

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)151

(Question Serial No. 1323)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (3) Market Management and Hawker Control
Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Under Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2017-18, it is mentioned that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) will “take action to close public markets which are under-utilised”. In this connection, please advise this Committee on the following:

- (1) details on the intended closure of under-utilised public markets;
- (2) given the strong demand for public market services from nearly 300 000 residents in Tin Shui Wai, whether the Department will conduct a study on the utilisation of public markets by those residents and the ways to meet local demand for public markets; and
- (3) the progress in setting up bazaar(s) in Tin Shui Wai.

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Che-cheung (Member Question No. 47)

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows-

- (1) As a result of demographic changes, new development/redevelopment projects and competition from other fresh provision outlets, the appeal of some public markets has been diminishing over time thus leading to reduced patronage and high vacancy rates. When considering whether an under-utilised public market is to be closed, we will take into account a host of factors, including vacancy rate, prospects for improvement, availability of alternative sources of fresh provision outlets in the vicinity, and the likely cost-effectiveness of upgrading works and the views of the relevant District Councils, etc. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) plans to close Shau Kei Wan Market and Tsuen King Circuit Market in 2017-18, the vacancy

rates¹ of which were 44% and 80% respectively as at 31 December 2016. Noteworthy is that a sizable portion of the occupied (i.e. leased) stalls are not in active operation, e.g. for the Shau Kei Wan Market, of the 46 occupied stalls, only 19 stalls are actively in operation.

- (2) In considering the provision of a new public market, the Government will take into account various factors, including the population in the area, demographic mix, community needs, the availability of public and private market facilities and the number of fresh provision retail outlets in the vicinity, etc. Moreover, we have to duly assess the demand and cost effectiveness in order to ensure that public resources are put to proper use. Currently, there are 5 wet markets and over 80 fresh provision retail outlets in Tin Shui Wai. The Housing Authority will also provide a shopping centre and a market in Ping Yan Court, a subsidised sale flats project under construction in the area and scheduled for completion in 2018.

When deciding the location site of a new public market, the Government will consider key factors such as the geographical location, existing and planned uses, usable area and ancillary transport facilities provided nearby, in order to ensure that, upon completion, the market will be of a substantial scale and viability and that the use of public finances and land resources can be optimised.

Having considered all relevant factors, and as announced in the Policy Address in January 2017, the Government has initially identified a suitable site in the Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area (NDA), which is adjacent to Tin Shui Wai, to build a sizable public market. This site is located in the vicinity of the proposed Hung Shui Kiu Railway Station, the proposed environmentally friendly transport services facilities and a public transport interchange, thus facilitating its link with Hung Shui Kiu NDA and various areas in Tin Shui Wai. Well-connected by public transport and close to the train station and public transport interchange, the site is accessible to more members of the public. As such, not only the needs of the residents in Hung Shui Kiu NDA, but also the needs of the population in the Tin Shui Wai area will be catered for.

- (3) In recent years, there have been calls for the establishment of open-air bazaars with local characteristics. While keeping an open mind, the Government believes that for the successful operation of such bazaars, the proposals should be developed bottom-up so that they can fully address the divergent needs and concerns of the local community in addition to commanding broad local support. If suitable sites are identified and support from the relevant District Councils has been obtained and provided that food safety and environmental hygiene are not compromised, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and FEHD stand ready to facilitate liaison with relevant government departments.

FHB has earlier received a proposal on organizing a bazaar in Tin Yiu Estate, Tin Shui Wai. Relevant departments, the venue management and the Area Committee of the Yuen Long District raise no objections to the bazaar proposal. The relevant

¹ Vacancy rate is the percentage of stalls not leased versus the total number of stalls in a market.

committee under the Yuen Long District Council shows support to holding temporary bazaars at suitable sites in the district, and raises no objection to the proposal. FEHD will offer assistance to the organiser in connection with any applications for Temporary Places of Public Entertainment Licence and related food business licences.

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