

LCQ6: Implementation of GREEN@COMMUNITY at public housing estates

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Lam and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

To strengthen the support for waste reduction and recycling at the district level, the Environmental Protection Department is implementing a community recycling network, namely GREEN@COMMUNITY, to promote different initiatives across the territory, which comprise Recycling Stations, Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots. There are views pointing out that with nearly 1.3 million public housing households in Hong Kong, the provision of more such recycling facilities at the relevant housing estates will significantly enhance the effectiveness of waste reduction and recycling work. Regarding the implementation of GREEN@COMMUNITY at public housing estates (PHEs), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that some districts are currently not provided with Recycling Stations, whether the Government will set up such facilities at locations in the vicinity of PHEs in these districts, and organise relevant public education activities through such facilities in preparation for the implementation of the municipal solid waste charging; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will set up Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots at PHEs; if so, of their coverage and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will expeditiously introduce into PHEs smart reverse vending machines, so as to dovetail with the implementation of GREEN@COMMUNITY and other related measures; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In order to assist and encourage the public in actively practising waste reduction and recycling, as well as to complement the future implementation of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) charging, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has been enhancing the support on waste reduction and recycling at district level, including sustained expansion and upgrading of the community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY.

Currently, GREEN@COMMUNITY comprises facilities at three levels, including Recycling Stations with larger areas, indoor and outdoor space for environmental education use; Recycling Stores usually located closer to residents, and Recycling Spots which operate weekly at fixed locations and time in the form of kerbside collection booths. As of end April 2022, there are 11 Recycling Stations, 32 Recycling Stores and over 120 Recycling Spots, i.e. over 160 collection points in total under GREEN@COMMUNITY. All recycling points under GREEN@COMMUNITY collect at least eight common recyclables including waste paper, plastics, metals, glass containers, fluorescent lamps and tubes, rechargeable batteries, small electrical appliances and regulated electrical equipment, and provide GREEN\$ (Greeny Coins) to encourage more members of the public to practise source separation of more types of recyclables for turning them into resources. All facilities under GREEN@COMMUNITY are operated by non-profit making organisations which provide various kinds of environmental education activities such as upcycling workshops, second-hand markets, briefings on environmental information, to encourage the public to establish green living habit. GREEN@COMMUNITY also makes good use of technology. Starting from end 2020 under a Pilot on Smart Recycling Systems, GREEN@COMMUNITY has been testing smart recycling systems (such as smart balances, recycling bins, gift redemption units), with Internet of Things (IoT) as skeleton technology, for local application and assessment of its benefits.

In addition to sustained upgrading of GREEN@COMMUNITY's services in all 18 districts in the territory, the EPD has also been promoting the Programme on Source Separation of Domestic Waste at residential estates/buildings, through provision of recycling bins to facilitate citizens to practise recycling conveniently.

Over 30 per cent of Hong Kong's population lives in public rental housing (PRH). Therefore, the EPD has been closely collaborating with the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) to enhance community recycling and environmental education support in PRH.

Our reply to the questions raised by the Hon Lam is as follows:

(1) On Recycling Stations, GREEN@WONG TAI SIN at Po Kong Village Road will commence construction in mid-2022. In addition, the Invigorating Island South initiative has also identified preliminarily a piece of land at Ap Lei Chau for development of another Recycling Station, namely GREEN@SOUTHERN. For those five districts which currently do not have any Recycling Stations, i.e. Central and Western, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City, Tsuen Wan and North Districts, there are 13 Recycling Stores within the districts to provide residents with environmental education and recycling support.

In addition to community environmental education activities organised through the GREEN@COMMUNITY, the EPD has been organising waste reduction and recycling activities for PRH in collaboration with the HA, with a view to strengthening the environmental awareness of residents in PRH. The EPD Green Outreach has already extended its outreach service to all 18 districts in Hong Kong (including PRH), to provide on-site technical and educational

support on waste reduction and recycling, enhance effectiveness of recycling arrangement in estates, help identify proper outlets for recyclables, etc. to community stakeholders such as resident organisations and property management companies. To get prepared for the implementation of MSW charging, the EPD and the HA have also collaborated since end 2018 in launching the Trial Project on Municipal Solid Waste Charging at Public Housing Estates in phases, to cover about 150 PRH blocks in Hong Kong. The first two phases of the trial project covering a total of 53 PRH blocks have been concluded. The third phase, covering a total of 51 PRH blocks, commenced in January 2022 and planned for completion in nine months. However, it was suspended due to severe epidemic situation. With recent relaxation of social distance restriction measures, the third phase of trial projects has progressively resumed and will complete in November 2022. The fourth phase covering a total of about 50 PRH blocks will commence in end 2022, right after the completion of the third phase.

(2) All PRH in Hong Kong have joined the Programme on Source Separation of Domestic Waste launched by the EPD. The HA requires its cleaning contractors to send various kinds of clean recyclables to downstream recyclers for proper recycling and conservation of valuable resources. In response to the change in recycling markets in recent years, the EPD is liaising with the HA in connection with a new service on one-stop collection of recyclables (especially those with low market values such as waste plastics, glass containers, fluorescent lamps and tubes, rechargeable batteries) from PRH by the EPD's operators (including the operators of GREEN@COMMUNITY), to help ensure that all recyclables will be properly treated and recycled. Separately, the operators of GREEN@COMMUNITY have already set up some Recycling Spots at or near PRH. Currently, about 80 PRH estates are covered by GREEN@COMMUNITY collection points. At the same time, the HA is in discussion with the EPD on suitable locations in PRH within a pilot district, for setting up a network of several mini Recycling Stores, considering and suiting the spatial characteristics of PRH. These mini Recycling Stores will help promote and support more PRH residents in establishing a clean recycling habit.

(3) With the support of the HA, the EPD has preliminary identified more than 10 PRH estates to set up a network of smart recycling application points, which will progressively in place from the second half of 2022.

Thank you, President.