

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)43/13-14

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Ref : CB2/HS/1/12

Subcommittee on Poverty

**Minutes of the fourth meeting
held on Thursday, 28 February 2013, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon CHAN Kin-por, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon Charles Peter MOK
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Hon TANG Ka-piu

Members absent : Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon WONG Yuk-man

Member attending : Hon WU Chi-wai, MH

**Public Officers : Item II
attending**

Mr Tony LIU
Assistant Director of Housing (Estate Management) 3
Housing Department

Mr CHOW Wing-hang
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 4

**Clerk in : Mr Colin CHUI
attendance** Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

**Staff in : Ms Catherina YU
attendance** Senior Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

Action

The Subcommittee deliberated (index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).

I. Subjects to be discussed by the Subcommittee
[LC Paper No. CB(2)674/12-13(01)]

2. Members agreed on the following subjects to be discussed at its meetings in March, April and May 2013 –

Meeting of 25 March 2013

- (a) relationship between housing and poverty;
- (b) support for disadvantaged groups such as persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, new-arrivals and single-parent families; and
- (c) proposal to conduct an overseas duty visit to study poverty alleviation measures.

Action

Meeting of 29 April 2013

- (a) relationship between education and poverty; and
- (b) the draft report of the Subcommittee on poverty line.

Meeting of 20 May 2013

- (a) ways to improve the poverty situation through information technology; and
- (b) the draft report of the Subcommittee on elderly in poverty.

Meeting of 21 May 2013

Relationship between the public's health condition and poverty. Deputations should be invited to give views on the subject matter.

II. Relationship between housing and poverty

[LC Paper No. CB(2)674/12-13(02)]

3. The Subcommittee requested the Administration to provide written response to the following –

- (a) whether the Administration would reduce the comprehensive social security allowance and rent allowance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme payable to CSSA households whose family members were receiving loan from the Student Financial Assistance Agency and, if so, the justifications;
- (b) the projection of the financial impact on the Government's expenditure should the Administration top up the rental difference between the rent allowance payable to and the actual rental paid by rent allowance recipients;
- (c) the projection of the financial impact on the Government's expenditure should the Administration provide rent allowance, which was at the same rate as the rent allowance under CSSA, to the public rental housing ("PRH") applicants who had been put on the Waiting List for more than three years;
- (d) a comparison of the median rental payable by PRH tenants and private housing tenants who were at the same median income level; and

Action

- (e) detailed justifications for not implementing rental control.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's responses were issued to members vide LC Paper Nos. CB(2)823/12-13(01) and (02) on 22 March 2013.)

III. Any other business

- 4. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:47 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
11 October 2013

**Proceedings of the fourth meeting of the
Subcommittee on Poverty
on Thursday, 28 February 2013, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
<i>Agenda item I – Subjects to be discussed by the Subcommittee</i>			
000215 - 000409	Chairman	Opening remarks	
000410 - 002307	Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che Dr KWOK Ka-ki Miss CHAN Yuen-han	Having regard to the subjects discussed by the Commission on Poverty ("CoP") and its Task Forces and the progress of the discussions, members agreed on the subjects to be discussed at the Subcommittee meetings in March, April and May 2013. Given a large number of items to be discussed by the Subcommittee, members agreed that an additional meeting should be held before June 2013.	
<i>Agenda item II – Relationship between housing and poverty</i>			
002308 - 003239	Chairman Administration	Briefing by the Administration on housing assistance for persons with low-income.	
003240 - 003811	Chairman Dr KWOK Ka-ki Administration	Dr KWOK Ka-ki's view that the Government's land and housing policies had created poverty. Dr KWOK's enquiry on how the Administration would address the housing needs of waiting list ("WL") applicants for public rental housing ("PRH") who were suffering from high private housing rental. The Administration's response that – (a) the maximum levels of the rent allowance ("MRA") would be adjusted annually according to the movement of the Consumer Price Index ("CPI") (A) rent index for private housing which would also cover the rental movement of the non-Comprehensive Social Security Allowance ("CSSA") households with relatively low expenditure. MRA was last adjusted by 7.8% in February 2013; and (b) the Community Care Fund ("CCF") would roll out relief measures to help CSSA recipients living in private housing who were paying a rent which had exceeded MRA. Its	

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		<p>"Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing paying rents that exceed the maximum allowance under CSSA" programme was expected to benefit around 17 000 households.</p> <p>Dr KWOK's view that the rate of increase in MRA was unable to catch up with the rapidly rising rental in private housing and one-off relief measures could not alleviate the financial burden of the CSSA households concerned.</p>	
003812 - 004548	Chairman Miss CHAN Yuen-han Administration	<p>Miss CHAN Yuen-han's view that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) rent allowance should be provided for those who had been placed on the WL for PRH for more than three years; and (b) under the Housing Authority ("HA")'s Well-off Tenants Policies, all salaries earned by grown-up children of the tenants would be counted towards household income. Hence, households with adult offsprings often became well-off tenants and were required to pay double rent. Because of this, the grown-up children would move out, resulting in many singleton elders. The Administration should address this problem. <p>The Administration's response that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) CCF would continue to launch assistance programmes to provide subsidy for low-income persons who were inadequately housed as well as for elderly tenants who were living in private housing; and (b) in order to strengthen the family-based support network, HA had enhanced its Addition Policy in 2007 with a package of initiatives to foster harmonious families. Under the Harmonious Families Addition Policy, an adult child (and his/her family members) of an elderly tenant could be added into his/her PRH tenancy even if the household income exceeded the WL income limit subject to certain criteria. 	
004549 - 005348	Chairman Mr LEE Cheuk-yan Administration	<p>Mr LEE Cheuk-yan's view that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the Administration should consider allowing newly arrived single mothers whose children 	

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		<p>were Hong Kong residents but were under the age of 18 to apply for PRH although they did not meet the seven-year residence requirement so as to ease their rental burden; and</p> <p>(b) the Administration should not average out the rental payable by all the CSSA households living in private housing when adjusting MRA as rental increase might not take place at the time the survey was conducted. Hence, it could not reflect the actual situation of those CSSA households which were suffering from high rental increase. The survey should only cover the CSSA households who were affected by rental increase.</p> <p>The Administration's response that the existing mechanism was objective and had appropriately reflected the rental movements of private housing.</p>	
005349 - 010114	Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG Administration	<p>Dr Fernando CHEUNG's view that –</p> <p>(a) the existing adjustment mechanism was a failure as there were still around 40% of CSSA households paying actual rental higher than MRA after the adjustment of MRA by 7.8%; and</p> <p>(b) the Administration should reinstate the policy adopted in 1996 under which MRA was determined by making reference to the actual rent paid by 90% of the CSSA households living in private housing.</p> <p>The Administration's response that increasing the rent allowance in accordance with the actual rent paid by CSSA households might induce an increase in the rentals for private housing. The Administration should ensure the prudent use of public money to help those in need. The imposition of rental control might affect the supply of rental flats.</p> <p>At the request of Dr CHEUNG, the Administration undertook to provide information on whether it would reduce CSSA and rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme payable to CSSA households whose family members were receiving loan from the Student Financial Assistance Agency ("SFAA") and, if so, the justifications.</p>	Admin (paragraph 3 of the minutes)

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010115 - 010816	Chairman Mr TANG Ka-piu Administration	<p>Mr TANG Ka-piu's view that the Administration should assess the pressure on the demand for PRH brought about by the Well-off Tenants Policies and Addition Policy.</p> <p>The Administration's response that –</p> <p>(a) the Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS") Steering Committee would study, inter alia, the Well-off Tenants Policies; and</p> <p>(b) the Harmonious Families Housing Schemes had been relaxed to allow a child who was over 18 of an elderly PRH tenant to apply for addition into the tenancy with his/her family members subject to certain criteria.</p> <p>At Mr TANG's request, the Administration undertook to provide information on the projection of the financial impact on the Government's expenditure should it –</p> <p>(a) top up the rental difference between the rent allowance payable to and the actual rental paid by rent allowance recipients; and</p> <p>(b) provide rent allowance, which was at the same rate as the rent allowance under CSSA, for PRH applicants who had been put on the WL for more than three years.</p>	Admin (paragraph 3 of the minutes)
010817 - 011406	Chairman Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che Administration	<p>Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che's expression of concern that CSSA payable to CSSA recipients who were receiving loans from SFAA would be reduced.</p> <p>Mr CHEUNG's view that in addition to the Rent Allowance for Elderly Scheme, the Administration should consider introducing similar scheme to cover PRH applicants who had been placed on WL for more than three years.</p> <p>The Administration's response that the provision of rent allowance for applicants on WL required careful study. It would continue its prevailing policy to assist low-income families to meet their housing needs mainly through the provision of PRH.</p>	
011407 - 012017	Chairman Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung Administration	<p>Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's view that the imposition of rent control did not necessarily affect the supply of rental flats and his request for the Administration to provide detailed justifications for not implementing rental control.</p> <p>In response to Mr LEUNG's concern about the</p>	Admin (paragraph 3 of the minutes)

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		policies to help young low-income earners who were single to meet their demand for PRH, the Administration said that the LTHS Steering Committee would study the relevant issue in detail.	
012018 - 012717	Chairman Mr LEUNG Che-cheung Administration	<p>Mr LEUNG Che-cheung's view that the Administration should adopt measures to address the housing needs of those working poor and CSSA recipients who were ineligible for applying PRH.</p> <p>In response to Mr LEUNG's enquiry on the number of WL applicants who did not meet the residence requirement for allocation of PRH, the Administration advised that there were about 3 000 to 4 000 such cases.</p>	
012718 - 013432	Chairman Administration	<p>The Chairman's view that if the provision of PRH was effective in alleviating poverty, the Government should meet the housing needs of the poor by building more PRH. Alternatively, an allowance which was equivalent to the amount of rental subsidy for PRH should be provided for those who were living below the poverty line set by CoP for renting private housing. The Administration was requested to relay the Chairman's view to CoP.</p> <p>At the request of the Chairman, the Administration undertook to provide a comparison of the median rental payable by PRH tenants and private housing tenants who were at the same median income level.</p>	Admin (paragraph 3 of the minutes)
013433 - 014118	Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG Administration	<p>View of the Chairman and Dr Fernando CHEUNG that the existing MRA adjustment mechanism failed to reflect the actual situation and those CSSA households not being affected by rental increase should be excluded from the calculation of MRA. Their call for the Administration to review the MRA adjustment mechanism.</p> <p>Dr Fernando CHEUNG's view that –</p> <p>(a) the Administration should seriously consider exempting needy single families which were eligible for application of PRH from the residence requirement; and</p> <p>(b) the Administration should consider regularizing the CCF's assistance programmes for the low-income earners who were inadequately housed and for CSSA</p>	

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		<p>households living in private housing and paying a rent which exceeded MRA. Subsidies under these assistance programmes should be provided for eligible persons on a quarterly or half-yearly basis. The Administration should submit its proposal in this regard before June 2013. To solve the problem at root, the Administration should determine MRA by making reference to the actual rent paid by 90% of the CSSA households living in private housing.</p> <p>The Administration's response that the relevant government departments would take into account members' views when considering new measures under the three assistance programmes launched by CCF namely, "Subsidy for low-income elderly tenants in private housing"; "Subsidy for CSSA recipients living in private housing paying rents which exceed the maximum rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme"; and "Subsidy for low-income persons who are inadequately housed".</p>	
014119 - 014732	Chairman Administration	<p>The Chairman's suggestion that the Administration should consider allowing WL applicants for PRH who would be allocated PRH flats within two to three years to reside temporarily in vacant PRH or private housing flats which were earmarked for redevelopment by the Government, Urban Renewal Authority, Hong Kong Housing Society and private developers. Allowance should be provided for them to rent these non-public vacant flats.</p> <p>The Administration's response that it had explored the feasibility of using flats vacated for redevelopment as a temporary measure to alleviate the shortage of PRH. Given that the redevelopment timetable might be affected by the move-out schedules of tenants, it had to give further thoughts to this option. It would continue to explore ways with a view to reducing the waiting time for PRH.</p>	
014733 - 015347	Chairman Dr Fernando CHEUNG Administration	<p>Dr Fernando CHEUNG's view and concern that –</p> <p>(a) the Administration should take into account the mobility difficulties of some elderly or disabled PRH applicants and allocate a flat which was conveniently accessible to them; and</p> <p>(b) lifts were not installed in every storey in some old PRH blocks. Flats of PRH estates without sufficient barrier-free access should</p>	

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		<p>not be allocated to persons with mobility difficulties.</p> <p>The Administration's response that –</p> <p>(a) it would meet PRH applicants to understand their special needs before flat allocation. Applicants would be invited to take a look at the flats before deciding whether to accept the flats; and</p> <p>(b) renovation works would be carried out in PRH estates which were aged 30 years or above. Lifts would be installed in every storey during the renovation works unless there were technical constraints. Flats which could not be accessed by lift would not be allocated to persons with disabilities. Transfer of flats for tenants with mobility difficulties would be considered upon request.</p>	
015348 - 015920	Chairman Miss CHAN Yuen-han Administration	<p>Miss CHAN Yuen-han's view that the Administration should improve the barrier-free facilities in PRH estates.</p> <p>Miss CHAN's reiteration of the need to review the income limits under the Well-off Tenants Policies so that grown-up children could live with their elderly parents.</p> <p>The Administration's response that the LTHS Steering Committee would examine the Well-off Tenants Policies in depth.</p>	
015921 - 020842	Chairman Mr WU Chi-wai Administration	<p>Mr WU Chi-wai's concern and view that -</p> <p>(a) the tenancy of an elderly tenant would be affected if his/her children who lived with him/her did not wish to declare their income as required under the Well-off Tenants Policies; and</p> <p>(b) since family members of an elderly PRH tenant, who lived in private housing and were added into the elderly's tenancy through the Harmonious Families Addition Scheme, had already gone through income assessment as other PRH applicants, it was unfair to require them to declare income two years after they had moved to the PRH flats.</p> <p>The Administration's response that –</p> <p>(a) tenants and their family members could now declare their income on separate declaration</p>	

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		forms to protect their personal data; and (b) declaration of income by tenants was necessary as the level of rent payable would depend on the household income.	
020843 - 021639	Chairman Miss CHAN Yuen-han Mr WU Chi-wai Administration	Miss CHAN Yuen-han's view that the Administration should take steps to address the long waiting time for PRH such as providing rent allowance for those who had been waiting for PRH for several years or arranging them to live in temporary housing until they were allocated PRH flats. Mr WU Chi-wai's view that owners of the flats in the then Kowloon Wall City, who had genuine financial hardship, should also be eligible for the Ex-owners of Subsidised Home Ownership Schemes to apply for PRH. The Administration undertook to relay Mr WU's view to the LTHS Steering Committee for consideration. The Chairman's view that the Administration could make reference to the Netherlands which used containers in open areas as temporary housing. The Administration's response that using containers as temporary lodgement could be explored, provided that technical issues such as water supply, sewage, etc. could be resolved.	
021640 - 021758	Chairman	Closing remarks	