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Panel on Housing

Meeting on 17 April 2009

Background brief on Public Housing Construction Programme

Purpose

This paper sets out the progress of Public Housing Construction Programme, and gives a brief account of the views and concerns expressed by the Panel on Housing (the Panel).

Background

2. As at November 2008, there were over 110 000 applicants on the Waiting List (WL) for public rental housing (PRH), with an average of 2 000 to 3 000 new applications received every month. To meet the need of low-income families for subsidized rental housing, the Housing Authority (HA) maintains a rolling five-year Public Housing Construction Programme (PHCP). The forecast production of PRH from 2008-2009 to 2012-2013 is about 77 000 flats i.e. around 15 000 flats per year on average. HA estimates that this level of production, together with the about 16 000 PRH flats anticipated to be recovered every year, would allow it to meet the pledge of maintaining the average waiting time (AWT) for PRH at around three years¹

Land supply for public housing

3. The projects for new flat production under PHCP will come from the urban/extended urban areas² with the remaining from the New Territories. The flat production volume within the five-year period would not be subject to major variation as the projects concerned are either at the construction stage or advanced detailed design stage. However, most of the sites available for PRH development beyond the five-year period are still at an early planning stage. In view of the valuable land resources, HA has to optimize the development potential of all available public housing sites while promptly addressing the following issues -

¹ The AWT pledge does not apply to non-elderly one-person PRH applicants on WL.

² Extended urban areas include Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, Shatin, Tseung Kwan O and Tung Chung

- (a) *different views from the local communities on the suitability of the sites for PRH development* – considerable time will have to be taken in discussing with the locals in an attempt to formulate mutually acceptable solutions;
- (b) *provision of community facilities* – consideration may need to be given to reserving part of the sites for community facility use having regard to requests from the local community, requirements of the relevant departments and development needs of the districts concerned;
- (c) *site availability* – sites, even if considered suitable for PRH development, may not be immediately available for various reasons, such as rezoning of sites, land resumption and clearance, technical feasibility study, large-scale site formation works etc.; and
- (d) *site development constraints* – uncertainties at the planning stage, such as traffic noise, building height restrictions and urban design considerations, may need to overcome.

Otherwise, PHCP and the pledge of maintaining AWT at around three years may be affected.

4. To strengthen the ties with local community, district co-ordinators at Assistant Director-level will be appointed to co-ordinate all consultation matters related to PRH development projects at district level, including residents and District Councils, and liaise with the relevant government departments so that the projects can be implemented more smoothly. Meanwhile, HA will take the following measures to ensure an adequate and steady land supply for public housing development -

- (a) close liaison with the relevant bureaux and departments to identify suitable sites for public housing development in different parts of the territory;
- (b) retention of cleared PRH sites for public housing development as far as possible; and
- (c) optimization of the development potential of all valuable public housing sites to make more effective use of the precious land resources, irrespective of the sizes of individual sites.

Deliberations by the Panel

5. The subject of land supply for public housing development was last discussed at the Panel meetings on 7 January and 17 June 2008.

6. Members opined that HA should secure the land required for PRH development beyond the five-year period, and that the Government should make the suitable sites for PRH production available during the planning stage. Effort should be made to avoid the over-concentration of PRH in certain districts as this would put extra pressure on the provision of ancillary facilities to meet the needs of the local community.

7. Members stressed the need to increase PRH production to expedite flat allocation to some 110 000 applicants on WL, which was constantly expanding with an addition of 2 000 to 3 000 new applications every month. Besides, increasing PRH production was a more effective means than recovery of existing PRH flats in upholding the pledge of maintaining AWT at around three years. To meet the demand for public housing of low-income families, members urged the Administration to relax the Income and Asset Limits for WL applicants. Consideration should be given to re-launching the Home Ownership Scheme and the Tenant Purchase Scheme to help expedite the recovery of existing PRH flats. The proceeds of sales would also help finance the PRH production.

Latest development

8. The Administration intends to brief the Panel on the latest progress of the construction programme of public housing at its meeting on 17 April 2009.

Relevant papers

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 7 January 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0107cb1-506-3-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 7 January 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg080107.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 17 June 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0617cb1-1656-4-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 17 June 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg080617.pdf>