

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON PLANNING, LANDS AND WORKS**

CO-ORDINATED MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS SCHEME

Purpose

This paper reports on the findings of the review on the pilot Co-ordinated Maintenance of Buildings Scheme (CMBS).

Background

2. At a special meeting of the Panel on 23 April 2001, the Administration briefed members on its initiatives under the ‘Comprehensive Strategy for Building Safety and Timely Maintenance’, which focuses on owners’ responsibility for maintaining their buildings, and the Government’s role to support them in doing so. The CMBS is one of those initiatives covered under this strategy.

3. Under the CMBS, the Buildings Department (BD) has taken the lead in coordinating the efforts of five other Government departments concerned with the maintenance of private buildings in helping owners and owners’ corporations (OC) identify and carry out repairs necessary to improve the safety of their buildings. The Administration has undertaken to review the effectiveness of the scheme in the light of experience with a view to determining the need for introducing statutory periodic maintenance.

Implementation Details

4. We launched the CMBS in November 2000 covering 150 buildings. The scheme operates as a “one-stop-shop” service by six Government departments (i.e. the BD, Fire Services Department, Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Water Supplies Department and Home Affairs Department) in making a concerted effort to establish all necessary repairs in a building, including the removal of unauthorised building works (UBW) which pose a danger to public safety or obstruction to necessary repair works.

5. An officer from BD acts as a building coordinator (BC), with the following responsibilities:

- a) conducting, in association with other departments concerned, a survey of a selected building so as to determine the scope and nature of improvement works required;
- b) arranging, through the District Offices (DO) concerned, a meeting with the building owners or OC to advise them of the outcome of the survey and explaining to them in detail the maintenance and repair works as required by participating Government departments;
- c) assisting building owners who are in need to apply for loans under the Building Safety Loan Scheme to fund the necessary repair and improvement works; and
- d) initiating joint law enforcement action under existing legislation with the relevant departments should the building owners or OC not proceed with the required works within a reasonable period of time.

6. The 150 buildings selected for the pilot scheme all required repairs relating to building safety such as structural elements, drainage services, fire services installations, electrical and mechanical equipment, water supply system etc. There were also a large number of unauthorized building works (UBW) on the external walls of these buildings.

7. Of the 150 selected buildings, 77 were originally chosen for building management improvement by the Building Management Co-ordination Committees run by the DO. The rest were selected on the basis of the survey conducted by the departments concerned. Of the 150 buildings, 40 did not have an OC before commencement of the scheme.

Progress

8. Since commencement of the scheme in November 2000, owners of 62 buildings have completed the necessary repair works. Owners of another 72 buildings have repair works in hand. In other words, owners of a total of 134 buildings (89%) have responded positively to the scheme so far. Owners of the remaining 16 buildings (11%) have not, however, been able to organize the necessary repair works, owing to various reasons

such as poor organisation, disharmony amongst the owners, unresolved management problems and disputes.

9. As regards UBW targeted for action in the 150 buildings, removal works have already commenced in 140 (93%) buildings. Owners of 48 (32%) buildings have completed removal of more than 70% of the identified UBW. In view of the large number of UBW requiring removal in these buildings, and the need to synchronize building repair with UBW removal works, we expect that owners would take some more time to complete the removal.

10. Of the 150 buildings, 40 did not have an OC when the scheme commenced. As a result of the launch of CMBS in their buildings, owners of 21 of them have subsequently taken the initiative to organise themselves to form OC to carry out the necessary improvement works.

Analysis

11. The objective of the scheme is to encourage and motivate owners to recognise and accept their responsibilities in maintaining their buildings properly, and to give them logistical and technical support in carrying out necessary repair works. In this light, we have compared the effectiveness of the scheme with our conventional approach of directly issuing orders to building owners to carry out repair works upon the discovery of defects in their buildings. The statistical analysis is shown in the table below.

Approach	Percentage of buildings commencing repair work in 12 months	Average Staff Input by BD per building
CMBS	85%	17.1 team-days*
Conventional approach	45%	12.8 team-days*

** A team comprises 1 professional officer and 1 technical officer from BD*

12. It is clear that under the CMBS, owners are much more prepared to initiate repair works to their buildings than those owners being issued with repair orders by BD in the course of its normal law enforcement work. Furthermore, the scheme has succeeded in urging 93% of owners of the selected buildings to commence removing their UBW.

13. The analysis also shows that although BD staff need to spend more time in meeting and giving support and advice to owners under the

CMBS as compared with the conventional approach, the extra effort has succeeded in motivating many more owners to take up their maintenance responsibility. We believe that this is because we approach all owners in a building for repairs, thus preventing any feeling of unfair treatment on the part of individual owners. The CMBS is obviously more cost-effective. It should however be pointed out that as in all cases of building repairs, owners need to take some considerable lead time to organise and complete their works.

14. We have also assessed the prospect of owners of the remaining 16 buildings organising the repair works themselves in the foreseeable future. Owing to various sorts of problems such as poor organisation and disputes over management and financial issues, it is unlikely that they will be able to proceed with the necessary repairs in the short term. In the circumstances, we believe it would be more realistic for BD to appoint its own term contractor to carry out the necessary remedial work in default of the owners.

15. In sum, the CMBS has brought about a sense of urgency on the part of the building owners concerned to initiate repairs, which many of them know are long overdue. In the longer term, we hope that the extra efforts made by the concerned Government departments will pave the way for a cultural change amongst building owners and make them better motivated to carry out periodic inspection and maintenance of their buildings.

16. We consider that even if a mandatory scheme for periodic inspection and maintenance is introduced, it will still be an uphill task for the Government to enforce the law in the absence of a correct mindset or sense of responsibility on the part of building owners. In such circumstances, there is likely to be a lot of instances where BD would have to appoint its own contractor to carry out the necessary repair works, with the result that more staff resources are required for supervision work and recovery of cost from the owners concerned on an on-going basis. We therefore believe that there is a case for the CMBS to run for a longer time.

Way Forward

17. In view of the above, BD intends to expand the scope of the scheme to cover the maintenance of more buildings in the 20 year old to 40

year old age group with a view to building up the momentum for a change in the perception and attitude on the part of building owners. Since early 2002, we have already started to identify a further 200 buildings for inclusion in the CMBS.

18. In the light of experience gained from the pilot CMBS, we intend to make the following refinements to the scheme:

- a) whilst it is necessary for owners to appoint an Authorized Person to coordinate more complicated repair works, they may appoint registered building professionals to coordinate the less complicated repairs;
- b) in appropriate cases, we will allow more time for owners of buildings without OC or with a large number of flat units to organize and complete the necessary repair works;
- c) we will however tighten up action under the CMBS to remove UBW not imminently dangerous if the majority of owners or OC so request. We will also speed up the issue of removal orders for those UBW posing an imminent danger to make the owners concerned remove them more quickly; and
- d) we will also try to outsource part of the work under the CMBS such as building inspection and provision of technical advice to owners. Such outsourcing, if extended, may help us include more buildings in the scheme in future.

19. In view of the relatively small sample size included in the pilot scheme, we intend to carry out another review upon completion of the scheme in the 200 buildings to assess more accurately its effectiveness. Pending the review and for reasons explained above, we do not consider it necessary to introduce statutory periodic maintenance of buildings now, especially in view of the prevailing economic conditions.

Buildings Department
April 2002