

**Question on Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags
(Paper IDC 79/2020)**

Post-meeting Written Reply

Regarding the effectiveness of the Plastic Shopping Bag (PSB) Charging Scheme (the Scheme) and Members' views on the charging level, please refer to the written reply provided by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) in June (see Annex for details).

In response to Members' enquiries on the survey methodology of the PSB disposal survey in 2009 and 2015, the EPD has been conducting surveys on PSB disposal at landfills and refuse transfer stations to estimate the annual PSB disposal since 2009. The estimation reflects the effectiveness of the first phase of the Scheme (implemented on 7 July 2009) and the current phase of the Scheme (implemented on 1 April 2015) on reducing the use of plastic bags.

Environmental Protection Department
August 2020

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Written Reply from the Environmental Protection Department

The Plastic Shopping Bag (PSB) Charging Scheme (the Scheme) is the first producer responsibility scheme introduced in Hong Kong. First phase of the Scheme was implemented on 7 July 2009¹, covering some 3 000 retail outlets that are mainly large supermarkets, convenience stores and medicare and cosmetics stores. With public support, the Scheme has been extended to cover the entire retail sector since 1 April 2015 under which all retail outlets shall, save for exemptions, charge not less than 50 cents for each PSB distributed.

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has been conducting annual survey on PSB disposal at landfills and refuse transfer stations since 2009, the results are as follows:

	2009 ²	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 ³	2016	2017	2018
Disposal Quantity (Million/Year)	4678.53	4443.74	4544.19	5247.42	4622.31	5241.82	3930.17	4296.48	4418.50	4510.04

The Scheme has yielded encouraging result in reducing the disposal of PSBs. We are also glad to see that majority of the public has developed the good habit of bringing their own shopping bags. According to the aforementioned survey, the number of PSBs disposed of at landfills dropped significantly by 25% in 2015 (comparing with 2014 before full implementation of the Scheme). However, we note that a rebound of PSB disposal rate after 2015 though the rate in 2018 is still 14% lower than that of 2014 before full implementation of the Scheme. We consider there is room to refine the current scope of exemption and charging arrangement. Taking into account relevant experiences in other places and the actual circumstances in Hong Kong, we are conducting a full review on the Scheme with respect to

¹ The name of the Scheme at that time was the Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags.

² We used survey findings collected before the implementation of the first phase of PSB Charging Scheme implemented on 7 July 2009 to estimate the full-year figure in 2009.

³ We used survey findings collected between October and December 2015 to estimate the full-year figure in 2015.

the scope of exemption (for instance, PSBs containing frozen and chilled foodstuff), the number of free PSBs that can be distributed under exemption cases, and the charging level, in order to further reduce the use of PSB. We plan to consult the public on the outcome of the review in the second half of 2020 in order to map out the way forward.