

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)353/04-05
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/HG/1

Panel on Housing

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 1 November 2004, at 2:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP (Chairman)
Hon LEE Wing-tat (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon Albert Jinghan CHENG

Public officers attending : **Agenda item IV**

Mr C M LEUNG, JP
Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
(Housing)

Mr K H LAU, JP
Deputy Director of Housing
(Estate Management)

Mr C Q LEE
Chief Manager/Management (Support Services)
Housing Department

Agenda item V

Mr C M LEUNG, JP
Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
(Housing)

Mr K H LAU, JP
Deputy Director of Housing
(Estate Management)

Mr H T FUNG
Assistant Director of Housing
(Allocation)

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Agenda item IV

Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy

Mr LAU Kar-wah
Chairman

Ms IP Chiu-ping
Chief Secretary

The Hong Kong Southern District Alliance Ltd.

Mr CHAN Chi-keung
Head of Youth Division

Kwai Chung Estate Resident's Right Concern Group

Mr NG Wing-chak
Chairman

Ms TANG Lai-kwan (鄧麗群女士)
Treasurer

Kwong Tin Estate Resident Union

Mr LO Kong-lam
Chairman

Ms CHUI Wai-kuem
Vice-Chairman

Alliance for Defending Grassroots Housing Rights

Ms WONG Ling-hei
Member

Sau Mau Ping District Residents' Association
(秀茂坪區居民聯會)

Mr MAK Fu-ling
Consultant

Sham Shui Po Community Association

Mr HUI Yat-hau
Group Member

Mr LAU Cheuk-kai
Group Member

The Federation of H.K., KLN. and N.T. Public Housing
Estates Resident and Shopowner Organizations

Ms LEUNG Fu-wing
Vice-Chairman

Ms CHAN Sau-wan
Member of the Executive Committee

Wang Lok Residents' Association (橫樂居民聯會)

Mr LAI Wing-ho
Vice-Chairman

Yiu Hing Friends Club (耀興之友社)

Mr LAM Wai-kwong
Secretary

North Point Residents' Association (北角居民協會)

Mr LIM York-ming
Chairman

Individual

Mr CHAN Wan-sang
Tuen Mun District Council member

Yiu Fook House Mutual Aid Committee
(耀福樓互助委員會)

Ms AU Yin-hing
Chairman

Ms LO Mei-lin
Secretary

Neighbourhood and Worker's Service Centre

Mr CHUNG Hau-ping
Community Affair Officer

Agenda item V

Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy

Mr LAU Kar-wah
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Neighbourhood and Worker's Service Centre

Mr WONG Yun-tat
Community Affair Officer

Mr CHUNG Hau-ping
Community Affair Officer

The Federation of H.K., KLN. and N.T. Public Housing
Estates Resident and Shopowner Organizations

Ms LEUNG Fu-wing
Vice-Chairman

Ms CHAN Sau-wan
Member of the Executive Committee

Shek Lei II Interim Housing Estate Concern Group
(石籬二村中轉屋關注組)

Ms WONG Ka-ka
Representative

Mr HO Ka-ming
Member

Kwai Shing East Interim Housing Estate Concern Group
(葵盛東中轉屋關注組)

Mr YIP Tak-leung
Representative

Mr LEE Yat
Member

Clerk in attendance : Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

Staff in attendance : Miss Salumi CHAN
Acting Assistant Secretary General 1

Ms Alice AU
Senior Council Secretary (1)5

Mr Anthony CHU
Council Secretary (1)2

Ms Christina SHIU
Legislative Assistant

Action

- I Confirmation of minutes**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)104/04-05 -- Minutes of meeting on 12 October 2004)

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2004 were confirmed.

II Information paper issued since last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)55/04-05(01) -- Letter dated 6 October 2004 from the Alliance of Tenants of Old Districts expressing concern about rights of tenants of old districts)

2. Members noted the above information paper issued since the first meeting of the Panel on 12 October 2004.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)118/04-05(01) -- List of outstanding items for discussion)

3. The next regular meeting was scheduled for Monday, 6 December 2004, at 2:30 pm. Members agreed to discuss the following items -

- (a) Disposal of surplus Home Ownership Scheme flats and Private Sector Participation Scheme flats; and
- (b) Procurement of services for public rental housing estates.

4. The Chairman reminded members that in consideration of the request from a number of organizations to take part in the discussion of the item on “domestic rent policy for public rental housing”, which was originally scheduled for discussion at the present meeting, a special meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday, 10 November 2004, to discuss the item.

(Post-meeting note: As agreed by the majority of members and with the concurrence of the Chairman, the above special meeting was subsequently rescheduled for Monday, 29 November 2004, at 2:30 pm to enable deputations and the Administration to discuss the item concerned in the light of the judgment concerning the median rent-to-income ratio case to be delivered on 22 November 2004.)

IV Marking Scheme for Tenancy Enforcement in Public Housing Estates

(LC Paper No. CB(1)140/04-05(01) -- Submission dated 30 October 2004 from Hong Kong People’s Council on Housing Policy

LC Paper No. CB(1)140/04-05(02) -- Submission dated 1 November 2004 from The Hong Kong Southern District Alliance Ltd.

- LC Paper No. CB(1)131/04-05(01) -- Submission from Kwai Chung Estate Resident's Right Concern Group
- LC Paper No. CB(1)131/04-05(02) -- Submission from the Alliance for Defending Grassroots Housing Rights
- LC Paper No. CB(1)140/04-05(03) -- Submission dated 1 November 2004 from Sau Mau Ping District Residents' Association
- LC Paper No. CB(1)125/04-05(01) -- Submission dated 28 October 2004 from The Federation of H.K., KLN. and N.T. Public Housing Estates Resident and Shopowner Organizations
- LC Paper No. CB(1)140/04-05(04) -- Submission dated 1 November 2004 from Wang Lok Residents' Association
- LC Paper No. CB(1)118/04-05(04) -- Information paper provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)118/04-05(05) -- Background brief on "Marking Scheme for Tenancy Enforcement in Public Housing Estates" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

Meeting with deputations/individual

Meeting with Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy (the Council)

(LC Paper No. CB(1)140/04-05(01))

5. Ms IP Chiu-ping, Chief Secretary of the Council, briefed members on the Council's submission.

Meeting with the Hong Kong Southern District Alliance Ltd. (the Southern Alliance)

(LC Paper No. CB(1)140/04-05(02))

6. Mr CHAN Chi-keung, Head of the Southern Alliance's Youth Division, briefed members on the Southern Alliance's submission.

Meeting with Kwai Chung Estate Resident's Right Concern Group (the KC Concern Group)

(LC Paper No. CB(1)131/04-05(01))

7. Mr NG Wing-chak, Chairman of the KC Concern Group, briefed members on the KC Concern Group's submission.

Meeting with Kwong Tin Estate Resident Union (the Union)

8. Mr LO Kong-lam, Chairman of the Union, briefed members on the Union's submission which was tabled at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Union's submission was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)147/04-05(02) on 2 November 2004.)

Meeting with the Alliance for Defending Grassroots Housing Rights (the Alliance)
(LC Paper No. CB(1)131/04-05(02))

9. Ms WONG Ling-hei, Member of the Alliance, briefed members on the Alliance's submission. She added that it would be unfair to make water dripping from air-conditioners a misdeed under the Marking Scheme for Tenancy Enforcement in Public Housing Estates (the Marking Scheme) without first retrofitting condensate drainage pipes in old public housing blocks.

Meeting with Sau Mau Ping District Residents' Association (the SMP Association)
(LC Paper No. CB(1)140/04-05(03))

10. Mr MAK Fu-ling, Consultant of the SMP Association, briefed members on the SMP Association's submission.

Meeting with Sham Shui Po Community Association (the Community Association)

11. Mr HUI Yat-hau, Group Member of the Community Association, briefed members on the Community Association's submission.

(Post-meeting note: The Community Association's submission was sent to the Secretariat after the meeting and circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)155/04-05(01) on 3 November 2004.)

Meeting with the Federation of HK, KLN and NT Public Housing Estates Resident and Shopowner Organizations (FERSO)
(LC Paper No. CB(1)125/04-05(01))

12. Ms LEUNG Fu-wing, Vice-Chairman of FERSO, briefed members on FERSO's submission.

Meeting with Wang Lok Residents' Association (the WL Association)
(LC Paper No. CB(1)140/04-05(04))

13. Mr LAI Wing-ho, Vice-Chairman of the WL Association, briefed members on the WL Association's submission.

Meeting with Yiu Hing Friends Club (the Club)

14. Mr LAM Wai-kwong, Secretary of the Club, briefed members on the Club's views. In gist, the Club considered it unfair to make water dripping from air-conditioners a misdeed under the Marking Scheme without first retrofitting condensate drainage pipes in blocks which did not have such facilities.

Meeting with North Point Residents' Association (the NP Association)

15. Mr LIM York-ming, Chairman of the NP Association, briefed members on the NP Association's views. In gist, the NP Association also considered it unfair to make water dripping from air-conditioners a misdeed under the Marking Scheme without first retrofitting condensate drainage pipes in blocks which did not have such facilities. This was because the nuisance was often unintentional and was in fact caused by the lack of proper facilities in the blocks concerned.

Meeting with Mr CHAN Wan-sang, Tuen Mun District Council member

16. Mr CHAN Wan-sang, a Tuen Mun District Council member, briefed members on his views. In gist, he saw a need to tackle the problem of water dripping from air-conditioners because of the nuisance and health hazard caused. He also opined that the Housing Authority (HA) had the responsibility for retrofitting condensate drainage pipes in public housing blocks which lacked such facilities because HA was the owner of the blocks and the costs incurred would not be substantial. HA should ensure all public housing blocks were provided with the facilities before making water dripping from air-conditioners a misdeed under the Marking Scheme.

Meeting with Yiu Fook House Mutual Aid Committee (the MAC)

17. Ms AU Yin-hing, Chairman of the MAC, briefed members on the MAC's submission.

(Post-meeting note: The MAC's submission was sent to the Secretariat after the meeting and circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)219/04-05 on 12 November 2004.)

Meeting with Neighbourhood and Worker's Service Centre (the Centre)

18. Mr CHUNG Hau-ping, Community Affair Officer of the Centre, briefed members on the Centre's views. In gist, the Centre considered it unreasonable to make water dripping from air-conditioners a misdeed under the Marking Scheme without first retrofitting condensate drainage pipes in blocks which lacked such facilities. The Centre also opined that installation of the pipes would help reduce disputes among public housing tenants.

19. The Chairman thanked the above deputations for attending the meeting to express their views.

Meeting with the Administration

20. The Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing) (PSH) thanked the deputations and undertook to convey their views to HA for consideration. With the aid of powerpoint, the Deputy Director of Housing (Estate Management) (DD of H(EM)) briefed members on the progress in implementing the Marking Scheme and the possible areas of improvement.

(Post-meeting note: The hard copy of the above powerpoint presentation was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)147/04-05(01) on 2 November 2004.)

General comments

21. Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee opined that the Marking Scheme should target at only life-threatening offences such as throwing objects from height. Minor offences should instead be tackled by improving the facilities in public housing estates. This was because the Marking Scheme could lead to tenancy termination and it might be too strict to terminate tenancy because of minor offences. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung also considered it unfair to implement the Marking Scheme without first improving the facilities of public housing estates.

22. In response, PSH pointed out that the Marking Scheme was introduced as an interim measure amidst the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). It was the Administration's plan to abolish it eventually, relying on public education to upkeep estate hygiene. However, after seriously examining the Marking Scheme and the significant improvements in estate cleanliness since its implementation, the Administration saw a need to continue with it to maintain estate cleanliness before solely relying on public education.

23. Mr Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yau cast doubt on whether improvements in the environmental hygiene of public housing estates were directly related to the Marking Scheme. He pointed out that the improvements might stem from strengthened enforcement of the Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness Offences) Ordinance (Cap. 570). He enquired whether the Marking Scheme could be suspended to assess whether the latter alone would suffice. He also enquired about the criteria for determining when the Marking Scheme could be abolished. In response, PSH confirmed that while other efforts also helped, the improvements were directly related to the Marking Scheme.

24. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming opined that implementation of the Marking Scheme was plagued with problems because of inadequate planning. The HA should review the Marking Scheme and make improvement. He found it unacceptable to introduce more misdeeds under the Marking Scheme. His views were shared by Messrs LEUNG Yiu-chung and Albert Jinghan CHENG. In particular, Mr Albert CHENG opined that since the outbreak of SARS was over

and estate cleanliness had improved, the Marking Scheme should be abolished as soon as possible. He and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung were therefore opposed to the proposal to reduce the number of warnings to usher in stricter and more immediate enforcement of the Marking Scheme.

25. In response, PSH stressed that efforts to keep public housing estates clean and safe should be kept up despite the end of the SARS outbreak. He however assured members that the Marking Scheme would be reviewed from time to time and, when appropriate, abolished.

26. Messrs WONG Kwok-hing and Patrick LAU Sau-shing opined that the Marking Scheme should not only aim at penalizing tenants but should also encourage voluntary efforts to keep the environment clean by awarding merits. In response, PSH agreed to consider the view but stressed the need to continue the Marking Scheme to complement other efforts such as public education, encouragement and operational efficiency.

Water dripping from air-conditioners

27. Members in general echoed the deputations' view that it was unfair to make water dripping from air-conditioners a misdeed under the Marking Scheme without first retrofitting condensate drainage pipes in old blocks which lacked such facilities. In particular, Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip criticized that the HA was shifting its responsibility for improving environmental hygiene in public housing estates to public housing tenants. He further pointed out that contrary to what was said in the relevant information paper, there was a consensus between the HA and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department that the latter would not issue a statutory Nuisance Notice to the tenant concerned if a dripping case occurred in a public housing estate. He considered it inappropriate that the HA should now propose to tackle the problem through the Marking Scheme. Mr Fred LI Wah-ming further pointed out that the proposal was infeasible because there was difficulty in retrofitting condensate drainage pipes in old public housing blocks and as such the tenants concerned were simply unable to prevent dripping. In consideration of the deputations' grave concern about the proposal, Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming also urged the Administration to think twice before implementing the proposal.

28. While not supporting the above proposal, some members agreed that the problem of water dripping from air-conditioners should be addressed. In this regard, Mr Albert CHENG opined that instead of allotting penalty points for water dripping from air-conditioners, Housing Department (HD) should be penalized for failing to rectify the problem by improving the facilities of public housing estates. Messrs LEUNG Yiu-chung, Patrick LAU and LEUNG Kwok-hung also stressed the importance of undertaking improvement works to public housing estates to tackle the problem because of the nuisance caused. They urged the Administration to speed up installation of the drainage pipes and requested an estimate on how long the works would take.

29. In response, PSH assured members that the HA was well aware of deputations and members' concern about the above proposal and would seriously consider their views. He further said that the HA would also actively examine the technical feasibility and operational implications of retrofitting condensate drainage pipes in the 800 odd blocks which lacked such facilities. One of the options contemplated was to retrofit drainage pipes during redecoration of the estates. As regards the call to expedite installation of drainage pipes, PSH highlighted the need to consider the technical and financial implications of installing the pipes if the work was not done in conjunction with estate redecoration.

30. In this regard, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung quoted his own personal experience and cast doubt on whether the HA was actually taking the opportunity to retrofit condensate drainage pipes during redecoration of estates.

Concern about holding the entire household liable for offences committed by individual household members

31. Members in general shared the deputations' comment on the unfairness of holding the entire household liable for offences committed by individual household members. In particular, Mr Frederick FUNG Kin-kee pointed out that the offender might not be on good terms with other household members. The above approach would further worsen their relationship and create more disputes. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung also opposed to the approach because the management of the HA were not likewise implicated when its former Chairman Ms Rosanna WONG resigned because of HA's short-piling incidents. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming urged the Administration to consider the suggestion of the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) that the Marking Scheme should target at individuals instead of the entire household.

32. In response, PSH stressed the importance of co-operation and mutual support among household members in keeping public housing estates clean and safe. The Marking Scheme was aimed to operate as a warning system to remind residents of their important role in this regard and had proved effective in deterring misdeeds affecting public hygiene or safety. He said that there would be implementation difficulties in enforcing the conditions of the tenancy agreement if only the offender concerned would be held liable and stressed the need to strike a balance between the pros and cons of the above approach.

Concern about double penalty

33. Mr WONG Kwok-hing echoed the deputations' view that the allotment of penalty points under the Marking Scheme for acts which were already subject to fines and even prosecution under different relevant laws would result in double penalty. His views were shared by Messrs Albert Jinghan CHENG, Albert CHAN and LEUNG Kwok-hung. Mr Albert CHENG further pointed out that there were already hygiene-related clauses in the tenancy agreement. In this regard, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung also opined that by subjecting public housing tenants to double penalty, the Administration was discriminating against them for receiving subsidized housing. Mr Albert CHAN considered it a shame that HA should unfairly impose double penalty on public housing tenants many of whom were helpless old people.

34. In response, PSH maintained that since public education had failed to effectively improve estate cleanliness despite years of implementation, there was a need for the Marking Scheme to enhance public housing tenants' self-discipline. He however agreed that old tenants should be helped to maintain good habits in keeping environmental hygiene in addition to the implementation of the Marking Scheme.

Implementation issues

35. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung highlighted complaints about the enforcement actions of frontline staff in certain spitting cases, in which the HD staff alleged that the tenants concerned had spitted despite the lack of circumstantial evidence. In his view, even though the tenants concerned could appeal against the allegation, the HD staff who vetted the cases would tend to take the side of their colleagues. In response, PSH said that estate staff would be reminded to take a reasonable and fair approach in discharging their duties.

36. Mr Frederick FUNG pointed out that under the temporary permission arrangement allowing tenants to continue to keep their small dogs until their natural death, the dogs were not allowed to use the lifts before 10:30 pm. However, the rule was rarely adhered to and no enforcement against such non-compliance was taken. In addition, there was also no mechanism to ensure that a tenant could not replace a registered dog with a new one after the natural death of the former. PSH responded that estate patrols would be stepped up to ensure no new dogs would be allowed under the temporary permission arrangement.

37. Mr WONG Kwok-hing opined that instead of subjecting public housing tenants to penalty points under the Marking Scheme, HD staff should be penalized for failing to efficiently perform their management duties to upkeep estate hygiene. Miss CHAN Yuen-han also considered that the poor hygiene conditions of public housing estates were the result of poor management and reduction in estate staff. In response to her call to review HD's management culture and

introduce improvements, PSH admitted that there was room for improvement in estate management. He however pointed out that while efforts would be made to improve estate management, improvements in estate cleanliness could not be achieved without tenants' co-operation.

Other views and concerns

38. At Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming's request, PSH undertook to consider DAB's suggestion that any points allotted under the Marking Scheme should be valid for a period of one year instead of two years from the day the material misdeed was committed.

39. Mr Patrick LAU enquired whether the household who reached the ceiling of 16 points and was issued a notice-to-quit was still staying in the public housing unit. In response, PSH said that the household concerned was appealing and as such he could not disclose details of the case.

40. Mr Fred LI queried why during the period from August 2003 to 13 October 2004, there was only one case of allotment of penalty points for the very common offence of disposing refuse indiscriminately. In his view, more active measures should be taken against the misdeed for the hygienic concerns it caused. He also considered that there was a need for strengthened enforcement measures against throwing objects from height in consideration of its great threat to public safety. PSH noted his views.

V Interim Housing Policy

(LC Paper No. CB(1)118/04-05(06) -- Information paper provided by the Administration)

Meeting with deputations

Meeting with Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy (the Council)

41. Mr LAU Kar-wah, Chairman of the Council, briefed members on the Council's views. In gist, the Council was opposed to the provision of interim housing as temporary accommodation to families affected by natural disasters or clearance operations who were not immediately eligible for allocation of public rental housing (PRH). This was because there were always delays in allocation of PRH to the families concerned with the result that they were stuck in interim housing. Moreover, interim housing estates were usually poorly provisioned and managed. The Council therefore called for demolition or renovation of old interim housing estates, improved management of interim housing estates, and accelerated allocation of PRH to residents of interim housing.

Meeting with Neighbourhood and Worker's Service Centre (the Service Centre)

42. Mr WONG Yun-tat, Community Affair Officer of the Centre, briefed members on the Centre's views. According to the Service Centre, owing to the fault of HD staff, many interim housing residents did not know they had to apply for PRH. As such, many of them had not done so and hence there was delay in allocation of PRH to them. Although HD had conducted a special allocation exercise after the persistent request of the residents concerned, implementation of the exercise had been plagued with problems. Many interim housing residents had not been informed of the exercise or its full details. Those who had were only given five-day notice and 15 minutes to select the flats. As such, many of them could not succeed in selecting a PRH flat. It was hoped that more regular and organized special allocation exercises could be conducted in future.

Meeting with The Federation of HK, KLN, and NT Public Housing Estates Resident and Shopowner Organizations (FERSO)

43. Ms CHAN Sau-wan, Member of FERSO's Executive Committee, briefed members on FERSO's views. In gist, FERSO supported the conversion of the flats in Po Tin Interim Housing Estate to PRH flats. However, it was concerned about HD's newly introduced rule that family members who came to Hong Kong after 2 June 2004 would not be counted as family members in the calculation of living density for overcrowding relief transfer within Po Tin Interim Housing Estate. FERSO hoped that HD could relax the above rule in consideration of the many difficulties residents would face if transferred to other estates.

Meeting with Shek Lei II Interim Housing Estate Concern Group (Shek Lei II Concern Group)

44. Mr HO Ka-ming, Member of Shek Lei II Concern Group, briefed members on Shek Lei II Concern Group's submission.

(Post-meeting note: Shek Lei II Concern Group's submission was sent to the Secretariat after the meeting and circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)155/04-05(02) on 3 November 2004.)

Meeting with Kwai Shing East Interim Housing Estate Concern Group (the KSE Concern Group)

45. Mr LEE Yat, Member of the KSE Concern Group, briefed members on the KSE Concern Group's submission.

(Post-meeting note: The KSE Concern Group's submission was sent to the Secretariat after the meeting and circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)155/04-05(03) on 3 November 2004.)

46. The Chairman thanked the above deputations for attending the meeting to express their views.

Meeting with the Administration

47. At the Chairman' invitation, DD of H(EM) briefed members on the Administration's paper on this item.

Allocation of public rental housing flats to interim housing residents

48. In reply to the Chairman on whether interim housing residents were really given only 15 minutes to select PRH flats, DD of H(EM) explained that due to the large number of residents involved in flat selection exercises, those at the end of the queue might have less time to select flats if more time was allotted for flat selection. Notwithstanding, sufficient flats would be made available for selection and the particulars on the flats available would be advertised beforehand. As such, residents concerned could do some research on the flats available beforehand to facilitate selection. If a resident could not make up his mind for a flat within 15 minutes, he/she would not lose the chance for selection. The only effect was that those behind him could choose first. PSH undertook to review the exercise to see how its implementation could be improved.

49. The Deputy Chairman urged the Administration to conduct one additional special transfer exercise shortly in consideration of the poor conditions of some interim housing flats and the high vacancy rate of PRH flats. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung shared his view and called upon HD to give residents more time to determine which PRH flats to choose. At the Chairman's request, PSH undertook to conduct one to two more transfer exercises to enable all interim housing residents who met the PRH eligibility criteria to be allocated a PRH flat. The Chairman also urged the Administration to endeavour to allocate PRH flats to remaining interim housing residents once they met the PRH eligibility criteria.

50. Miss CHAN Yuen-han recalled the Administration's undertaking to allocate within two years PRH flats to the residents rehoused in Po Tin, Shek Lei II and Kwai Shing interim housing estates because of the Diamond Hill squatter clearance operation. She had reminded HD to conduct registration of the affected residents for allocation of PRH. She found it unacceptable that many of them had not been so registered or offered other types of housing assistance, and that they had to stay in interim housing for up to seven years. She requested an explanation from the Administration in this regard.

51. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung shared the concerns of Miss CHAN Yuen-han and opined that the delay in PRH allocation was caused by imposition of the requirement to meet the stringent eligibility criteria on income and asset limits for PRH. He therefore called for relaxation of the PRH eligibility criteria for interim housing residents. Mr Albert CHAN echoed his views and said that the relaxation should apply to all residents who had stayed in interim housing for over two years

because their number was small and the Administration should have no difficulty in rehousing them in PRH. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung added that the delay was caused by bureaucracy

52. In response, DD of H(EM) explained that most interim housing residents who were not allocated PRH within seven years were new arrivals in Hong Kong when they were rehoused in interim housing, and hence had to meet the seven-year residence rule to qualify for PRH. As for those residents who met the eligibility criteria, the waiting time for PRH had already been shortened to an average of only two years. It was believed that with the scaling down of clearance projects, relaxation of the eligibility criteria for rehousing, and the conduct of more allocation exercises, the problem of delay in PRH allocation to interim housing residents would be solved.

Other views

53. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming proposed that, as incentives to speed up the conversion of the interim housing flats in Po Tin to PRH flats, the Administration should relax the three-time offer rule for PRH applicants who were willing to accept PRH flats converted from interim housing flats, relax the residence requirement in considering applications for overcrowding relief transfer to such converted flats, and improve the toilet facilities in Po Tin Interim Housing Estate. His views were shared by Mr WONG Kwok-hing.

54. In response, DD of H(EM) reported that to speed up conversion of the interim housing flats in Po Tin into PRH flats, the following incentives had already been introduced –

- (a) Three refusals to accept such converted flats would only be counted as one;
- (b) The security system in Po Tin Interim Housing Estate had been enhanced;
- (c) On top of the existing 14-day rent free period, one additional rent-free month would be offered to applicants who accepted such converted flats; and
- (d) Allocation of PRH flats would be accelerated if applicants accepted such converted flats.

He however pointed out that since the flats in Po Tin Interim Housing Estate were comparatively smaller, there was difficulty in arranging for overcrowding relief transfer within Po Tin.

55. The Administration also noted Mr Albert CHAN's call for further improvements to the interim housing policy by providing interim housing estates in the urban areas as well, and the following views of Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung –

- (a) That as exemplified by the rat cage he presented to PSH, the living conditions of interim housing estates were poor. Most of the interim housing estates were also too far away; and
- (b) That the tilt towards developers in Government's housing policy should be rectified. The Administration should improve the policy on interim housing to ensure it could achieve its purpose of offering timely housing shelters to those affected by natural disasters and clearance operations.

VI Any other business

56. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:40 pm.