

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(PL)118

(Question Serial No. 1019)

Head: (82) Buildings Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works

Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (YU Tak-cheung)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

It is mentioned on page 77 of the Estimates of Expenditure that “provision for 2020-21 is \$165.8 million (9.7%) higher than the revised estimate for 2019-20. This is mainly due to the increased provision for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Joint Office (JO) with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in handling public reports about water seepage problem, stepping up the implementation of OBB 2.0...”

1. What are the manpower and expenditure for JO for 2020-21? What are the changes as compared with 2019-20?
2. How will the increased provision enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of JO? Will the relevant indicators or performance pledges be enhanced?
3. In the Special Meetings of the Finance Committee last year, the Buildings Department indicated in reply to my enquiry that “since the second half of June 2018, JO has applied new testing technologies ... in three pilot districts (i.e. Kowloon City, Wanchai and Central and Western) ... JO will progressively extend the use of the new testing methods to other pilot districts in the third quarter of 2019” (Reply Serial No.: DEVB(PL)301). What are the areas where the new testing methods are in use? When is the use of these methods expected to be extended to the whole territory?
4. How will the Government assess the effectiveness of the new testing methods? What is the actual performance of the new testing methods (e.g. successfully identifying the source of water seepage)?

Asked by: Hon WU Chi-wai (LegCo internal reference no.: 36)

Reply:

1. The changes in manpower and expenditure of the Joint Office (JO) set up by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Buildings Department (BD) in 2019-20 and 2020-21 are tabulated below —

BD	2019-20 (a)	2020-21 (b)	Change (b) – (a)
Number of professional and technical staff	82	82	0
Staff cost and departmental expenses (\$ million)	53.7 (estimated)	63.5 (estimated)	+9.8
Expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants (\$ million)	26.0 (estimated)	42.5 (estimated)	+16.5

FEHD	2019-20 (a)	2020-21 (b)	Change (b) – (a)
Number of investigation and co-ordinating staff	236	241	+5
Staff cost and departmental expenses (\$ million)	134.8 (estimated)	146.2 (estimated)	+11.4

2. to 4. Since the second half of June 2018, JO has applied new testing technologies such as infrared thermography and microwave tomography in three pilot districts (i.e. Kowloon City, Wanchai and Central and Western), where applicable. With experience gained and data obtained through pilot application of the new testing technologies, JO has since September 2019 extended the above new testing technologies to another five pilot districts (i.e. Sham Shui Po, Kwai Tsing, Tuen Mun, Tai Po and the North District). As at 31 December 2019, the success rate⁽¹⁾ of cases using the new testing technologies is some 80%, which is higher than the success rate⁽¹⁾ of around 60% for cases using the conventional methods. JO is refining the technical guidelines and procedures relating to the use of the new testing technologies and is planning to gradually extend such technologies to other districts. In this connection, there will be an estimated increase in expenditure of \$26.3 million for employing contract staff and engaging outsourced consultants to assist the investigation of water seepage reports including the use of new testing technologies with a view to enhancing the success rate in identifying the source of water seepage.

$$\text{Note}^{(1)}: \text{Success rate} = \frac{\text{Cases with source of water seepage identified}}{\text{Cases with source of water seepage identified} + \text{Cases with source of water seepage not identified and investigation completed (excluding cases where investigation has not been completed due to, e.g. seepage ceases to exist during investigation)}}$$

- End -