

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 0460)

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:

In respect of processing of building plans, the targets for processing building plans within 60 days for new submissions, processing building plans within 30 days for re-submissions and processing within 28 days applications for consent to commence building works are all set at 90%. Will the Department inform this Committee of the following:

1. In relation to the actual performance, while more than 95% of processing of plans and applications met the target in 2019, only 84% did so in 2020, representing a dramatic drop by over 10%. What are the reasons?
2. Will the Department strive to meet the planned targets this year to improve the processing rate? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon SHEK Lai-him, Abraham (LegCo internal reference no.: 63)

Reply:

1. The decrease in performance in 2020 was owing to the intermittent special work arrangements of the Buildings Department (BD) as part of the Government-wide social distancing measures due to COVID-19. Adhering to the Government-wide arrangement, BD continued to provide emergency services and essential public services, including processing critical statutory submissions for new developments so as not to affect commencement of works or works being in progress during the periods when the special work arrangements prevailed. A series of measures for facilitating statutory submissions under the special work arrangements, formulated in consultation with the relevant professional institutions and stakeholder organisations, had been duly promulgated and sent to registered building professionals and registered contractors. If necessary, BD may also accord priority to individual cases. The public services have resumed normal since February 2021.

2. The BD will, as always, strive to meet the targets set for building plans processing. In the meantime, BD has been adopting pragmatic measures to facilitate applicants in obtaining approval of building plans and consent to commence building works. Specifically, if an application can be approved subject to minor amendments or furnishing of further particulars, BD will allow the applicant to make such amendments or furnish such required particulars after the stipulated target date for processing the applications. This is a practice well-accepted by the industry, and is preferred to the alternative of rejecting the applications before the stipulated target date which will cost the applicants extra time and efforts to restart the entire vetting process.

BD has also been reviewing the plan approval process regularly with a view to improving the efficiency of plan processing and facilitating the preparation of plans that meet BD's requirements. Specifically, BD is consulting the industry through the established platforms on a proposed facilitation measure for three most common types of structural plan submissions.

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