

Information Paper for Legislative Panel on Home Affairs Meeting on 8 February 1999

Development of Community Halls

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on community hall development since the 1989 moratorium, including the current policy on community hall development, as well as the current utilization of community centre facilities.

Background

2. As a result of the low utilization rate of community centres/halls, a moratorium was imposed in 1989 on the "automatic" construction of new community centres/halls based solely on population, pending a review of the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) for community halls. Planning Department completed the review in 1996 and a public consultation exercise was conducted in late 1996.
3. Subsequently, the Administration fine-tuned the HKPSG which were eventually finalized in 1998. Home Affairs Department, in conjunction with Planning Department, have briefed the 18 Provisional District Boards on the outcome, and Planning Department is now preparing the formal promulgation of the revised HKPSG for community halls (please see the Appendix).

Current Policy

4. Under the 1989 version of the HKPSG, a community centre meant a community hall and a welfare block of fixed floor area. There was a population specification for the provision of community centre facilities, with a District Community Centre (DCC), Area Community Centre (ACC) and Neighbourhood Community Centre (NCC) being provided according to various population threshold levels.
5. Under the revised HKPSG for community halls, the term "community hall" will be used instead of community centre. A community hall will usually have a standardized size of 1260m² (in Gross Floor Area). Future community halls will usually form part of an integrated development, instead of being stand-alone developments. In addition, future community halls will no longer necessarily be co-located with welfare services, although welfare services/facilities would often be one of the main joint users in an integrated development.
6. The provision of future community halls will be judged on a "need basis" on individual merits, taking into account the following factors:-
 - i. population size;
 - ii. area characteristics and community aspirations;
 - iii. location of the area concerned;
 - iv. availability of existing community halls or similar facilities nearby;
 - v. the usage rates of nearby community halls;
 - vi. accessibility of nearby community halls to the subject area; and

vii. availability of alternative accommodation for community activities and their ease of access.

7. The Director of Home Affairs, in consultation with the District Officers, will assess the need for the provision of community halls. Views and aspirations of the local community will be taken into account.

Future Provision of Community Halls

8. In view of the revision of the HKPSG for community halls, Home Affairs Department has undertaken a review of the 68 reserved community hall sites to assess the projected needs for new community halls. Where no urgent or special need for a community hall is identified, the site will be released for other purposes, such as schools or public housing. Where genuine need is identified, concrete development proposals would be drawn up either for the reserved site with the community hall as the basic component and other facilities incorporated into the development; or with a community hall being incorporated into an integrated development at a nearby area, releasing the original community hall site.

9. So far, Home Affairs Department has obtained the Finance Committee's funding approval for three community hall projects in Sai Ying Pun, Mong Kok, and Happy Valley. Twelve other joint development projects have been drawn up and are awaiting funding approval. Home Affairs Department is working closely with other Departments to finalize concrete proposals for seven further projects.

Utilization of Existing Community Centres/Halls

10. A review of the utilization of the 77 existing community halls (42 community centres and 35 community halls) has led to the conclusion that the majority still serve genuine local needs and should be retained. Most community centres/halls have high utilization rates, especially at weekends and evenings. District Officers will continue to work with the local communities to improve utilization of the community centres/halls and encourage active local use particularly during the weekdays.

11. At the same time, Home Affairs Department is exploring the possibility of redeveloping a small number of community centres/halls which have good redevelopment potential. In some instances, redeveloping the community centre/hall and adjoining government buildings in one combined integrated development will release more land for other priority uses and better utilize our scarce land resources.

12. In parallel with Housing Department's estate redevelopment schemes, Home Affairs Department is assessing the provision of community and welfare facilities to serve the housing estate residents and the population in the vicinity. Joint developments can better serve the community and provide additional land for housing development.

Epilogue

13. Community halls provide venues and focal points for a range of community activities including civic education activities, social gatherings, training courses, celebrations, and recreational and cultural activities organized by local community organizations. The conference room within the hall is used by various local groups such as District Boards, Area Committees, Owners Corporations for meeting purposes. Community halls also serve as temporary shelters for people in need during natural disasters, emergency situations and inclement weather. As part of Home Affairs Department's mission to promote greater involvement and participation in community

building activities as well as to enhance and foster social cohesion, we believe that it is still essential to provide such community facilities. We welcome Hon. Members' constructive views on the provision, development and management of community halls.

Home Affairs Department
February 1999

LegCo Panel on Home Affairs**List of discussion items for future meetings****1. Report on the HKSAR under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)**

An outline of topics to be covered under the CAT report was issued for public consultation on 16 July 1998 which ended on 22 August 1998. The Home Affairs Bureau is co-ordinating compilation of the CAT report, which will form a discrete section of the Central People's Government's (CPG's) report for submission to the United Nations. The Panel may wish to discuss the report when it is available.

2. Reports of the HKSAR on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

The Administration published the report outline in relation to ICESCR for public consultation which ended in April 1998. The Administration has briefed the Panel on the timetable for preparing the HKSAR reports at the Panel meeting on 27 July 1998. The Administration has revised its timetable regarding HKSAR's report on ICESCR aiming at completion by early February 1999. The Panel may wish to discuss the contents of the report when available.

3. Sex Discrimination Ordinance and Disability Discrimination Ordinance

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has reported progress to the Panel at a meeting held on 27 July 1998 on its review of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance and Disability Discrimination Ordinance. The review commenced in December 1997, aiming to identify those provisions which may require amendments (including new areas warranting legislation) in the light of operational experience. EOC will make its recommendations to the Chief Executive via the Home Affairs Bureau. The Panel may wish to follow up on the recommendations of the review.

4. Review on the definitions of “hotel” and “guesthouse”

When studying the Hotel Accommodation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 1998, the Bills Committee formed to study the Bill noted the hotel industry’s request to distinguish “hotel” and “guesthouse” in the definitions, so that hotels and guesthouses may be subject to different licensing requirements. The distinction in definitions will also facilitate tourists in choosing suitable accommodation. However, different views have been expressed by deputations on a feasible definition. To address members’ concern, the Administration has undertaken to conduct a separate exercise as early as possible to review the definitions of “hotel” and “guesthouse” in consultation with the trade and relevant bureaux. The Panel may wish to follow up on the recommendations of the review.

5. Legislative and administrative measures to improve management and fire safety in private buildings

Item proposed by Hon Albert HO Chun-yan. The Panel may wish to discuss with the Administration the measures introduced to improve the management and fire safety in private buildings.

6. Work of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data

Item proposed by Hon Albert HO Chun-yan. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (Privacy Commissioner) is responsible for enforcing and promoting compliance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. The Panel may wish to be updated on the work of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

7. Long-term cultural policy

Members of the Subcommittee on long-term cultural policy will hold further discussion with the Administration when findings of the public consultation exercise on the future arts and cultural structure are available.

Revised Planning Standards and Guidelines for Community Halls

Background

1. Community halls have mainly been planned and provided as a part of community centres, each of which consists of a community hall for community activities and a separate welfare block with a fixed floor area for welfare services. Consequent on a review of the provision of accommodation for welfare services, it is considered more appropriate for the extent of floor area required for welfare services to be assessed and determined on a project by project basis. Therefore, the previous planning standards and guidelines for the provision of community centres are no longer valid. There is a need to promulgate a new set of planning standards and guidelines for the provision of community halls.

2. Whilst in future community halls will no longer be co-located with welfare services in every case, there are clear advantages for including welfare services in the development of community halls, as the clients of welfare services are one of the main users of community halls. Hence, the Director of Social Welfare (responsible for welfare facilities and Group Work Units) should be consulted, early at the project planning stage of the community halls, on the extent of welfare accommodation required for joint development with the community halls.

Responsibility for Community Halls

3. The Director of Home Affairs is responsible for the provision and management of community halls and, hence, should be consulted on all community hall proposals. The Government Property Administrator, who is tasked with ensuring optimum utilisation of sites, should also be consulted at an early stage of the planning process. Arrangements may sometimes be made for other Government departments e.g. Housing Department, to provide and/or manage community halls on behalf of the Home Affairs Department. In such cases, the client departments should also be consulted early in the planning process.

Functions of Community Halls

4. Community halls provide a focal point for local community activities undertaken by all age groups, including such activities as meetings of local community organisations; social group and civic education activities; training courses; and celebration, recreation and sport activities. They also provide temporary sheltering for people in need during natural disasters, emergency situations and inclement weather.

Provision of Community Halls

5. Community halls are provided on the basis of need, as assessed and advised by the Director of Home Affairs who will take into account the views of local community. The views of the respective District Officers should hence be sought on the need for the provision of community halls when development plans (including outline development plans, layout plans and planning briefs for comprehensive development/redevelopment) are prepared. The respective District Officers and the Government Property Administrator should also be consulted on the continued need for sites reserved on current development plans for community centres/halls.
6. When determining need, the following factors should be taken into consideration :
 - (a) population size;
 - (b) area characteristics and community aspirations;
 - (c) location of the area concerned;
 - (d) availability of existing community halls or similar facilities nearby;
 - (e) the usage rates of nearby community halls;
 - (f) accessibility of nearby community halls to subject area; and
 - (g) availability of alternative accommodations for community activities and their ease of access.
7. Where the need for a community hall is discerned, but is not up to a level as to justify a 'full-size standard-designed' facility, or a planned community hall cannot be provided in time to meet community needs, alternative accommodations for community activities should be considered. This could include specially-designed multi-purpose function rooms and selected school halls.

Floor Area/Site Requirements

8. Community halls should, as far as possible, be planned and provided as a part of integrated GIC developments in the form of joint-users buildings, or as an integral part of comprehensive developments where no suitable GIC sites are available. The Government Property Administrator is responsible for co-ordinating joint user requirements and taking the integrated development project forward in the Capital Works Programme. When it is not possible to develop integrated GIC cum community hall buildings due to such problems as the timing and priority of resources for individual GIC components, stand- alone community halls may be constructed subject to the agreement of the Property Strategy Group.
9. It should, however, be noted that as advised by the Government Property Administrator stand-alone community halls would only be approved in exceptional circumstances. Every effort should hence be made to identify joint-users for an integrated development and to resolve associated implementation issues.
10. A standard-designed community hall requires about 1,260m² of gross floor area (32m x 39.5m) and should include a multi-purpose hall for 450 persons, a stage, a stage store, male and female dressing rooms and a meeting room. If not provided elsewhere, an ancillary management office, a store room and a conference room as well as toilets should be provided.
11. Where a full-size standard-designed community hall is not required, specially-designed multi-purpose function rooms for community activities should be considered.
12. Due to the relatively large floor area required for a community hall, should there be the need it may be appropriate to reserve sites for the joint-users buildings by using community halls as the basic component, and then add on other GIC uses. The respective District Planning Officers, having regard to such factors as size of site available, types of GIC facilities, location, ease of access to population being served etc., and in consultation with concerned departments, in particular Government Property Agency, should work out the facilities to be accommodated in the joint-users buildings and the respective floor area requirements for the facilities.

Locational Factors

13. To facilitate maximum utilization, community halls should be centrally located and be easily accessible to the population they are intended to serve. Other GIC facilities to be co-located with community halls should preferably be used by the public on a day-to-day basis such as government offices, welfare facilities, clinics, etc.

Summary of Standards

Facility	Standard	Land Requirement	Area Served
Community Halls	To be determined on the basis of need, having regard to community aspirations and other relevant considerations.	1 260m ² (32m x 39.5m) floor area and, preferably, with a minimum clearance height of 7.65m for joint-users buildings; or 2,100m ² (60m x 35m) site area for stand-alone sites in exceptional circumstances.	local

BH/ac
(Amend R-CH3)

Translation

Election Rules

1. All Village Representatives (VRs) should be elected on the ‘one- person-one-vote’ principle.
2. The VRs shall hold office for four years with elections coinciding with those for their respective Rural Committees.
3. An election for the VR must be held at least one month before the current term of the VR expires.
4. Qualifications for a voter :
 - (a) *Any indigenous villager, male or female, aged 18 or above; or*
 - (b) *Any person, male or female, aged 18 or above, who is a Hong Kong permanent resident within the meaning of the Immigration Ordinance (Cap 115) whose major place of residence is the village.*
5. Qualifications for nomination as a candidate in an ‘indigenous village’ :

Any indigenous villager, male or female, aged 18 or above.
6. Qualifications for nomination as a candidate in a ‘non-indigenous village’ :

Any person, male or female, aged 18 or above, who is a qualified voter under Rule 4 above and who has ordinarily resided in Hong Kong for the 10 years immediately preceding the date of election.
7. Any qualified voter (Rule 4) can vote in only one village.

8. Any candidate (Rules 5 and 6) can stand for election in only one village.
9. A VR candidate must be nominated by five eligible voters (Rule 4) :
 - (a) For villages in which there is only one VR vacancy, after the close of the nomination period, if there are more than one eligible candidate, secret ballot voting will be conducted. The candidate winning the highest number of votes will be elected. Should there be only one eligible candidate for the VR vacancy, the candidate will be automatically elected for the uncontested seat.
 - (b) For villages in which there are more than one VR vacancy, after the close of the nomination period, if the number of eligible candidates exceeds the number of eligible candidates exceed the number of VR vacancies, secret ballot voting will be conducted. Those candidates winning the highest number of votes will be elected. Should the number of eligible candidates equal to the number of VR vacancies, the candidates will be automatically elected.
10. In the event of the death, resignation or disqualification of a VR while in office, a re-election will be conducted at the earliest possible date.
11. The term of office for any re-elected VR will expire on the same day as it will expire for the original VR.
12. A VR shall be disqualified for being elected or being nominated as a candidate or from holding office if :
 - (a) he has in Hong Kong or in any other territory or country been sentenced to death or an imprisonment term exceeding three months; or
 - (b) he is an undischarged bankrupt; or

- (c) he has been convicted of a corrupt practice or illegal practice within the meaning of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Ordinance (Cap 288) other than the illegal practice consisting of a contravention of any of the provisions of section 19(2) of that Ordinance within 10 years from the date of the election; or
- (d) there is in force a decision under the Mental Health Ordinance (Cap 136) that he is of unsound mind and incapable of managing himself and his affairs.)

13. The following election timetable should, as far as possible, be followed :

60 days prior to polling day	Posing of the provisional electoral roll in the Village Office, Office of the relevant Rural Committee and the relevant District office
40 days prior to polling day	Posting of the final electoral roll in the above specified locations
40 days prior to polling day	Nominations accepted
30 days prior to polling day	Posting of the list of eligible candidates in the above specified locations
15 days prior to polling day	Announcement of polling details, such as place and time of polling (In the event that the number of candidates does not exceed the number of vacancies, the candidates will be automatically elected)