

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1906/08-09
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/HG/1

Panel on Housing

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 17 April 2009, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH (Chairman)
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon CHAN Hak-kan
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS

Members absent : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP

Public officers attending : **For item IV**

Mr YAU Shing-mu, JP
Acting Secretary for Transport and Housing

Mr Thomas C Y CHAN, JP
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Ms Ada FUNG Yin-suen, JP
Deputy Director (Development & Construction),
Housing Department

Mr HO Sau-him
Assistant Director (Independent Checking Unit),
Housing Department

Ms Eunice MAK Hoi-cheung
Acting Chief Planning Officer,
Housing Department

For item V

Mr YAU Shing-mu, JP
Acting Secretary for Transport and Housing

Mr LAU Kai-hung
Deputy Director (Estate Management),
Housing Department

Mr WONG Bay
Assistant Director (Housing Subsidy),
Housing Department

Clerk in attendance : Miss Becky YU
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Mr Franco KWONG
Council Secretary (1)1

Action

- I. Confirmation of minutes**
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1071/08-09 — Minutes of the meeting held on
2 February 2009)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2009 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since last meeting

2. Members noted the following information papers which had been issued since last meeting –

Action

LC Paper Nos. CB(1) 989/08-09(01) — Administration's papers on Land Registry Statistics in February and March 2009 (press release)
and 1243/08-09(01)

III Items for discussion at the next meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1263/08-09(01) — List of follow-up actions

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1263/08-09(02) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 4 May 2009, at 2:30 pm –

(a) Progress of public engagement for public housing development; and

(b) Progress of the provision of barrier-free access in public housing estates.

4. In response to Mr KAM Nai-wai's request for early discussion of the review of the Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance (Cap. 7), the Chairman advised that the subject had already been included in the list of outstanding items for discussion by the Panel. The Administration would be requested to provide a timeframe for discussion of the subject.

5. The Chairman also reminded members of the visit to public housing estates with green roofing and information technology measures on Thursday, 23 April 2009, at 2:30 pm.

IV. Construction programme of public housing and the implementation of building guidelines

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1263/08-09(03) — Administration's paper on construction programme of public housing and the implementation of building guidelines

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1263/08-09(04) — Paper on the Public Housing Construction Programme prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Background brief))

6. The Deputy Director of Housing (Development & Construction) (DDH(D&C)) gave a power-point presentation on the construction programme for public rental housing (PRH), and the implementation of Housing Authority (HA)'s building guidelines. The Assistant Director of Housing (Independent Checking Unit) (ADH(ICU)) then highlighted the work of the Independent Checking Unit (ICU).

Action

Land supply and PRH development

7. Mr LEE Wing-tat was concerned about the land supply for PRH development. Unlike the earlier days when large-scale sites, such as those at Tin Shui Wai, were earmarked for PRH development, nowadays only smaller and scattered sites could be identified due to shortage of land and objections from local community. The situation was further aggravated by the return of prime cleared PRH sites, such as ex-North Point Estate, to the Government for other developments. This would not only affect the steady supply of PRH to meet demand, but was also undesirable from the planning perspective, particularly on the provision of facilities, since this would mean that new PRH developments would have to share facilities with other existing developments within the district. Mr LEE opined that HA could not rely on the recovery of PRH flats from existing stock to meet demand, which was expected to surge amid the present state of economy. Efforts should be made to identify more suitable land for PRH development to meet the increasing demand. He considered it necessary to hold a joint meeting with the Panel on Development to discuss the supply of land for PRH development. Mr Frederick FUNG echoed that cleared PRH sites should be used for redevelopment of new PRH flats and should not be returned to the Government for other uses. He also agreed that the subject of PRH development straddled both the Transport and Housing Bureau as well as the Development Bureau since PRH development could not be achieved without the adequate supply of land. In order to uphold the target of maintaining the average waiting time (AWT) for PRH at about three years, there was a need to ensure sufficient supply of suitable land.

8. The Acting Secretary for Transport and Housing (Atg STH) said that HA encountered problems in securing timely provision of land for PRH development, particularly land of a larger scale. While PRH development on a smaller scale might not be cost-effective, there was a need to proceed with the housing projects in order to ensure an adequate supply of PRH flats to maintain AWT target of about three years. In response to Mr LEE Wing-tat's further enquiry on the number of large-scale PRH developments on the pipeline, Atg STH said that the projects at Anderson Road and Tuen Mun Area 54 were some of the larger scale PRH developments under production. Efforts would be made to identify more suitable sites for PRH development.

9. Mr CHAN Hak-kan noted with concern that some sites originally earmarked for PRH development had been used for other purposes, such as the one in Tai Po which had been used for the development of a private hospital. The Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) (PSTH(H)) explained that the Tai Po potential site referred to was situated in a remote area. As it would be not be cost-effective or suitable for PRH development, the site was earmarked for the development of a much needed private hospital. Efforts had since been made to identify an alternative site within Tai Po for PRH developments. A suitable site had been found and the Tai Po District Council would be consulted in due course.

10. Prof Patrick LAU said that Government had an obligation to ensure sufficient supply of land to maintain a sustainable public housing production programme. Atg STH said that public housing projects in the coming five years had generally been

Action

firmed up. Those beyond the coming five years were still at early planning stage. Prof LAU was concerned that, with the new standards to be adopted in the redevelopment of old estates, fewer number of PRH flats could be produced from the cleared sites. He asked if consideration could be given to rehabilitating the older estates rather than demolishing them for redevelopment, which should only be considered on a need basis. PSTH(H) assured members that a comprehensive structural investigation would be conducted to ascertain the structural safety of old estates, and whether it would be more cost-effective to keep these estates or to demolish them. He added that under the improved standards for PRH flats, larger flats would be provided in the redevelopment of old PRH estates. In order to maintain the same number of flats to be produced from the cleared sites, consideration would be given to optimizing the plot ratios of the sites if these had not been fully utilized before.

11. Mr CHAN Hak-kan enquired about the impact on AWT if more people registered under the Waiting List (WL) for PRH amid the present state of economy. He asked if consideration would be given to providing more incentives to sitting PRH tenants to encourage them to purchase surplus Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats to improve the turnover of PRH flats for re-allocation. Atg STH said that AWT was affected by a number of factors. At present, there was no indication of a significant upward trend in the number of WL applicants, which stood at an annual figure of around 35 000 to 38 000 new applicants in recent few years. While the AWT target was set at around three years, it was worth noting that the current average waiting time for PRH was 1.9 years for general applicants and 1.2 years for elderly one-person applicants. PSTH(H) said that following the re-positioned housing policy announced in 2002, the Government had withdrawn from the role as a developer to minimize its intervention in the property market. Hence, it was no longer the Government's policy to provide assistance for home ownership. Surplus HOS flats would be disposed of in an orderly manner. In recent years, some 10 000 PRH flats were recovered per year from tenants for various reasons, including purchasing their own flats.

12. Given that there were about 38 000 new WL applicants per year, Mr Frederick FUNG pointed out that the annual production of 15 000 PRH flats together with the annual recovery of 16 000 PRH flats from existing stock were not able to meet the demand, and that there would still be a shortfall of about 7 000 flats per year. Based on these figures, it was unlikely that HA could uphold the AWT target of three years in five years' time. Atg STH said that the annual demand for PRH flats was partly met by new production and partly by recovery from existing stock with an annual allocation of about 30 000 flats. It was estimated that with the current level of production, the AWT target of three years could be maintained for the next five years. The Administration would endeavour to identify more suitable sites for PRH development.

13. Mr Alan LEONG enquired whether the public housing construction programme had taken into account the aspiration of many sitting tenants to purchase their own PRH flats. He asked if HA was prepared to conduct a review of the

Action

Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) to ensure that the AWT target of around three years could be achieved even with the re-launching of TPS. Atg STH said that HA's priority was to ensure adequate supply of PRH flats to meet the AWT target. Besides, the construction programme was meant to provide public housing flats for rent and not for sale. The sale of PRH flats under TPS would inevitably reduce the turnover of PRH flats, thereby lengthening the AWT for WL applicants.

14. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that Hong Kong took pride of its housing policy under which low-income families which could not afford private rental housing could apply for subsidized housing. However, the increasing difficulty in securing suitable land for PRH development might render more people become homeless. Hence, the timely provision of land was imperative to ensure sufficient supply of PRH flats to meet the demand. In view of the increasing number of young one-person PRH applicants, Mr LEUNG suggested that a separate waiting list should be drawn up for them.

Strengthening ties with local community

15. The Chairman opined that HA had failed to take into account views of District Councils (DCs) in planning for PRH development. By way of illustration, HA had declined Island District Council (IDC)'s request for PRH development at Tung Chung West, but insisted to proceed with the PRH development at Tung Chung Area 56 despite strong opposition from IDC. He also pointed out that residents were misinformed about the provision of transport infrastructure in Tung Chung. Atg STH said that the residents' views would be taken into account when planning for PRH development. In view of the strong objection to the proposed PRH development at Tung Chung Area 56, HA was prepared to review the planning, taking into account the choice of site for the connection to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge.

16. Mr Frederick FUNG said that when consulting DCs, more emphasis should be placed on the need to maintain the AWT target of about three years. While DCs could give views on where and how the PRH estates within their districts should be developed, they could not object to the provision of PRH estates as a matter of principle. PSTH(H) explained that when consulting DCs on the provision of PRH estates within their districts, HA would focus on the development needs of the community rather than the objections to the provision of PRH estates.

Independent Checking Unit

17. Mr Joseph LEE opined that apart from ensuring adequate supply of PRH flats, there was also a need to ensure the quality of housing production. He enquired about the rationale for ICU to follow the checking system of the Buildings Department (BD). ADH(ICU) said that while developments of HA were not subject to control of the Buildings Ordinance (Cap.123) (BO), it was HA's intention to ensure compliance with the technical and safety standards of BO. ICU was set up in October 2000 to enforce independent administrative control on new developments of HA. Over the years, ICU had been keeping up with the practice of BD, and aligning itself with the updated

Action

guidelines under BO. The checking system had been effective so far. DDH(D&C) added that since 2000, HA had implemented 50 improvement measures covering contract administration and site supervision among others to assure the quality of public housing, one of which being requirement for submission of designs and construction plans for independent checking. In view of the lapse of time, Mr LEE said that a general review of the operation of ICU might be necessary.

Provision of supporting facilities

18. Noting that residents of Tin Ching Estate and Lei Muk Shue Estate had complained about the inadequacy of market and transport facilities respectively, the Chairman stressed the need to ensure the availability of necessary supporting facilities, such as shopping, transport and recreational facilities, when planning for PRH developments. ADH(ICU) said that one of the main tasks of ICU was to ensure the compliance with safety standards and requirements. DDH(D&C) added that while adequate supporting facilities would be provided within PRH developments as far as practicable, there might be cases where facilities had to be shared with neighbouring developments. The provision of supporting facilities would be reviewed in the light of residents' needs.

19. Mr Frederick FUNG pointed out that supporting facilities were a necessity in PRH developments. However, he noted with concern that the open space on ground floor of new PRH estates were mostly used to house public utilities, such as pumping stations, leaving insufficient space for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide the much needed community and welfare services. PSTH(H) said that the Social Welfare Department would be consulted on the needs of the community and space requirements for NGOs. If there was insufficient space for the provision of supporting and ancillary facilities, consideration would be given to providing a separate block for these purposes, as in the case of Tin Ching Estate where a comprehensive social services centre was provided. Mr FUNG stressed the need for HA to ensure that the services provided by NGOs could meet the changing needs of the ageing population. PSTH(H) assured members that the views of residents would be taken into account in the provision of services.

20. Mr Alan LEONG asked whether views and requirements should be taken into consideration in the design of PRH flats. PSTH(H) confirmed that users' views would be taken into account in the layout of the open spaces. Some fittings within the flats would also be suitably adjusted to meet individual needs of tenants.

Conclusion

21. The Chairman said that members were generally concerned about the adequacy of PRH supply, particularly the supply beyond the coming five years. As the forward planning of PRH production would hinge on the timely provision of suitable land, he suggested holding a joint meeting with the Panel on Development to discuss the subject within the current legislative session. When planning for PRH developments, care should be taken to ensure provision of sufficient supporting

Action

facilities, such as transport, recreational and community services, for the benefit of residents. As the Deputy Chairman of the Panel on Development, Prof Patrick LAU agreed to the need for a joint meeting between the two Panels to discuss the land supply for PRH. Representatives from both the Development Bureau and the Planning Department should be invited to attend for discussion.

V. Clearance arrangement for Tung Tau (I) Estate Block 22

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1263/08-09(05) — Administration's paper on clearance arrangement for Tung Tau (I) Estate Block 22)

22. The Assistant Director of Housing (Housing Subsidy) (ADH(HS)) gave a power-point presentation on the various arrangements for the clearance of Tung Tau (I) Estate Block 22 (TT 22).

(Post-meeting note: The power-point presentation materials were circulated to members under LC Paper No. CB(1)1336/08-09(02) on 17 April 2009.)

Arrangement for tenants

23. Noting that about 500 elderly households would be affected by the clearance of TT 22, Mr Frederick FUNG expressed concern about the availability of suitable flats within the same district to re-house these elderly households. The Deputy Director of Housing (Estate Management) (DDH(EM)) said that apart from the neighbouring Tung Tau Estate Phase 9 Redevelopment Project with 1 300 PRH flats scheduled for completion in November 2010, there was a new estate to be developed at Tung Tau Cottage Area West nearby which would provide about 800 PRH flats. Together with refurbished vacant flats in other estates, there would be adequate flats for rehousing of the affected households, including all the elderly households of TT 22.

24. Mr Frederick FUNG noted that one-person and two-person households could opt to receive a Singleton/Doubleton Allowance in lieu of rehousing but this was not applicable to three or more person households. He questioned the rationale for the different treatment. DDH(EM) explained that it had all along been HA's policy to allow one-person and two-person households to apply for Singleton/Doubleton Allowance in lieu of rehousing, as experience showed that such households would opt to move to the Mainland upon clearance. Unlike one- and two-person households, most of three-or -more-person households would prefer rehousing to PRH flats. Besides, households which opted for the allowance would be barred from applying for PRH for two years. The Chairman said that for the sake of fairness, consideration should be given to allowing three- or-more-person households to opt for allowances in lieu of rehousing.

Action

Arrangement for commercial tenants

25. Mr Frederick FUNG questioned why restricted tenders were only applicable to retail premises in markets and not other retail facilities of HA. He urged HA to allow affected commercial tenants to lease retail facilities in the neighbouring estates through restricted tender. This would also help improve the vacancy rates of these facilities. DDH(EM) said that it was an established arrangement to allow commercial tenants choosing to lease HA retail premises in markets to participate in restricted tenders. He added that as 80% of retail and car parking facilities in HA estates had been divested to the Link Management Company, affected commercial tenants who wished to lease retail facilities other than those in markets would have to participate in open tenders.

Po Yan Catholic Primary School

26. Mr Frederick FUNG enquired if the Po Yan Catholic Primary School (the School) was given an option to re-provision to another estate in order to get away from the construction noise and other nuisance during the demolition and re-development of TT 22. DDH(EM) said that the Education Bureau had been consulted on the need to re-provision the School on account of the nuisances associated with the demolition and re-development of TT 22. As the School did not have the required number of students, the re-provisioning of the School to another estate might give rise to enrolment difficulties and lead to closure of the School. As such, the school management and the parent-teacher association had indicated their preference to remain status quo in the present site during the demolition and re-development of TT 22. Mr FUNG was concerned about the noise which the School would be exposed to during demolition and redevelopment of TT22, the inconvenience and safety hazard associated with the demolition works, particularly those related to the removal of asbestos-containing materials. DDH(EM) advised that a liaison group comprising representatives of the Education Bureau, Housing Department (HD) and the school management had been set up to work out the detailed arrangements. Measurements of the construction noise as well as the background noise would be made available for reference of the liaison group.

Removal of building structures containing asbestos

27. DDH(EM) said that removal of building structures containing asbestos would follow the guidelines promulgated by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). HD had briefed the tenants of TT 22 on the removal works at a meeting which was attended by hundreds of affected residents. Given the positive response, the removal works were expected to commence in July 2009. ADH(HS) added that according to records, most of the asbestos-containing structures in TT 22 were located at the verandahs and were encapsulated. Before commencing with the removal works, bulk sampling on all the building structures containing asbestos would be collected by specialists. Prior approval on the removal procedures would also be sought from EPD. Air quality monitoring would be conducted daily prior to and during the clearance of TT 22 to detect any presence of asbestos. The clearance site would be

Action

enclosed to prevent dispersal of asbestos fibres. Meanwhile, EPD staff would inspect the site on a regular basis.

28. Mr Alan LEONG questioned if HD was experienced in removing building structures with asbestos-containing materials. Noting the clearance of Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate had also involved the removal of asbestos-containing materials in some of the building structures, he enquired if similar arrangements would be adopted in TT 22. The Chairman said that HD had dealt with many clearances involving the removal of structures with asbestos-containing materials, including North Point Estate. ADH(HS) said that HD had established a three-tier approach in the treatment of asbestos-containing materials. Asbestos-containing materials which posed an imminent health hazard would be removed immediately while those which were less hazardous would be encapsulated and sealed. Asbestos-containing materials which did not pose any threat would be kept intact until the demolition of the structures. The clearance of Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate would only be carried out after all tenants had moved out. All workers engaged in the removal of asbestos-containing materials were required to wear protective gear to avoid contamination. All the asbestos-containing materials were sealed to prevent dispersal of asbestos fibres.

29. The Chairman stressed the need to ensure that no asbestos fibres would be dispersed to the surrounding environment, particularly when the nearby School was still in operation. He therefore enquired about the number and location of air monitoring stations to be set up to detect the presence of asbestos prior to and during the clearance of TT 22. He also requested that HD to upload the air quality monitoring results onto its website so that the relevant parties would be made aware of the situation. DDH(EM) agreed that the public had the right to know the whereabouts of asbestos-containing materials and the air quality monitoring results. Arrangements would be made to upload such information on the website of HD. Efforts would be made to step up public education on the avoidance of touching asbestos-containing materials, and a video on the subject would be shown at the ground floor of TT 22.

VI. Any other business

30. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:51 pm.