

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)380**

**(Question Serial No. 7182)**

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:

According to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPSG"), the Government has specific requirements for the ratio between population size and provision of leisure, cultural and sports facilities, including 1 library for every 20 000 persons, 1 badminton court for every 8 000 persons and 1 multi-purpose sports stadium for every 50 000 persons. According to the Projections of Population Distribution 2013-2021 compiled by the Planning Department, Sha Tin currently has a population of about 650 000, which is expected to increase to about 710 000 by 2021. It is stated in the Estimates that the policy and resources allocation on community development work will continue to be overseen. In this connection, please advise this Committee on the following:

1. whether the community facilities (such as markets) currently available in different areas in Sha Tin meet the standards prescribed by HKPSG; among those areas which fail to meet the HKPSG standards, their respective shortfalls, as well as whether there are plans to make up the shortfalls by providing additional facilities (if yes, the details; if not, the reason(s)); and
2. given that the population of Tai Wai alone already stands at 180 000, whether the feasibility of building a multi-purpose market complex therein has been reviewed.

Asked by: Hon YUNG Hoi-yan (Member Question No. 52)

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows -

1. The Food and Health Bureau conducted a policy review on public markets in 2007-08, which concluded that the future provision of new public markets should be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure efficient use of public resources. Apart from the population of the area in question, other relevant factors that should be considered include the demographic mix, community needs, the presence of market facilities nearby, the number of fresh provision retail outlets available in the vicinity, and public sentiment towards the preservation of hawker areas in the particular locality. The

Government consulted the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of the Legislative Council and all District Councils on the review findings in 2008. As a result of the policy review, those parts concerning public markets in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) were amended in April 2009 and have remained in force since then. The revised HKPSG is based on a more holistic consideration of relevant factors, rather than just the size of the population, in the planning of public markets. When preparing or reviewing town plans, the Planning Department will consult the relevant policy bureaux and departments, so as to ascertain whether there is a need to reserve land for public markets. We will, in the light of developments and the actual situation on the ground, assess the need to review the planning guidelines for public markets as and when appropriate.

Our focus is on facilitating convenient access for the public to retail outlets in their vicinity for meeting their daily needs on fresh food. Currently, there exists a variety of channels for the public to purchase fresh food. Apart from public markets, many members of the public when purchasing fresh food may choose to patronise markets, supermarkets and various types of retail outlets operated by other public and private entities.

Customer preference for different shopping venues in purchasing fresh food may evolve in tandem with changes in socio-economic circumstances, lifestyles, purchasing power and various other factors. Providing a new public market requires the use of Government land and entails public financial commitment. Therefore, in considering whether a public market should be built, we have to duly assess the need for the market and cost-effectiveness in order to ensure that public resources are put to proper use. In fact, in the face of fierce competition, changing circumstances in individual communities and changes in the purchasing habits of members of the public, some public markets are facing relatively high vacancy rates and low customer flows. Also, the Audit Commission has in previous reports pointed out that, given the high cost of constructing a new public market, the relevant principles should be strictly adhered to.

2. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department currently has no plan to build new public market or municipal services building in Tai Wai, but we would, taking into account the considerations outlined above, keep the situation under review.

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