

For Discussion
On 10 December 2001

Legislative Council
Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel

Planning and Provision of
Fixed Telecommunications Network Services
for New Public Housing Estates

Current Provision of In-building Telecommunications Wiring System in
New Public Housing

Under the present arrangement, one set of in-building telecommunications wiring system (in-building wiring system) is installed for the provision of telecommunications services in each public housing block. The in-building wiring system is currently provided by a lead telecommunications services coordinator, nominated by the four local wireline-based Fixed Telecommunications Network Services (FTNS) operators amongst themselves. This is the outcome of consultation with the four wireline-based FTNS operators, given their interests in installing their in-building wiring systems. Projects with building completion dates up to December 2003 have been allocated to all interested local FTNS operators as lead coordinator on a fair share basis.

2. Upon request by two local wireless-based FTNS operators in rolling out their sets of in-building wiring systems in existing Public Housing Estates (PHEs), the Housing Authority (HA) have permitted their works. Up to November 2001, HA had approved applications of 70 estates for the installation of wireless-based FTNS in existing PHEs. Members may also wish to note that in order to minimize disturbance to PHE residents and to meet the requirements of the new wireless-based FTNS operators, they are required to sound out other wireless-based FTNS operators, and co-ordinate their requirements, in accordance with the in-building access guidelines issued by the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA).

Choice of Operators by Residents

3. The residents in PHEs, existing or new, will have access to the telecommunications services of their choice via the in-building wiring system. Although only one in-building wiring system is installed, save for the additional system by the wireless-based FTNS operators referred to in paragraph 2 above, the local FTNS operators who want to provide their services can reach PHE residents by making interconnection to the in-building wiring system of the lead coordinator. Such interconnections are subject to section 36A of the Telecommunications Ordinance (Cap 106).

New Development – Multiple In-building Wiring Systems in Public Housing Estates in Future

4. The HA have all along provided sufficient access facilities to support Government's policy to offer consumers with unimpeded access to the full range of public telecommunications services of their choice. Subject to any physical constraint, all FTNS operators, regardless of the technology they may use, should have an opportunity to install or interconnect with the in-building wiring systems in new PHEs.

5. Recently, some wireline-based FTNS and wireless FTNS operators have approached HA proposing to build two in-building wiring systems in new PHEs. We also see the merit of such a proposal in promoting competition, with any subsequent financial benefit being passed to consumers.

6. Taking into account the physical constraint on the corridor slabs to house cables/conduits for various services, we have appraised that we can accommodate an additional in-building wiring system as proposed. Therefore HA is considering to accede to the proposal. We also note that as technology advances, some operators may install in-building wiring systems which occupy much less duct space. This may allow the provision of more than two in-building wiring systems in a new PHE block in future.

7. The mechanism under consideration is that all the local FTNS operators who have committed to provide the in-building wiring systems in the new PHE blocks will nominate amongst themselves two lead coordinators.

The two lead coordinators must be different operators so as to encourage competition. Each lead coordinator will coordinate the in-building wiring system requirements of **all** the other operators, subject to any constraint in space. In other words, while there may be two sets of in-building wiring systems, the approach will allow more than two operators to invest into such systems.

Coordination of Requirements and Configuration of the In-building Wiring Systems

8. HA had held meetings with all the wireline-based FTNS and wireless-based FTNS operators in this regard. The operators have agreed to coordinate amongst themselves the requirements and configuration of the in-building wiring systems and would advise HA on the outcome. In the event that they cannot reach any consensus, OFTA's advice and assistance would be sought. Subject to any further comment from the local FTNS operators and the approval within HA, we aim to implement the new approach to new PHE blocks with building completion dates beyond December 2003.

Co-operation with OFTA

9. OFTA have been consulted on the above approach and they are supportive of the proposed arrangement. We would continue to liaise with the local FTNS operators with the assistance of OFTA.

Housing Department
December 2001