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Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Transport and Housing

Session No. : 14

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)01

(Question Serial No. S0124)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) (Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

This is a follow-up question on Reply Serial No. THB(H)007, in which the Administration provided data on the areas reserved for welfare lettings in public rental housing (PRH) estates. I am in support of the social inclusion policy. PRH estates have to cater for the housing needs of the public while certain areas therein are reserved for the provision of support facilities to serve those who have such needs. I would like the Administration to advise if there is a set of criteria under the existing PRH policy for determining the ratio of facilities to be provided, such as the respective areas of welfare, leisure and cultural, as well as commercial facilities that should be provided for a certain number of PRH flats. Please also advise what policies the Administration will adopt to achieve greater integration between relevant facilities (together with their users) and the local residents to enable the balanced development of new communities.

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Yuen-han

Reply:

In planning new public housing developments, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) will determine the provision of facilities, including social welfare and recreational facilities, with reference to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines and in consultation with relevant government departments, organizations and the District Councils. While meeting the needs of the local community and population growth, and taking into account other factors such as individual site conditions, availability of existing facilities in the district as well as the feasibility and suitability of the required facilities, etc, the HA will endeavour to accommodate relevant social welfare and recreational facilities as far as practicable so as to promote social inclusion and development of well-balanced communities.

For retail facilities, the HA will consider factors such as the planned population of the public housing developments, existing retail facilities nearby, etc. If necessary, consultancy study will be commissioned to determine the suitable retail facilities for new public housing developments.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)02

(Question Serial No. S0119)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding Reply Serial No. THB(H)049, last year the media uncovered suspected cases of unauthorised alterations and additions to the floor area in the shopping centres divested to The Link. As the compilation of the as-built drawings has been completed, when will the authority concerned proceed to the next stage which involves the inspection of all the premises and those divested, so as to strengthen enforcement and eliminate unauthorised building works? Is there any implementation timetable?

Asked by: Hon. KWOK Wai-keung

Reply:

For the suspected cases of unauthorised alterations and additions to the floor area in the retail facilities of The Link Real Estate Investment Trust (The Link) enquired by the media in 2013, the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of Housing Department, after investigation, found that there was no increase in gross floor area of the retail premises.

Separately, the ICU has implemented the Planned Survey Programme for residential buildings in Home Ownership Scheme courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates since 2004. The surveys include the inspection and identification of unauthorized and dangerous building works, as well as the condition of common areas, external walls and drainage pipes. The Programme does not cover the retail and carparking premises. Given that there were not many unauthorised alteration works cases involving the retail and carparking facilities of The Link in the past three years (i.e. 2011-2013), the ICU has no plan to include the retail and carparking premises into the Planned Survey Programme at this stage. The ICU will continue to follow up on the reports on suspected illegal alteration received (including the reports on facilities of The Link) in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance and the current policy and guidelines of the Buildings Department.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)03

(Question Serial No. S0120)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

According to Reply Serial No. THB(H)049, the Independent Checking Unit does not keep a break-down of the unauthorised building works (UBWs) according to the degree of seriousness, and the majority of the cases were UBWs erected on the external walls of the buildings (such as canopies and flower racks). In view of the previous cases where dilapidated unauthorised canopies collapsed resulting in casualties, as well as for the protection of the lives and properties of the general public, what is the time limit generally set by the Administration for the owners concerned to complete the removal works upon identification of unauthorised canopies? If there is such a time limit, what are the details? If there is none, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. KWOK Wai-keung

Reply:

The canopies mentioned in the reply to Serial No. THB(H)049 are those unauthorized 'light-weight canopies' erected above the window on the external wall of domestic flats. They are commonly constructed of metal sheet and frames. The Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of Housing Department will take enforcement action against the owner/occupier of the relevant flats in accordance with the Buildings Department (BD)'s current enforcement policy and enforcement arrangements (e.g. issue of advisory letters and removal orders, etc). Advisory letters will first be issued to the persons concerned requesting them to complete the removal works within 60 days. If the removal works have not been completed within the specified period, the ICU will serve removal orders on the persons concerned in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance, requiring them to complete the removal works within 60 days. If the requirements of the order are still not complied with by the persons concerned after warning, the ICU will refer the case to BD for consideration of initiating prosecutions.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)04

(Question Serial No. S0121)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding Reply Serial No. THB(H)042, will the new posts to be created by the Administration be allocated to various new public rental housing (PRH) and Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) projects? If yes, what is the detailed breakdown of the allocation figures? Given the resumption of HOS, what are the details of the additional manpower deployed for HOS projects upon announcement of this initiative? In general, how to determine the staff establishment of frontline staff for a PRH or HOS site? Are there any criteria? If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. KWOK Wai-keung

Reply:

Regarding the 63 new posts for the Clerk of Works, Building Services Inspector and Works Supervisor grades to be created as set out in Reply Serial No. THB(H)042, 46 will be for implementing the public housing production target (including the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) and public rental housing (PRH)).

Since the announcement of the resumption of HOS in late 2011, the Housing Department (HD) has created about 300 posts in various grades/ranks in 2012-13 and 2013-14. Of these posts, 10 are directorate posts and the remaining are non-directorate posts.

All construction sites of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) are supervised by Authorised Persons, qualified and competent professional personnel, assisted by site supervisory staff, to ensure that contractors' full time site supervision is effectively executed. In determining the staffing requirement of frontline site supervisory staff, the HD takes into account the statutory requirement of Technically Competent Persons, the Code of Practice for Site Supervision of the Buildings Department, and the HA's requirements on environmental protection, site safety, quality assurance and monitoring of contractor's performance, etc. Also, the staffing requirement varies at different stages of the works to cope with the progress of works on site.

Apart from the three grades mentioned in Reply Serial No. THB(H)042, site supervisory grades in the HD also include Inspector of Works grade. The establishment of all site supervisory grades in the HD in the past three years and the estimated increase of posts in 2014-15 are listed as follows:

	Clerk of Works	Building Services Inspector	Inspector of Works	Works Supervisor (Construction)	Works Supervisor (Building Services)	Works Supervisor (Civil)
Establishment (as at 31 March 2012)	606	332	82	306	242	27
Establishment (as at 31 March 2013)	618	344	92	298	233	27
Establishment (as at 31 March 2014)	637	358	140	297	231	34
No. of posts to be created in 2014-15	34	17	4	7	3	2

In respect of HOS projects, a total of 67 site supervisory posts were created in 2012-13 and 2013-14. Also, another 50 site supervisory posts will be created in 2014-15 for implementing the public housing production target (including HOS and PRH).

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)05

(Question Serial No. S0132)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Noting that young people with limited financial means also want to have their own living space, will the Administration consider building small to medium flats (i.e. studio flats) to satisfy the home ownership needs of young couples? If yes, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons? Will the Administration reconsider granting rent allowance to people who are eligible for public rental housing allocation?

Asked by: Hon. LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla

Reply:

The Government will meet the home ownership needs of young families by increasing the supply of Home Ownership Scheme flats. The design of the flats (small size flat, one bedroom, two bedrooms or three bedrooms) will be decided having regard to the demand of the community.

At present, the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme already provides a safety net for those who cannot support themselves financially in meeting their basic needs. As for those who have pressing needs for housing, they can consider applying for Compassionate Rehousing on the recommendation of the Social Welfare Department, or the Express Flat Allocation Scheme to achieve earlier rehousing to public rental housing.

When the supply of private residential flats is still tight under the current market situation, it would be difficult to ascertain whether it would be the landlords or the tenants who would benefit if the Government were to provide rent subsidy to non-CSSA tenants. There is high possibility for the landlords to increase the rents if they are aware that many tenants are receiving Government subsidies. As a result, the tenants may not benefit in real terms as the rent subsidy provided by the Government is likely to become additional rent. Therefore, the Government does not consider it appropriate to provide rent subsidy.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)06

(Question Serial No. S0176)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding Reply Serial No. THB(H)042, will the new posts to be created by the Administration be allocated to various new public rental housing (PRH) and Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) projects? If yes, what is the detailed breakdown of the allocation figures? Given the resumption of HOS, what are the details of the additional manpower deployed for HOS projects upon announcement of this initiative? In general, how to determine the staff establishment of frontline staff for a PRH or HOS site? Are there any criteria? If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. TANG Ka-piu

Reply:

Regarding the 63 new posts for the Clerk of Works, Building Services Inspector and Works Supervisor grades to be created as set out in Reply Serial No. THB(H)042, 46 will be for implementing the public housing production target (including the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) and public rental housing (PRH)).

Since the announcement of the resumption of HOS in late 2011, the Housing Department (HD) has created about 300 posts in various grades/ranks in 2012-13 and 2013-14. Of these posts, 10 are directorate posts and the remaining are non-directorate posts.

All construction sites of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) are supervised by Authorised Persons, qualified and competent professional personnel, assisted by site supervisory staff, to ensure that contractors' full time site supervision is effectively executed. In determining the staffing requirement of frontline site supervisory staff, the HD takes into account the statutory requirement of Technically Competent Persons, the Code of Practice for Site Supervision of the Buildings Department, and the HA's requirements on environmental protection, site safety, quality assurance and monitoring of contractor's performance, etc. Also, the staffing requirement varies at different stages of the works to cope with the progress of works on site.

Apart from the three grades mentioned in Reply Serial No. THB(H)042, site supervisory grades in the HD also include Inspector of Works grade. The establishment of all site supervisory grades in the HD in the past three years and the estimated increase of posts in 2014-15 are listed as follows:

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In respect of HOS projects, a total of 67 site supervisory posts were created in 2012-13 and 2013-14. Also, another 50 site supervisory posts will be created in 2014-15 for implementing the public housing production target (including HOS and PRH).

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)07

(Question Serial No. SV012)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Pursuant to the reply THB(H)045, the Administration is requested to provide information on the increase in the number of architects and landscape architects in the Housing Department over the past three years to meet the Administration's public housing supply targets.

Asked by: Hon. Tony TSE Wai-chuen

Reply:

For the past three years, a total of 31 architect grade (including one Chief Architect) posts and four landscape architect grade posts were created in the Housing Department for implementing the new public housing production targets.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)08

(Question Serial No. S0122)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (5) Support Services

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

In Reply Serial No. THB(H)048, the Administration stated that the Long Term Housing Strategy (LTHS) Sub-division would be disbanded on 1 April 2014 (i.e. it has already been disbanded just now), and that as a stop-gap arrangement, the secretariat support it provided for the LTHS Steering Committee would be taken up additionally by other divisions. However, I consider that the LTHS of Hong Kong needs to be reviewed regularly. In order to prevent the recurrence of housing policy vacuum of the past 10 years, will the Administration consider dedicating permanent post(s) in the Department to study and review the housing policy, housing supply, and changes to market demand in Hong Kong on a regular basis?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

In order to follow up on the policy reviews relating to the Long Term Housing Strategy (LTHS) and to map out the framework for future LTHS reviews, the Government would create nine time-limited additional posts in 2014-15 under Programme (5) Support Services of Head 62 to establish a Special Duties Unit (the Unit). The Unit comprises one Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) officer and eight non-directorate officers. These posts are established for a period of two years.

We expect that the Unit should be able to complete most of the follow up work relating to the recommendations of the LTHS review within two years. The remaining work will be absorbed by other divisions of the Housing Department. We will review our manpower resources if there is a need.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-THB(H)09

(Question Serial No. S0123)

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Building Control

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

In Rely Serial No. THB(H)049, the Administration stated that there were very few cases regarding subdivided units in Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates among the reported cases received by the Independent Checking Unit. No exact figures were given. If the Housing Department is not mindful of safeguarding residents' quality of accommodation and strengthening its inspection of flats despite earlier media coverage of subdivided units in HOS and public rental housing (PRH) buildings, I am worried that the problem of subdivided units will only worsen, to the detriment of the residents. As such, I demand that the relevant figures, as well as the details and number of inspections conducted to prevent illegal subdivision of units in HOS courts and PRH estates, be provided by the Administration.

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

Among the reported cases received by the Independent Checking Unit (ICU) of Housing Department in the past three years (i.e. 2011 to 2013), there were very few cases concerning subdivided units in Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) courts and Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) estates. As such, the ICU has no plan to include the inspection of subdivided units into the Planned Survey Programme which is aimed at unauthorized building works and building defects due to disrepair on the external wall and common area of the residential buildings in HOS courts and TPS estates. The ICU has not kept separate figures on the cases involving subdivided units.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-THB(H)10****(Question Serial No. S0125)**

Head: (62) Housing Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)
(Stanley YING)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

Regarding Reply Serial No. THB(H)050, have the figures for public rental housing and Home Ownership Scheme flats been included in the target housing production for the coming 5 financial years? If yes, please provide the respective years in which the projects will commence. If no, please provide the schedule for the design and construction works involved.

The reply from the Administration did not include the objection figures as requested. Please explain why and provide a supplementary reply.

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-kin

Reply:

Regarding the figures for public rental housing (PRH) and Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats in the Reply Serial No. THB(H)050, since some of the projects involve the procedures of rezoning and clearance, etc, the time required for development is longer, and that is why these projects have not been included in the target housing production for the coming 5 financial years. The details of the anticipated timing for these projects to commence are listed below. As mentioned in the Reply Serial No. THB(H)050, all of the projects that the Hong Kong Housing Authority had proposed to District Councils in the past three years are either supported or agreed by the respective District Councils, so there are no objection figures.

PRH

District Council	Site Location	Anticipated Year of Works Commencement (Based on the commencement date of foundation works)
Kwun Tong	Anderson Road Sites A, B and C	Already Commenced
	EHC Site Ph. 7	2015-16
Wong Tai Sin	San Po Kong Flatted Factory	Already Commenced
Sham Shui Po	Pak Tin Estate Redevelopment	2014-15
	Lai Chi Kok Road – Tonkin Street	2015-16
	Shek Kip Mei Phs. 3, 6 and 7	2014-15
	NWKR Site 6	2016-17
	Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Food Market Site 3	2014-15
Sha Tin	Fo Tan	2014-15
	Shek Mun	2014-15
	Ma On Shan Area 86B	2019-20

District Council	Site Location	Anticipated Year of Works Commencement (Based on the commencement date of foundation works)
Kwai Tsing	Ex-Kwai Chung Police Married Quarters	Already Commenced
	Tai Wo Hau Road	2015-16
Tuen Mun	Tuen Mun Area 18	Already Commenced
	Tuen Mun Area 29 West	2015-16
	Tuen Mun Area 54 Sites 1 – 4	Already Commenced
North	Fanling Area 49	2014-15
	Choi Yuen Road	2014-15
Islands	Tung Chung Area 56	Already Commenced
	Tung Chung Area 39	2014-15
Eastern	Lin Shing Road	2014-15
	Chai Wan Factory Estate Conversion	Already Commenced

HOS

District Council	Site Location	Anticipated Year of Works Commencement (Based on the commencement date of foundation works)
Kwun Tong	Choi Hing Road	2014-15
	Pik Wan Road South	2015-16
Kowloon City	Kai Tak Site 1G1(B)	2014-15
	Sheung Lok Street	2014-15
Sham Shui Po	Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Food Market Site 5	2014-15
	Fat Tseung Street West	2015-16
Sha Tin	Mei Mun Lane, Sha Tin Area 4C	Already Commenced
	Pik Tin Street, Sha Tin Area 4D	Already Commenced
	Hin Tin Street, Sha Tin Area 31	Already Commenced
	Wo Sheung Tun Street	2015-16
	Ma On Shan Road, Northern Portion	2017-18
	Ma On Shan Road, Southern Portion	2017-18
Kwai Tsing	Ching Hong Road	Already Commenced
Tsuen Wan	Sha Tsui Road	Already Commenced
Tuen Mun	Tuen Mun Area 54 Site 5	2019-20
	Tuen Mun Area 2	2016-17
Yuen Long	Wang Yip Street West	Already Commenced
	Kiu Cheong Road East	2014-15
Islands	Ngan Kwong Wan Road East	2014-15
	Ngan Kwong Wan Road West	2014-15