

Minutes of 40th Meeting (Part 2)(extension)
of Environment and Conservation Fund
Waste Recovery Projects Vetting Sub-Committee

Date : 25 March 2014 (Tue)
Time : 10:00 a.m.
Venue : Conference Room (Rm 2825), 28/F, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wanchai

Present

Professor LO Man-chi, Irene (Chairperson)

Ms. CHAN May-kuen, Sylvia
Mr. FAN Jor-ching, Jor
Ms. FUNG Dun-mi, Amy
Mr. LO Yan-lai
Mr. POON Yuen-fong, Sanford
Mr. WONG Tze-kang, Rico
Mr. LOCK Kwok-on, Anthony
Mr. LEONG Lap-kan, James
Mr. CHAN Wing-cheong, Matthew Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Mr. LEE Siu-tak, Derek Environment Bureau (ENB)
Ms. LAM Siu, Zola EPD (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Dr. CHAN Chi-kau, Johnnie, BBS, JP
Mr. CHAN Ho-lim, Joseph
Ms CHEUK Fung-ting, Phyllis
Mr. TAM Wai-kit, Alex

In Attendance

Dr. CHUI Ho-kwong, Samuel EPD
Ms. Elaine CHUNG EPD
Mr. FAN Yu-shek EPD
Mr. SIT Kam-wa EPD
Mr. CHENG Lap-shing EPD

Ms. Jacqueline FUNG Center for Food Safety (CFS), Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)

Welcoming Remarks

The **Chairperson** welcomed all Members and representatives of the EPD as well as Ms Jacqueline FUNG of CFS to the 40th meeting (part 2)(extension) of the Waste Recovery Projects Vetting Sub-committee (WRPVSC).

Agenda Item 1: Briefing on Food Safety Guidelines for Food Recovery

2. **Ms. Jacqueline FUNG** briefed Members on the “Food Safety Guidelines for Food Recovery” (the Guidelines) promulgated by the CFS and highlighted the salient points of particular concerns to operation of food donation projects.

3. Note

4. Regarding the **Chairperson**'s enquiry on the general practice of handling festive food items such as moon cakes or glutinous rice dumplings (zongji), **Ms. Jacqueline FUNG** said that moon cakes could be handled in the same way as other packaged food. Nonetheless, the handling of zongji was more complicated since it was ready-to-eat food. It had to be stored in a fridge before distribution and should be re-heated once only. **Member** asked if there were any specific definitions for the terms ‘Use by’ and ‘Best before’ which were frequently printed on the wrapping of packaged foods. **Ms. Jacqueline FUNG** explained that the ‘Use by’ dates were used for perishable foods which would deteriorate easily. Any foods that were not consumed by the specified “Used by” dates were considered not suitable to eat and should not be sold/ donated for human consumption. The ‘Best before’ dates showed the time limit that the quality of foods could be maintained at certain standard. Food that had passed the specified “Best before” dates did not necessarily mean that they were not edible anymore. Whether the food could be safely consumed depends on the duration of the overdue period and how the food products were stored. She supplemented that all the imported food products for selling in Hong Kong should bear either one of the two indications on the packing. On **Member**'s enquiry about whether it was risky to eat the food after removing the deteriorated part, **Ms. Jacqueline FUNG** emphasized that it would require one to exercise prudent judgement on the basis of food safety knowledge. **Member** suggested that CFS might consider devising an accreditation system like the ISO standards developed by the International Organization of Standardization to benchmark an organization's capacity in safety operation of food recovery projects. The Vetting Sub-committee could then make reference to the relevant accreditation obtained by the organisations for the purpose of assessing their capability in carrying out the projects having regard to food safety concerns. **Ms. Jacqueline FUNG** said she would convey Members' suggestion to CFS. Noting the concern on reliable source of food supply, **Member**'s enquired the types of foods that could be accepted from domestic households. **Ms. Jacqueline FUNG** responded that generally pre-packed food would be safe for acceptance. Nonetheless, the food should still be carefully checked for any damage to the packing. The Chairman thanked **Ms. Jacqueline FUNG** for briefing the Vetting Sub-committee. **Ms. Jacqueline FUNG** left the meeting at 10:30 am.

Agenda Item 2: Vetting of 5 Waste Reduction Projects (WRP) Applications Involving Food Donation

5. Representatives of the 5 applicant organisations were then invited one by one to the Meeting to give a 10-minute presentation on their project proposal and answer questions put forward to them by the **Members**. (**Mr. LO Yan-lai** left the meeting at 12:00 noon.)

6. After the presentation session, **Members** discussed in general the parameters for vetting food donation projects. **Member** expressed that the Vetting Sub-committee should verify its liability in approving the food donation projects and impose conditions of grant in relation to food safety aspects for compliance by the successful applicants. **Dr. Samuel CHUI** reported that advice of the Department of Justice (DoJ) was being sought on the proposed inclusion of a disclaimer in the “Approval Letters” to be issued to the successful applicants to confine ECF/Vetting Subcommittee’s liability. It would be made a binding condition for the successful applicants to comply with the Guidelines throughout the project period. **Dr. Samuel CHUI** supplemented that on the basis of the presentations delivered by the applicants, it appeared that the organizations were not well aware of the Guidelines. There was a need to arrange a briefing for the applicants to ensure that they fully understood the Guidelines and would hence comply with the relevant instructions in actual operation of the projects.

7. **Member** stated that while food donation projects should be encouraged, food safety concerns had to be properly addressed. The organisations should be required to develop their own food handling and processing guidelines based on which the Vetting Sub-committee could assess the organisation’s commitment and ability in ensuring food safety in food donation projects. The **Chairperson** indicated agreement to the suggestion and added that in future invitation exercises the applicants for food donation projects should be requested to submit such implementation plans and working procedures for reference and consideration by the Vetting Sub-committee. **Member** opined that relevant bureaux and departments should work in collaboration to come up with some sort of monitoring mechanism for food donation projects. **Member** suggested that in the meantime CFS’s assistance might be sought to comment on the work flow of food handling procedures proposed by the applicant organisations. A joint site visit might be arranged for CFS to advice on their operation procedures in situ. ^{Note}

8. The Meeting then proceeded to deliberate on the detailed merits of individual applications. **Mr. Rico WONG**, **Mr. Jor FAN** and **Mr. Anthony LOCK** declared potential conflict of interest given the previous cooperation between their principal organisations and some of the applicant organisations. After consultation with other **Members**, the **Chairperson** decided that they should remain to consider the applications as they had no direct interest with the applicants.

9. ^{Note} **Members** advised that a briefing session on the guidelines should be arranged for the applicants. After the briefing session, the applicant organisations should be required to prepare and submit an implementation proposal detailing the food recovery, handling as well as distribution process in accordance with the Guidelines. **Members** would further consider their submissions for approval by circulation.

Agenda Item 3: Any Other Business

(i) Confirmation of budget reference for Food Donation Project

10. Members endorsed the amount of budget for individual expenditure items detailed in Appendix I ^{Note} as budget reference for the Secretariat’s preliminary vetting of the budget proposals for food donation projects.

(ii) Baler of WRP 179

11. **Dr. Zola LAM** reported that a baler procured under WRP 179 would need to be disposed of as the project would end on 31 March 2014. **Member** suggested that the baler might be disposed of by auction. **Dr. Samuel CHUI** supplemented that the Secretariat would explore other alternatives for more meaningful disposal of the equipment. The baler was later on transferred to other newly approved project for future use.

(iii) Revision of the vetting mechanism

12. **Ms Elaine CHUNG** briefed Members on the proposed minor revision to the vetting mechanism for WRP applications, which took into account Members' views expressed in the 40th WRPVSC Meeting (Part 2) held on 4 March 2014. After discussion, the vetting mechanism with revised details (at Appendix II^{Note}) was endorsed.

Note: The paragraph/appendix will not be included in the version of notes to be uploaded to the webpage of ECF according to the standing practice of not disclosing the detailed reasons for supporting or rejecting an application. The ECF webpage contains a general disclaimer that "Reasons for supporting/rejecting an application had been made known to the project proponents concerned, and the public could ask the project proponents direct for such information."