

Legislative Council Panel on Housing
Total Maintenance Scheme for Public Rental Housing Estates

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Total Maintenance Scheme for improving estate maintenance services in public rental housing estates.

Background

2. One of the Housing Authority's major tasks is to manage and maintain its assets with a view to maximizing their performance and economic life. While the common and external areas in public rental housing estates are generally well-maintained, there is room for improvement in the standard of maintenance within the flats. The Total Maintenance Scheme is a comprehensive approach for maintaining public housing estates.

3. To meet the rising expectations of our tenants, there is a need to foster a service-oriented culture among the staff and all service providers of the Housing Department. In developing the Total Maintenance Scheme, we aim to lay a foundation towards this target. With implementation of the Total Maintenance Scheme which will cost about \$6.3 billion in total in the next five years, we expect to achieve better quality and effectiveness in our repair and maintenance works, lower operation costs and increased tenants' satisfaction.

The Total Maintenance Scheme

4. The objective of the Total Maintenance Scheme is to provide comprehensive, customer-oriented maintenance service featuring proactive in-flat inspection and enhanced services upon tenants' requests for repairs. The measures under the Scheme fall under three main tenets, as follows -

- (A) proactive and comprehensive approach to identify maintenance problems;
- (B) prompt response to emergencies and tenants' requests for repairs; and
- (C) enhanced promotional and educational programmes.

A. Proactive and comprehensive approach to identify maintenance problems

5. Early detection and rectification of defects will help prevent dilapidation, eliminate health and safety hazards, minimize malfunctioning of facilities and avoid unnecessary expenses on major corrective maintenance. We consider that proactive inspections should be strengthened for timely tackling of latent maintenance problems. Planned maintenance initiatives, as set out below, will be taken to prevent the occurrence of more serious problems in future -

(a) In-flat Inspection Ambassador

6. To ensure that building elements and services installations inside domestic flats are maintained in a safe and serviceable condition, In-flat Inspection Ambassadors will be appointed to carry out proactive in-flat inspections for 30 estates each year so that all public rental flats will be inspected in the coming five years.

7. The main function of the team is to provide one-stop service for inside flat inspection and repairs; to educate tenants on home care and maintenance issues; to record the maintenance conditions through flat-to-flat inspections and to build up a communication network with tenants.

(b) Dedicated Task Force for Major Maintenance Issues

8. From time to time, there are major maintenance issues which arouse public concerns and require prompt and comprehensive actions. We have in the past employed Drainage Ambassadors to carry out drainage inspections in 2003 to prevent the spread of SARS; set up the Building Repair Task Force for repairing debonded tiles and formed Technical Teams for aluminium windows inspections. The setting up of these dedicated teams not only enable us to respond promptly to the problems, but also ensure that necessary precautionary measures could be taken to tackle any related latent problems.

9. To ensure that major maintenance issues are handled in a speedy and coordinated manner, we will assign a senior professional officer with expert knowledge on the issue concerned to lead a dedicated Task Force on a need basis.

(c) Estate Improvement Programme

10. While all public housing blocks are structurally safe, the building conditions of the aged estates are deteriorating. The Housing Authority has recently embarked on a new strategy for sustaining existing public housing blocks. Under this strategy, comprehensive structural investigation will be conducted on aged public housing estates. If certain blocks or estates are found to be structurally unsafe or beyond economic repair, demolition would be considered. For blocks or estates which are structurally safe but require repair works, we will undertake the necessary works and enhance the condition of these estates through the Estate Improvement Programme.

11. Multi-disciplinary professional teams will be set up to conduct comprehensive review of the improvement needs of older housing estates. Provisions for access, landscaping, facilities for the elderly, recreational and sports facilities, etc. will be examined with reference to the demographic profile of the estate and in consultation with the Estate Management and Advisory Committee (EMAC).

(d) Enhanced Research and Development

12. A maintenance database will be set up to record the maintenance history of the domestic flats. The database will provide useful information for future research and development as well as preparation of the maintenance and improvement programme and budget. A works request and complaint database will also be established to assist the management in maintenance planning and financial monitoring.

13. With these technical databases, experienced technical subject experts will be appointed to focus their efforts in knowledge and technology updating in a specialized area with a view to bringing about enhancement to our maintenance operations. For example, a more comprehensive approach would be adopted for ceiling seepage and spalling repairs rather than simple patch works so as to improve durability and effectiveness.

B. Prompt Response to Emergencies and Tenants' Requests

14. The majority of the complaints received by the Housing Department are related to maintenance and repair services. In order to deliver quality housing service that meets our tenants' expectations, we will implement the following initiatives.

(a) Maintenance Hotline

15. A hotline will be set up to improve the efficiency in handling maintenance requests and complaints. Service improvement is expected through providing a one-stop service to tenants at the hotline centre from receiving complaints and requests to clearing of the cases; expediting actions in response to tenants' maintenance requests by re-engineering the minor day-to-day repair procedures so as to shorten the waiting time for inspection and repair, to streamline communication and workflow, as well as to tighten up the monitoring on contractors' progress of work. We will also set up a central complaint monitoring system to enable the management to closely monitor the effectiveness in handling complaint cases until satisfactory completion of the maintenance works. Feedback from tenants on the service satisfaction level will be sought and followed up.

(b) Proactive Public Relations Management

16. It is necessary to strengthen our crisis management capacity to enable us to address public and media concerns about major incidents occurred in estates promptly and positively. Dedicated senior professionals of the Housing Department are appointed as Customer Service Co-ordinators to collate inputs from the relevant offices, handle the issue from the tenants' perspective and report to senior management for consideration in addressing the public's concern.

17. Communication with tenants will be strengthened with wider use of the Housing Authority Channel to ensure that policies and issues affecting the tenants are widely publicized. Special feature articles will be placed in local newspapers on the proper maintenance of the public housing estates to ensure that any queries are clarified in a timely manner. Regular report on follow-up actions to complaints and works requests will be made to the public to enhance the transparency of our operation.

18. We will continue to gauge the views and expectations on our maintenance services from various stakeholders, including Members of the Legislative Council and District Council, Owners' Committees, EMACs, government departments, non-governmental organisations and the local community. The information gathered will form an important basis for formulating our long term maintenance strategy.

(c) Management and Monitoring of PSAs and Maintenance Contractors

19. The performance of Property Service Agents (PSAs) and maintenance contractors is crucial for delivering quality services to our tenants. In order to enhance the management and monitoring of PSAs and maintenance contractors, the Housing Authority would review the tendering arrangements, streamline the quality auditing and performance verification process, and request PSAs and maintenance contractors to deploy a customer services manager for each contract. The Housing Authority will also tighten its list management, including more stringent and timely regulatory actions against poorly-performing PSAs and maintenance contractors; cultivate a partnering relationship among the tenants, PSAs and maintenance contractors for quality property management and maintenance services for the existing housing estates; and review the contract renewal strategy so that continuity of quality services can be maintained.

C. Enhanced Promotional and Educational Programme

(a) Publicity and Tenant Education Programme

20. Publicity about home care should continue to promote our in-flat inspection service, to motivate tenants' participation in home care and defects reporting, to assist them to identify the typical defects, and to educate the tenants on proper use of sanitary fitments and installations inside flats and in public areas. A comprehensive promotional and educational plan will be worked out to promote the Total Maintenance Scheme in order to win the support from tenants and the general public.

21. To maximize the impact of our publicity efforts, various means of publicity including pamphlets, posters, road shows, the Housing Authority Channel, gatherings with tenants and setting up of Maintenance Education Paths will be used in the publicity campaign for the Total Maintenance Scheme.

(b) Enhancement of Customer Services

22. A customer-focused service requires our staff to be committed to customer care. To this end, customer services seminars will be arranged for professional and technical staff to instill a sense of quality and commitment to customer services. In-house seminars will be held by inviting staff to share their experience in the delivery of quality works and services. To reinforce a sense of partnership, we will collaborate with contractors and consultants in jointly organizing training activities.

23. Our partnering contractors will be required to enhance customer services, particularly on punctuality, communication, politeness, workmanship, site safety, protection and trade test requirements to support the implementation of the Total Maintenance Scheme. This will be supplemented by the system of Quality Maintenance Contractors and the Housing Department's supervision procedures, performance verification and in-house staff training already in place.

Implementation Plan

24. We will consult EMAC members on the Total Maintenance Scheme in the next two months. We expect that the Scheme will be well-received. We aim to implement the proposed initiatives starting from 1 January 2006.

Conclusion

25. Through comprehensive identification of maintenance problems and enhancement of the quality and effectiveness of our repair and maintenance services, the Total Maintenance Scheme will help to improve the quality of living of our tenants. We also envisage that the enhanced customer services will inevitably raise tenants' expectations. Through closer co-operation among the Housing Department, tenants and other stakeholders, we are confident that these expectations can be met.

Housing Department
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