

## **From planning to operations: Facilitation measures to support new hotels**

The hotel trade is one of Hong Kong's pillar industries and contributes tremendously to the local tourism. Hong Kong has seen a substantial growth in the number of hotels in the past 5 years. To facilitate the start-up of new hotels and support the further development of the industry, relevant government bureaux/departments are constantly reviewing/enhancing their regulatory requirements and/or licensing services to reduce the trade's burden before a new hotel can commence operation. Let's take a look at some new business facilitation measures recently introduced and how they can help the trade.

### **Fire Services Department: Improvement measures of processing general building plans and facilitation measures for acceptance inspection of fire service installations and equipment**

The Fire Services Department (FSD) exerts utmost efforts in ensuring fire safety of all buildings, including hotel buildings. The FSD will, in processing General Building Plan (GBP) submissions and conducting acceptance inspections, ensure that all the fire service installations and equipment (FSI) provided in a newly built hotel are up to fire safety requirements and standards. The department has recently adopted a collaborative and proactive liaison approach to enhance the efficiency and business-friendliness of the processing of GBP submissions and acceptance inspections.

To expedite the processing of GBP submissions, the FSD has adopted a more flexible policy for plan amendment aiming at reducing abortive work and repeated submissions, viz., other than discrepancies involving structural aspects or major FSI, Authorised Persons (APs) could effect amendments of GBP in accordance with provisions stipulated in the relevant Practice Note issued by the Buildings Department (BD).

The department also adopts a Case Officer System featuring that the same Processing Officer will be assigned to follow through a whole building project. This officer will keep liaising with BD's case officer upon the receipt of a GBP submission and inform him/her of the processing outcome in due course. This initiative helps speeding up GBP processing by strengthening the communication among the APs, FSD and BD.

As for facilitating the acceptance inspections of FSI, FSD has introduced a new arrangement of conducting pre-inspection meetings with the APs and Registered Fire Service Installation Contractors on a need basis to assess the actual project status and site readiness, conduct preliminary document check and coordinate the inspection schedules. The standard document checklist, which is currently used for new developments, has also been enhanced to facilitate timely and orderly submission of all the documents required before acceptance

inspections. All these measures will streamline and enhance the effectiveness of the acceptance inspection process.

Furthermore, regular technical seminars as well as liaison meetings and fire safety standards advisory group meetings are conducted from time to time to enhance the construction industry's understanding of fire safety requirements and standards.

### **Home Affairs Department: Measures to advance the hotel licence application process**

Getting a hotel licence is a prerequisite to operating a new hotel. For a new purpose-built hotel, the licensing process starts after satisfactory completion of the construction works and the issuance of an Occupation Permit by the BD. To shorten the lead time for obtaining a hotel licence, the Office of Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department has devised measures to facilitate early planning of hotel licence application.

Among these measures, OLA will, when commenting building plans for hotel development as requested by the BD under the centralised plan processing system, encourage the project APs (who act on behalf of the developers) to liaise with hotel operators for early incorporation of as much building and FSI works associated with their hotel operation as possible. This will allow early preparation for hotel licensing and facilitate better co-ordination and planning of related works which will shorten the lead time for obtaining a hotel licence. It has also made available a pre-submission enquiry service to the APs and/or consultant to facilitate clarifying and/or resolving specific hotel licensing requirements/issues well before submission of the hotel licence applications.

To complement the above measures, the OLA is refining the application guides on hotel licensing to make them more concise and precise. The OLA has also revised the standard form for reporting completion of works with the inclusion of additional guidance notes to facilitate the applicants and/or their consultants to better understand what documented proof is required, with a view to expediting the process of compliance check. In order to further enhance the transparency in the licensing process, a new performance pledge has been launched: an applicant of new licence will be notified of the application result within 35 working days upon receipt of the report of completion of works.

### **Water Supplies Department: Measures to streamline the processing of applications for water supply**

No hotel can run without having water supply. Early availability of water supply will no doubt enable a new hotel to commence business earlier. To facilitate application for new water

supply, the Water Supplies Department (WSD), the authority for approving new water supply, has put in place a number of streamlining measures. Noticing that technical errors in plumbing proposals and missing submission of documents are common problems which delay the processing of the application for water supply, the WSD has promulgated the “Technical Requirements of Plumbing Works in Building” and “Guide to Applications for Water Supply” to enable the trade to have a better understanding of the standards of the technical and submission requirements. To reduce errors and anomalies in the submission of the list of pipes and fittings to be installed in the plumbing works, pipes and fittings acceptable by the WSD have been posted on WSD’s website for applicants’ searching, and online generation of the required forms for submission is available. WSD has also provided a submission checklist for use by the applicants to avoid incomplete information and/or missing supporting documents.

To make the whole application process even simpler and faster, WSD has also waived the requirement to submit pipe alignment plans for approval of plumbing proposals and allowed licensed plumbers to carry out interim inspections of underground pipes and final inspections of completed pipes under the ‘Voluntary Submission of Inspection Checklists’ scheme. These measures have not only ensured the quality of the application submissions but also reduced the time required for processing, hence expediting the approval process and availability of water supply for business operation.

The hotel trade welcomes these measures which help make the application process smoother and more efficient, thereby creating a positive environment for the industry to grow.

**Efficiency Office, Innovation and Technology Bureau**