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Panel on Welfare Services

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the special meeting on 8 July 2017**

Provision of social welfare facilities in public rental housing developments

Purpose

This paper provides an account of the discussions of the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") on the provision of social welfare facilities in public rental housing ("PRH") developments.

Background

2. According to the Administration, in light of community demand for welfare services, it has all along been adopting a multi-pronged approach to increase the provision of social welfare facilities. The Social Welfare Department ("SWD") has been exploring various means to secure suitable accommodation to cater for ongoing welfare service needs. Relevant government departments have been maintaining close communication to explore the possibility of reserving suitable sites and premises in new housing developments and redevelopments, including PRH development projects, for setting up welfare facilities.

3. Under the existing mechanism, when a new development area or site is identified as having potential for PRH development, the Planning Department ("PlanD") or the Housing Department ("HD") will collaborate with the relevant departments (including SWD) and organizations, and consult the relevant District Council on planning for the provision of community facilities in the PRH project concerned. SWD would take into account factors such as the needs of the local community and the overall demand from the welfare service

perspective as well as the advice from PlanD or HD in drawing up an optimal mix of proposed welfare facilities for a particular PRH site. In addition to identifying suitable sites or premises in new PRH development, SWD has been working in collaboration with HD to explore the conversion of appropriate vacant non-domestic premises and suitable empty bays at the ground level of domestic rental blocks in existing PRH estates for welfare uses.

Deliberations by members

Planning for provision of welfare facilities in public rental housing developments

4. Some members took the view that in formulating PRH development plans, the Administration should not focus on the supply of public housing and neglect the needs for community facilities, particularly that for residential care homes ("RCHs") for the elderly and for persons with disabilities. The Administration should not play down the provision of residential welfare facilities in PRH developments because the provision would result in a reduction in public housing supply. In view of the long waiting time for residential care services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities, some members called on the Administration to set targets for the provision of these services and allocate a specific percentage of the total area of new public housing projects for such provision.

5. The Administration advised that as the provision of different types of facilities (including community, education, welfare, etc.) in a PRH development would be constrained by allowable floor area, increasing the provision of one type of facility would result in a reduction in the provision of the others. SWD and HD would collaborate with the relevant government departments to plan for the provision of PRH flats and community facilities in a comprehensive manner. If welfare facilities were proposed and were preliminarily assessed as feasible, the initial proposals would be included in the planning briefs of the PRH developments concerned. A number of such proposals had already been included in the planning briefs.

6. Some members called on the Administration to consider making use of lower floors of PRH domestic blocks, vacant domestic and non-domestic units in PRH estates for provision of RCHs, integrated community centres for mental wellness, community district support centres for persons with disabilities, etc. Some empty bays in PRH estates should also be deployed for the provision of welfare facilities.

7. According to the Administration, welfare facilities would be provided on lower floors of PRH blocks in some new PRH estates where feasible. Feasibility studies would be conducted if there were proposals for converting suitable empty bays at the ground level of domestic rental blocks in existing PRH estates into welfare premises. Restrictions on building height, headroom, corridor width, lift facilities, parking spaces, etc. for RCHs would impose technical difficulties on converting domestic units into RCHs. Given that the conversion would imply a reduction in the number of rental units and result in an adverse impact on public housing supply, the Administration should also consider views of the local community (including those of both stakeholders and domestic residents) on the proposal to convert existing PRH units into RCHs.

8. Given that the provision of welfare facilities in PRH developments was not a standard arrangement, some members opined that the Administration should take into account the needs of local community for welfare services in formulating PRH development plans. Concrete criteria and procedures should be drawn up at the planning stage for determining the types of facilities to be included in PRH developments and estimating the scale of such facilities.

9. The Administration advised that it had strived to identify suitable sites for welfare facilities. In 2015-2016, construction works were ongoing or under planning for 99 welfare facilities to be incorporated in 28 PRH developments. These facilities included RCHs for the elderly and persons with disabilities, integrated family service centres, integrated children and youth services centres, etc. When a development area or a site was identified as having potential for PRH development, PlanD and HD would collaborate with the government departments concerned. SWD would also examine the demand for and supply of welfare facilities in a district and explore whether the relevant site could accommodate the required facilities. The provision of welfare facilities would depend on individual projects and the needs of the community concerned.

10. To mitigate the problem of lacking suitable premises for welfare services, some members were of the view that the Administration should consider constructing taller welfare facilities blocks. The Administration advised that in new PRH developments, the provision of welfare facilities on higher floors of welfare blocks would be considered if the provision complied with the statutory requirements. In light of the acute demand for public housing, the Administration should take into account the potential adverse impact on public housing supply in considering the provision of welfare facilities in PRH developments on a case-by-case basis.

11. At its meeting on 10 April 2017, the Panel was briefed on the Administration's planning for social welfare services for newly completed PRH estates. The Administration advised that SWD would continue to explore with relevant departments the possibility of reserving sites or premises in new PRH developments for welfare uses, and plan its services for newly completed PRH estates for the provision of appropriate and comprehensive social welfare services. Notwithstanding the Administration's advice, the Panel took the view that residents moving into newly completed PRH estates had often faced shortages of various services and facilities, which was particularly the case for community care services for the elderly. The Panel passed two motions (wording of the motions in **Appendix I**) urging the Administration to, inter alia, set up an inter-departmental working group to plan and provide sufficient services and facilities to meet the residents' various basic needs before the intake of residents, ensure the availability of the services and facilities (including those provided for persons with disabilities, elderly persons, families, children and youngsters) for the district where a new PRH estate was located before the intake of residents, and provide a new PRH estate with a team of social workers for a period of five years to assist residents in adapting to the new environment and building community capital. The Administration was requested to take necessary actions on these motions.

Relevant papers

12. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix II**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
3 July 2017

Panel on Welfare Services

**Motion passed under agenda item IV on
"Estate-based social welfare services planning"
at the meeting on 10 April 2017**

Given that currently the existing social welfare facilities in various districts are already in acute shortage, which is particularly the case for various types of community care services for the elderly, this Panel proposes in this regard that:

1. a request be made for an expeditious review of the resources and staffing establishment for various types of existing community care services, and consultation should be conducted in this regard with the public across the 18 districts and the trade;
2. the Government be requested to set up an inter-departmental working group to make available space reserved for community care and residential care facilities in the planning of newly built housing estates; and
3. the relevant government departments be requested to review and revise the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, so as to add a provision requiring that subsidized community care facilities and residential care services should be increased in accordance with the elderly population in the district, with the primary focus on community care services.

Moved by : Dr Hon LAU Siu-lai

Panel on Welfare Services

Motion passed under agenda item IV on "Estate-based social welfare services planning" at the meeting on 10 April 2017

Given that over the years, residents moving into newly completed public housing estates have often acted as pioneers and faced shortages of various social welfare, education, health care, transport, employment and shopping facilities and services, this Panel proposes that:

1. a team of social workers serving new public housing estates be established for a period of five years to assist the residents in adapting to the new environment and building community capital;
2. the services and facilities for the district, including those provided for young children, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, families, children and youngsters, should be made available before the intake of residents; and
3. the Government should, before the intake of residents of a new housing estate, set up an inter-departmental working group to plan and provide sufficient services to meet the residents' basic needs for social welfare, transport, education, employment, health care and shopping, etc.

Moved by : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung

**Relevant papers on provision of social welfare facilities in
public rental housing developments**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Welfare Services	12 May 2014 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	11 May 2015 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	10 April 2017 (Item IV)	Agenda

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