

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)267

(Question Serial No. 3760)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses
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:

The Legislative Council is expected to complete the scrutiny of the Private Columbaria Bill within the current legislative session. With regard to the follow-up actions on the legislation, please advise this Committee of the following:

- a) whether the Department has formulated any work plan for following up the Private Columbaria Bill in 2017-18; if yes, the specific details of the work plan, as well as the timetable, manpower arrangement and the estimated expenditure for implementation of the plan concerned; if not, the reason(s);
- b) whether the Department has reserved resources and manpower for the preparatory work on the setting up of the Private Columbaria Licensing Board and for its initial operation in 2017-18; if yes, the estimated expenditure, manpower arrangement and details of the preparatory work; if not, the reason(s); and
- c) whether the Department has reserved resources for launching publicity and public education activities to promote the new Private Columbaria Ordinance in 2017-18; if yes, details of the work plan, the timetable and estimated expenditure in this respect; if not, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (Member Question No. 125)

Reply:

- (a) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) will set up a dedicated office known as the Private Columbaria Affairs Office (PCAO) to deal with the preparatory work for taking forward the Private Columbaria Ordinance (the Ordinance) and for implementing the licensing scheme for private columbaria upon commencement of the legislation. The Private Columbaria Bill is being scrutinized by the Legislative Council, and we are working closely with the Council to facilitate its early passage. If everything goes smoothly, the Ordinance could be enacted by as early as mid-2017. The new PCAO comprises the Licensing Board Secretariat, the

Administration Unit, the Licensing Team and the Enforcement Team. About 50 staff and \$50 million have been earmarked for the operation of the PCAO in 2017-18.

- (b) The Licensing Board Secretariat of the PCAO will be responsible for the preparatory work in setting up the Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB). Since the team will also perform other preparatory work and duties for the PCAO, there is no separate breakdown on the expenditure and manpower resources involved in setting up the PCLB.
- (c) Upon enactment of the Ordinance, the Department will set up a dedicated website on the regulation of private columbaria to provide relevant information to consumers and operators respectively. The Department will also step up its publicity and public education efforts on the licensing scheme, including broadcasting new Announcements in the Public Interest on television and radio, broadcasting an animated video, placing advertisements on newspapers, distributing pamphlets through various channels and at various locations. Briefing sessions for various stakeholders will also be arranged to enhance their understanding of the relevant requirements. Staff of the PCAO, among other duties, will take forward the above work on publicity and public education. There is no separate breakdown on the expenditure involved in such work.

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