

The Legislative Council meeting on 30 June 2010

Motion on “Policy on elderly housing”

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council meeting on 30 June 2010, the motion on “Policy on elderly housing” moved by the Hon LAU Kong-wah and amended by the Hon WONG Sing-chi and Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou was carried. The wording of the motion carried is at [Annex](#).

2. This report consolidates the comments from relevant bureaux, and sets out the Administration’s position and the follow-up actions taken in respect of the aforementioned motion.

3. Caring for the elderly has all along been one of the major policies of the Government. The objective of our elderly policy is to facilitate "ageing in the community". We encourage family members, old and young, to take care of each other, and neighbours to give mutual assistance, so as to establish a family-based support network. Also, we seek to ensure that regardless of where they live, elderly people may receive all types of support conveniently. Therefore, the Government’s current policy is to strengthen the role of families in mutual support as well as to enhance elderly support services and facilities so that elderly people living in different places and with different needs can easily gain access to various types of welfare, health care and community services.

Enhance elderly-related public housing policy

Shorten elderly people’s waiting time for public rental housing

4. At present, about 40% of the elderly people in Hong Kong live in public rental housing (PRH). The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) is committed to addressing the housing needs of elderly people who cannot afford rental flats in the private market, and has introduced a number of priority housing schemes to expedite PRH allocation to elderly applicants on the Waiting List (WL) within the constraints in PRH resources. At present, there are about 5 400 elderly one-person applicants on the waiting list and their average waiting time is about 1.1

years, which is lower than the average of about 2 years for general family applicants.

5. According to the HA's current five-year Public Housing Construction Programme for the period from 2010/11 to 2014/15, it is estimated that about 75 000 PRH flats will be built during that period. HA will continue to actively coordinate with relevant bureaux and departments to identify suitable sites for PRH development in different districts to meet the needs of the community, including the needs of elderly people.

Encourage core family members to live with elderly relatives

6. At present, elderly households applying for PRH, including elderly one-person applicants and all-elderly households, may choose any one of the four WL districts as the restriction which disallows new applicants from opting for the Urban District does not apply to elderly applicants. Under the Harmonious Families Addition Scheme, eligible adult offspring, including singletons or those with family, may apply for adding themselves to the tenancy of their elderly tenants. Also, young family members, including singletons, may apply with their elderly members for PRH flats in any district under the Harmonious Families Priority Scheme and enjoy a credit waiting time of six months. They may choose either to live under one roof or separately in two nearby PRH units. Existing elderly PRH tenants may apply for transfer to PRH estates near to that of their offspring through the Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme, or apply for amalgamation of tenancies with that of their offspring and be transferred to a PRH unit of suitable size under the Harmonious Families Amalgamation Scheme.

Enhance PRH facilities to cater for the needs of elderly people

7. In the past, HA introduced hostel-type PRH for elderly people. However, since those units require tenants to share communal kitchen and bathroom facilities, they are not popular to elderly people. The Housing Department has therefore ceased allocating those singleton flats commonly known as “split units” and Type I units under the Housing for Senior Citizens Scheme (HSC), and has stopped including those units in the Express Flat Allocation Scheme since last year.

8. HA introduced a trial scheme in 2002 to convert units under HSC with relatively high vacancy rate into general PRH flats. In view of the satisfactory results of the trial scheme, HA endorsed the scheme as a

long-term measure in July 2006, with a view to converting about 500 units under HSC with relatively high vacancy rate into more than 100 general PRH flats. The conversion programme involves about 1 400 units, which will provide more than 400 general PRH flats after conversion for applicants eligible for PRH, including elderly people.

9. HA is committed to providing elderly PRH tenants with a safe and convenient living environment for elderly people to “age in the community”. Over the past years, HA has been enhancing the design of PRH estates and the buildings, including adopting “universal design” in all of its new projects since 2002 to introduce facilities which make the daily living of elderly tenants more convenient.

10. In 2006, HA implemented the “Barrier-free Access Improvement Programme” and added facilities such as ramps, handrails and voice synthesizers in lifts to make it more convenient for needy elders and people with disabilities. In view of the ageing population in some of the PRH estates, HA renovates and adds recreational and leisure facilities suitable for elderly people, and provide additional lifts, pave the floor with non-slippery tiles, adjust the door closers or the floor springs at the residential ground floor lobby areas for easy access, as well as install automatic doors in PRH estates’ shopping centres to enhance accessibility for elderly people as appropriate. HA constantly upgrades and increases recreational facilities, in the light of views gathered from local consultation and monitoring of the usage of existing recreational facilities. HA is also committed to improving barrier-free access to recreational facilities for elderly people and people with disabilities.

Review existing policies on welfare and health care services for the elderly

11. The Government also attaches importance to the needs of elderly people who are not living in public housing estates. We understand that improving the home environment for the elderly people, particularly enhancing their home safety, is extremely important to supporting ageing in place. The “Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly” of the Social Welfare Department provides elderly families who lack financial means with home modification services and home fittings, so as to improve their home environment and reduce the risk of domestic accidents. Besides, the Government implements the “District-based Scheme on Carer Training” through the District Elderly Community Centres and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres throughout the territory to teach carers of the elderly basic knowledge of elderly care, including

elderly care skills, common elderly ailments and skills in communicating with the elderly people, etc.

12. At present, the Government provides home care services and day care services for elderly people in need living at home. The service covers personal care and nursing care, rehabilitation exercise, counseling, meal, respite and escorting. There are about 25 000 elderly people receiving government subsidised community care services. Apart from government subsidised home care services, there are a number of non-profit making organisations and social enterprises providing similar home support services for elderly people to choose from. Recently, the Government has implemented various new schemes to further support elderly people living at home and their carers. Among them, the “Integrated Discharge Support Trial Programme for Elderly Patients” (IDSP) provides elderly hospital discharges with multi-disciplinary support services. Through the concerted efforts of medical professionals and social workers, IDSP helps elderly people with comprehensive pre-discharge planning as well as intensive rehabilitation exercise and home care services after discharge, so that elderly people discharges can recover as soon as possible and continue to live at home.

13. The Financial Secretary announced in the Budget this year that funding of \$55 million was earmarked for a new pilot scheme on home care services for frail elderly people, which would be implemented in Kowloon to provide “tailor-made” care services for elderly people waiting for subsidised nursing home places.

14. Besides, the Government also provides a range of support services to elderly people (including singletons and “hidden” elders) through the 158 elderly centres at the district and neighbourhood levels. These include regular contacts with them, and the provision of counselling, referral, emotional support, social and health education services, etc.

15. On healthcare services, the Government has been providing comprehensive healthcare services to Hong Kong residents, including elderly people and other citizens, through the public hospitals and clinics in different districts. The services include inpatient and outpatient service of different specialties, ambulatory service and outreach service, etc.

16. As regards Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), elderly people who have received CSSA continuously for at least one year may choose to retire in Guangdong or Fujian province under the

Portable CSSA Scheme. For Old Age Allowance (OAA) (commonly known as “fruit money”), beneficiaries are now entitled to a 240-day absence limit. The Labour and Welfare Bureau is currently reviewing whether this limit can be further relaxed.

17. As some elderly people may choose to retire on the Mainland, there are calls for the Administration to consider allowing welfare benefits to be portable to the Mainland. The Administration’s position is that welfare covers a wide range of policy areas such as healthcare, education etc, and is not limited to social security. Welfare portability therefore touches on complex issues and will have significant impact on public policies and resources. The Administration is of the view that the subject needs to be handled with great care.

Examine current land planning, actively explore the ‘mixed use development’ concept, and provide more incentives to encourage developers and non-governmental organizations to develop elderly housing projects

18. In respect of land use and planning, in order to provide elderly people with more diversified housing options, the Government granted two lots of land situated in Tseung Kwan O and Jordan Valley to the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) at nominal premium a few years ago for the implementation of the Senior Citizens Residence Scheme on a trial basis. The Scheme aims to provide middle class elderly people with elderly housing where services such as rental housing, recreational as well as medical and nursing care are provided on a one-stop basis. Besides, the Government has approved the HKHS to carry out two other elderly housing development projects at the former Tanner Hill Estate site in North Point as well as in Tin Shui Wai Area 115.

19. At present, land designated for residential use on Outline Zoning Plans can be used for residential developments, including public and private housing developments. According to the “Definitions of Terms / Broad Use Terms Used in Statutory Plans” of the Town Planning Board, “elderly housing” is regarded as a kind of “residential institutions”. This type of land use, including the supporting facilities (such as medical and care services) provided for the residing elderly people, are permitted in “Residential (Group A)” and “Residential (Group B)” zones. For other land use zonings such as “Commercial”, “Government, Institutions or Community”, “Residential (Group C)”, “Residential (Group E)” and “Comprehensive Development Area”, elderly housing may be permitted through application for planning permission.

Actively encourage the banking and insurance sectors to explore more financial packages

20. In view of the ageing population in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation is conducting a study on the feasibility of introducing "reverse mortgages". The scope of the study includes making reference to overseas experience, analyzing conditions and factors in the local market, and discussing with banks and insurance companies.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
September 2010**

(Translation)

**Motion on
“Policy on elderly housing”
moved by Hon LAU Kong-wah
at the Legislative Council meeting
of Wednesday, 30 June 2010**

Motion as amended by Hon WONG Sing-chi and Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou

That, there are currently more than 1.2 million elderly people in Hong Kong which account for about 18% of our population, and safe and stable accommodation and environment are fundamental and important elements of the lives of the elderly, and promoting ‘ageing in the community’ is all the more an important principle and belief of the SAR Government’s elderly policy; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to formulate a targeted, comprehensive and long-term planning policy on elderly housing to meet the challenges arising from an ageing population, which includes:

- (a) to examine afresh the current land planning and formulate a comprehensive land policy with sites earmarked for elderly housing purposes;
- (b) to actively explore the introduction of the ‘mixed use development’ concept in private and public housing, and design a residence model which integrates elderly housing and complementary facilities, so as to lay the foundation for building a society of mutual care between the elderly and the young;
- (c) to draw up a timetable for the expeditious provision of spacious small-sized flats with self-contained kitchens and toilets to all elderly people residing in ‘elderly housing’, so that they can live comfortably and securely;
- (d) to install facilities in old public rental housing (‘PRH’) estates and shopping malls that suit the daily life of elderly people, such as retrofitting handrails and ramps at passageways, paving the floor with non-slippery tiles, installing automatic doors, etc., so as to provide a safe and convenient living environment;
- (e) in PRH estates with relatively more elderly residents, to provide community facilities that can cater for the needs of elderly people, such as pebble paths, gateball courts, fitness equipment, chess tables, etc., and social welfare services such as meal service, personal care, estate clinics as well as recreation centres for the elderly; and to enhance efforts in caring for elderly residents in PRH estates by paying regular visits to singleton and hidden elders and organizing activities for them, so as to enable them to have more contacts with the community;

- (f) making reference to the experience of the Senior Citizen Residences Scheme currently undertaken by the Hong Kong Housing Society, to provide more incentives to encourage developers and non-governmental organizations in possession of land resources, etc. to develop elderly housing projects with complete complementary facilities for living;
- (g) to actively encourage the banking and insurance sectors to explore more financial packages, such as 'elderly housing insurance schemes', 'reverse mortgage schemes', etc., with a view to helping the elderly improve their living environment and lives in their twilight years; and
- (h) to review the existing policies on welfare and health care services for the elderly, and immediately implement the verdict of the High Court to abolish the absence limit for receiving Old Age Allowance, so as to enable those elderly people who choose to live in the Mainland to have peace of mind and enjoy their twilight years there;
- (i) to review the public housing policies relating to the elderly, and increase the supply of elderly housing, with a view to further shortening the waiting time of elderly people for public rental housing ('PRH');
- (j) to enhance or provide relevant schemes under PRH policy to encourage core families to live with or near their elderly relatives to facilitate the caring of the elderly;
- (k) to improve the design and facilities of elderly housing to facilitate the activities of elderly people with disabilities as well as enhance home safety; and
- (l) to review the existing community and medical services for the elderly so as to enhance support for elderly people living at home.