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Panel on Housing

Meeting on 15 April 2013

**Updated background brief on "Progress of addition of lifts
and escalators in Housing Authority's existing public housing estates"
prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

Purpose

This paper sets out the progress of the addition of lifts and escalators in Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA")'s existing public rental housing ("PRH") estates, and gives a brief account of the views expressed by Members on the subject.

Background

2. PRH estates constructed on hillsides are normally provided with staircases for connecting the different platforms within the estate or with the adjacent estate/public road. To further improve the pedestrian access based on local needs, HA has provided lifts or escalators to some of these PRH estates, including Tai Wo Hau Estate, So Uk Estate, Tsz Ching Estate, Yau Tong Estate and Kwai Chung Estate, over the past few years.

3. Members of the Panel on Housing ("the Panel") have been regularly briefed on the progress of HA's programme to enhance the pedestrian access in identified PRH estates to cater for the need of tenants, the elderly and the disabled in particular, requiring barrier-free access. Enhancement works include the provision of new lifts, escalators and footbridges in external areas within PRH estate boundaries to connect elevated platforms with large-level differences and, where technically feasible, addition of lift towers to PRH blocks built without lift services.

4. The lift modernization programme in all existing PRH estates is an on-going programme. HA continues to modernize lifts aged over 25 years and takes the opportunity to provide lift openings for floors currently without any,

where the structure permits. The modernization programme will cover approximately 100 lifts each year over the next five years.

Addition of lifts, escalators and footbridges at external areas

5. The addition of facilities such as escalators or lifts with footbridges is considered an effective means for the pedestrians to overcome level differences. Escalators are however not suitable for wheelchair users and would only be used under circumstances where lift installations are technically not suitable due to site constraints. In evaluating the need and priority on the addition of lifts and escalators on hillsides and at external areas, HA will give consideration to vertical level difference, land status, technical feasibility and social acceptability. Higher priority will be accorded to estates with a higher percentage of elderly tenants and where the additional facilities would benefit a larger number of tenants.

6. The projects in external areas within PRH estate boundaries are set out in **Appendix I**. These projects often involve piling and superstructure works at slopes together with extensive temporary works and sometimes significant slope improvement works. Considerable challenges have been encountered in implementing some projects to cope with demanding site constraints as well as limited working area and complicated geotechnical conditions. To shorten construction time on site and to minimize possible nuisance to tenants, HA has used steel lift towers, steel footbridges and off-site prefabrication of parts as far as possible. HA has maintained close liaison with other government departments to ensure timely and uninterrupted delivery and to facilitate the hoisting of prefabricated parts into place.

Addition of lifts in existing PRH estates without lift service

7. There are 35 blocks in 12 estates which are without lift service. These blocks are mostly seven storeys high. A five year programme has been planned to add new lifts to these blocks. The progress of the programme is set out in **Appendix II**.

8. HA has encountered some challenges in carrying out these projects, which include the need to clear some flats to allow for access points for the new lifts, alteration to some existing structures to accommodate some new external lift towers as well as the installation of various measures to minimize disturbance to the tenants of both domestic flats and ground floor shops during construction. Since construction works involve noisy site work such as demolition, rock breaking and piling construction, and as the work sites are often adjacent to domestic flats, the HA has implemented appropriate noise mitigation measures and

also shortened the construction period to minimize disturbance to the tenants.

Modernization work for lifts in existing estates

9. HA has put in place a structured lift modernization rolling programme where the conditions of all lifts over 25 years of age are evaluated regularly. Lifts are replaced in accordance with priority based on their age, breakdown rates, and the benefits after replacement in terms of improved safety, comfort, travel time and energy efficiency. Opportunity is also taken to provide lift openings for every floor if not previously provided, where the structure permits. HA plans to replace about 100 lifts each year over the period from 2008-2009 to 2013-2014 with a total estimated expenditure of \$500 million.

10. Eight lift modernization projects involving 177 lifts in eight PRH estates were awarded in 2011 while contracts to further replace approximately 100 lifts were let out in 2012.

Deliberations by the Panel on Housing

11. The addition of lifts and escalators in existing PRH estates was discussed by the Panel at its meetings on 5 January and 7 December 2009, as well as 10 February 2011 and 7 May 2012.

12. With the aging population, Panel members generally supported the provision of lifts and escalators in PRH estates to cater for the need of the elderly and the disabled. However, some members were concerned about the long lead time for installation of lifts/escalators. These members also queried the need for feasibility studies when most PRH were of similar designs. Some other members enquired if residents, District Council members and Estate Management Advisory Committees had been consulted on the provision of lifts/escalators to avoid possible under-utilization of these facilities. Consideration should also be given to equipping the lifts/escalators with communication system and energy saving devices (such as energy-efficient lighting and sensors which would automatically turn off the lifts/escalators when these were not in use) where applicable. The Administration was requested to provide regular progress reports on these programmes, and to consider providing lifts/escalators at estates which were not included in the programmes but in need of these facilities.

13. On the *addition of lifts, escalators and footbridges at external areas*, some Panel members noted that the locations of these facilities must be within the estate boundary. This had rendered many deserving cases not eligible for inclusion in the programme. Given that a consultancy study was underway to establish an

assessment system for the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems, members requested that an inter-departmental group should be set up to oversee the study which should be expedited for the benefit of residents. To observe how the need for elevator links and elevator systems could be met, a visit to Kwai Chung Estate and Oi Man Estate was arranged on 5 March 2009. When the provision of barrier-free access in PRH estates was discussed at the Panel meeting on 4 May 2009, members opined that HA should consult tenants at the design and planning stage of barrier-free access improvement works, including the installation of lifts and escalators, so that these facilities could be provided in such a way and location that would best suit the needs of the community.

14. Some Panel members considered a more definitive time frame should be provided for the addition of lifts, escalators and footbridges within the boundaries of PRH estates, and that HA should take a more proactive role in providing these facilities to enhance pedestrian access. Consideration should also be given to connecting the lift/escalator networks of PRH estates with that of MTR Corporation Limited to facilitate barrier-free access. By way of illustration, HA should proceed with the installation of lifts and escalators at Tze Wan Shan without having to await the approval of the Shatin to Central Link ("SCL"), albeit the provision of these facilities formed part of SCL. HA should consider carrying out the improvement works first and reimbursing the cost from MTR Corporation Limited upon approval of SCL to enable early provision of the needed facilities. Some other members expressed concern that if the lift installation programme would be subject to the World Trade Organization Agreement on Government Procurement, local contractors might not succeed in tendering the works. These members asked if the programme could be tendered out under several smaller contracts to enable the participation of local contractors, thus benefiting the local economy through the creation of more job opportunities for the local workforce. They also stressed the need for proper maintenance of lifts and escalators to ensure safety.

15. While appreciating the progress of the programme to enhance pedestrian access in identified PRH estates, particularly the use of steel lift towers, steel footbridges and off-site prefabrication of parts to shorten the construction time on site, some Panel members asked why similar techniques were not adopted by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department to expedite the public works projects in relation to provision of barrier-free access. The Administration advised that these techniques were commonly adopted in building works not only to shorten construction time on site but also minimize possible nuisances to affected residents. However, their application was subject to the availability of sufficient working space.

16. On the *modernization work for lifts in existing PRH estates*, some Panel members enquired if the programme would deal with the existing problem where

lift openings were not provided for every floor in some PRH blocks, and whether special arrangements would be provided to transfer elderly or physically disabled tenants living in the top floor units which were not provided with lift openings. Noting that some lifts in PRH estates were not equipped with sensors, Panel members were concerned that passengers could easily get caught between closing lift doors. To facilitate the visually impaired, HA should provide floor numbers in Braille characters for existing lifts in PRH estates. HA should also consider installing more lifts in larger estates (such as Lok Wah Estate), and providing covers for escalators for the convenience of residents.

17. On the *addition of lifts in existing PRH blocks without lift service*, some Panel members noted with concern the possible wastage in the provision of new lifts at the Pak Tin Estate which was to be redeveloped. They considered that a longer term planning should be worked out for aged estates with redevelopment potential to avoid waste of resources. The Administration explained that the decision to add new lifts to Pak Tin Estate was made in 2008 as part of the programme on addition of lifts in existing PRH estates without lift service. As the decision to redevelop Pak Tin Estate was taken after the completion of tender for the new lifts, the Housing Department was contractually obliged to proceed with the construction works as there would be costs incurred from the rescission of the contract. The provision of new lifts at Pak Tin Estate would ensure barrier-free access, particularly for elderly tenants, pending redevelopment. Opportunity would be taken to relocate and re-use the equipment (such as the lift car and lift driving mechanism etc) as far as possible in other estates.

Latest development

18. The Administration proposes to report on the latest progress of the programme on the addition of lifts or escalators in HA's existing PRH estates at the Panel meeting on 15 April 2013.

Relevant papers

19. A list of relevant papers is in **Appendix III**.

**Addition of Lifts, Escalators and Footbridges
in External Area within the Boundaries of PRH Estates**

(i) Summary of Progress

Stage of work	Progress	
	As at 10 February 2011	As at 15 April 2012
Project completed	14%	29%
Project under construction	29%	71%
Tender completed	43%	100%
Design completed	86%	100%
Feasibility study completed	100%	100%

(ii) Completion Timeline

Up to	Cumulative Percentage of Projects Completed
15 April 2012	29%
2nd quarter of 2012	52%
3rd quarter of 2012	81%
4th quarter of 2012	100%

Addition of Lifts for PRH Blocks without Lift Service

(i) Summary of Progress

Stage of work	Progress	
	As at 10 February 2011	As at 15 April 2012
Project completed	33%	36%
Project under construction	27%	64%
Tender completed	60%	100%
Design completed	67%	100%
Feasibility study completed	100%	100%

(ii) Completion Timeline

Up to	Cumulative Percentage of Projects Completed
15 April 2012	36%
2nd quarter of 2012	42%
3rd quarter of 2012	71%
4th quarter of 2012	100%

List of relevant papers

**Progress of addition of lifts
and escalators in Housing Authority's existing public housing estates**

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Housing	5 January 2009	<p>Administration's paper on "Addition of Lifts in Housing Authority's Existing Public Housing Estates" (LC Paper No. CB(1)490/08-09(05)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0105cb1-490-5-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)893/08-09) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20090105.pdf</p>
Panel on Housing	4 May 2009	<p>Administration's paper on "Progress of the provision of barrier-free access in public housing estates" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1447/08-09(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0504cb1-1447-4-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)2071/08-09) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20090504.pdf</p>
Panel on Housing	7 December 2009	<p>Administration's paper on "Progress Report on the Addition of Lifts and Escalators in Housing Authority's Existing Public Rental Housing Estates" (LC Paper No. CB(1)534/09-10(05)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/hg/papers/hg1207cb1-534-5-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)987/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20091207.pdf</p>

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Housing	10 February 2011	<p>Administration's paper on "Progress Report on Addition of Lifts and Escalators to Existing Public Rental Housing Estates" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1209/10-11(03)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0210cb1-1209-3-e.pdf</p> <p>Updated background brief on "Progress of addition of lifts and escalators in Housing Authority's existing public housing estates" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(1)1209/10-11(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0210cb1-1209-4-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)2023/10-11) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20110210.pdf</p>
Panel on Housing	7 May 2012	<p>Administration's paper on "Progress report on addition of lifts and escalators to existing public rental housing estates" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1764/11-12(05)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0507cb1-1764-5-e.pdf</p> <p>Updated background brief on "Progress of addition of lifts and escalators in Housing Authority's existing public housing estates" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(1)1764/11-12(06)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0507cb1-1764-6-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)2426/11-12) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20120507.pdf</p>