

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Review of Enhanced Partnering Arrangements among Estate Management Advisory Committees and Non-Governmental Organisations to Promote Neighbourliness in Public Rental Housing Estates

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the review findings on the implementation of the enhanced partnering arrangements among Estate Management Advisory Committees (EMACs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in public rental housing (PRH) estates. New measure will be introduced to optimise the use of the EMAC funds to organise community building activities for tenants.

BACKGROUND

2. In 2009, the Housing Authority (HA) implemented the enhanced partnering arrangements to promote neighbourliness in PRH estates. Under the arrangements, each EMAC is provided funds and they are allowed to use up to 30% of the EMAC funds to partner with NGOs to organize from two to four community building functions¹ per annum, according to the needs and preference of individual estates.

3. We briefed Members on the implementation of the initiative in 2009 and 2011 respectively. In this paper, we will report the outcome of the recent comprehensive review of the partnering arrangements by making reference to the experience gained and feedback collected.

REVIEW FINDINGS

Functions Held and the Effectiveness of the Partnering Arrangements

4. The initiative has been well received by the EMACs, tenants and other stakeholders. Some 800 partnering functions of various types were held during the period from April 2011 and March 2013. The themes covered care for the elderly, supporting services for different target groups, promotion of family cohesion, healthy living and environmental protection.

¹ According to the prevailing guidelines, two to three partnering functions with NGOs should be arranged for small estates (with 3 000 or less flats), and three to four functions for large estates (with 3 001 or more flats) per annum. The funding ceiling for each function is \$30,000 for small estates and \$50,000 for large estates.

5. To promote care and support for elderly tenants, each EMAC is required to organise at least one partnering function annually to facilitate NGOs' outreaching service for the elderly. The Housing Department (HD) has collaborated with the Department of Health to identify suitable NGOs to partner with EMACs to launch thematic community health promotion programmes in a number of estates to raise tenants' awareness of the importance of good health.

6. The HD made use of the biennial seminar for EMAC members held in March 2012 to solicit their support for the partnering arrangements. EMACs' have been questioned to allow an evaluation of the partnering functions. Their response has been very encouraging. The overall satisfaction rate of the functions is 99%. Apart from fostering neighbourliness and strengthening tenants' sense of belonging towards the community, the partnering functions also serve as a useful platform for NGOs to provide a wide range of services to tenants and reach out more effectively to those who are in need of assistance.

Control and Monitoring of Expenditure

7. To ensure the effective use of public money, the use of the EMAC funds for partnering functions has been stringently monitored by estate management staff. The actual expenses incurred are reimbursed to NGOs by making reference to the standard expenses adopted by District Councils. In addition, the Housing Department will randomly check the proposals and evaluation reports of the NGOs on a quarterly basis.

OPTIMISING THE USE OF EMAC FUNDS TO HOLD COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

8. During the review, we observed that some EMACs, particularly those estates with few NGOs in the neighbourhood, have experienced difficulties in achieving the target number of functions despite strenuous efforts by the estate management staff to promote the arrangements. In some estates, the local NGOs have been fully committed to their on-going activities and do not have spare capacity to arrange additional partnering functions.

9. In view of this, in March 2013 the HA endorsed a new measure to ensure full utilization of the EMAC funds and encourage them to arrange community activities for the benefit of tenants. Under the new measure, EMAC may organise one thematic community building function per annum without partnering with NGOs to cater for local needs when all attempts of identifying suitable NGOs have been exhausted. The function solely organised by EMAC is subject to the same fund control measure adopted in the partnering arrangements with NGOs.

WAY FORWARD

10. Given the strong support from EMACs and tenants as well as the positive evaluation of the arrangements, the HA will continue the current partnering arrangements with NGOs and maintain the existing target number of functions to be held each year. Furthermore, when sufficient NGO partners cannot be engaged to achieve the target, each EMAC will be allowed to organise one community function by itself per annum.

11. Members are invited to note the review findings on the enhanced partnering arrangements among EMACs and NGOs to promote neighbourliness in PRH estates and the new measure to optimise the use of EMAC funds to ensure that all tenants can fully participate in community activities.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
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