

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)336

(Question Serial No. 5459)

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:

With regard to the burial services provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (a) the number of cases of using the Department's service of scattering of cremains in Gardens of Remembrance in each of the past 3 years;
- (b) the number of cases of using the Department's service of scattering of cremains at sea, as well as the utilisation rate of the service quota, in each of the past 3 years;
- (c) whether the Department will continue to increase the service capacity in 2019-20 (if yes, the details and the estimated expenditure in this respect; if no, the reason(s));
- (d) whether the Department has drawn up any plan for continuing the publicity work on scattering of cremains in Gardens of Remembrance and at sea in 2019-20; if yes, details of the plan, including a breakdown of the estimated expenditure by publicity channel or event, as well as the timetable and estimated indicators for the events concerned; if no, the reason(s);
- (e) the number of webpages dedicated to the memory of the deceased in the "memorial.gov.hk" website managed by the Department; the number of new memorial webpages created in each of the past 3 years; the number of visitors of the website in each of the past 3 years;
- (f) the manpower arrangement and estimated expenditure for the operation of the "memorial.gov.hk" website in 2019-20; whether the Department will consider reviewing the cost effectiveness of the website in 2019-20 and follow up the results and recommendations of the review (if yes, the work plan and timetable of the review; if no, the reason(s)).

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (LegCo internal reference no.: 204)

Reply:

- (a) The number of cases on scattering cremated ashes in the Gardens of Remembrance managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) in the past 3 years is as follows -

Calendar Year	Number of cases on scattering of ashes in Gardens of Remembrance
2016	4 004
2017	4 966
2018	5 352

- (b) The number of applications received and the utilisation rates of the free ferry service provided by the Department for scattering cremated ashes at sea in the past 3 years are as follows –

Calendar Year	Number of applications received	Service capacity	Utilisation rate
2016	850	1 175	72%
2017	906	1 175	77%
2018	878	1 225	72%

- (c) The Department reviews the service capacity for the free ferry service from time to time, and will consider increasing the service level should demand for the service so warrant.
- (d) In 2019-20, the Department will continue to take proactive efforts in promoting green burial, including scattering of cremated ashes in Gardens of Remembrance or at sea, the Internet Memorial Service (IMS) and the Green Burial Central Register. Publicity and public education will continue through different channels, including Announcements in the Public Interest on television and radio, promotion videos, posters and banners, a mobile app, a dedicated website and collaboration with non-governmental organisations and promotional activities at Senior Exhibitions, etc. The estimated amount of provision earmarked for promoting green burial in 2019-20 is about \$17.0 million.

While the total number of green burial cases handled by the Department has increased by about 29% from 2016 to 2018, it takes time for the community at large to accept green burial as a sustainable form of handling cremated human ashes. We will continue to improve the green burial facilities and services, engage community stakeholders for support and step up our publicity and public education efforts.

- (e) As at 31 December 2018, there were 12 528 memorial webpages for the deceased created under the IMS website provided by the Department. Information on the

number of newly created memorial webpages and hit count of such webpages in the past 3 years is provided as follows -

Calendar Year	Number of newly created memorial webpages	Hit count
2016	1 366	590 672
2017	1 493	675 947
2018	1 619	641 891

- (f) In 2019-20, the work of operating the IMS website as well as its new mobile app will continue to be absorbed by the Department's existing staff. The estimated amount of provision earmarked for maintaining the service is about \$0.42 million. The Department keeps under review the cost effectiveness of the IMS and will seek improvements as appropriate to better meet the needs of the users.

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