

Proposed Trial Scheme on Municipal Solid Waste Charging

Purpose

This paper briefs members on the framework of the proposed trial scheme on municipal solid waste (MSW) charging to be carried out later this year.

MSW Charging

2. MSW charging is one of the key initiatives in the “Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)”. In line with the principle of “polluter pays” and the views and aspiration of the general public, we consider that a “variable rate” charging scheme is more appropriate for Hong Kong. Such a scheme would not only create direct economic incentive for people to reduce waste, but also encourage people to separate and recover useful materials from the waste stream, thus conducive to achieving the overall objectives of the “Policy Framework”.

3. Nevertheless, the living environment of Hong Kong is unique, with most of the population living in multi-storey and multi-tenant buildings. The current waste collection system also varies, from door-to-door collection in public housing to shared bin system commonly adopted in private buildings. It is, therefore, a great challenge for us to develop a “variable rate” charging scheme that creates incentives to reduce waste at the household level, yet simple and easy to administer and comply with by all.

Proposed Trial Scheme

4. To develop a “variable rate” charging scheme that takes into account Hong Kong’s unique characteristics, we propose to run a trial

scheme in selected housing estates later this year. The proposed trial scheme should achieve the following objectives:

- (i) to examine the logistical arrangement for implementing a “variable rate” charging scheme in different housing settings;
- (ii) to assess the impact of a “variable rate” charging scheme on different stakeholders ;
- (iii) to identify potential problems and possible counter-measures associated with the implementation of a “variable rate” charging scheme; and
- (iv) to estimate the effect of a “variable rate” charging scheme on waste reduction and recycling.

5. Amongst different methods to calculate the “variable rate”, we recommend that a “volume-based” system should form the basis of our proposed trial scheme. We propose to conduct the trial scheme in various housing settings, including public rental housing, subsidized sales flats and private housing estates, so as to assess the strengths and shortcomings of the trial scheme under different conditions. Given that one of the objectives of MSW charging is to encourage source separation and recycling, we propose to conduct the trial scheme in junction with the territory-wide source separation in certain housing estates, so that we can assess the combined effect of these two key initiatives in the “Policy Framework”. For comparison and control purposes, the trial scheme should also be conducted in housing estates where source separation programme is not in place. Lastly, to imitate the effect of charging as far as possible, we propose to introduce economic incentive in the trial scheme.

6. Subject to the agreement of members on the framework of the proposed trial scheme described above, we will develop the scheme in further details, in consultation with stakeholders, including property management companies and waste collectors.

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to endorse the framework of the proposed trial scheme on MSW charging.