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Panel on Housing

Meeting on 10 February 2011

**Updated background brief on progress of addition of lifts and escalators in
Housing Authority's existing public housing estates
(Position as at 1 February 2011)**

Purpose

This paper sets out the progress of the addition of lifts and escalators in Housing Authority (HA)'s existing public rental housing (PRH) estates, and gives a brief account of the views and concerns expressed by the Panel on Housing (the Panel).

Background

2. PRH estates constructed on hillsides are normally provided with staircases for connecting the different platforms within the estate or with the adjacent estate/public road. To further improve the pedestrian access based on local needs, HA has provided lifts or escalators to some of these PRH estates, including Tai Wo Hau Estate, So Uk Estate, Tsz Ching Estate, Yau Tong Estate and Kwai Chung Estate, over the past few years.

3. Some of the PRH blocks built in the 70's are without lifts. Tenants are required to walk up and down the stairs. In view of an aging population, there is an increasing need to provide lift services to tenants. HA adopts a holistic approach to enhance the pedestrian circulation for tenants and allow barrier-free access for the disabled and elderly.

Addition of lifts, escalators and footbridges at external areas

4. The addition of facilities such as escalators or lifts with footbridges is considered an effective means for the pedestrians to overcome level differences. Escalators are however not suitable for wheelchair users and would only be used under circumstances where lift installations are technically not suitable due to site constraints. In evaluating the need and priority on the addition of lifts and escalators on hillsides and at external areas, the following guiding principles will be adopted -

- (a) Vertical level difference - the vertical level difference between the platforms to be connected should not be less than six metres (footbridges six metres above ground or equivalent to two-storey high would normally be provided with lifts);
- (b) Land status - the proposed locations of any escalator, lift tower and associated footbridge must be within the estate boundary;
- (c) Technical and social feasibility - every proposal is subject to a feasibility study including the space requirement, clearance of underground utilities or obstructions, and the site geotechnical aspects etc;
- (d) Social acceptability - HA will consult the tenants and concerned groups and evaluate the impact on tenants during construction before committing to the additional facilities; and
- (e) Priority - higher priority will be accorded to estates with a higher percentage of elderly tenants and where the additional facilities would benefit a larger number of tenants.

Based on the above guiding principles, HA has started a survey among existing PRH estates with a view to formulating an overall work programme. A list of the estates where feasibility studies, design or works are being carried out is given in Annex I to LC Paper No. CB(1) 534/09-10(05) which is hyperlinked below for ease of reference.

Addition of lifts in existing PRH estates without lift service

5. There are 35 blocks in 12 estates which are without lift service. These blocks are mostly seven storeys high. HA has planned to add new lifts to these blocks under a five-year programme, subject to feasibility study and consultation with tenants and concerned groups. The provision of lifts will in general take the form of a lift tower built adjacent to the block, with connections to the block on every floor. A pilot scheme in Tai Hing Estate has been completed and two new lifts have been put to use since 2008. Construction and preparation work are underway in other estates, as detailed in Annex II to LC Paper No. CB(1) 534/09-10(05) which is hyperlinked below.

6. The above two programmes will cost around \$450 million and are targeted for completion by 2012.

Modernization work for lifts in existing estates

7. A structured lift modernization rolling programme has been put in place where the conditions of all lifts over 25 years of age are evaluated regularly. Lifts are replaced in accordance with priority based on their age, breakdown rates, and the benefits after replacement in terms of improved safety, comfort, travel time and energy efficiency. Opportunity is also taken to provide lift openings for every floor if not previously provided, where the structure permits. HA plans to replace about 100 lifts each year over the next five year with a total estimated expenditure of \$500 million.

8. Since early 2009, eight lift modernization contracts involving 124 lifts in eight PRH estates have been awarded. These will be completed in phases in the next three years.

Deliberations by the Panel

9. The addition of lifts and escalators in existing PRH estates was discussed at the Panel meeting on 5 January and 7 December 2009.

10. With the aging population,, members generally supported the provision of lifts and escalators in PRH estates to cater for the need of the elderly and the disabled. However, they were concerned about the long lead time for installation of lifts/escalators. They also queried the need for feasibility studies when most

PRH were of similar designs. Some members enquired if residents, District Councillors and Estate Management Advisory Committees had been consulted on the provision of lifts/escalators to avoid possible under-utilization of these facilities. Consideration should also be given to equipping the lifts/escalators with energy saving devices, such as detectors, which would automatically turn off the lifts/escalators when these were not in use.. The Administration was requested to provide regular progress reports on these programmes, and to consider providing lifts/escalators at estates which were not included in the programmes but in need of these facilities.

11. On addition of lifts/escalators on hillsides and at external areas, members noted that the locations of these facilities must be within the estate boundary. This had rendered many deserving cases not eligible to be included in the programme. Given that a consultancy study was underway to establish an assessment system for the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems, members requested that an inter-departmental group should be set up to oversee the study which should be expedited for the benefit of residents. A visit to Kwai Chung Estate and Oi Man Estate was subsequently held on 5 March 2009 to observe how the need for elevator links and elevator systems could be met.

12. On implementation details, members expressed concern that if the lift installation programme would be subject to the World Trade Organization Agreement on Government Procurement, local contractors might not be able to succeed in tendering the works. They asked if the programme could be tendered out under several smaller contracts to enable the participation of local contractors, thus benefiting the local economy through the creation of more job opportunities for the local workforce. They also stressed the need for proper maintenance of lifts and escalators to ensure safety.

13. The addition of lifts and escalators was raised when the provision of barrier-free access in PRH estates was discussed at the Panel meeting on 4 May 2009. Some members opined that HA should consult tenants at the design and planning stage of barrier-free access improvement works, including the installation of lifts and escalators, so that these facilities could be provided in such a way and in such location that would best suit the needs of the community. Efforts should also be made to expedite the provision of these facilities.

Latest development

14. The Administration proposes to brief the Panel on the latest progress of the addition of lifts and escalators in PRH estates at the Panel meeting on 10 February 2011.

Relevant papers

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 5 January 2009

[http:// www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0105cb1-490-5-e.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0105cb1-490-5-e.pdf)

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 5 January 2009

[http:// www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20090105.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20090105.pdf)

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 4 May 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0504cb1-1447-4-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 4 May 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20090504.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 7 December 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/hg/papers/hg1207cb1-534-5-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 7 December 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20091207.pdf>

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