

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Meeting on 12 July

Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects

INTRODUCTION

This paper briefs members on the Government's policy on the Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects (NLCDPs) and reports on the latest progress of the follow up actions on the recommendations of the Audit's Report No. 29 of 1997 regarding NLCDPs.

POLICY ON NLCDPS

Background

2. NLCDP teams were introduced in the 1970s to serve deprived and transient communities where the provision of welfare services and facilities was considered inadequate or non-existent. The objective of introducing such service was to fill gaps in welfare service provisions in deprived and transient communities. The NLCDP service is provided by NGOs under Government subvention in areas identified according to a set of established selection criteria, including a population criterion of between 3,000 and 15,000 (list of criteria at Annex).

3. Over the years since the introduction of the NLCDP scheme, there has been a substantial expansion in the overall provision of welfare and community building services and facilities as well as the full implementation of the District Administration Scheme, such that the role of NLCDPs in filling social service gaps is fast diminishing. Against the above background and having taken full account of the views of all parties concerned, including the welfare sector and residents' groups, the Executive Council decided in December 1995 that NLCDP service should not be extended to rural areas, new towns and public housing

estates not yet affected by redevelopment as proposed by the welfare sector.

Audit Review

4. The Audit Commission (Audit) conducted a review on the NLCDP in 1997 to examine the Administration's management of the NLCDP service and to explore whether there was scope for further improvement of the service. Based on the findings of this review and noting that some NLCDP teams were serving areas with a population below 3,000, Audit recommended in October 1997, inter alia, that the Government should -

- (a) review whether there are still sufficient justifications for those NLCDPs with no scheduled clearance dates to continue;
- (b) where the population of a project area has fallen below 3,000, review whether there are still sufficient justifications for the projects to continue; and
- (c) where necessary, consider taking appropriate measures to maximise the use of NLCDP resources, including redeploying the project teams to other NLCDPs or to other welfare services; combining two or more projects serving areas with small population to form a single project; and reducing the number of staff of those project teams which serve areas with small populations.

5. The Administration has accepted Audit's recommendations and agreed to take appropriate follow up actions.

Progress in following up Audit's recommendations

6. The relevant parties, including Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), Social Welfare Department (SWD), Housing Department (HD) and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) have since been actively considering how Audit's recommendations should be taken up. As a work priority, the relevant parties have agreed to review first the NLCDP

teams serving a population below 3,000 and without clearance dates. Once this task is completed, the Government will continue to review other NLCDPs with no scheduled clearance dates.

7. The Government is currently deliberating on the implementation of Audit's recommendations for individual NLCDP teams. In the process, SWD is closely liaising with HKCSS and the affected teams to consider how best to carry out these recommendations.

Home Affairs Bureau

July 1999

**Criteria for nominating priority areas for
Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects (NLCDPs)**

NLCDP service is provided for deprived and transient communities where the provision of welfare services and facilities are inadequate or non-existent. The first three criteria and one or more of the remaining criteria must be fulfilled for an area to be selected as a project area.

- (a) A population between 3,000 and 15,000.
- (b) The area would not be cleared within 3 years.
- (c) Low income areas.
- (d) Geographically isolated communities being remote from the town centre and not accessible to welfare services.
- (e) New settlement with inadequate welfare services.
- (f) Heterogeneous communities with groups of conflicting interests, different ethnic groups or social classes.
- (g) Areas with long-standing environmental/social problems.