

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)154**

**(Question Serial No. 3533)**

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:

With regard to the management of public markets, please provide information on the following:

- (a) the expenditure on subsidising public market management in the past 3 years;
- (b) the number of vacant stalls in public markets and the vacancy rate at present, the average and longest vacancy period, and the expenditure on subsidising public market management for all vacant stalls in 2017-18;
- (c) the number of in-house staff involved in the management of public markets;
- (d) the number of contractors engaged, the manpower they deploy, the types of services they provide and the expenditure involved in the various aspects of market management; and
- (e) given the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department's plan to close under-utilised public markets as stated under the Programme, the list of markets planned to be closed and details of the plans concerned.

Asked by: Hon HO Chun-yin, Steven (Member Question No. (LegCo use): 79)

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows -

- (a) For 2015-16 and 2016-17, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) recorded deficits of \$293.7 million and \$401.9 million respectively in the management of public markets. The deficit for 2017-18 (revised estimate) is \$366.9 million.

- (b) “Vacant” stalls refer to stalls that have not been let out. Degree of activity of let-out stalls varies. As at 31 December 2017, 1 267 stalls out of a total 14 086 stalls in public markets were not let out, representing 9% of the total number of stalls. The figure has included those stalls being frozen for various purposes, such as stalls in markets undergoing improvements works or stalls that may be needed for housing tenants from public markets being planned for closure, but excluded the stalls in 2 public markets which were closed in end February 2018. Information on the average and longest period of vacancy is not readily available.
- (c) As at 31 December 2017, 207 in-house staff including Non-civil Service Contract staff were involved in the management of public markets.
- (d) As at 31 December 2017, a total of 14 contractors and about 1 500 contractors’ staff were engaged to support the operation of public markets, including venue management, cleansing, pest control and security guard services. The estimated total expenditure involved for 2017-18 is about \$240.5 million.
- (e) 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. Closure of such markets may release precious land resources for more gainful use to better serve the community. When considering whether an under-utilised market is to be closed, the Department 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 Department will consult the relevant District Council(s) and the market tenants to be affected on any market closure plans.

- End -