

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)178**

**(Question Serial No. 3299)**

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:

In his Budget Speech, the Financial Secretary mentioned that he had asked relevant departments to implement as early as possible the proposal to facilitate alfresco dining operation. In this connection, please advise on the details, the timetable, as well as the manpower and financial resources, of the plan(s) concerned.

Asked by: Hon QUAT Elizabeth (Member Question No. 56)

Reply:

In 2013, the Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit under the Financial Secretary's Office formed a Working Group comprising representatives from eight departments (including the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department), Fire Services Department, Buildings Department, Lands Department, Planning Department, Housing Department, Transport Department and Home Affairs Department) to review the procedures involved in handling applications for Outside Seating Accommodation (OSA) permission from restaurants. The Working Group has put forward ten recommendations to enhance and streamline the OSA application procedures with a view to shortening the processing time and facilitating trade compliance.

The following six recommendations have been implemented -

- (i) To highlight in the OSA Application Guide (the Guide) that parallel processing of separate OSA and restaurant licence applications is allowed and the outcome of restaurant licence application is independent of that of the OSA application;
- (ii) To allow the granting of OSA permission to a provisional restaurant licence;
- (iii) To enhance the mechanism for considering objections to OSA applications from the public by seeking the relevant departments' comments in regard to complaint and enforcement statistics related to the restaurant under OSA application;
- (iv) To convene joint departmental meetings with applicants at which relevant departments will discuss their concerns/objections with the applicants direct;
- (v) To streamline the processing procedures for OSA applications by confining referral of such applications only to government departments which should be involved; and

(vi) To streamline the application process for issue of land licence so that the Lands Department can issue the land licence to the applicants in a timely manner.

Implementation of the following four recommendations is underway -

- (vii) To consider relaxing the pre-requisite of open space adjoining the restaurant for OSA application without compromising public interest;
- (viii) To enhance the Guide to make it more informative and business-friendly;
- (ix) To include OSA in the Licence Application Tracking Facility currently provided by the Department for applicants to monitor the progress of their applications on-line; and
- (x) To adopt the “cancel and re-issue” approach to replace the current practice of processing a fresh application to shorten the land licence processing time in relation to the transfer of restaurant licence.

We plan to have them implemented within 2015.

There is no separate breakdown on the manpower and expenditure involved in the handling of applications for OSA.

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