

**Business Facilitation Advisory Committee
Task Force on Business Liaison Groups**

E-licensing and Other Business Facilitation Measures for Billiard Establishments, Public Bowling-alleys and Public Skating Rinks

Purpose

This paper briefs members on a series of initiatives put forward by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to facilitate licensing and related applications for billiard establishments, public bowling-alleys and public skating rinks.

Background

2. Billiard establishments, public bowling-alleys and public skating rinks belong to one of the ten Business Liaison Groups. Operators of these premises are required to obtain the relevant Places of Amusement Licences (PAL) before commencing business operation.

3. To continuously improve the licensing services to meet business needs, LCSD as the licensing authority is committed to better serving the business community through widening the adoption of innovation and technology and streamlining business processes in service delivery. To meet the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Government has also pledged to implement e-licensing for all its licensing applications by mid-2022 as part of our commitment to develop Hong Kong into a smart city.

New Business Facilitation Measures

Provision of e-licensing services for applicants

4. To facilitate the business community to submit their licence applications, make payment and collect licences, the following e-services for PAL related applications are now available for trades' adoption –

- (a) Online submission of applications: From April 2021, applicants can submit 9 types of application forms and supporting documents for LCSD's licensing services (e.g. new PAL applications, renewal, extension of business hours, transfer of licences, alterations, etc.) online through the GovHK e-Form Services ([link](#)). iAM Smart is adopted for digital signing and to facilitate pre-filling of particulars in the e-forms. A responsive design for these e-forms has also been adopted which will be mobile-friendly such that members of the public can fill in and submit them conveniently anywhere and anytime.
- (b) E-payment option: General demand notes are issued to applicants for the settlement of licence fees and administration fees for making alterations, transfer of licences or changing shop signs, which allows a wide range of online payment means including PPS, internet banking, Faster Payment System and e-Cheque to provide greater convenience to applicants in making payment.
- (c) Issue of e-licences: Instead of collecting the licences in person at service counters, applicants can now opt to receive their licences in PDF e-copy through emails to save applicants' time and cost on collecting licences. Applicants can indicate their preference and leave an email address for the purpose during the application stage.

5. By the end of 2021, further e-services will be provided. E-notifications on the application status at major milestones of the application process will be issued to applicants via emails to keep applicants posted of the application progress to enhance the transparency. Applicants will also be allowed to submit layout plans through emails which will then be referred to relevant government departments such as Buildings Department via e-means to speed up the application referral process and processing.

Streamlining application forms and documentation requirements

6. To save applicants' time and burden of preparing application submissions, LCSD has implemented the following initiatives to simplify and standardise application forms and documentation requirements –

- (a) The application forms for licence renewal and extension of business hours have been merged into one form to facilitate applicants' submission as the two forms are usually submitted together.

- (b) The supporting documents required have been streamlined by removing the requirement of submitting a copy of Business Registration Certificates for new/renewal applications and obviating the need for applicants to submit a copy of their Hong Kong Identity Cards for renewal applications subject to no change in the personal information of the existing licensees.
- (c) A checklist on the required documents is provided to facilitate applicants to submit all necessary information in one go.

Extension of the approval period for extension of business hours

7. Operators of billiard establishments, public bowling-alleys and public skating rinks can apply for extension of the business hours of their premises (to sometime between 2 a.m. to 8 a.m.) subject to LCSD's permission. The approval granted used to last for six months only. To provide greater assurance to trades to facilitate their longer-term operational and business planning, the approval period for extension of business hours for all premises of PAL has been extended from six months to one year.

Relaxation of specification of moveable furniture items on layout plans

8. Operators who would like to make changes to the layout plans approved during the licence application are required to submit alteration applications to LCSD for approval. To reduce the need for alteration applications hence saving the administrative efforts of trades and provide operators with greater flexibility in altering the seating layout, the specification requirement of layout plans has been relaxed such that moveable furniture items such as tables and chairs are no longer required to be shown on the layout plans.

Way Forward

9. Members are invited to note the content of the paper and offer comments, if any. They are also encouraged to make greater use of the e-licensing services provided to reap the benefits.