures for dealing with applications for the renewal or transfer of liquor licence, aiming to provide added room for sensitive handling of voices from the neighbourhood. A set of guidelines has also been published by the LLB in December 2013 capturing the factors that need to be taken into account when assessing liquor licence applications and highlighting the scrutiny that applications from upstairs bars would have to go through, as well as the more stringent conditions that the LLB may impose including those relating to capacity limit and measures to abate noise nuisance for premises etc.

Separately, we have since June 2014 added express provisions in the licensing conditions stipulating that restaurant licensees must comply with fire safety requirements at all times (such that minor breaches, if repeatedly not attended to promptly, would render them liable to suspension/cancellation of licence). In addition, documentary evidence of continuous compliance with fire safety requirements (namely that the fire safety related certificates issued by registered specialist contractors remain valid at the material time) must be adduced when the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) processes applications for licence renewal. An overwhelming majority of liquor-licensed premises have restaurant licences.

Apart from the administrative measures that have been implemented, on 4 February 2015, we introduced to the Legislative Council (LegCo) the Dutiable Commodities (Liquor) (Amendment) Regulation 2015 (The Amendment Regulation) to adjust the maximum validity period of a liquor licence, and to facilitate electronic submission of applications including the issue or renewal of liquor licence, with a view to further improving the liquor licensing regulatory regime. The Amendment Regulation will come into operation on 3 August 2015.

40 staff in the three licensing offices in the Department are responsible for handling liquor and club liquor licence applications and the related appeals, and implementing the above enhancement measures as part of their licensing-related duties. In addition, another nine staff are deployed for providing secretariat support to the LLB. There is no separate breakdown on the manpower and expenditure involved in the implementation of the above measures.

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