

**Thirty-first Meeting of
the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee**

***Agenda Item 3(b) : Report on the work of the Food Business
and Related Services Task Force***

Purpose

This paper reports on the work of the Food Business and Related Services Task Force (FRSTF) since the last Business Facilitation Advisory Committee (BFAC) meeting held on 30 November 2015.

Work progress of FRSTF

Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines)(Amendment) Regulation 2015 (Chapter 123I)

2. The Buildings Department (BD) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) have jointly briefed FRSTF on the Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) (Amendment) Regulation 2015 (Chapter 123I) (the Amendment Regulation), including the issues of particular relevance to the food business sector. The Amendment Regulation has come into operation on 14 December 2015. Its main features include enhancement of the standards for the provision of female sanitary fitments in public places and rationalization of the standards for the provision of sanitary fitments in restaurants.

3. In response to the trade's concern, BD has clarified that the new standards of sanitary fitments under the Amendment Regulation are only applicable to an existing premises when there are major alteration and addition works involving a change in use of the premises (e.g. converting a shop into a restaurant) or an extension of the current business (e.g. extending a restaurant to the adjoining premises causing an increase in area of the restaurant). If there are compliance difficulties due to special reasons such as physical site constraints of the building concerned, BD may consider granting modification of or exemption from the relevant provisions of the Buildings Ordinance.

4. From the licensing perspective, FEHD has advised that the communal toilet policy remains unchanged after commencement of the Amendment Regulation. In addition, the new standards of sanitary fitments under the Amendment Regulation are only applicable to new restaurant applications received on or after 14 December 2015 with a seating accommodation for more than 300 customers.

5. FRSTF appreciates the clarification efforts of the two departments and welcomes the pragmatic approach taken by BD in applying the new standards of sanitary fitments to existing premises.

New Measures to Enhance the Control of Application Process for Water Supply to Inside Service

6. The Water Supplies Department (WSD) has briefed FRSTF on the recent measures to enhance the control of inside service since the incidents of lead in drinking water, particularly those related to application of food business for water supply. These include imposing a maximum validity period of 5 years for general acceptance of pipes and fittings and requiring that plumbing works could only commence after the Water Authority's permission is obtained. WSD has also taken various initiatives to minimize the possible business impact such as the transitional arrangements of accepting installation of pipes and fittings without valid general acceptance in the non-potable water supply system and granting permission for commencement of plumbing works provided that the licensed plumber has made certain undertakings.

7. In response to the trade's concern that the long processing time of their applications for water supply due to the new control measures would delay the commencement of their business operations, WSD has advised that this should be a temporary issue when licensed plumbers were not familiar with the new requirements. An ad-hoc task group chaired by the Deputy Director of Water Supplies and comprising members from trade associations, suppliers of pipes and fittings, contractors and accredited laboratories has subsequently addressed the teething problems of implementing the new control measures. The department has also accorded priority to processing the applications for water supply from the trade. If there are any long outstanding cases, the trade can contact the relevant case officers or the business facilitation officers as promulgated vide WSD's website for assistance.

8. FRSTF appreciates the initiative of WSD to facilitate business compliance with the new control measures and is pleased to note that the department continues to explore various options to further streamline the application process.

Way forward

9. Members are invited to note the work progress of FRSTF. FRSTF will continue to monitor the development of the above issues.

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March 2016