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Panel on Welfare Services

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 11 June 2018**

Provision of social welfare facilities in public rental housing developments

Purpose

This paper provides an account of past discussions of the Council and its committees on the provision of social welfare facilities in public rental housing ("PRH") developments.

Background

2. According to the Administration, in the 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 government 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 developments, 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 PRH projects for such provision. To ensure that welfare facilities for elderly persons and persons with disabilities would be provided in PRH estates, the Administration should include in the planning briefs the provision of such facilities in new PRH developments.

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 in 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. Taking the view that the planning standards for welfare facilities stipulated in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPSG") failed to address the growing and changing needs of the public for welfare services, some Members urged the Administration to plan ahead so that welfare services would be available before intake of PRH residents. A range of dedicated services should also be provided for specific target groups, e.g. single parents, divorced parents, new-arrivals and ethnic minorities in new PRH estates. Some other Members expressed concern about the non-provision of welfare services for children aged below three and persons with disabilities in new PRH estates. These Members called on the Administration to review the planning standards set out in HKPSG in order to provide sufficient services to meet the residents' needs for child care services, health care services and services for persons with disabilities. The Administration should also include in HKPSG the minimum threshold for provision of social welfare facilities in a PRH estate.

12. According to the Administration, HD would estimate the population in accordance with the design of a PRH estate and discuss with SWD the planning for the provision of welfare facilities at an early stage. In general, HD would take into consideration the planning standards under HKPSG and a host of relevant factors in planning for the provision of such facilities to cater for the service needs of the new population as well as the community at large. One of the factors was the scale of the PRH development and the floor area available for the provision of welfare facilities as against other needs. It was therefore not desirable to impose a minimum threshold for the provision of social welfare facilities in a PRH estate. The Administration considered that the existing planning mechanism could better allow it to provide a suitable mix of social welfare facilities in a new PRH development to flexibly cater for the service needs of the new population as well as the community at large. It would keep in view whether and when it would be necessary to review the planning standards under HKPSG. In this connection, the Elderly Services Programme Plan had recommended reinstating the population-based planning ratios for elderly services in HKPSG. The Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") and SWD would discuss with the Development Bureau and PlanD to consider how to implement the recommendation.

13. The Administration further advised that in response to the community demand for child care centre service for children aged below three, the Administration would set up a 92-place child care centre in Shun Lee Estate in Kwun Tong and a 56-place child care centre in Wah Ming Estate in Fanling in 2018. Besides, the Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities

provided a package of home-based support services to meet the personal care, nursing care and rehabilitation training needs of persons with intellectual/physical disabilities. Services provided included home visits conducted by occupational therapists and physiotherapists. The Administration would take into account the demand for community support services for persons with disabilities in planning for welfare facilities in new PRH developments.

14. At its meeting on 10 April 2017, the Panel on Welfare Services ("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 government 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. The Panel, however, 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.

15. The Panel conducted a visit to On Tai Estate and On Tat Estate in Kwun Tong on 8 May 2018 to understand the social welfare services to residents of new PRH estates. The Panel also visited two non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") each of which received funding from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust ("HKJCCT") for launching a three-year community support programme in On Tai Estate and On Tat Estate respectively. These programmes aimed at providing residents of these two PRH estates with a number of support services to facilitate their adaptation to the new environment and integration into the community, such as assisting them in inspecting the flats allocated to them, moving into the new flats upon intake and applying for welfare services. In this connection, a written question was asked at the Council meeting of 23 May 2018 on, inter alia, whether the Government had assessed the community support services needed by the families moving into new PRH estates, whether it would increase the funding for the relevant

government departments to provide such families with appropriate assistance, whether there were other NGOs that were currently providing support services for residents of newly completed PRH estates, and whether the Government had subsidized the operation of such NGOs.

16. According to the Administration, it had always been concerned about the needs of residents of new PRH estates. SWD would provide suitable support services to assist residents in adapting to the new living environment at the early stage of resident intake of individual newly completed PRH developments. The District Social Welfare Offices ("DSWOs") of SWD assessed, on an ongoing basis, the needs for welfare services at district level, having regard to the population growth and demographic changes in their respective districts. Through collaboration with the government departments, NGOs and stakeholders concerned, DSWOs would deploy community resources to plan for appropriate support services and identify, at an early stage, residents with service needs for referral to relevant services. Also, where there were newly completed PRH estates, the Integrated Family Service Centres and/or Integrated Services Centres operated by SWD or subvented NGOs located within their relevant service boundaries would collaborate with other government departments/district organizations in providing services, including the neighbourhood network building projects funded by the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund ("CIIF") under LWB, or by HKJCCT, to facilitate the new residents and families to integrate into the community as soon as possible. Up to March 2018, CIIF had approved a total of 21 projects, operated by 19 NGOs in 15 new PRH estates, to support the residents and help them build mutual help networks. Besides, the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HKHA") had been providing suitable non-domestic premises not yet in use, including Mutual Aid Committee offices, to the NGOs concerned as temporary work bases in individual newly completed public housing developments at the initial stage of resident intakes, for the provision of outreaching support services to assist residents in adapting to the new living environment. To this end, HKHA would enter into short-term temporary permits with NGOs nominated by SWD. The fee for the premises was at the same level as the concessionary rent for the HKHA's welfare facility premises.

Timely provision of welfare services and facilities in newly completed public rental housing estates

17. Noting that the Administration aimed to enable operating agencies of social welfare facilities in new PRH estates to commence welfare services within seven months after the issue of the occupation permits, some Members called on the Administration to shorten as far as possible the time for completion of the necessary procedures, so that such services and facilities

would be ready at the time of intake. The fitting-out works for welfare facilities should be carried out in tandem with the construction of PRH blocks.

18. The Administration advised that the fitting-out works for welfare facilities could only be carried out by the operating agencies after the occupation permits were issued. These works should comply with the relevant legislation and should be approved by relevant government departments. The time required for completing the necessary procedures would vary from project to project. The Independent Checking Unit under the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) would vet operating agencies' applications for carrying out the fitting-out works upon receipt. It was expected that with the advancement of the necessary preparatory work, the operating agencies would commence the welfare services within seven months after the issue of the occupation permits at the latest. An operating agency had to be identified to carry out the fitting-out works and provide the service concerned at least several years earlier than the existing practice if the fitting-out works for welfare facilities were to be carried out in tandem with the construction of PRH blocks. However, such arrangement would not be feasible as fitting-out works for welfare facilities in PRH estates had to meet the latest operational and service design for the specific welfare facilities.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 June 2018

Panel on Welfare Services

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

(Translation)

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*

* According to the Judgment of the Court of First Instance of the High Court on 14 July 2017, LEUNG Kwok-hung, Nathan LAW Kwun-chung, YIU Chung-yim and LAU Siu-lai have been disqualified from assuming the office of a member of the Legislative Council, and have vacated the same since 12 October 2016, and are not entitled to act as a member of the Legislative Council.

Panel on Welfare Services

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

(Translation)

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 Minutes
Panel on Welfare Services	8 July 2017 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	23 May 2018	Written question (no. 18) on provision of community support services for residents of new public rental housing estates