

LCQ21: Provision and management of public markets

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

Some members of the public have pointed out that the government's efforts in providing and managing public markets have been ineffective. For instances, patronage of North Kwai Chung Market has remained low due to the prolonged delay in retrofitting air conditioning system, Tsuen King Circuit Market was closed as a result of mismanagement, and there has been a shortage of public market in new towns such as Tung Chung and Tin Shui Wai. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has formulated plans to redevelop the public markets in New Territories West; if so, of the details (including the name of the public markets involved and the timetable for redevelopment);

(2) whether it has formulated plans to renovate the public markets in New Territories West; if so, of the details (including the name of the public markets involved and the timetable for renovation);

(3) whether it will pursue the "single site, multiple use" model in multi-storey developments in redeveloping public markets, and build municipal complexes to provide the various types of public facilities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as the Chief Executive indicated in last year's Policy Address that the Government would build a public market in Tung Chung and Tin Shui Wai respectively, whether the Government will provide more public markets in phases having regard to the current and anticipated future population of the two districts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) as the Financial Secretary announced in his 2018-2019 Budget Speech that the Government would earmark \$2 billion for implementing a Market Modernisation Programme over the next 10 years, whether it has assessed the number of public markets that can benefit from the funding; whether it will provide additional funding in a timely manner in order that the relevant works can be carried out in more public markets; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government is implementing the ten-year Market Modernisation Programme (MMP) to improve the operating environment of existing public markets. The Government is also planning to develop new public markets in certain districts. My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1), (2) and (5) In identifying markets for implementation of projects of different scales (including redevelopment, fundamental overhaul and refurbishment and minor improvement works) under MMP, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will select public markets with regard to their geographical location and distribution, condition of facilities, business viability, community needs and tenants' readiness so as to benefit the public as a whole.

Having regard to a preliminary assessment of existing markets and views gathered from the Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Public Markets under the Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene, the FEHD has proposed that, in the first phase of the MMP, a fundamental overhaul for four markets and refurbishment and minor improvement works for at least another three markets will be taken forward. The pioneering project of the MMP will be the overhaul of Aberdeen Market while the other three markets to be overhauled are located in Kowloon and the New Territories. We have been actively liaising with the tenants there and other stakeholders with a view to reaching a consensus on the way forward as soon as possible. The overhaul arrangements for Aberdeen Market will set a model for future similar projects. After the details of the Aberdeen Market project are finalised, we will kick-start other first phase projects progressively.

The FEHD will continue to follow up on the first-phase projects and identify more markets suitable for the MMP, so as to make the best use of the \$2 billion earmarked, to improve the operating environment of markets. We will assess the need for more funding at a later stage when the funds earmarked are about to be fully committed.

(3) In line with government policy, where the site is zoned for "Government, Institution or Community" purposes, we will pursue the "single site, multiple use" model in multi-storey developments and welcome collaboration with other government departments to accommodate compatible use.

(4) As announced in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government plans to build new public markets in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung Town Centre respectively. The Government has also initially identified suitable sites in the east of Tung Chung New Town Extension Area as well as in the southwest of Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area (NDA) to build public markets. Apart from the above, we are also looking for locations in Tseung Kwan O and the Kwu Tung North NDA to build new markets.

Providing a new public market requires the use of scarce land resources and entails public financial commitment, both capital and recurrent. We also observe the evolving customer preference for shopping venues in purchasing fresh provisions. Given these premises, in considering whether a public

market should be built, we have to duly assess the need for the market and cost effectiveness and to ensure proper use of public resources.

The provision of new public markets would be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Government will take into account relevant factors including demographic mix, community needs, provision of both public and private market facilities nearby and number of fresh provision retail outlets in the vicinity. We would also consider the actual situation of individual districts and the views of stakeholders in the process.