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Panel on Housing

Meeting on 9 June 2011

Background brief on enhanced partnering arrangements among Estate Management Advisory Committees and non-governmental organizations to promote neighborliness in public rental housing estates

Purpose

This paper sets out the background to the enhanced partnering arrangements among Estate Management Advisory Committees (EMACs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting community building and neighbourliness in public rental housing (PRH) estates, and gives an account of the views and concerns expressed by the Panel on Housing (the Panel).

Estate Management Advisory Committees

2. EMACs are established to serve as a communication channel between the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) and PRH tenants. EMACs provide feedback and reflect tenants' views on daily management matters, including maintenance and improvement works. They also play a role in assessing the performance of cleansing and security contractors, as well as in strengthening tenants' sense of belonging towards the community through organizing various community activities. Since 1995, 136 EMACs have been established.

Partnership with NGOs in organizing EMAC activities

3. In the past, EMACs usually engaged private production companies in the market to organize carnivals once or twice a year to promote community building, but the effect was limited. In view of the well-established community network of NGOs, their rich experience in providing social services, and their ability to provide PRH tenants with a multitude of social services according to the needs, HA invited local NGOs to organize community services as pilot schemes in certain PRH estates. Given the satisfactory outcome, HA

conducted a survey to solicit views from EMACs and representatives of the local community on the feasibility of partnering with NGOs in organizing various types of community activities. A majority of EMAC members supported the proposal, while representatives of the local community considered that EMACs could serve as a useful platform for NGOs to provide a wide range of services to tenants.

4. Taking into account the survey result, HA endorsed on 31 July 2009 the proposal of inviting NGOs to organize EMAC functions to foster community building and neighbourliness through the following enhanced system and funding arrangement -

- (a) ***formulation of an annual workplan*** - EMAC Chairmen would invite local NGOs to express their interest in organizing activities. NGOs would be invited to attend EMAC meetings to brief members on their work areas by rotation. Upon consultation with members, the EMAC Chairmen would draw up an annual workplan, and invite NGOs concerned to submit proposals and budgets for organizing these functions;
- (b) ***procedures for approving partnering function*** - EMAC Chairmen would seek the views of the Home Affairs Department, and form an advisory panel with representatives from the Social Welfare Department to conduct a preliminary assessment on the proposal. EMAC concerned would then discuss and approve the proposals, sequence of events to be held, selection of NGOs and funding arrangement etc;
- (c) ***funding arrangement*** - HA has agreed to set aside more resources to EMACs to organize respective services or activities. Under the enhanced arrangement, EMACs are allowed to use 30% of the EMAC fund (a total of about \$17.35 million) of their respective PRH estates to partner with NGOs. The actual expenses incurred would be paid on a reimbursement basis. The maximum amount of funding reserved for each function is about \$30,000 to \$50,000 depending on the number of households of the PRH estates; and
- (d) ***monitoring mechanism*** - NGOs which have been awarded the funds are required to submit to the relevant EMAC secretariats a summary report within two months upon completion of the functions. EMACs are responsible for monitoring the performance of the selected NGOs for future reference.

Deliberations by the Panel

5. The enhanced partnering arrangements among EMACs and NGOs in promoting community building and neighbourliness in PRH estates were discussed at the Panel meeting on 2 November 2009.

6. While supporting the need to promote community building and neighbourliness in PRH estates, members were concerned about the substantial resources earmarked for the purpose which amounted to 30% of the EMAC fund. They stressed that HA should make reference to the procurement guidelines formulated by the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption to ensure that the enhanced partnering arrangements were implemented in an open and fair manner. A stringent and independent monitoring mechanism should be in place to guard against abuse. HA should also ensure that the community activities were organized to cater for the needs of tenants. The Administration was requested to report on the progress of implementation of the enhanced partnering arrangements in 12 months' time.

Latest development

7. The Administration will brief members on the progress of the enhanced partnering arrangements among EMACs and NGOs in promoting community building and neighbourliness in PRH estates at the Panel meeting on 9 June 2011.

Relevant papers

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 2 November 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/hg/papers/hg1102cb1-193-6-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 2 November 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20091102.pdf>

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