

Panel on Welfare Services
Subcommittee on Improving Barrier Free Access
and Facilities for Persons with Disabilities

Matters related to Access to Peng Chau General Out-patient Clinic

Purpose

This paper aims to brief members on the progress made by relevant Government departments and the Hospital Authority (HA) in handling the issue of access to Peng Chau General Out-patient Clinic (GOPC), including the proposal of installation of an elevator or relocating the Peng Chau GOPC.

Background

2. Public primary healthcare services including general out-patient services provided by HA are primarily targeted at chronically ill patients, elderly people and low-income families. In 2011, utilization rate of Peng Chau GOPC was around 58% and the attendances were around 10,000, in which the elderly and chronic disease patients account for 34% and 45% respectively. Some members of the local community have reflected that the existing clinic is located on a small hill. The elderly and the sick find it inconvenient to go up the slope or walk up forty steps to reach the clinic. They thus propose the installation of an elevator or relocating the clinic. Currently, HA is responsible for the operation of Peng Chau GOPC. As the above access is located beyond HA's management boundary, HA has endeavoured to make operational arrangement addressing the needs of patients. For elderly people as well as persons with disabilities or using wheelchairs, staff members of Peng Chau GOPC will provide necessary assistance to them for access to the clinic. For example, ambulance service will be arranged in advance for chronically ill patients who require assistance to reach the clinic for their follow-up appointments, or assistance will be provided to patients for

calling ambulance service, if necessary, to ensure their needs are properly addressed.

Major Follow-up Actions

3. The Islands District Office (IsDO) has held various meetings since November 2010 with member of the Legislative Council (LegCo) and representatives of the local community who were concerned about the matter. IsDO has maintained close liaison with relevant Government departments and HA to follow up on the matter. In April 2011, IsDO convened a meeting with representatives of relevant Government departments and HA, LegCo member as well as representatives of the local community who were concerned about the matter in order to have preliminary discussion on suggestions to improve the accessibility issue of the Peng Chau GOPC.

4. On 25 May 2011, IsDO held a meeting with representatives of relevant Government departments and HA mainly to discuss the proposal for relocating the clinic. On 23 June 2011, IsDO arranged a site visit for representatives of relevant Government departments and HA to the existing Peng Chau GOPC building and its access road. Other locations inspected were the second floor of the Peng Chau Municipal Services Building, the former Peng Chau Chi Yan Public School, the Police Post and Post Office inside Peng Chau Government Offices Building. Attendees of the site visit agreed that on geographical and sanitation grounds, the second floor of the Peng Chau Municipal Services Building and Peng Chau Chi Yan Public School were not suitable sites for relocation. On the other hand, the Pak Wan reclamation area proposed at the 25 May meeting has been included in the List of Sites for Sale by Application.

5. A LegCo case conference was held on 8 August 2011 to discuss matters related to access to Peng Chau GOPC, during which the proposal for installation of an elevator was also discussed. Representatives of HA, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB), the Geotechnical Engineering Office, the Transport Department (TD), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the District Lands Office (Islands) (DLO/Is) and the Fire Services Department (FSD) were present. TD's representative

said that the proposal of installing an elevator for access to the Peng Chau GOPC had been included in the list of candidate projects for provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems. TD would assess the proposal in accordance with the established criteria to determine its merits and relative priorities for conducting feasibility studies, taking into account the allocation of resources. LWB also indicated that they in-principle supported any feasible suggestion that could improve barrier-free access to the Peng Chau GOPC and had conveyed the case concerned to the Food and Health Bureau. The meeting agreed that IsDO would arrange a site visit to Peng Chau on 9 September 2011 for representatives of HA, HKPF, Hongkong Post, District Lands Office (Islands), the Government Property Agency, the Architectural Services Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and FSD to follow up on the proposal for relocating the Peng Chau GOPC.

6. A site visit was conducted on 9 September and attendees noted that: (i) the proposal for relocation of hawker stalls from ground floor the second floor of the Peng Chau Municipal Services Building was raised in the LegCo case conference held on 8 August with a view to utilising the vacated ground floor for relocation of the Peng Chau GOPC; and (ii) HKPF was preliminarily considering to retain the report room of the Peng Chau Police Post. In this connection, another option was to move the existing post office in the Peng Chau Government Offices Building to the adjacent Municipal Services Building, so that more space would become available in the former for relocation of the Peng Chau GOPC, feasibility of which depended on a further site visit to be conducted by HA's surveyors.

7. With regard to proposal (i), FEHD had consulted the Peng Chau Market Management Consultation Committee and hawkers concerned, and learnt that all committee members and hawkers objected to the proposal. For proposal (ii), Hongkong Post said that as long as the postal services of Peng Chau would not be affected, relocating Peng Chau Post Office to a nearby location that meets its daily operational need and barrier-free access requirements could be explored. As the ground floor of the Peng Chau Municipal Services Building would continue to be used as a market, and that the requirement of barrier-free access could not

be met for its second floor, the Municipal Services Building at present could not be used to relocate the Peng Chau Post Office.

8. After the site visit held on 9 September, HA agreed to review whether the area of the Peng Chau Police Post located in the Peng Chau Government Offices Building at present was adequate for relocation of the clinic. HKPF stated that the cost of relocation and relevant expenditures incurred should be borne by the department responsible for swapping the locations of the Peng Chau GOPC and the Police Post in the Peng Chau Government Offices Building. On the other hand, IsDO suggested HA to study whether the vacant land outside the Peng Chau Government Offices Building could be used to relocate the Peng Chau GOPC, and whether HA could bear the costs incurred by other departments in the relocation exercise.

9. Subsequently, HA commissioned a consultancy to conduct a feasibility study for the proposal of clinic relocation. According to the findings of the consultancy study, the available area of Peng Chau Government Offices Building provided for relocation was less than 100 m², which was less than one-third of the existing area of the Peng Chau GOPC. Even though the area of the vacant land outside the Peng Chau Government Offices Building was included, the area was less than the existing area of the Peng Chau GOPC. In this connection, HA reflected that the available area of the Peng Chau Government Offices Building and the vacant land outside the building was not sufficient for relocation of the Peng Chau GOPC. Moreover, the vacant land outside the building is owned by the Government, the allocation of the Government's land to HA should follow the established mechanism. The land use should be confirmed by the Planning Department, followed by seeking approval from the District Lands Conference through the Lands Department.

10. On 12 January, 2012, IsDO as well as representatives of the relevant Government departments and HA had a meeting with LegCo member and representatives of the local community who were concerned about the matter, so as to report the latest progress to them. At the meeting, various issues relating to the relocation of the Peng Chau GOPC to the Peng Chau Government Offices Building, including whether HA

could bear the cost of relocation, whether the area of the Peng Chau Government Offices Building was enough for relocation, and whether HA could improve access facilities of the Peng Chau GOPC based on the principle of providing barrier-free access facilities, were discussed.

11. The representative of HA pointed out that HA commissioned a consultancy to conduct a feasibility study for the proposal of clinic relocation. According to the findings of the consultancy study, the available area of the Peng Chau Government Offices Building and the vacant land outside the building was not sufficient for relocation of the Peng Chau GOPC. In this connection, HA had reservation about the proposal for relocating the Peng Chau GOPC to the Peng Chau Government Offices Building. It was pointed out at the meeting that HA should consider using the second floor of the Peng Chau Government Offices Building in addition to the ground floor for relocation of the Peng Chau GOPC. However, HA stated that such proposal would not be considered for the time being since separating the GOPC into two floors would affect clinic operation and cause inconvenience to the patients. As regards whether HA could consider improving access facilities based on the principle of providing barrier-free access facilities, HA has rolled out the barrier free access enhancement works for GOPCs gradually. In regard to the inclusion of the proposal of installing an elevator for access to the Peng Chau GOPC in the list of provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems by TD, HA welcomes the proposal of installing an elevator for access to the Peng Chau GOPC. The proposal will solve the long-standing problem for access to the Peng Chau GOPC with relatively less impact to other Government departments. HA will render its support and cooperate with the relevant Government departments.

Way Forward

12. A Working Group has been set up under the Islands District Council to follow up on the accessibility issue of the Peng Chau GOPC and consider possible solutions. At the first meeting of the Working Group held on 11 April 2012, members agreed to have a site visit to the Peng Chau GOPC and the Police Post in the Peng Chau Government Offices Building in order to further understand the actual situation. The

relevant Government departments and HA will continue to explore possible solutions and liaise with district personalities concerned.

Islands District Office

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