

LCQ19: Community recycling facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Kin-por and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

In order to encourage the public in actively practising waste reduction and recycling in daily lives, as well as to complement the Municipal Solid Waste charging (MSW charging) to be implemented by the Government on April 1, 2024, the Environmental Protection Department is taking forward the community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY and launched a food waste collection trial scheme in public rental housing (PRH) estates (the trial scheme) on October 30, 2022. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the facilities provided under GREEN@COMMUNITY include Recycling Stations, Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots, whether the authorities will set up more such facilities in various districts, especially those currently without Recycling Stations, in preparation for the implementation of MSW charging; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether more temporary recyclables collection points will be set up prior to the next Lunar New Year and the implementation of MSW charging, so as to cope with the large number of recyclables delivered by members of the public within a short period of time; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether the amount of food waste collected so far under the trial scheme has met the expectations; as the Government has set a target to extend the trial scheme to cover a total of 100 blocks of PRH estates in 2023-2024, whether it will implement the trial scheme further at other blocks of PRH estates after the target has been met; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether the Smart Food Waste Bins have been checked and cleaned regularly to ensure their proper functioning and prevent hygiene problems; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan is set out below:

(1) and (2) The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has been expanding the community recycling network to strengthen the support for recycling facilities at the district level. There are currently 11 Recycling Stations

emphasising on both environmental education and recycling support, 33 Recycling Stores located in close proximity to clusters of single-block buildings and over 120 Recycling Spots operating weekly at fixed time and locations in the form of kerb-side collection booths under the GREEN@COMMUNITY throughout the 18 districts in Hong Kong for the collection of nine common types of recyclables. These include glass containers, plastics, small electrical appliances, fluorescent lamps, rechargeable batteries and beverage cartons, which are lack of commercial recycling activities. The service of the GREEN@COMMUNITY has covered about 80 per cent of the single-block buildings (including "three-nil" buildings).

In addition, the first Recycling Store located in an MTR station, namely GREEN@TSING YI, will come into operation in the first quarter of 2024. The operator has already started to provide Recycling Spots and housing collection services in Kwai Tsing District since October this year. The 12th Recycling Station, namely GREEN@WONG TAI SIN, is expected to commence operation in the fourth quarter of 2024.

Strengthening the recycling support in public rental housing (PRH) estates will facilitate the implementation of municipal solid waste (MSW) charging. The EPD plans to develop a network of Recycling Stores in PRH estates to enable the residents and those living nearby to participate in clean recycling and enhance the cost-effectiveness of the recycling network. The first two Recycling Stores in PRH estates, namely GREEN@KWAI FONG and GREEN@TAI WO HAU, have commenced operation in late June this year. The EPD prepares to expand the network to 50 PRH estates progressively starting from the end of this year. Tender assessment is now underway.

The EPD will review from time to time the operation of all community recycling facilities and specific needs of individual district for recycling facilities to improve the service of the community recycling network. Prior to the Lunar New Year and the implementation of MSW charging next year, the EPD will adopt measures such as increasing the number of Recycling Spots and extending the service hours in order to cope with the possible increase in the amount of recyclables. In addition, before the implementation of MSW charging, 50 new Recycling Stores in PRH estates will commence operation progressively and the number of public collection points in Hong Kong will be increased to over 220.

(3) The EPD, in collaboration with the Housing Department (HD) and the Hong Kong Housing Society, launched the Trial Scheme on Food Waste Collection in PRH Estates (the Trial Scheme) in end-October 2022. Under the Trial Scheme, smart recycling bins equipped with overflow prevention and odour abatement devices are used to collect food waste for better environmental hygiene, and "GREEN\$" rewards are provided to encourage residents' participation. The Trial Scheme has been extended to 13 PRH estates (with a total of 101 blocks), covering about 170 000 residents as at mid-September this year, which is six months earlier than the original target schedule.

Since the launch of the Trial Scheme for a year, more than 1 200 tonnes of food waste have been collected, with a daily average of about 5 tonnes.

The quantity of food waste collected is in line with our expectations, and over 50 per cent of the households in some PRH estates have used the smart recycling bins. Overall speaking, the Trial Scheme has been well received by PRH residents with positive comments. With the implementation of MSW charging on April 1, 2024, it is expected that the public demand for food waste recycling will continue to increase. In this regard, the EPD has embarked on the progressive installation of smart recycling bins in all PRH estates (involving about 1 400 additional housing blocks) targeting for completion by 2024 to further encourage domestic food waste recycling.

(4) The EPD attaches great importance to the operation and hygiene conditions of smart recycling bins, and regularly deploys staff to conduct inspections at the participating PRH estates. The contractor also provides maintenance services for the smart recycling bins. The recent inspection results have shown satisfactory hygiene conditions at the smart recycling bins and their surrounding areas. As the smart recycling bins are usually installed at fully ventilated locations near entrances of PRH blocks and equipped with odour abatement devices, odour problems would not be caused under normal circumstances. In addition, when the smart recycling bins have reached about 70 per cent of their full capacity, the system will automatically send phone messages to frontline cleansing staff, ensuring that they have sufficient time to replace the inner bins and avoid potential environmental hygiene problems arising from overflowing.

In view of the implementation of the Trial Scheme, the EPD has provided additional resources to the HD to ramp up its manpower for enhancing cleansing services at the participating PRH estates, including maintaining cleanliness of the smart recycling bins and their surrounding areas, replacing food waste filled inner bins and properly storing them temporarily at designated locations in the PRH estates (e.g. central refuse collection points). These would facilitate the daily collection of food waste by EPD's contractors for delivery to the treatment facilities for recycling.