

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)346

(Question Serial No. 6315)

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 overseeing the progress of re-issuing fixed pitch hawker licences, please advise this Committee on the following:

- (a) What is the expenditure or estimated expenditure involved for the review of re-issuing hawker licences under the five-year assistance scheme?
- (b) Will the Department provide funding support for applicants allocated with vacant fixed hawker pitches to construct their stalls?
- (c) Further to the above question, if no funding support is provided, will loan package be offered to applicants with financial difficulties?
- (d) When will be the whole procedure of re-allocation of vacant fixed hawker pitches and issue of fixed pitch hawker licences be completed?
- (e) A total of over 12 000 applications from eligible applicants are received under the re-allocation of vacant fixed hawker pitches exercise. Will the Department conduct study or public consultation on the provision of new fixed hawker pitches so as to allow the public to apply for fixed pitch hawker licences?

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-chun (LegCo internal reference no.: 195)

Reply:

- (a) The work of the five-year Hawker Assistance Scheme (Assistance Scheme) has been substantially completed in the first quarter of 2019. During the implementation of the Assistance Scheme, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has taken forward the consultation on the re-allocation of vacant fixed hawker pitches and issue of new licences in the fourth quarter of 2018. The work is undertaken by the staff responsible for the Assistance Scheme and there is no additional expenditure involved.

- (b) Under section 40 of the Hawker Regulation (Cap. 132AI), where a licensee is allocated a hawker pitch, he shall, unless a stall is provided by the Department on the pitch, provide at his own expense and hawk from a stall that is designed and constructed in accordance with specifications previously approved by the Department. During the application period for the 2019 Re-allocation of Fixed Hawker Pitches and Issue of New Licences (Hawker pitch re-allocation scheme), the Department had specified this requirement in the hawker licence application form and reminded applicants of such requirement in the notification letter for pitch selection and collection of licence. This is in line with the practice adopted during the re-issue of new hawker licences in 2010. The Assistance Scheme, which has concluded now, was launched in 2013 with the aim to enhance the fire safety standard of the 43 hawker areas across the territory and improve fire resisting capability and design of hawker stalls.
- (c) Hawking should be seen as one of the modes of economic activities. While hawking can bring about some employment and small business opportunities, the policy on hawker licensing does not originate from welfare concerns or poverty alleviation. The hawker pitch re-allocation scheme is formulated after review of the need for the issue of new fixed pitch hawker licences for pitches vacated upon completion of the Assistance Scheme. The fire safety and environmental hygiene condition of the pitches and the concerns of traders were also taken into account.
- (d) The Department launched the hawker pitch re-allocation scheme at the end of September 2019. Under the scheme, 435 vacant fixed hawker pitches located at 7 districts will be open for application by persons who are interested in the hawking business and able to meet the required conditions. Successful applicants will operate at the pitches after a licence is granted. After launching the scheme, the Department received a total of 14 126 applications, of which 12 788 applicants were initially eligible. The Department conducted an open computer random sequencing cum manual ballot exercise to determine the priority order of applicants for pitch selection at the end of November 2019. Applicants were invited for selection of vacant pitches in early December. As at 29 February 2020, 349 applicants were invited for pitch selection. Among them, 236 have selected the pitches (77 of them have been granted with the fixed pitch hawker licence), 109 gave up pitch selection and 4 were considered not eligible for the scheme. The pitch selection exercise is scheduled for completion at the end of April 2020. The work is mainly performed by 12 departmental staff at an estimated expenditure of \$8.04 million in 2020-21.
- (e) The list of eligible applicants who have not been allocated a hawker pitch will be kept for 3 years for use in the allocation of vacant pitches that could be made available within the three-year period. We have no plan to set up new fixed hawker pitches at the moment.

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