

**Fifty-fifth Meeting of
the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee**

***Agenda Item 4 : Report on the progress of the
“Be the Smart Regulator” Programme
– October 2024 update***

Purpose

This paper provides updates on the progress of the “Be the Smart Regulator” Programme (the Programme) since the last Business Facilitation Advisory Committee (BFAC) meeting held on 12 June 2024.

Latest progress

Overview

2. The 28 participating bureaux and departments (B/Ds) continue to sustain their momentum in enhancing their licensing services. Good progress has been made on various fronts to further improve the business facilitation and regulatory environment in Hong Kong with a view to boosting the long-term competitiveness. Major progress is highlighted below.

Major progress in various departments

3. Participating B/Ds continue to improve the efficiency and transparency of licensing services and reducing compliance costs to trades, through streamlined procedures, effective use of innovation and technology, enhanced regulatory requirements, as well as strengthened support and guidance to the trades. Examples of the measures implemented in recent months are highlighted as follows –

- (a) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has provided e-notifications via SMS and e-mails to remind the trades to renew their food business licences or permits (such as General Restaurant Licences and Food Factory Licences) in a timely manner with a view to minimising the chance of business loss due to missing of renewal deadline.
- (b) The Hong Kong Police Force has provided e-licence services for Massage Establishment Licence, Pawnbrokers Licence and Security Personnel Permit by allowing the applicants to download and store

their e-licence with a QR code via a newly developed mobile application, and hence shortening the time of applicants to obtain the issued licences and reducing their administrative cost for storing and displaying the licence.

- (c) The Marine Department has provided e-licence services for 24 licences (such as Hong Kong Licences (Deck Officer, Marine Engineer Officer or Electro-technical Officer) and Pleasure Vessel Operator Certificate of Competency) to increase the efficiency of the licensing services, and hence reducing the administrative burden of the trades. The e-licence will be embedded with a QR code to facilitate online verification of validity.

Digitalisation of government services and e-payment services

4. The pledges of the 2022¹ and 2023² Policy Addresses of turning all government services online and providing e-payment options for all government services has been accomplished and in full steam of implementation respectively.

World Bank Group's Business Ready project

5. The World Bank Group published the first Business Ready (B-READY) 2024 Report on 3 October 2024. Hong Kong is among the top ten performers among 50 economies covered in the Report. The Report compares the overall performance of economies in terms of their business environment under ten topics and three pillars. For Hong Kong, among the ten topics, the three topics with the highest score are namely "International Trade" (90.77 points), "Business Entry" (85.49 points) and "Utility Services" (77.71 points). Among the three pillars, Hong Kong ranks fifth in "Operational Efficiency" with a score of 78.52 points..

¹ As pledged in the 2022 Policy Address, submission of application, payment and collection of documents for all licences, services involving application and approval and forms by electronic means will be enabled by mid-2024. If in-person submission or collection of documents is required by law or international practice, applicants will only need to visit the government offices once.

² The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address that e-payment option will be provided for all government services by Q3 2024. The Government will also provide an option for making payment by Mainland e-wallets for government services commonly used by Mainland visitors for their convenience.

6. The Government will conduct in-depth studies on the Report and continue to work closely with the business sector and other stakeholders to create a more business-friendly and efficient environment for Hong Kong.

Way forward

7. Members are invited to note the progress of the Programme.

**Digitalisation and Business Facilitation Division
Digital Policy Office
Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau
October 2024**