

**For Information on
20 May 2019**

Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

**The Hong Kong Society for the Blind
Redevelopment of Factory for the Blind in To Kwa Wan**

Purpose

Upon the request of this Panel, this paper briefs Members on the redevelopment project as proposed by the Hong Kong Society for the Blind (HKSB) submitted under the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (Special Site Scheme) to redevelop its site of the Factory for the Blind (the Factory) at 19 Mok Cheong Street, To Kwa Wan (the subject site).

Background

2. HKSB set up a factory at the subject site in 1963 with the objective of providing employment opportunities for persons with visual impairment. There was employer-employee relationship between HKSB and the workers of the Factory. Workers with other types of disabilities were engaged to take up tasks which could not be handled entirely by workers with visual impairment. According to the information provided by HKSB, upon establishment of the Factory, there were four production lines, namely sewing, paper-box, woodwork and filing tag. Following the socio-economic changes in Hong Kong, the Factory was converted into a service unit comprising a sheltered workshop and a factory section in 1996. Currently, the subject site is occupied by a 3-storey building with an area of 2 044m², accommodating the Factory (i.e. the sheltered workshop and the factory section) and the Bradbury Care and Attention Home for the Aged Blind (C&A/AB). As at 31 March 2019, the Factory had 146 trainees of the sheltered workshop and 55 workers of the factory section (about 10 % of the service users were persons with visual impairment) while there were 52 service users in the C&A/AB.

Redevelopment Project of HKSB

3. With a view to providing additional types and places of

rehabilitation services, improving the work environment and equipment, enhancing training facilities and workshops for vocational rehabilitation services, as well as providing workers with work environment and equipment meeting service demand, HKSB submitted an application for funding support under the Special Site Scheme of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to redevelop the subject site in 2013. As regards vocational rehabilitation and employment support for persons with disabilities, according to the information on their application, HKSB aimed to re-provision the existing 210 training places/ posts of the sheltered workshop/ factory section of the Factory and to set up a new Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centre with 100 places upon completion of the redevelopment project. Proposed day and residential services at the new complex is provided at **Annex**.

4. HKSB completed the Technical Feasibility Study (TFS) in the first quarter of 2019 and passed the preliminary findings to Government departments concerned for further consideration. It is preliminarily estimated that the TFS report will be completed in the third quarter of 2019. HKSB will then submit an application to the Lotteries Fund for detailed design of the premises and finalise the project cost and the implementation schedule. According to the estimation of HKSB, the demolition works will tentatively commence in 2022 with the expected completion of the new complex in 2025.

Proposed Decanting Arrangement by HKSB

5. HKSB originally proposed to temporarily decant the C&A/AB and the Factory (i.e. the sheltered workshop and the factory section) to their Jockey Club Tuen Mun Care and Attention Home for the Aged Blind (JCTM C&A/AB) located at No. 8, Tsing Fuk Lane, Tuen Mun in order to continue the operation of services concerned. HKSB also planned to provide free transport at different pick-up points in urban area to facilitate service users to commute to and from JCTM C&A/AB. HKSB recently noted concerns from workers/ trainees of the Factory and their family members as well as other stakeholders about the decanting arrangement. Having considered the stakeholders' concerns in March this year, the Government has rendered assistance to HKSB in the search for a suitable decanting site in urban area. Subsequently, the Government has identified a to-be-vacated school premises in Kwun Tong District and HKSB has given preliminary indication that the school site concerned should be suitable as a decanting site for the Factory. Detailed arrangement and study on the feasibility of the decanting option are underway and yet to be confirmed. SWD has informed HKSB that they may apply for the Lotteries Fund to cover the works, furniture and equipment

for the decanting site and relocation costs, etc.

6. In addition, HKSB reinstated that the operation of most of the trades of the sheltered workshop and the factory section would be maintained and the present employer-employee relationship with workers of the factory section would be retained during the redevelopment period and after completion of the redevelopment project.

Consultation with Stakeholders by HKSB

7. We understand that HKSB has started briefing service users and their family members on the redevelopment project and relevant arrangements through various channels since October 2018. Apart from meeting with service users and their family members, HKSB collected their views and addressed their concerns through individual interviews, telephone and mail. HKSB advised that, with a view to strengthening communication with service users and their family members, they arranged a meeting on 17 April 2019 to brief services users, their family members and other stakeholders further on the progress and arrangement of the redevelopment project. Representatives of SWD also attended the meeting and provided their advice. HKSB will set up a communication platform involving different stakeholders to facilitate mutual communication on the arrangement of the redevelopment project.

8. As regards the decanting site of the Factory, SWD would assist HKSB in consulting local bodies concerned in due course, with a view to hearing their concerns about the services, site location and redevelopment project as well as addressing their views.

Advice Sought

9. Members are invited to note the information in this paper.

Social Welfare Department
May 2019

Annex

Day and residential services to be provided at the new complex at 19 Mok Cheong Street, To Kwa Wan are as follows:

Type of Services	No. of New Places	No. of Reprovided Places
Hostel for Severely Mentally Handicapped Persons	150	--
Hostel for Moderately Mentally Handicapped Persons	50	--
Care and Attention Home for the Aged Blind	48	52
Day Activity Centre	150	-