

LCQ16: Short-term parking arrangements for delivery couriers

Following is a question by the Hon Kingsley Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (November 6):

Question:

It has been reported that the new communities of Queen's Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court in Fanling, with a population of more than 30 000, have great demand for the services of online delivery platforms. However, some of the relevant trade unionists have reflected that the management offices of these housing estates have not considered the need of delivery couriers for short-term parking of their motorcycles. Not only have the management offices failed to provide temporary parking spaces, they have also stepped up their efforts to impound motorcycles and have even lodged complaints with the Police about motorcycles obstructing roads, resulting in delivery couriers often having to pay impounding charges and fines for penalty tickets. Such trade unionists hope that the relevant estate management offices and the Police can take into account the principles of legality, reasonableness and compassion in their actions. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views about the varying standards of the management offices of different public housing estates in managing the short-term parking of delivery couriers' motorcycles in the housing estates, which has left delivery couriers at a loss, whether the authorities will consider providing guidelines for all parties to follow; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will keep abreast with the need to develop the platform economy by using the housing estates with recent population intakes (e.g. Queen's Hill Estate) as pilot estates to provide "designated motorcycle parking spaces for delivery" within or near the housing estates to allow delivery couriers to park their motorcycles for short periods; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will follow the practice of the Mainland and set up "courier posts" in various districts to provide areas for resting, eating and using toilets, equipped with facilities such as water dispensers and first-aid kits, so as to improve the working conditions and well-being of delivery couriers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it has estimated the latest number of local delivery couriers accepting orders through online platforms?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Transport and Logistics Bureau, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), a consolidated reply to the Hon Kingsley Wong's question is as follows:

(1) & (2) In general, establishing designated motorcycle parking spaces for delivery services in public housing estates or on public roads nearby requires effective management measures to ensure that these parking spaces are used as intended, such as restricting the parking purpose and limiting the parking duration based on the circumstances of each public housing estate to avoid prolonged occupancy. At present, motorcycle parking spaces on public roads are open for public use, including food delivery motorcycles. There are no restrictions on the parking use of the parking spaces. The Transport Department endeavours to increase the supply of motorcycle parking spaces on public roads to meet with the keen demand of motorcyclists through various means. It is initially assessed that the feasibility in establishing designated motorcycle parking spaces for a specific purpose is relatively low.

Overall speaking, loading/unloading bays are provided around the domestic blocks in most of the housing estates/courts under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) for vehicles, including delivery motorcycles, to load/unload goods or pick-up/drop-off passengers. Taking into account the prevalent need for short-term parking by various types of vehicles to load/unload goods and pick-up/drop-off passengers, the HA has waived the parking fees for vehicles parked in its loading/unloading bays in all housing estates/courts under the HA's management for up to 30 minutes.

In addition, for roads other than the loading/unloading bays, the Housing Department (HD) or the authorised staff of the housing estates/courts/car park operators will exercise discretion with regard to the actual situation in handling short-term parking by delivery motorcycles and other vehicles in a reasonable and compassionate manner. Given that the specific circumstances and road design vary in different housing estates/courts, the staff concerned will, in handling the matter, consider the needs of delivery couriers and will strike a balance among various factors such as estate management, the impact on other residents and road users, as well as whether the road section concerned is an emergency vehicular access which has to be kept clear at all times for fire appliances, police vehicles or ambulances to carry out rescue and other operations. In general, the staff will first issue a verbal/written warning to request the driver concerned to drive off the illegally parked vehicle. Only when the warning goes unheeded, the driver will receive fixed penalty tickets or have the vehicle impounded in accordance with the law. Couriers can use the loading/unloading bays adjacent to the domestic blocks for short-term parking of their motorcycles to facilitate their delivery services, and the estate staff will handle short-term parking by delivery motorcycles in a reasonable and compassionate manner according to the actual situation. The above

arrangements took into account the needs of all the stakeholders.

Queens Hill Estate is a public rental housing estate under the HA, while the neighbouring Shan Lai Court is a sold housing court under the "Home Ownership Scheme". Lung Ma Road and Lung Chun Road, the major roads serving Queens Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court, are restricted roads within Queens Hill Estate. No parking is allowed at any time on these two roads which are under the control of the HD. The housing estate and court concerned are provided with emergency vehicular access to various domestic blocks, each of which is provided with loading/unloading bays in the vicinity with free parking offer for the first 30 minutes to allow short-term parking by vehicles (including motorcycles). At present, seven and six loading/unloading bays are provided adjacent to the domestic blocks in Queens Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court respectively. These facilities provide spaces for free temporary parking, enabling couriers to promptly deliver services. In addition, 11 hourly motorcycle parking spaces are provided in Queens Hill Estate for visitors (including couriers).

It is noted that some motorcycles/vehicles are parked on Lung Ma Road and Lung Chun Road, of which parking is prohibited at all times, or on the adjacent pedestrian footpaths. There are even vehicles parked illegally on emergency vehicle access in the housing estate/court, posing danger to other road users and pedestrians. Therefore, enforcement actions must be taken. The management agency appointed by the HA is authorised to carry out enforcement actions. Warning banners have been put up in prominent areas on roads to remind drivers that illegal parking will result in their vehicle impounded or issuance of fixed penalty tickets. If illegal parking is identified, the staff will warn the driver on-site to drive away the vehicle as soon as possible; and issue a warning notice if the driver is not present. Should the warning be unheeded, the vehicles concerned will be impounded. According to the record, most of the impounded vehicles were prolonged parking vehicles rather than short-term parking by delivery motorcycles. It can thus be seen that the aforementioned enforcement actions have been carried out in a lawful, reasonable and compassionate manner, and the impact on couriers has been minimal. It is observed that the situation has now been improved and in general couriers would temporarily park their motorcycles on the loading/unloading bays adjacent to the domestic blocks for delivery services.

As for the supply of motorcycle parking spaces, the HD has provided seven additional monthly motorcycle parking spaces in the carpark of Queens Hill Estate since January 2024 having regard to the demand for motorcycle parking spaces and technical feasibility. All these parking spaces have been rented out. The implementation of the above integrated measures has greatly improved the illegal parking situation within Queens Hill Estate and Shan Lai Court, leading to a drop in the number of impounded vehicles.

In view of the limited public spaces in housing estates and the requirement for the provision of emergency vehicular access, loading/unloading bays, pedestrian links as well as the recreational, leisure and greening facilities in accordance with the planning standards, it is not feasible to provide additional "designated motorcycle parking spaces for

delivery".

(3) and (4) Commissioned by the Labour Department (LD), the C&SD has contracted out in September 2023 a Thematic Household Survey to collect information on, among others, the characteristics and working conditions of digital platform workers engaging in food and goods delivery services. The household survey is the first of its kind and fieldwork has been completed. Data processing and analysis are underway. The C&SD expected that the key findings of the relevant survey will be available in early 2025.

The Government has always supported the development of different industries. With the rapid development of platform economy, the Government is very concerned about the working conditions and protection for delivery couriers and digital platform workers. The LD has set up a Liaison Group to facilitate the communication among major food and goods delivery platform operators and labour organisations as well as to encourage platform companies to adopt good practices for enhancing the working conditions and protection for platform workers.

Should there be any measures related to the platform economy, the HD will spare no effort to provide necessary support.