

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Utilization of the Housing for Senior Citizens and the Improvement Measures

Purpose

This paper sets out the utilization of the Housing for Senior Citizens (HSC) and the improvement measures.

Background

2. The Housing Authority (HA) introduced HSC in the 1980s, providing a hostel-type public rental housing (PRH) with 24-hour warden service for singleton applicants aged 60 or above, with the objective of fostering mutual support and social interaction among the elderly residents. The earliest HSC units were made available through partitioning a normal domestic PRH flat into two or three smaller units. Tenants have to share communal toilet and kitchen facilities. Later, individual toilets were provided in some HSC units, but tenants still have to share kitchen facilities. The vacancy rate of HSC has been on the high side due to applicants' preference for self-contained flats, and the shortened waiting time for small self-contained PRH flats as a result of an increase in supply. The vacancy rate of old-style HSC units in which toilet and kitchen facilities are shared is particularly high, with the refusal rate standing at 90%. As at the end of October 2006, there were 2 042 (20.8%) vacant units out of a total of 9 820.

Improvement measures to increase the HSC utilization rate

3. As the demand for HSC has diminished over the years, the HA decided in November 2000 to cease its construction. Meanwhile, the following improvement measures have been introduced to better utilise the units.

(1) Lifting the age limit for HSC

4. In November 2001, the HA relaxed the age restriction for HSC tenants, allowing non-elderly singletons to apply for HSC. At present, about 10% of the HSC tenants are non-elderly singletons.

(2) *Incorporating HSC in the Express Flat Allocation Scheme (EFAS)*

5. Under the EFAS, the HA invites eligible applicants on the Waiting List to choose from a pool of unpopular vacant PRH flats in the territory. Since December 2001, HSC units have been included in EFAS for applicants to select. In the past four EFAS exercises, a total of 1 810 HSC units were selected and 726 units were successfully let. In the latest EFAS exercise, 876 out of 1 300 available HSC units have been selected and the allocation work is in progress.

(3) *Conversion of HSC with higher vacancy rate into normal PRH flats or other uses*

6. The HA launched a trial scheme in 2003 to convert HSC units of a high vacancy rate for a long time into normal PRH flats or other uses in a phase manner, so as to better utilise the housing resources. The scheme was endorsed by the HA in July 2006 as a long term measure. Each year, about 500 HSC units are to be converted. The HA has adequate self-contained one-person PRH flats for HSC tenants to move in on a voluntary basis. We shall maintain close liaison with the Social Welfare Department, non-government elderly services providers and elderly welfare organizations in the course of programme implementation, to ensure that HSC tenants are properly re-housed.

7. Under the conversion programme, the HSC units in Chung On Estate in Ma On Shan and Wah Lai Estate in Lai Chi Kok have been converted into normal PRH flats. On the other hand, the HSC in Fu Tai Estate in Tuen Mun has been converted into a Residential Care Home for the Elderly cum Day Care Unit. Part of the HSC in Tin Chak Estate in Tin Shui Wai has been converted into non-domestic uses including social service centre, elderly community centre and estate management office in order to make the best use of the resources.

8. The HA is committed to enhancing the utilization rate of HSC and making better use of the housing resources through conversion of some HSCs, in order to allow more eligible applicants on the Waiting List to be allocated with flats within a shorter time and to improve their living conditions.

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Demarcation and Management of Common Areas in Tenants Purchase Scheme Estates

Purpose

This paper sets out the general principles governing the demarcation and management of common areas in Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) estates.

Background

2. At a meeting between Members of the Legislative Council and Kwai Tsing District Council on 8 December 2005, some District Council Members raised concern about the recreational areas and facilities on the podium of the shopping centre of the Cheung Fat Estate, a TPS estate, being designated by the Housing Authority (HA) as estate common area and facilities, rather than sold to the Link Management Limited, the owner of the shopping centre after its divestment from the HA. As such, all the owners of the Cheung Fat Estate would share responsibilities for the management and maintenance of the areas and facilities. The matter was subsequently discussed at a Case Conference held on 20 February 2006. The Housing Department (HD) explained the general principles governing the demarcation and management of common areas and facilities in TPS estates in a reply to Legislative Council and District Council in January 2006 and at the Case Conference in February 2006.

Principles Governing the Demarcation and Management of Common Areas

3. The boundary and facilities of a TPS estate and the management and maintenance responsibilities for such facilities are defined in its Deed of Mutual Covenant (DMC). As in the case of private properties, DMCs for TPS estates are prepared in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Legal Advisory and Conveyancing Office (LACO) of the Lands Department, and must be approved by LACO to ensure compliance with the guidelines and to properly balance the interests of all owners.

4. The HA, in drawing up the DMCs of TPS estates, would seek to maintain the integrity of the overall planning of the estates. Common areas and facilities for use and enjoyment by the residents, such as roads, open space and recreational facilities, are classified as ‘estate common areas and facilities’ under the DMC. According to the user-pays principle, the management and maintenance responsibilities for such facilities are shared by all owners in accordance with the DMCs.

5. The HA has established a maintenance fund for estates sold under the TPS, and made a one-off contribution to the fund to finance major maintenance works for the estate common areas and facilities. The contribution was calculated on the basis of \$14,000 per residential unit.

Recreational areas and facilities on the podium of Cheung Fat Estate Shopping Centre

6. The recreational areas and facilities on the podium of the of the Cheung Fat Estate Shopping Centre have all along been open for use by residents of the estate. Following the above principles, the HA has designated the relevant part as estate common areas and facilities in drawing up the DMC, in order to ensure the continued enjoyment of these facilities by the residents. The management and maintenance responsibility for the facilities are shared by all the owners of the estate.

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Policies for “Solid Core Flush Door Replacement Programme” and “Installation of Additional Lift Towers and Pedestrian Bridges” in Public Rental Housing Estates

Purpose

This paper sets out Housing Department’s (HD) general policies governing the “Solid Core Flush Door Replacement Programme” and the “Installation of Additional Lift Tower and Pedestrian Bridge”.

Background

2. At the meeting between Members of Legislative Council and Kwai Tsing District Council on 8 December 2005, some Members of District Council expressed concern over the replacement of hollow core flush doors in Cheung On Estate and installation of lift towers and pedestrian bridges to link all housing blocks in Lai Yiu Estate. Legislative Council Members present at the meeting later met with the HD in January 2006. The HD subsequently provided a reply to the Legislative Council and Kwai Tsing District Council on the relevant issues.

Solid Core Flush Door Replacement Programme

3. The Housing Authority (HA) commissioned professional fire consultants in 2002 to assess the overall fire risk for public rental housing units completed on or before 1996. The consultant report found that all these units complied with the fire safety requirements. To enhance the fire safety level of the flats along the one-way fire escapes, the report suggested replacing the hollow core flush doors of these units with solid core flush doors which are more fire resistant. The replacement programme was completed in March 2006.

4. In 2006, the HD launched the “Total Maintenance Scheme” to carry out inspection and maintenance for all public rental housing units. To further improve the facilities in old public rental housing units, we have incorporated the replacement of core flush door into the Scheme. Under the Scheme, technical officers will enter every unit to inspect the facilities and check whether the entrance door should be replaced. If replacement is necessary, the technical officers will include it into the “Estate Action Plan” of the following year. The HD could set aside about \$30 million under the

“Estate Action Plan” for door replacement every year. The HD will also replace the entrance door with solid core flush door during refurbishment of vacant units or when it receives requests from residents for replacement of damaged and dilapidated entrance doors.

Installation of Additional Lift Towers and Pedestrian Bridges

5. The HD is committed to enhancing the quality of housing for public rental housing residents. Apart from the daily maintenance services, the HD has undertaken various improvement works in housing estates, including the installation of additional lift towers and pedestrian bridges for some estates which are built by hillsides, in order to provide a better living environment for the residents. When we receive proposals from local organizations for such additional facilities, we will conduct technical feasibility studies on various aspects to ascertain the feasibility of the works. If the proposal is found technically feasible and cost effective, the HD will apply to the HA for funding and arrange for implementation of such works in order to facilitate the access of residents.

6. The HD studied and carried out works to build additional lift towers and pedestrian bridges in a number of estates in the Kwai Tsing District last year. Among them, works for installing lift towers connecting Tai Wo Hau Estate and Kwai Chung Estate started in early September 2006 and are due for completion in mid 2008. In addition, the HD has commenced the technical feasibility study on the installation of lift towers next to Shing Kwok House of Kwai Shing East Estate. As regards the pedestrian bridge connecting Cheung Wang Estate and Cheung Hang Estate, tendering is in progress and the works is scheduled for completion by the end of 2007.

Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau
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