

立法會
Legislative Council

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LegCo Panel on Housing

**Subcommittee on Rehousing Arrangements
for Residents Affected by Clearance
of Temporary Housing Areas, Squatter Areas and Cottage Areas**

**Minutes of first meeting
held on Thursday, 9 November 2000, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon CHAN Kam-lam (Chairman)
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SZETO Wah
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Members absent : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

Public officers attending : **Housing Bureau**

Mr Andrew WELLS, JP
Deputy Secretary for Housing

Housing Department

Mr K H LAU
Business Director/Allocation & Marketing

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Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Miss Becky YU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)3

I Election of Chairman

As the Chairman of the LegCo Panel on Housing, Mr CHAN Kam-lam presided at the election of Chairman and invited nominations for the chairmanship of the Subcommittee.

2. Nominated by Mr Fred LI Wah-ming and seconded by Mr SZETO Wah, Mr CHAN Kam-lam was elected Chairman of the Subcommittee.

II Terms of reference and internal discussion
(Appendix III to LC Paper No. CB(1) 148/00-01)

3. Members agreed that apart from rehousing arrangements, the terms of reference of the Subcommittee should be expanded to include compensation arrangements. Members endorsed the terms of reference of the Subcommittee as follows:

“To examine the existing rehousing and compensation policies for residents affected by clearance of temporary housing areas, squatter areas and cottage areas and to make recommendations to address their housing needs.”

III Meeting with the Administration
(LC Paper Nos. 79/00-01(01) , (02) and 148/00-01(02))

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Secretary for Housing (DS for H) updated members on the progress of the announced clearances of temporary housing areas (THAs), squatters areas (SAs) and cottage areas (CAs). He reiterated that the objective of clearances was to improve the living conditions of THA, SA and CA residents on the one hand and to release land for public purposes on the other. The Administration considered that there should not be any further delay in the announced clearances having regard to the unsatisfactory environment of THAs, SAs and CAs. He stressed that while observing the principle of equity on allocation of limited housing resources, the Administration had tried as far as practicable to meet the housing aspirations of the residents. These included allocating public rental housing

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(PRH) to eligible households through the Anticipatory Housing Scheme (AHS) and providing interim housing (IH) in Kwai Shing Estate and Shek Lei Estate. Up till now, of the 2,231 households affected by the clearance of Diamond Hill SA, 1,774 had accepted the rehousing arrangements. As regards Tung Tau CA, 280 households would be affected by the impending clearance and 229 households had accepted the rehousing offers. He called for members' assistance to persuade the remaining households to accept the rehousing arrangements.

Diamond Hill Squatter Clearance (DHSC)

5. Mr Fred LI Wah-ming and Miss CHAN Yuen-han urged the Administration not to proceed with the first phase of DHSC scheduled for 14 November 2000 in view of the strong resistance from the remaining 457 households. They cautioned about the dire consequences in the event of confrontation on the day of clearance. Having regard to the success in previous clearances of Diamond Hill SA over the past twenty years, the Business Director/Allocation & Marketing (BD/A&M) was confident that the current DHSC would be completed as scheduled. To facilitate members' understanding, BD/A&M tabled a set of reference materials relating to the past and the impending clearances of Diamond Hill SA. He added that he had visited the Diamond Hill SA in person the other day and found that there were only about 1,000 residents occupying 6.5 hectares of land which was far below the prevailing population density. To optimize the scarce land resources in the urban area, the vacated site would be used to build the first "green" estate capable of accommodating 20,000 people, a school village comprising two primary schools and one secondary school as well as a flyover connecting San Po Kong and the Diamond Hill MTR Station. The Administration had consulted the Wong Tai Sin District Council (WTSDC) which had expressed support to DHSC as this would not only provide land for future development but also improve the living conditions of the residents. BD/A&M was optimistic that the affected residents would appreciate the objectives of clearance and would eventually accept the rehousing arrangements.

6. Mr LI pointed out that unlike past clearances in which residents were offered urban rehousing, residents affected by the current DHSC who were not eligible for PRH would be rehoused to IH in Po Tin, Tuen Mun which was far away from the neighbourhood they were accustomed to. This would cause undue disruptions to their daily routine, particularly to the elderly and students who had to travel a long way to school. BD/A&M clarified that in the past, clearances not eligible for PRH were rehoused to THAs. Such an arrangement had been subject to much criticism having regard to the poor conditions of THAs. Notwithstanding, the Housing Authority (HA) made a difficult decision on 23 September 1995 to retain 13 THAs to ensure that sufficient rehousing resources were available for clearance operations. The concept of permanent IH was introduced in 1995 as a long-term solution to meet the housing needs of clearances. To eliminate the possibility of queue-jumping by squatting and to ensure rational allocation of public housing resources, HA approved the policy that all clearances rehoused to THA/IH after 23 September 1995 had to register on the Waiting

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List (WL) for PRH.

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7. On the provision of IH in Tuen Mun, BD/A&M explained that as WL applicants could only opt for PRH in extended urban areas, the New Territories and Islands, clearerees who were eligible for IH should likewise be rehoused to these areas. DS for H remarked that Tuen Mun was not as remote and distant from urban areas as perceived given the present transport network. He added that the facilities in new purpose-built IH units were much better than those in THAs and SAs. Moreover, the Education Department would assist the affected students to transfer schools if necessary. As regards rehousing for the elderly, DS for H advised that deserving cases would be referred to the Social Welfare Department for consideration of compassionate rehousing according to individual merits. He emphasized that the current rehousing arrangements for DHSL were better than past clearances.

8. Mr LI remained concerned that the cost of living of clearerees, particularly in respect of travelling, would increase after moving to IH in Tuen Mun. BD/A&M advised that as there were at present nine direct bus routes connecting Po Tin IH and urban areas at affordable fares, residing in Tuen Mun should not significantly aggravate the financial burden of clearerees. By way of illustration, the bus fare for the route from Po Tin IH to Tsim Sha Tsui was about \$13.

9. Miss CHAN Yuen-han was disappointed that the Administration had insisted on rehousing residents affected by DHSC to IH in Tuen Mun despite their strong opposition. She asked if the Administration would use force if residents concerned declined to vacate their squatters on the day of clearance. BD/A&M said that as only five households had yet to accept the rehousing offer, he was confident that the first phase of DHSC would be completed smoothly. Besides, assistance from WTSDC had been sought to persuade the remaining households to accept the rehousing arrangements. Miss CHAN opined that the Administration had under-estimated the resistance from residents concerned. She cautioned that all the remaining 457 households would jointly resist the clearance operation. Expressing similar concern, Mr SZETO Wah urged the Administration to meet with the 457 households before the D-day to avoid confrontation. It would also be useful if LegCo Members or WTSDC members would be invited to the meeting as a mediator to help work out rehousing arrangements acceptable to both the Administration and the residents.

10. BD/A&M advised that the Administration had all along been liaising with the residents concerned to encourage them to accept the rehousing arrangements. In fact, HD had a meeting with WTSDL on 8 November 2000 and would meet with the resident representatives on 10 November 2000. The Customer Liaison Group set up especially for DHSC had also issued letters to each of the affected households informing them of the possible assistance. He hoped that residents would understand that it was not possible to further defer DHSC in view of the dilapidated conditions of the Diamond Hill SA. Mr SZETO called on the Administration to defer the first phase of DHSC and to hold the proposed tripartite meeting to work out satisfactory arrangements which would expedite future phases of DHSC. Miss CHAN Yuen-han also supported the proposed tripartite meeting. DS for H took note of members'

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views.

11. The Chairman sought information on the timetable for the eight phases of DHSC. He also enquired about the number of the remaining 457 households which had registered on WL, when their WL applications would mature and the number of families whose members did not satisfy the residence rule for PRH. BD/A&M undertook to provide the details after the meeting. He said that in gist, of the 457 households, 36 and 421 would be eligible for PRH and IH respectively. Of the 421 households eligible for IH, 110 would be offered PRH through AHS and the remaining 310 would be rehoused to IH in Kwai Chung and Tuen Mun Districts. Since early this year, HD had made IH offers to 100 households thrice, 180 households twice and 30 households once.

(Post-meeting note: The required information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 166/00-01.)

12. To reduce resistance from residents concerned, the Chairman opined that the Administration should use all the IH resources in Kwai Shing Estate and Shek Lei Estate for DHSC. It should also consider relaxing the 12-month period under AHS so that more clearerees could be offered PRH direct without having to move to IH in Kwai Chung and Tuen Mun Districts. DS for H took note of the Chairman's views but advised that the proposed relaxation of AHS might not be fair to WL applicants, particularly to those bedspace and rooftop dwellers who had to wait for a long time for PRH.

13. As regards the situation of business operators affected by DHSC, BD/A&M advised that of the 174 business operators, 128 were eligible for payment of an ex gratia allowance and they had been invited to collect the payment. As for the 46 ineligible cases, one of them had provided fresh evidence and had been approved for an ex gratia payment. BD/A&M assured members that HD would also review the other cases if fresh evidence was provided. As to whether business operators who had collected payment could pursue their claims at a later stage, BD/A&M answered in the negative as these operators would be required to sign an undertaking upon receipt of the pay cheques.

Clearance of cottage areas

14. Noting that So Kon Po CA, Mount Davis CA and Lai Chi Kok CA would be cleared in 2001, Miss CHAN Yuen-han cautioned about the possible confrontation if the Administration maintained its stance of not compensating CA residents for the loss of their self-owned structures upon clearance. BD/A&M considered that the chance for confrontation was slim since CA residents generally found the rehousing arrangements acceptable and the clearance of Tung Tau CA would set a precedent for the remaining CAs.

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15. To facilitate future discussion, Mr SZETO Wah requested and the Administration undertook to provide the timetable for clearance of the remaining THAs, SAs and CAs and the number of remaining households who had yet to accept the rehousing arrangements.

(Post-meeting note: The required information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 166/00-01.)

IV Any other business

16. Members agreed that depending on the outcome of the first phase of DHSC on 14 November 2000, the date of next meeting would be decided after receipt of the Chief Executive's response to the letter of the Chairman of the House Committee regarding Members' request to grant a special ex gratia allowance to residents affected by clearance of CAs.

17. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:55 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat

21 December 2000