

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1262/99-00
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/HG/1

LegCo Panel on Housing

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 17 February 2000, at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon LEE Wing-tat (Chairman)
Hon Gary CHENG Kai-nam, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon HO Sai-chu, SBS, JP
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon NG Leung-sing
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SZETO Wah

Members absent : Hon David CHU Yu-lin
Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Ronald ARCULLI, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum

Public officers attending : **For item IV**

Housing Bureau

Mr Andrew R WELLS, JP, Deputy Secretary (2)

Miss L K LAM, Chief Assistant Secretary (Research and Planning)

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Planning Department

Mr LEE Chun-ming, Senior Statistician

For item V

Housing Bureau

Mr Andrew R WELLS, JP, Deputy Secretary (2)

Miss L K LAM, Chief Assistant Secretary (Research and Planning)

Planning and Lands Bureau

Mr Geoffrey WOODHEAD, Principal Assistant Secretary (Buildings)

Home Affairs Bureau

Mr Francis LO, Principal Assistant Secretary

Buildings Department

Mr AU Choi-kai, Assistant Director/Legal and Management

Attendance by invitation : **For item IV**

MDR Technology Ltd

Miss Eunice CHUEN, Associate Research Director

Clerk in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG, Chief Assistant Secretary (1)6

Staff in attendance : Mr LAW Kam-sang, JP, Deputy Secretary General
Ms Pauline NG, Assistant Secretary General 1
Mr Jackie WU, Research Officer 1
Miss Becky YU, Senior Assistant Secretary (1)3

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I Confirmation of minutes of previous meetings

(LC Paper Nos. CB(1) 924, 977 and 978/99-00)

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 November, 6 and 7 December 1999 were confirmed.

II Information paper issued since last meeting

2. Members noted that the following information papers had been issued since the last meeting on 3 January 2000:

LC Paper No. CB(1) 850/99-99 - Letter addressed to the Chief Executive by the Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy regarding building quality of public housing flats; and

LC Paper No. CB(1) 856/99-00 - Letter addressed to the Chairman of the Hong Kong Housing Authority by the Beverly Garden Owners' Committee requesting a meeting between the two parties.

III Date of next meeting and items for discussion

3. The next regular meeting would be held on Monday, 6 March 2000, at 4:30 pm to discuss the provision of one-bedroom flat for two-person elderly households upon redevelopment.

(Post-meeting note: At the instruction of the Chairman, the meeting was postponed to 17 March 2000.)

IV Demand for public and private housing

(LC Paper Nos. CB(1) 979/99-00(01), (02) and (03))

4. At the Chairman's invitation, Miss Eunice CHUEN/MDR Technology Ltd (MDR) presented the key findings of the 1999 Survey of Housing Aspirations of Households using a computer power point. The Deputy Secretary for Housing(2) (DS for H(2)) also took the opportunity to respond to some press reports which stated that the low aspiration for home ownership as revealed in the survey was at variance with the Administration's pledge to achieve a home ownership rate of 70% by 2007. He clarified that the purpose of the survey was to ascertain the housing aspirations of existing households. It could not reflect the housing demand created by new household formation. For example, an average of about 30,000 new households were formed each year as a result of marriage. New households contributed significantly towards the rise in home ownership.

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5. Members then proceed to discuss the executive summary of the 1999 Survey of Housing Aspirations of Households circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 979/99-00(03).

Characteristics and living conditions of households

6. On *living density*, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung noted that the average living density of households as revealed in the survey was 14 square metres per person which was much higher than the space allocation standard of five-and-a-half square metres per person for public rental housing (PRH). He considered that there was a need for the Administration to review the respective housing policy to narrow the gap. DS for H(2) stressed that the living density of PRH had been improved gradually over the years, partly as a result of the Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme (CRP).

7. On *characteristics and living conditions of inadequately-housed households* (IHH), Mr Gary CHENG noted that the percentage of households that were inadequately housed was much lower than expected. The Chairman also considered that the figure of 7.1% of IHH was on the low side. He asked if the discrepancy was attributed to the exclusion of private non-owner-occupier households from the survey and whether the Administration had cross-checked the figure with the Census & Statistics Department (C&SD). The Senior Statistician confirmed that the Planning Department had checked all the figures before they were published. The Chief Assistant Secretary for Housing (Research and Planning) (CAS for H(R&P)) clarified that there was no difference between owner-occupier and non-owner-occupier households as IHH only referred to those sharing accommodation with other households and those living in temporary or non-self-contained structures. She however agreed that there was a drop in the number of the latter case as a result of clearance of squatters and Temporary Housing Areas (THAs). To ascertain the situation, DS for H(2) said that the Administration would conduct a separate analysis on the two types of IHH.

8. Mr SZETO Wah enquired whether unrelated singleton tenants living in converted one-person flats were regarded as IHHs. Miss CHUEN/MDR explained that they would be classified as a household if they lived together under the same roof and made common provision for essentials of living. At members' request, the Administration undertook to provide the number of these households.

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Housing aspirations of households

9. On *preferred location*, Mrs Selina CHOW and Mr NG Leung-sing asked if the Administration would consider allocating more land in the preferred districts to meet the demand. DS for H(2) advised that while efforts would be made to optimize the land under CRP to produce more flats, these would be far from enough to meet the demand, taking into account the scarcity of land in urban area. Additional land in extended urban area and in the New Territories was required. He however assured members that with the provision of sufficient infrastructure, the travelling time between these areas and the urban area would be substantially reduced.

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10. On *preferred type of housing*, Mr CHAN Kam-lam noted from Table 4 that 59.8% of households preferred living in private flats. He enquired if the Administration would review the splitting ratio between public and private housing in the light of the findings. DS for H(2) explained that housing demand varied according to economic conditions and population changes, as well as policy decisions which might create housing needs. The housing demand model would be used to re-estimate the demand taking into account the most up-to-date assumptions and statistics, including the Survey on Housing Aspirations of Households. However, as the findings of the survey were a snap shot of the housing aspirations of households in a particular period of time, these results were unlikely to have a major effect on long-term housing demand. The pledge for annual provision of 50,000 public housing flats would therefore remain unchanged. While appreciating the Administration's assurance, Mr CHAN remarked that the Administration should ascertain the demand for PRH and subsidized home ownership (SHO) flats to determine a reasonable flat mix between these two types of flats.

11. Expressing similar concern, Ms CHAN Yuen-han opined that the Administration should increase the production of PRH given that 53.5% of those who intended to move out from their households to another accommodation in the next ten years and rent a flat would prefer PRH. Furthermore, the demand for PRH would surge if the economic situation continued to deteriorate since some owners might have to sell their properties and apply for PRH. DS for H(2) advised that the prevailing flat mix between PRH and SHO was worked out using the housing demand model. He assured members that the Administration would take into account the findings of the survey and other statistical information such as the affordability of households provided by C&SD to re-run the model for compiling future housing demand projections.

12. Noting that the preference for private flats was mainly attributed to the better quality of these flats, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered it necessary for the Administration to improve the quality of SHO flats. DS for H(2) advised that the Housing Authority (HA) was currently undertaking a review of the operation of the construction industry and the building construction process in the public sector with a view to formulating measures to improve building quality of public housing.

13. Mr Fred LI opined that Table 4 might not be able to reflect the actual preference of households, particularly of those private owner-occupier households who were aware of their ineligibility for public housing. Miss CHUEN/MDR advised that according to feedback from field workers, the question of eligibility had never been raised by respondents during interviews. They were given free choice on the types of housing. Besides, many households living in private flats were non-owner-occupiers. Mr Gary CHENG however pointed out that the accuracy of the findings would be affected if respondents were not aware of their own limitations. For example, new legal entrants from the Mainland might prefer PRH despite their ineligibility. DS for H(2) advised that efforts had been made to provide these entrants with a better understanding of the application procedures for PRH.

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14. Mr CHENG questioned the rationale for the lack of a separate analysis on the housing aspirations of legal immigrants from China. Miss CHUEN/MDR advised that the scope of the survey was determined by the Planning Department. Nevertheless, sufficient data were available for a separate analysis on this specific group. At members' request, the Administration undertook to provide information on the housing aspirations of legal immigrants from China.

Housing aspirations of inadequately-housed households

15. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan noted that of the 50.4% of IHH not intending to move to another accommodation, 67.1% were attributed to "unaffordability". He asked whether these households had registered on the Waiting List (WL) despite their "unaffordability". DS for H(2) advised that as many of these IHH were residents of THAs and estates under CRP who were eligible for direct re-housing to PRH upon redevelopment, they were not required to register on WL. CAS for H(R&P) added that according to the Housing Department, of all the 120,000 applicants on WL, many were living in PRH, THAs and squatters pending overcrowding relief and clearance operations as appropriate. Only a small proportion of applicants were living in old districts. Efforts were being made to encourage more residents of these districts, particularly those living in bedspace apartments and cubicles, to register on WL. Mr LEE considered that the Administration might need to conduct door-to-door visits to invite applications from bedspace lodgers.

16. The Chairman expressed concern about the possible mismatch of housing resources for private dwellers given that the majority of WL applicants were in fact sitting tenants. He remarked that with the increased production of PRH over the next few years, consideration should be given to expediting the re-housing process for these tenants, particularly those living in non-self-contained flats. The Administration should also take into account the profile of WL applicants in the formulation of future housing policy.

17. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that the prevailing policy to re-house IHH not eligible for PRH to interim housing (IH) in remote areas was at variance with the findings of the survey which revealed that the majority of IHH preferred living in urban areas. Expressing similar concern, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan remarked that the high transportation cost, coupled with less job opportunities were the major disincentives for IHH to move to IH in remote areas. Mr LEE opined that the Administration should review the overall planning for public housing to tackle the problem.

18. As regards overcrowded PRH households, CAS for H(R&P) explained that since no additional housing demand would be generated as a result of overcrowding relief, they were not included as part of the working assumptions for the housing demand model for compiling housing demand projections.

Housing aspirations of the elderly

19. Noting that 15.5% of elderly households preferred buying a flat, Mr HO Sai-chu enquired about their sources of income. Miss CHUEN/MDR advised that these included

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their own savings, living expenses given by their children, Old Age Allowance and Comprehensive Social Security Assistance allowance etc.

Conclusion

20. DS for H(2) advised that the findings of the survey were consistent with the general housing targets of the Administrations. Formulation of housing policy took into account survey results among other factors. For example, the decision to replace a portion of SHO flat production with loans would be introduced partly in the light of the public's preference for private flats. The Chairman however cautioned that the Administration had to be careful in taking forward the proposal given that the preference of households for private flats was inconsistent with their affordability.

21. The Chairman remarked that the Administration might need to adjust the building standards in view of the aspiration for more spacious accommodation. Consideration should also be given to providing housing flats in both the public and the private sectors to meet the specific requirements of elderly households. To facilitate a better understanding of the aspirations of households, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan requested and the Administration undertook to provide a comparison of the survey results of the Housing Aspirations of Households conducted in 1996 and 1999. CAS for H(R&P) indicated that a like to like comparison might not be feasible as some questions in the 1999 survey, such as the affordability of households, were not included in the 1996 survey.

Admin

IV Housing standards of domestic buildings in Hong Kong
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 706/99-00 and 979/99-00(04))

22. Members noted the information note on housing standards of domestic buildings in Hong Kong (LC Paper No. CB(1) 706/99-00) prepared by the LegCo Research and Library Services Division. Mr Gary CHENG enquired about the application of the prevailing statutory requirements and standards for residential buildings in Hong Kong. The Deputy Secretary General advised that most of the requirements set out in the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) (BO) and the relevant building regulations were applicable to the whole buildings rather than to individual flats within the buildings. He added that unlike PRH, there were no standards for living space and living density in private dwellings in Hong Kong.

23. On *fire safety*, Mr Fred LI questioned the rationale for prohibiting the use of plastic dust-bins inside lifts of PRH which had caused much inconvenience to tenants. The Assistant Director of Buildings/Legal and Management (ADB/LM) advised that the fire safety codes issued by the Building Authority only set out the prescriptive provisions on fire resisting construction and means of escape and access. The provision, installation and maintenance of fire equipment were governed by the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95).

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24. On *lighting and ventilation*, the Chairman asked if the Administration would consider imposing new statutory requirements, including the use of construction materials and water cooling system to achieve energy efficiency and conservation. ADB/LM advised that under the Building (Energy Efficiency) Regulation, the external walls and roofs of a building should be designed and constructed to achieve a suitable overall thermal transfer value. The Principal Assistant Secretary for Planning and Lands (Buildings) (PAS/PL(B)) assured members that the Administration would examine all possible ways through which energy efficiency could be achieved. These included a study on how natural ventilation could assist in reducing energy consumption. He added that instead of imposing prescriptive regulations, the Administration would assess energy efficiency on a performance basis, under which developers and architects would be allowed to use suitable materials to reduce the transfer of energy through buildings. The objective was to promote best practices in energy efficiency and conservation in Hong Kong.

25. On *sanitation*, Ms CHAN Yuen-han noted that under the Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) Regulations, additional watercloset fitments, lavatory basins and baths/showers were required to be provided if more than eight persons were residing or likely to reside in a domestic building. She asked if the same requirement also applied to PRH. ADB/LM clarified that buildings of HA were exempt from the provisions of BO. CAS for H(R&P) however pointed out that new Harmony Block flats with internal floor area exceeding 54 square metres were now equipped with one additional watercloset fitment.

26. On *noise control*, PAS/PL(B) advised that he was not in a position to comment on the subject as this fell outside the purview of the Planning and Lands Bureau.

27. Noting that a review of plumbing and drainage provisions would be conducted by the Buildings Department (BD), Mr NG Leung-sing asked if this would include the life span of pipes. ADB/LM explained that at present, there was no provisions specifying the life span of pipes. However, the Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) Regulations governed the durability of drainage works by specific requirements on the materials, connexion and fixing of pipes. Given the large number of complaints against leakage of pipes a few year after in-take, Mr NG considered that the Administration should step up control in this respect by specifying the life span of pipes in regulations and reject any sub-standard design and material if necessary. ADB/LM took note of Mr NG's view.

28. Mr NG also questioned the need to engage outside consultant to undertake the review having regard to its simple nature. ADB/LM clarified the review was not just of drainage pipes but was a comprehensive review of the standards, design and construction of plumbing and drainage system as well as sanitary provisions of new buildings. The objective of these studies was to establish a new set of standards to meet the present day requirements.

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V Any other business

Greater private sector involvement (PSI) in Housing Authority estate management and maintenance services

29. The Chairman advised that the Alliance of Housing Department Staff Union had requested for the setting up of a Subcommittee to monitor the progress of the PSI exercise. Noting that the situation was being monitored by the Panel on Public Services, members considered that there was no urgent need for the setting up of a Subcommittee. Nevertheless, the Administration should be requested to provide regular six-monthly reports on the progress of the exercise. Joint meetings with the Panel on Public Services would also be conducted if necessary to discuss matters of common concern.

Discussion on the need for overseas duty visit

30. The Chairman proposed and members agreed that a visit to Japan to study their system on building quality assurance would be useful. The Chairman added that as the subject straddled the remit of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works, he would consult the respective Chairman in this regard. Meanwhile, the Clerk was requested to collect information on the building quality assurance system in Japan for members' reference.

Clerk

31. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6:50 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
25 April 2000