

## **Improvement of Facilities and Living Space in Aged Public Housing Estates**

### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the measures to improve the facilities and living space in aged public housing estates.

### **Background**

2. The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has been striving to improve the living environment of aged public housing estates. As far as estate facilities are concerned, a number of HA's maintenance and improvement programmes bring continuous improvements to estate environment and building quality. Through its allocation and transfer policies, the HA also seeks to ensure that residents of these estates may enjoy comfortable living space.

### **Improvements to Facilities in Aged Public Housing Estates**

#### **Comprehensive Structural Investigation Programme**

3. To ensure structural safety of all buildings in its public housing estates, the HA has, since 2005, conducted comprehensive investigation of the structure of the estates of 40 years old or above. At present, ten estates have been included in this programme, of which the investigation for six<sup>1</sup> has already been completed. For the remaining four<sup>2</sup>, the investigation will be completed in mid-2008.

4. The Housing Department (HD) will carry out proper maintenance and implement the Estate Improvement Programme in those estates which can be sustained for at least 15 more years in a cost-effective manner.

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<sup>1</sup> They include Choi Hung Estate, Sai Wan Estate, Model Housing Estate, Wo Lok Estate, Ma Tau Wai Estate and So Uk Estate (So Uk Estate has been included in the clearance programme).

<sup>2</sup> They include Fuk Loi Estate, Tung Tau Estate, Wah Fu Estate and Ping Shek Estate.

### **Estate Improvement Programme**

5. The HA improves the living environment and facilities of public housing estates through the Estate Improvement Programme.

6. In assessing and formulating the improvement plans, the HD would consult the Estate Management Advisory Committees and collect views of the residents through telephone and questionnaire surveys. The HD will consider the characteristics of each estates and accordingly devise suitable themes for the improvement works to be carried out. For instance, “Healthy Estate” is the theme for Sai Wan Estate, where the improvement works include constructing a health track along the hillside. “Barrier-free, green and energetic” are chosen as themes for Choi Hung Estate, where improvement works include installing additional lifts and providing more landscape facilities and outdoor fitness venues, etc. The HD has set up a multi-disciplinary team to examine the need for providing additional accesses, landscape facilities, improved recreational and sports facilities and additional facilities for the elderly in the estates in light of the estates’ demographic profiles.

### **Total Maintenance Scheme**

7. Under the Total Maintenance Scheme launched in early 2006, the HA has set aside \$6.3 billion for repairing and renovating facilities of all public housing flats over a period of five years to improve the living environment and the quality of life of tenants. Aged estates are accorded priority. In-flat Inspection Ambassadors deployed by the HD would identify in-flat maintenance problems in a proactive and comprehensive way. Their major duties include providing one-stop in-flat inspection and maintenance services, educating tenants on domestic repair and maintenance, setting up a maintenance database and establishing a good communication network with tenants.

### **Replumbing Programme**

8. Over the past few years, the HA has completed replumbing works for 816 public housing blocks. The works for the remaining 100 blocks will be completed by 2010. Under HD’s plan, all public housing estates would join the “Fresh Water Plumbing Quality Maintenance Recognition Scheme” of the Water Supplies Department by 2008, so as to ensure that the water supply system of the estates meets the standard recommended by the Water Supplies Department and residents would be able to enjoy quality water supply.

### **Condensation Drain Pipe Programme**

9. Since 2006, whenever the HD carries out redecoration works for an estate, condensation drain pipes for air-conditioners would be installed on building facades where necessary. The installation of such pipes seeks to tackle the problem of water dripping from air-conditioners. To date, such installation works have been completed in 15 estates. The entire programme is scheduled for completion in 2010.

### **Lift Upgrading Programme**

10. Since 1990, the HA has upgraded 387 lifts to improve their speed and loading capacities. In the coming five years, the HA will spend \$500 million to replace some 500 other lifts and install lifts in a number of buildings currently without lift services. The project covers feasibility studies of the provision of lift towers in some aged estates such as Choi Hung Estate, Tai Hing Estate, Pak Tin Estate, Lei Muk Shue Estate and Yue Wan Estate, for the convenience of the elderly and needy.

### **Re-wiring and Electrical Reinforcement**

11. To cater for the needs of modern-day life, the HD has completed an upgrading programme for the entire electricity supply system to enhance its loading and safety level. To address the problems of aging wiring and inadequate sockets in the flats of the aged estates, the HD has launched an in-flat re-wiring programme. The programme has been completed in 11 estates so far. The programme for the remaining 57 estates built in or before 1985 will be completed in six years' time.

### **Enhancement of Security System**

12. The HD plans to replace the black-and-white display screens of the closed circuit television systems in all the 152 public housing estates with high-definition digital colour systems in five years' time, in order to raise the overall quality of surveillance and security services.

### **Barrier-free Access Improvement Programme**

13. To cater for the needs of the elderly, the disabled and the visually impaired, the HA has rolled out the barrier-free access improvement programme since 2006, to install additional ramps, handrails, voice synthesisers in lift cars and Braille on lift panels in all public housing estates. The works are expected to be completed in 2008. Moreover, the HD will carry out free in-flat modification works for elderly and disabled tenants according to their needs or having regard to the advice of their physiotherapists. Examples of the works include installing handrails in the flats and widening the entrance doors, etc.

### **Improvement of Living Space in Aged Public Housing Estates**

14. After years of efforts of the HA, the number and ratio of overcrowded households (i.e. households with an average living space of less than 5.5 m<sup>2</sup> per person) have fallen from 15 600 (accounting for 2.7% of the total number of public housing households) in June 2001 to 4 100 (0.6%) in September 2007, which is well within the HA's pledge of 1% for this year.

15. At present there are a total of 26 estates which are more than 30 years old, accommodating some 72 000 households. The average living space per person in these aged public housing estates is now 12.84 m<sup>2</sup>. Compared with ten years ago when the average living space per person in these estates was 9.89 m<sup>2</sup>, there has been an improvement of nearly 3 m<sup>2</sup>.

16. Furthermore, the HA offers the following transfer schemes for eligible public housing households to improve their living space subject to availability of resources.

### **Overcrowding Relief Transfer Exercise**

17. The HD conducts the Overcrowding Relief Transfer Exercise two to three times a year. Under this exercise, all eligible public housing households with living space below 5.5 m<sup>2</sup> per person may apply for transfer to larger flats. Since 2001, nearly 7 000 households have been relieved from overcrowding through this exercise.

## **Living Space Improvement Transfer Scheme**

18. The Living Space Improvement Transfer Scheme (LSITS) has been conducted by the HD annually since 2006. Under the scheme, all eligible public housing households with living space below 7 m<sup>2</sup> per person may apply for transfer to larger flats. Nearly 2 100 households have benefited from the past two LSITS exercises.

19. Moreover, some 17 500 households have had their living space improved through the Regional Transfer Exercise (RT) and the Voluntary Transfer Exercise (VT)<sup>3</sup> in the past decade. Households in need of transfer owing to special circumstances may apply for “special transfer” by producing recommendations from the relevant Government department(s)/organization(s) (such as the Social Welfare Department or the Hospital Authority) or relevant supporting documents. The HD will provide them with appropriate and prompt assistance according to their needs subject to availability of resources.

### **Views Sought**

20. Members are invited to express views on the measures to improve the facilities and living space for aged public housing estates.

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<sup>3</sup> Regional Transfer Exercise and Voluntary Transfer Exercise aim at helping needy PRH households to improve their living condition through transfer and enabling the HA to recover PRH flats of suitable sizes and types in the target districts to meet the overall or district-specific special allocation requirements.