

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)618/12-13
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/HG/1

Panel on Housing

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 7 January 2013, at 2:30pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH (Chairman)
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen

Members attending : Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP

Members absent : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

Public Officers attending : **For item IV**

Mr YAU Shing-mu, JP
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing

Miss Agnes WONG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

Mr Andy YIP
Acting Assistant Director/Existing Buildings 2
Buildings Department

For Item V

Ms Ada FUNG, JP
Deputy Director (Development & Construction)
Housing Department

Mrs Rosa HO
Chief Architect (3)
Housing Department

Mr Kenneth WONG
Chief Civil Engineer
Housing Department

Ms Irene HO
Principal Transport Officer/New Territories
Transport Department

Mr Alfred YAU
Regional Highway Engineer/New Territories
Highways Department

For Item VI

Ms Ada FUNG, JP
Deputy Director (Development & Construction)
Housing Department

Mr CHAN Nap-ming, JP
Assistant Director (Independent Checking Unit)
Housing Department

Clerk in attendance : Ms Miranda HON
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Council Secretary (1)1

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)1

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(1)327/12-13 — Minutes of the meeting held on
5 November 2012)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2012 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since last meeting

2. Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting -

(LC Paper No. CB(1)268/12-13(01) — "Land Registry Statistics for
November 2012" provided by the
Administration (press release)

LC Paper No. CB(1)377/12-13(01) — Letter dated 19 December 2012
from Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG
on his request for the Research
Division of the Legislative
Council Secretariat to conduct
research studies on the Long
Term Housing Strategy, as well as
subdivided flats and rent control
(Chinese version only)

Action

3. With reference to the letter dated 19 December 2012 from Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG on his request for the Research Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat to conduct research studies on the Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS"), as well as subdivided flats and rent control, the Chairman indicated that the request for research studies on LTHS would be considered by the Subcommittee on LTHS. Regarding the proposed research studies on subdivided flats and rent control, he said that as the subject of "Measures to deal with subdivided flats" would be discussed under agenda item IV of the meeting, members could seek the relevant information from the Administration direct. The Secretariat might collate information suggested by Dr CHEUNG as far as possible. He considered that a research study should be performed on rent control. Members agreed.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)367/12-13(01) — List of follow-up actions

LC Paper No. CB(1)367/12-13(02) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

4. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 4 February 2013, at 2:30 pm -

- (a) Energy saving initiatives in new public housing developments; and
- (b) 2012/13 - 2016/17 Public Housing Construction Programme of the Housing Authority.

5. The Chairman reminded members of the special meeting to be held on Friday, 18 January 2013, from 5:30 to 6:30 pm to receive a briefing by the Secretary for Transport and Housing on relevant policy initiatives in the Chief Executive's 2013 Policy Address.

IV. Measures to deal with subdivided flats

(LC Paper No. CB(1)367/12-13(03) — Administration's paper on "Measures to deal with subdivided flats"

Action

LC Paper No. CB(1)367/12-13(04) — Background brief on "Housing arrangements for occupants affected by enforcement action against unauthorized alteration works inside private premises" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

6. The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing ("USTH") briefed members on the existing measures to deal with the building and fire safety problems of subdivided flats, as well as the existing policies to cater for the housing needs of low-income groups by highlighting the salient points of the information paper. He said that there were views in the community that subdivided flats had their value of existence as there was a demand in the market for these flats which could provide affordable urban accommodation to those who were not eligible for public rental housing ("PRH"); or those who wished to live in the urban area which was closer to their workplaces or their children's place of study. It was therefore the Government's policy to secure the safety of subdivided flats, but not to eradicate all these flats. The Acting Assistant Director of Buildings/Existing Buildings 2 ("AtgADB/EB2") explained the measures taken to address the building safety issues related to subdivided flats.

Assistance provided to low-income groups living in subdivided flats

7. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that subdivided flats were very common in the older buildings in Kowloon West. Many of the households living in subdivided flats were awaiting their turn of PRH allocation under the Waiting List. Some of them had chosen to live in subdivided flats because these were closer to their workplaces or their children's place of study. The poor living conditions of subdivided flats should not have been allowed in a cosmopolitan city like Hong Kong and more should be done to address the problem. She would suggest that the rental subsidy provided to recipients under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme be extended to non-CSSA recipients living in subdivided flats and were on the Waiting List. She also enquired if there were any short-term measures that would alleviate the situation.

8. In response, USTH said that the standard of subdivided flats varied. The living conditions in some subdivided flats were not poor and they did not pose threats to building or fire safety. Any eligible person living under poor conditions, including the existing tenants of subdivided flats, could apply for PRH if they met the eligibility criteria. As for those who had pressing and imminent housing needs but were not able to resolve the problems by themselves, they could approach the Social Welfare Department or its recognised non-governmental organisations for assistance. Depending on individual

Action

circumstances, they would recommend eligible cases for Compassionate Rehousing to the Housing Department ("HD") for allocation of PRH flats in accordance with the established policies. Waiting List applicants might also seek earlier PRH allocation through the Express Flat Allocation Scheme. Enforcement actions would be taken against subdivided flats which posed a threat to building or fire safety. As regards the request for rental subsidy for tenants of subdivided flats, USTH said that CSSA had provided a safety net for those who could not support themselves financially. Furthermore, the Community Care Fund ("CCF") had reserved some \$91 million to provide a one-off subsidy to those who were living under poor conditions in order to relieve their financial burden.

9. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed dissatisfaction over the absence of statistics, policies, enforcement actions and rehousing arrangements for tenants of subdivided flats, which showed that the Administration had not taken heed of the plight of low-income groups living in subdivided flats. He considered it necessary that the Administration should work out measures to deal with subdivided flats including the rehousing arrangements before collecting the relevant statistics. The tenants of subdivided flats would come forward and apply for the rehousing arrangements when these were worked out. USTH said that new immigrants living in subdivided flats could apply to register on the Waiting List even though they did not have seven-year residence, provided that they met the residence requirement when their turn of PRH allocation was due. The Steering Committee on Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS") would be looking at the means to address the housing needs of low-income groups who were awaiting PRH allocation. Members' views on measures to deal with subdivided flats, including Mr LEE's suggestion of setting a minimum housing standard, would be taken into consideration by the Administration.

10. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung did not agree that subdivided flats had their value of existence. He supported that more efforts should be made to investigate buildings suspected of having subdivided flats and that more humanitarian consideration be given to the rehousing of low-income groups living in subdivided flats, cubicles and bedspace apartments. USTH said that HD staff had been paying visits to poorly-housed low-income groups to advise them to apply for PRH.

11. Mr Frederick FUNG said that the prevalence of subdivided flats was a result of inadequate provision of PRH. The Administration should increase the production of PRH units in the next five years beyond its target of 15 000 per year by identifying more land for PRH. It should not wait for the outcome of study by the Steering Committee on LTHS before pledging to increase the production target as the study would take time to complete. He considered that if the Chief Executive did not include in his 2013 Policy Address the increase in the target production of PRH units for the next five years, he would be seen to

Action

have failed in meeting the pledge made in his election manifesto. Mr FUNG further said that while he did not support giving priority to the low-income groups living in subdivided flats in general in the allocation of PRH as this would disrupt the queuing arrangement, he would support giving priority to those evacuated by the clearance of subdivided flats in the allocation of PRH. The use of interim housing units for rehousing the tenants affected by law enforcement actions and the provision of rental subsidy pending the allocation of PRH units should be considered. He also demanded that the requirement for limiting the number of subdivided flats to no more than three within a flat be strictly enforced.

12. Dr LAM Tai-fai noted with concern the difference in the perception of subdivided flats between the Administration and members. While members were concerned about the poor living conditions of subdivided flats, the Administration considered that subdivided flats were of existence value. He said that if the Administration was of the view that subdivided flats were of existence value, it should have encouraged the provision of more subdivided flats. He also shared the concern that without statistics on subdivided flats, there would be much difficulty in working out the clearance and rehousing arrangements. He considered that more should be done to resolve the problem, including the introduction of a definition of subdivided flats which would differentiate between proper and improper subdivided flats, or the introduction of a registration system similar to that for unauthorized building works in the small houses in the New Territories. USTH responded that the standard of the so-called subdivided flats varied and it was not the Government's policy to eradicate all subdivided flats. The Administration shared members' concern about the poor living conditions of low-income groups and would try to work out measures to resolve the problem in the long term.

Measures taken to address building safety issues related to subdivided flats

13. Mr Alan LEONG queried the Administration's statement made in its information paper that it would continue enforcement action to ensure that the subdivided flats could meet the safety requirements of relevant regulations, given that this could not be done in the absence of statistics on subdivided flats. AtgADB/EB2 said that investigative actions would be taken against subdivided flats in response to referrals and complaints. Notices requesting for rectification of irregularities would be served on owners of subdivided flats who were found to have contravened building regulations. Mr LEONG expressed concern about the risk of casualties if the Administration was to take actions only in response to referrals and complaints. He questioned why the Administration could not take proactive enforcement action against subdivided flats in areas known for prevalence of such flats. USTH responded that the Steering Committee on LTHS would be looking at ways to address the problem of subdivided flats.

Action

14. Mr KWOK Wai-keung pointed out that the prevalence of subdivided flats arose from the inadequacy in the provision of public housing for low-income groups. The low-income groups who were awaiting PRH would have to live in subdivided flats with poor living conditions. The Administration was well aware of the problems associated with subdivided flats, which included fire safety issues, water seepage and overloading, but it had chosen to tolerate the existence of such flats and did not take actions to eradicate them. As a result, owners of flats situated in buildings with a prevalence of subdivided flats were exposed to risks of building and fire safety, as well as water seepage. He considered it necessary that more should be done to protect the interests of these owners.

15. USTH said that the standard of subdivided flats varied. Some of the subdivided flats in residential buildings were in order and did not contravene the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) ("BO"). There were others which were situated in non-residential buildings and were in contravention of building and fire safety regulations. The Administration had adopted a series of measures to specifically address the issues related to subdivided flats and enforcement actions would be taken as appropriate against those subdivided flats which posed risks to building and fire safety, based on a prioritized programme. Mr KWOK sought elaboration on the actions to be taken against subdivided flats which posed risks to building and fire safety. AtgADB/EB2 explained that where irregularities were found in buildings, the Buildings Department would issue notices requiring owners to rectify them.

16. Miss Alice MAK shared the view that subdivided flats posed fire and building safety threats not only to the tenants therein but also to the neighbouring residents. She was particularly concerned about water seepage problems which would be increasingly difficult to resolve with the subdivision of flats. Owners of properties situated below subdivided flats would have a hard time to cope with water seepage arising from alterations in water supply and drainage systems of subdivided flats in the upper floors, regardless of whether they were properly or improperly subdivided. She was of the view that the best means to resolve the problem of subdivided flats was to produce more PRH units. She also enquired about the number of flats which were properly subdivided and did not contravene BO.

17. USTH agreed on the need to expedite the provision of public housing. He said that efforts had been made to identify more land for PRH and to increase the plot ratio of available sites. As regards water seepage problems associated with subdivided flats, AtgADB/EB2 said that efforts would be made to identify the sources of seepage, which might arise from water supply or drainage systems. Notices requesting for rectification would be issued to the owners concerned.

Action

Need for statistics on subdivided flats

18. Mr WONG Yuk-man noted from the Administration's information paper that while "subdivided flats" was not defined in BO, this term was commonly used to describe cases where an original flat (as shown on the approved building plan) was subdivided into two or more smaller self-contained domestic cubicles for sale or rental and each of these cubicles usually had its own toilet, or even its own cooking place. He questioned whether such description was considered acceptable to the Administration and he recalled that the Secretary for Development had a different interpretation of subdivided flats and cubicles. As tenants of subdivided flats were living in very poor living conditions and were exposed to threats of fire and building safety, there was a need to ascertain the extent of the problem and to give an estimate on the number of subdivided flats. He was concerned that despite the prevalence of subdivided flats in non-residential buildings, it was not the Government's policy to eradicate subdivided flats.

19. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed regret that the Government had failed to provide an estimate on the number of people living in subdivided flats. He opined that it would be difficult to formulate housing strategies in the absence of statistics on subdivided flats. Therefore, he would move a motion requesting the Administration to provide the number of households living in subdivided flats in the territory. He did not agree with the Administration's acceptance of subdivided flats on grounds of their value of existence. He pointed out that low-income groups awaiting PRH allocation did not want to live in subdivided flats but did not have a choice as they could not afford other private rental accommodation. He hoped that a policy to eradicate subdivided flats, cubicles and interim housing units in the long run could be worked out as they should not be tolerated. He pointed out that instead of relying on CCF to provide one-off subsidy to those who were living in poor conditions, consideration should be given to resolving the housing problem of low-income families. Also, he requested information on the number of households living in subdivided flats.

20. USTH responded that the Administration did not have comprehensive statistics on subdivided flats. The Steering Committee on LTHS would be identifying ways to tackle the housing problem of low-income families living in subdivided flats. There were difficulties in gaining access to private premises in the investigation on subdivided flats, particularly when no irregularities were spotted outside the premises. He said that some of the households living in subdivided flats were eligible for PRH but for various reasons they had chosen to live in such flats. Others were Waiting List applicants awaiting their turn of PRH allocation.

Action

21. Dr Fernando CHEUNG referred members to a photograph taken at a subdivided flat which was the home to a 69-year-old man. The subdivided flat had an area of 60 square feet only and the cooking facilities were situated right next to the toilet bowl. He questioned the Administration's acceptance of subdivided flats on grounds of their value of existence, when it did not have statistics on the number of households living in subdivided flats. He failed to see how subdivided flats could have existence value when the living conditions were so poor. He said that the Business and Professionals Federation of Hong Kong had commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct a study on subdivided flats and according to its findings, there were about 148 600 people living in subdivided flats. Another survey conducted by a student association had estimated that there were 280 000 households living in subdivided flats. These figures were much higher than the estimation of 64 900 people living in subdivided flats made by the Census and Statistics Department ("C&SD") under its General Household Survey.

22. Dr CHEUNG further stated that the rentals for subdivided flats were exceptionally high, averaging at about \$27 per square feet. The low-income groups had a hard time coping with the high rentals and poor living standards. The Administration, however, had not taken the needed measures to alleviate the plight of low-income groups. Instead, it had continued to adhere to the target production of 15 000 PRH flats per year and had declined to reinstate rent control. He requested that statistics on subdivided flats be provided by the Administration and that the Research Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat should assist in compiling some of these statistics. He also requested that a meeting be held to receive deputations' views on subdivided flats and for the Administration to respond to the concerns raised.

23. Mr Kenneth LEUNG noted that according to the General Household Survey of C&SD, as at end June 2012, there were some 31 800 domestic households, with a total of 64 900 people living in private temporary housing or in the rooms, cubicles, bedspaces and cocklofts of private permanent housing. He sought information on the average income of these households, their rentals as well as their rent-to-income ratio. He also pointed out that according to the survey conducted by the Society for Community Organization, about 50% of the new immigrants were living in subdivided flats, 10% of them were living in cubicles, and 7% of them were living in roof-top structures. He enquired about the rehousing arrangements for these new immigrants in the event of clearance of subdivided flats and roof-top structures, given that many of them did not meet the seven-year residence requirement and were not eligible for PRH.

24. USTH replied that the Administration did not have information on the income levels of the 31 800 domestic households surveyed under the General Household Survey of C&SD. In general, the rent-to-income ratio of households

Action

with monthly income less than \$10,000 per month and living in private rental accommodation would be around 40%. Mr LEUNG expressed concern as to how these low-income groups could afford the living expenses when the rental took up 40% of their income. USTH said that some of these households were receiving CSSA, which included the provision of rental subsidy.

25. Noting that it was the Government's policy to secure the safety of subdivided flats and not to eradicate them, Dr Joseph LEE enquired about the number of properly subdivided flats which could be tolerated and of these, how many were situated in private residential and industrial buildings and what measures were taken to ensure their safety. He opined that as a responsible Government, efforts should be made to identify the extent of the problem and to maintain a record of the number of subdivided flats in Hong Kong. He also enquired about the policy on cubicles since some of the low-income households would choose to live in cubicles which were close to their work places. Consideration could be given to redeveloping temporary housing accommodation sites or aged buildings for re-housing tenants affected by the clearance of subdivided flats. USTH responded that the Steering Committee on LTHS would try to resolve the housing needs of low-income groups. Efforts would be made to provide statistics on subdivided flats, although there would be difficulties in doing so.

26. Mr WU Chi-wai said that the crux of the matter was whether subdivided flats had value of existence. He supported that subdivided flats should be phased out and a timetable should be worked out with a view to improving the living conditions of low-income groups. He said that there was a need to provide statistics on subdivided flats so that the extent of the problem could be ascertained. USTH said that there were different interpretations of subdivided flats. He agreed on the need to improve the living conditions of low-income groups who were poorly-housed and more PRH units should be provided to meet their housing demand.

27. Dr KWOK Ka-ki also did not agree that subdivided flats had existence value. As the Administration could not provide the necessary statistics on subdivided flats, he requested for the conduct of a survey on subdivided flats in addition to the introduction of a registration system with a view to identifying the extent of the problem. USTH said that the Administration was in the course of preparing for the collection of statistics on poorly-housed households (including the subdivided flat tenants) to facilitate the formulation of housing strategies. As regards why the Administration had not conducted any survey on subdivided flat tenants, AtgADB/EB2 said that it was difficult to gain access to private premises for conducting inspections relating to subdivided flats.

Action

Motion

28. The Chairman referred members to the following original motion moved by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and the amendment motion moved by Mr KWOK Wai-keung which were tabled at the meeting -

Original motion moved by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and seconded by Dr Fernando CHEUNG

本會強烈要求有關當局盡快向本會提供全港居住於"劏房"的住戶數目，及長遠取締"劏房"的措施，協助居民上樓。

(Translation)

That this Panel strongly requests the relevant authorities to expeditiously provide to the Panel the number of households living in "subdivided flats" in the territory, and to eradicate "subdivided flats" in the long run so as to assist residents with flat accommodation.

Amendment motion moved by Mr KWOK Wai-keung and seconded by Miss Alice MAK

本會強烈要求有關當局盡快向本會提供全港居住於"劏房"的住戶數目、家庭人數及單位數目，以重新檢討公營房屋的興建量，協助低收入居民盡快上樓；同時當局應長遠取締"劏房"，保障小業主權益。

(Translation)

That this Panel strongly requests the relevant authorities to expeditiously provide to the Panel the number of households living in "subdivided flats" in the territory, their family sizes as well as the number of such flats, so as to review afresh the public housing production to assist low-income families with flat accommodation as soon as possible; at the same time, the authorities should eradicate "subdivided flats" in the long run to protect the interests of flat owners.

29. The Chairman put the amendment motion to vote. Eight members voted for the motion, no one voted against it and two abstained. The Chairman declared that the amendment motion was carried.

Admin 30. The Chairman and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung requested the Administration to inform the Panel of the proposed timetable and methodology in taking forward the survey on subdivided flats to collect the relevant statistics on the households living therein before the Panel's next meeting. As to Dr Fernando CHEUNG's

Action

request for the Panel to hold a special meeting to receive deputations' views, the Chairman said that this should more appropriately be dealt with by the Subcommittee on LTHS under the Panel.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's reply on the proposed timetable and methodology in taking forward the survey on subdivided flats was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)510/12-13(01) on 31 January 2013.)

V. Public Works Programme Item No. B079TI – Public Transport Interchange at Hung Shui Kiu Area 13

(LC Paper No. CB(1)367/12-13(05) — Administration's paper on "Public Works Programme Item No. B079TI – Public Transport Interchange at Hung Shui Kiu Area 13")

31. The Deputy Director of Housing (Development & Construction) ("DDH(D&C)") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to upgrade Public Works Programme Item No. **B079TI** to Category A at an estimated cost of \$37.8 million in money-of-the-day prices for the design and construction of a public transport interchange ("PTI") at Hung Shui Kiu Area 13. The Chief Architect (3), Housing Department ("CA(3)HD") gave a power-point presentation on the proposal.

(Post-meeting note: A set of the power-point presentation materials on the subject was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)384/12-13(01) on 7 January 2013.)

32. Miss Alice MAK enquired whether the completion of PTI would tie in with the population intake of the public housing development at Hung Shui Kiu Area 13. She expressed concern as to whether the demand for public transport services arising from the population of about 13 700 in the area could be met by the public transport services available at PTI which only provided three bays for franchised buses and one lay-by for green minibus/franchised buses. She also enquired if the proposed PTI had any room for expansion to accommodate more public transport services to meet any increase in demand after the population intake of the adjoining public housing development.

33. DDH(D&C) responded that the construction of PTI would commence in August 2013 for completion by November 2014 to tie in with the population intake of the public housing development at Hung Shui Kiu Area 13 during the same period. CA(3)HD said that PTI would provide three bays for franchised

Action

buses, two of which were single-lane while one was double-lane, as well as one lay-by for green minibus/franchised buses. The scale of the proposed PTI would be able to provide sufficient transport services for an additional population of 13 700. Given the planning constraints, it would not be possible to further expand PTI. However, space had been reserved at the side roads at the boundary of the new public housing development which could be utilised to accommodate more transport services if necessary. The Principal Transport Officer/New Territories, Transport Department ("PTO/NT, TD") added that the Administration would closely monitor the usage of PTI and the transport services demand of the residents after the population intake of the public housing development in the area. Where necessary, suitable adjustments would be made to meet any increase in demand for transport services.

34. Mr Michel TIEN said that he had exchanged views with the residents of Hung Shui Kiu on the demand for public transport services in the area. While they would welcome the provision of PTI, they were most concerned about the availability of transport connections to the West Rail, Tai Lam Tunnel and Siu Lam at Tuen Mun, where changes to other transport modes could be made. The provision of bus routes travelling to New Territories East areas such as Fanling and Tai Po via Hung Shui Kiu, and terminating at Tin Shui Wai, would be most welcome by residents. He would therefore support that the three bays with two single-lanes and one double-lane be re-adjusted to allow for four bays with four single lanes to cater for the four bus routes.

35. PTO/NT, TD responded that the bus routes to be provided at the PTI would include bus no. 68X, which operated from Hung Shui Kiu via Tai Lam Tunnel to Jordan. Consideration would also be given to re-routing bus no. 63X which operated via Tuen Mun Road to Jordan; and 68A as well as other bus routes serving the neighbouring areas to stop at the PTI. She added that bus no. K75 would connect residents from the development to the Light Rail and West Rail Station. The suggested provision of bus connecting services from PTI to the West Rail would be taken into account. The Transport Department would seek the views of the relevant District Councils on the bus service plan for the development at Hung Shui Kiu Area 13 when consulting them on the Franchised Bus Route Development Programme in early 2014. At the request of Mr TIEN, the Administration agreed to consider providing a cover for the lay-by for green minibus/franchised buses to provide more shelter for waiting passengers.

(Post-meeting note: As advised by HD, it had met and discussed with Mr Michael TIEN on 9 January 2013, and it was agreed that a separate passenger shelter over the footpath adjacent to the lay-by proposed for green minibuses/franchised buses would be provided.)

Action

36. The Chairman concluded that members supported the submission of the proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee and the Finance Committee.

VI. Proposed creation of directorate posts in the Housing Department for implementation of the new Home Ownership Scheme and other housing initiatives

(LC Paper No. CB(1)367/12-13(06) — Administration's paper on "Proposed creation of directorate posts in the Housing Department for implementation of the new Home Ownership Scheme and other housing initiatives")

37. DDH(D&C) briefed members on the Administration's proposal to create four D1 directorate posts, including one Chief Engineer, one Chief Geotechnical Engineer, one Chief Maintenance Surveyor ("CMS") and one Chief Structural Engineer ("CSE") in Housing Department ("HD") with effect from 3 May 2013 to cope with the substantial increase in workload arising from the implementation of the new Home Ownership Scheme ("HOS") and other related housing initiatives.

38. The Chairman stated that he would extend the ending time of the meeting by 15 minutes to 4:45 pm. Members agreed.

39. Mr Frederick FUNG indicated support for the implementation of the new HOS and for HD to take forward the project. He enquired whether the construction works for the new HOS would be taken up by HD or outsourced to private contractors as he was concerned that there might not be sufficient manpower resources within HD to take up the associated construction works. DDH(D&C) responded that HD was responsible for the new HOS construction works and the proposed creation of posts was meant to cope with the substantial increase in workload arising from the implementation of the new HOS. While some of the construction and engineering works would be contracted out to architects and engineers in the private sector if necessary, the new HOS would not be dealt with as private sector participation projects. The manpower requirement for meeting the annual production target of 15 000 public rental housing ("PRH") flats and 5 000 new HOS flats had been kept under review. With the approval of the Finance Committee, six directorate posts had already been created in the Development and Construction Division ("DCD") since 13 July 2012 to kick-start the planning and design work relating to the new HOS.

Action

Four more directorate posts were proposed to be created under the present proposal. Additional manpower resources would be sought as and when necessary.

Admin

40. Mr FUNG further said that the creation of posts on a piecemeal basis had made it difficult for members to monitor the overall staffing situation. He therefore sought information on the total additional manpower resources required to cope with the target production of 5 000 HOS flats per year. At Mr FUNG's request, the Administration would provide an overview of the total additional manpower resources required to cope with the workload arising from the implementation of the new HOS and other related housing initiatives.

41. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired about the criteria for creation of additional posts, as he was not aware of the need to create additional posts for constructing HOS back in the earlier days when both PRH and HOS flats were produced in tandem. DDH(D&C) responded that the creation of posts would be proposed in a phased manner and in accordance with the stage of development of the new HOS, starting with the planning and design work, and followed by the actual construction and implementation. This explained why the proposals for the creation of directorate posts had to be separately submitted in July 2012 and January 2013. In assessing the need for creating additional posts, the scale and complexity of works, as well as the completion schedule would be taken into account.

Admin

42. DDH(D&C) also explained that due to the cessation of production of HOS flats and other reasons, the number of directorate posts in DCD had been reduced. Given that most of the sites identified for the new HOS development either had very complicated engineering constraints or were exposed to natural terrain hazards, there was greater demand for engineering input for detailed design, coordination and liaison. There was thus a need to further strengthen the directorate support from the engineering disciplines within DCD. There was also an urgent need for additional professional posts in DCD to enable timely delivery of the housing production targets. At Mr LEUNG's request, the Administration undertook to provide information on the sites identified for the new HOS and their complexities in justifying the creation of additional posts.

43. Mr Tony TSE said that he supported the proposed creation of posts as there was a need to cope with the substantial increase in workload arising from the implementation of the new HOS. With reference to the directorate set-up of the Independent Checking Unit ("ICU"), he noted that while two directorate posts, i.e. one CMS post and one CSE post, would be created under the present proposal, the Chief Architect ("CA") post and CSE post redeployed to ICU since 2005 and 2006 would have to be returned to DCD. As such, there would not be any net increase in the number of directorate posts in ICU to carry out its work, which included, among others, checking building design and construction

Action

proposals, granting of approvals and consents to commence work and undertaking subsequent site monitoring works against the endorsed site supervision plans, method statements, etc.

44. The Assistant Director of Housing (ICU) explained that the return of one CA and one part-time CSE posts from ICU to DCD was needed to address the urgency of resource needs for DCD at the moment. With the return of these directorate posts to DCD, the proposed creation of two directorate posts in ICU would only result in a marginal increase in the staff support at directorate level for ICU. He advised that HD had adopted a prudent approach, even though the workload of the CMS in ICU would likely be very heavy. HD would closely monitor the staffing situation of ICU with the implementation of the new HOS and other new initiatives in building control works, and additional manpower resources would be sought as and when necessary.

45. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok declared interest as a member of the Building Committee and the Tender Committee of the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA"). He said that as the representative of the Engineering Constituency, he was well aware of the operation of the construction industry and the additional building requirements in terms of quantity and quality, given that HA was now granted potential sites, rather than disposed sites as in the past, for housing developments. While he supported the proposed creation of directorate posts to cope with the increase in workload arising from the implementation of the new HOS, he was concerned about the adequacy of non-directorate professional staff for taking up the workload. DDH(D&C) assured members that there would be sufficient professional staff to assist in the implementation of the new HOS.

46. Given the limited supply of housing land, Mr WU Chi-wai enquired if there was sufficient land reserve to meet the target production of public housing. He also enquired about the additional manpower resources required to overcome the site constraints and complexities arising from the use of potential sites in housing developments. DDH(D&C) said that the production of public housing was taken forward under a rolling five-year Public Housing Construction Programme ("PHCP"), and the land supply for public housing for the next four years would be set out under PHCP. Given a proliferation in the use of potential sites in housing developments, more technical studies, preparatory work and longer lead time would be needed to deal with unforeseen ground conditions and to overcome site constraints. In response to Mr WU's request, the Administration agreed to provide information on the potential sites to be made available for the production of public housing in the future.

Admin

47. The Chairman concluded that members supported the submission of the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee.

Action

VII. Any other business

48. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:35 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 March 2013