

**Motion on
“Elderly Housing Policy”
at the meeting of the Legislative Council on 9 April 2008
Progress Report**

Purpose

At the Legislative Council meeting on 9 April 2008, the motion moved by the Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, as amended by the Hon Frederick FUNG, Hon James TO, Hon Mrs. Selina CHOW, Hon SIN Chung-kai, Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon Albert HO and Hon LEE Wing-tat on “Elderly Housing Policy” was carried. The wording of the passed motion is at the Annex.

2. This report briefs Members on the work progress of major areas covered by the motion.

The design and allocation of Public Rental Housing

3. The primary role of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) is to provide public rental housing (PRH) to eligible low-income persons who cannot afford private rental housing, including elders who have housing needs. The HA will continue to actively coordinate with the policy bureaux and departments concerned to identify suitable sites for PRH development in different districts to meet the need of the community, including the elderly, on PRH. In designing housing estates and blocks, the HA aspires to provide a safe and convenient living environment for elderly tenants. Besides, the HA will continue to adopt “universal design” in new estates, including the introduction of lever types door handles and the improvement of access in estates etc., so that tenants can age in place. In addition, the HA will also provide recreational and exercise facilities suitable for the elderly such as pebble path, gateball court, fitness facilities, chess tables and community planting fields in estates with aging population.

4. On the other hand, to encourage mutual support between older and younger tenants, the HA has introduced five enhanced PRH allocation policies, namely, Families with Elderly Persons Priority Scheme, Special Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons, Addition Policy for Harmonious Families, Enhanced Transfer Scheme for Harmonious Families and Amalgamation of Tenancies for Harmonious Families. As at April 2008, 2,404 applicants had benefited from immediate vetting of eligibility for allocation of PRH units under

the Families with Elderly Persons Priority Scheme and the Special Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons. Besides, the Addition Policy for Harmonious Families allowed 1,039 elderly tenants to add their grown-up children and families in the tenancies. As a result, some 1,452 family members were added in the tenancies. In addition, 170 families were transferred to or nearby housing estates where their relatives live under the Enhanced Transfer Scheme for Harmonious Families and 136 tenants have their tenancies amalgamated under the Amalgamation of Tenancies for Harmonious Families.

“Elderly housing”

5. The underlying concept of “elderly housing” is to develop a residential community where elders would live together and receive one-stop services. The Senior Citizen Residence (SEN) Scheme, namely the Jolly Place in Tseung Kwan O and the Cheerful Court in Jordan Valley, operated by the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) on a trial basis under the lease-for-life arrangement, are examples of “elderly housing” where eligible elders are provided with one-stop services, including rental housing and community-based recreational and healthcare services. The Government is working with the HKHS in the planning of a new elderly housing project on Hong Kong Island.

6. Elderly housing of this nature undoubtedly provides an additional choice for the elders. Nevertheless, the spirit behind the Government’s policy of “ageing in the community” is to promote mutual support among family members regardless of age, strengthen neighbourhood support, and ensure that support services are easily accessible to elders regardless of where they live. So, it is not a must for elders to live in the same neighbourhood. That said, if individual organizations have concrete proposals on “elderly housing” and look for the Government’s support, the Government would consider them carefully, taking into account relevant factors including the effective use of public resources.

Enhancing the living environment for the elderly living in aged districts

7. On another front, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) continues to adopt a holistic approach to regenerate old urban areas, including redevelopment, rehabilitation, revitalization and heritage preservation, so as to improve the living conditions in dilapidated districts. As regards redevelopment and rehabilitation, the URA has commenced 35 redevelopment projects and assisted in rehabilitating over 450 buildings as at June 2008. For example, in two old

districts Sham Shui Po and Kwun Tong, the URA has commenced a total of 13 redevelopment projects and assisted in rehabilitating 63 buildings.

The regulation of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs)

8. The Government is committed to enhancing the quality of RCHEs and ensuring that their services are provided at a satisfactory level. The Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance (Cap. 459) and its subsidiary legislation, which came into full operation in June 1996, provide for the regulation of RCHEs through a licensing system administered by the Director of Social Welfare. To ensure compliance of the Ordinance, the Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly (LORCHE) of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) conducts inspections on RCHEs. The average frequency of regular and unannounced inspections for each RCHE is seven times a year. In addition, upon receipt of complaints, LORCHE will conduct unannounced inspections to the concerned RCHEs immediately. For substantiated complaints, LORCHE will, depending on the nature and severity of the case, give advice or warning to the RCHE, and follow through the case to ensure that corresponding improvements are made. Besides, SWD has been providing support to RCHEs, for instance, through providing training and information to care givers in RCHEs, to enhance their service quality and capability.

9. Enhancing the transparency of RCHEs will facilitate needy elders and their family members to choose suitable RCHEs. In this connection, SWD has uploaded information on all licensed RCHEs onto the Department's website. The website also provides a list of RCHEs participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme, letters and guidelines issued by SWD to RCHEs, and information on RCHEs which have been successfully prosecuted.

Long-term planning of elderly services

10. The Government provides subsidised residential care places to elders with long-term care (LTC) needs who cannot be adequately taken care of at home. In the past 10 years or so, the Government has allocated a lot of resources to residential care services for the elderly. The number of subsidised residential care places has increased from about 16,000 in 1997 to about 26,000 in 2007, representing a rise of about 60%. The Government will continue to allocate resources to increase the number of subsidised residential care places. That said, elders with LTC needs do not necessarily require subsidised residential care places. With the support of family members, carers and various subsidised community care services, they can also age in the community. In fact, the

Government is providing various home-based community care services (for instance, rehabilitation, personal care, escort and meal delivery) to support elders to age in the community. We will continue to strengthen these services to meet elders' need.

11. Against the backdrop of an ageing population, the measure of increasing continuously the supply of subsidised residential care places alone will not be sufficient to meet elders' ever-growing LTC needs. The Elderly Commission decided to conduct a further study to explore how to target subsidised residential care services at elders most in need, and how to promote further development of quality self-financing/private residential care services and encourage shared responsibilities among individuals, their families and the society in meeting the LTC needs of the elderly. The study will also look into the financing mode of LTC services, including the introduction of a "voucher system". It is expected that the study will be completed in early 2009.

Medical services and community care for the elderly

12. In respect of medical and community care, the Hospital Authority will continue to enhance the community and ambulatory care services in 2008/09 for sustaining the support to the elderly in the community. The Hospital Authority plans to provide an additional 10,000 psychogeriatric outreach attendances to residential care homes for the elderly. As a result, the number of psychogeriatric outreach attendances is expected to increase from 51,100 in the 2007/08 revised estimates to 61,100 in the 2008/09 estimates. It is estimated that a total of about 1,400 to 1,700 additional elders could benefit from the service in 2008/09.

13. In addition, the Hospital Authority will in conjunction with the Department of Health continue to provide in-patient services, out-patient services and comprehensive primary health care services including health assessment, physical check up, counseling and health education, etc. to the elderly through the hospitals, general out-patient clinics, specialist out-patient clinics and Elderly Health Centres in the 18 districts.

14. Care givers in RCHEs play an important part in serving elders. In view of the nurse shortage in the welfare sector, SWD, with the assistance of the Hospital Authority, launched a two-year full-time training programme in 2006 to train up Enrolled Nurses for the welfare sector. Three classes have been organized so far. Five more classes will be launched between 2008 and 2011. These eight classes will together provide a total of 930 training places. With the tuition fees fully subsidised by the Government, the graduates are required to

work in the welfare sector for at least two consecutive years after graduation. This will help the welfare sector retain the graduates and alleviate the nurse shortage in the sector.

Transport and Housing Bureau
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Food and Health Bureau
Development Bureau
July 2008

**Motion on “Elderly housing policy”
moved by Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing
at the Legislative Council meeting of Wednesday, 9 April 2008**

Motion as amended by Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, Hon James TO Kun-sun, Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, Hon SIN Chung-kai, Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon Albert HO Chun-yan and Hon LEE Wing-tat

“That, although the Chief Executive’s Policy Address emphasizes ‘quality city and quality life’, it has not put forward any long-term policy objective, and in the face of the two challenges of the appalling living conditions of many elderly persons and the known problem of the ageing population, this Council urges the Government to allocate additional resources to promote comfortable living for all the elderly so as to achieve quality life for the whole community, and make reference to local and overseas experience, as well as comprehensively consult the elderly, to expeditiously formulate, through comprehensive planning, a clear policy on elderly housing, including:

(a) immediately examining the different housing needs of various categories of elderly persons in various districts in the territory, and formulating guidelines for constructing elderly housing;

(b) encouraging people to live with their elderly parents through measures such as perfecting the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance system and offering additional tax concessions, etc, as well as enhancing the support for elderly persons living alone or with another elderly person;

(c) formulating land policies that complement elderly housing, including giving consideration to land supply, land grant and land premium, etc, and setting out explicitly in the Outline Zoning Plan the types of land to be used for building elderly housing;

(d) expediting the pace of urban renewal and rehabilitation to improve the living environment for the elderly residing in old districts (including Sham Shui Po and Kwun Tong);

(e) providing land at a low price or for free to non-profit-making bodies or organizations that have the interest, ability and experience to build elderly housing, and considering converting vacant schools and old industrial buildings into elderly housing;

(f) comprehensively reviewing the legislation on lands, planning and buildings, as well as the system for long-term care services and the relevant support measures, with a view to reinforcing the policy objective of ‘ageing in the community’, so as to integrate elderly housing, medical care and community care services into various communities, and providing in the vicinity of elderly housing sufficient community and passive recreational facilities which are needed by the elderly; and

(g) improving the regulation of care and attention homes and serviced housing for the elderly by increasing the subsidized places and nursing manpower as well as enhancing the transparency of residential care homes for the elderly, so as to provide diversified choices for elderly persons with different means, thereby truly creating a quality living environment and a culture of mutual help and care for the people in the territory, including the elderly who will account for over a quarter of the population, and developing a harmonious and integrated quality city for the future of Hong Kong; in addition, in view of the cramped living environment in Hong Kong and the appalling living conditions of many elderly persons, quite a number of elderly persons hope to take up residence on the Mainland upon retirement to enjoy a better housing and living environment; the Government, in formulating the elderly housing policy, should take into consideration this factor and provide more support and flexibility in such areas as medical care, welfare, etc, for the Hong Kong elderly persons who take up residence on the Mainland, so as to enable the elderly to choose the places where they reside and live upon retirement according to their actual situations and wishes; at the same time, the Government should also raise the dependent parent/grandparent allowance, and relax the requirement of living together for the purpose of claiming tax deduction, so that children living in the same housing estates as their elderly parents or grandparents or living in the vicinity within a specified distance can enjoy the tax allowance, so as to encourage children to take care of their elderly parents and grandparents; in addition, the Government should:

(a) construct public housing units and other types of housing for the elderly according to the different housing needs of various categories of elderly persons in various districts in the territory;

(b) when considering converting vacant schools and old industrial buildings into elderly housing, also consider converting them into relevant support facilities, such as elderly centres, to be managed and operated by non-profit-making bodies or organizations;

(c) lower the income and asset limit requirements for public housing applicants living with their elderly parents, as well as extend and enhance the various

measures under the ‘schemes to foster harmonious families’ in public housing, thereby enabling more elderly persons to live with their children and be taken care of by their family members; and

(d) conduct a comprehensive survey on the housing conditions of elderly persons in Hong Kong, actively help elderly persons living in appalling conditions to improve their living environment, and assist elderly persons with housing needs, such as those living in cubicle apartments and cage homes, to apply for public housing;

(e) construct more small public housing flats for the elderly and provide supporting social services; and

(f) study the provision of ‘residential care vouchers’ to eligible elderly persons so that holders of such vouchers can freely purchase residential care services of their choice, as well as introduce a grading system for residential care homes for the elderly to strengthen their regulation, while at the same time expeditiously increase the residential care places for the elderly, so as to resolve the current hardship caused by the excessively long waiting time to those on the central waiting list; and

(g) review the policy on public housing for the elderly, including providing housing units of elderly-friendly designs and relevant support facilities on a comprehensive basis, as well as assigning more young families to housing estates where many elderly persons live, so as to inject new vitality into the elderly community.”