

**Forty-third Meeting of
the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee**

***Agenda Item 3(c): Report on the work of the
Task Force on Business Liaison Groups***

Purpose

This paper reports on the work of the Task Force on Business Liaison Groups (BLGTF) since the last Business Facilitation Advisory Committee meeting held on 12 May 2020.

Work progress of the BLGTF

2. In view of the pandemic situation of COVID-19 and the social distancing measures, discussion papers of the following items were circulated to solicit views from members. Members' views and departments' responses were distributed to members for information on 19 August 2020.

Overall progress of Business Liaison Groups

3. From 5 November 2019 to 4 August 2020, affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, three Business Liaison Group (BLG) meetings were held and a total of nine issues were satisfactorily resolved or clarified. 12 information dissemination sessions on business facilitation/new regulatory requirements were conducted by departments concerned.

Measures to facilitate food business licence applicants to obtain a full licence in a timely manner

4. To address the common problem of failing to obtain a full food business licence before the expiry of the provisional licence, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) reported that it has taken a number of measures to facilitate trade's compliance with the requirements for a full licence, which include disseminating application progress information to applicants directly (rather than through contractors/agents) through various channels so that applicants can take appropriate action where necessary, arranging early inspection to the premises after the issuance of the provisional licences, streamlining the workflow of processing revised plans, providing prescribed forms filled in with relevant details in advance, and enhancing the publicity and education on good practices.

5. The BLGTF thanked FEHD's efforts in implementing these business facilitation measures which will improve the licensing service for food business.

Enforcement actions against unlicensed guesthouses and brief introduction of the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation (Amendment) Ordinance 2020

6. The Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) under the Home Affairs Department (HAD) briefed Members on its current enforcement actions against unlicensed guesthouses and the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 (Amendment Ordinance) which seeks to improve the existing licensing regime, facilitate enforcement action and enhance deterrence against unlicensed hotels/guesthouses by such measures as introducing a strict liability on owners/tenants of the premises, increasing the maximum penalty and empowering OLA to apply for search warrants and closure orders. The Amendment Ordinance would also empower OLA to take into account the land documents, local residents' views, and whether the licence applicant is a fit and proper person in the licensing process. The Amendment Ordinance will come into effect on 1 December 2020.

7. The BLGTF thanked HAD for the measures to bring more effective enforcement against unlicensed premises which will be beneficial to the trades' business operation.

Accepting installation of secondary water meters for calculation of Trade Effluent Surcharge (TES) in hotels

8. To reduce the trade's burden, the Drainage Services Department (DSD) and the Water Supplies Department (WSD) briefed the BLGTF that secondary water meters installed and maintained by the WSD will be acceptable in lieu of private sub-meters for determining the TES payment required for the restaurants in existing hotels. This will save the trade the costs of installing, calibrating and taking meter readings of the private sub-meters. The measure will be implemented within 2020.

9. The BLGTF thanked DSD and WSD for the measure which would reduce the compliance cost and burden to be borne by the trade.

Way forward

10. Members are invited to note the work progress of the BLGTF. BLGTF will continue to oversee and monitor the work progress of the BLGs.

**Business Facilitation Team
Efficiency Office
Innovation and Technology Bureau
September 2020**