

THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY

Memorandum for the Housing Authority

Urban Renewal - Rehousing Arrangements

PURPOSE

To seek Members' approval to set aside 20% of the annual rehousing quota available to the future Urban Renewal Authority (URA) for allocation to tenants affected by its urban renewal projects on compassionate grounds at URA's discretion.

BACKGROUND

2. At the Housing Authority (HA) meeting on 13 April 2000, Members approved a broad framework for assisting the URA in rehousing tenants to be affected by its urban renewal projects (Paper No. HA 25/2000). In principle, the HA has agreed to allocate 1,000 public rental housing (PRH) / interim housing units to the URA annually for meeting its rehousing demand. These affected tenants must meet the prevailing eligibility criteria set by the HA prior to the admission to PRH. This arrangement aims at achieving rational allocation of housing resources.

VIEWS OF A BILLS COMMITTEE

3. When the URA Bill was examined by a Bills Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo), Members expressed concern over one of the terms under the proposed framework - the affected tenants would have to fulfil the established eligibility criteria laid down by the HA before they could be offered PRH. They were of the view that some affected tenants who marginally failed the HA's eligibility criteria might have needs for rehousing on compassionate grounds. The Bills Committee on the URA Bill proposed that the URA should be allowed to set aside 20% of the rehousing quota i.e. around 200 flats, to rehouse these tenants on compassionate grounds at URA's discretion.

This would be in line with the arrangement of the Housing Society which would also serve as one of URA's rehousing agents. The Chairman of the Bills Committee on URA Bill made a request to the Chief Executive asking the HA to consider the proposal.

THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEW

4. Currently, all compassionate cases are vetted by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) before they are recommended to the Department for compassionate rehousing. An annual quota of 2,000 PRH units is set aside in 2000/01 for compassionate rehousing. The SWD has established a transparent system in handling these cases. This arrangement has been working well so far and, in normal circumstances, can be extended to cover cases for the URA. However, in view of LegCo Members' views, minor adjustments to the broad framework agreed earlier by HA Members may be necessary.

PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS

5. At the meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) on 15 June 2000, the Bills Committee's proposal was thoroughly discussed. Upon deliberations, the SPC finally agreed to recommend the proposal to the HA for approval subject to the following basic principles -

- (a) we agree that the quota under the discretion of the URA for meeting the needs of compassionate cases should confine to 20% of the total rehousing quota i.e. around 200 flats;
- (b) we agree that instead of entrusting the vetting process to SWD, the URA can process compassionate cases on the understanding that similar practice and standards as SWD be adopted;
- (c) we request that the eligibility criteria so established by the URA be made transparent, open and fair;
- (d) all tenants to be rehoused in PRH, irrespective of their background and origins, be subject to the same set of HA management policies after admission; and
- (e) this is a special arrangement for the URA and should not constitute a precedent for handling similar requests in future.

PRESUMPTION

6. It is not thought that Members will object to the proposed arrangements as outlined in paragraph 5 above. If no objection or request for discussion is received by the Committees' Secretary by noon on **23 June 2000**, Members' approval will be presumed and appropriate action taken.

--- 0 --- 0 --- 0 ---

File Ref. : HD(SCC) 1/5/143/97

Date : 19 June 2000