

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)855/13-14
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/HG/1

Panel on Housing

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

Members present : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH (Chairman)
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, JP
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
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-kiwok, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen

Member attending : Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP

Members absent : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP, PhD, RN
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP

Public Officers attending : **For item III**

Mr D W PESCOD, JP
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

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

Mr Harry CHAN
Chief Planning Officer 2
Housing Department

For item IV

Mr D W PESCOD, JP
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

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

Mr Ken CHEUNG
Chief Architect 3
Housing Department

Mr Kenneth WONG
Chief Civil Engineer 1
Housing Department

Mr Eric HUI, JP
Assistant Director (2)
Home Affairs Department

Ms Carmen YU
Assistant District Officer (Kwun Tong)
Kwun Tong District Office
Home Affairs Department

Mr KOK Che-leung
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Subventions)
Social Welfare Department

Mr Kenneth WOO
Chief Executive Officer (Subventions/Planning)
Social Welfare Department

For item V

Mr D W PESCOD, JP
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

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

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

Staff in attendance : Mr Ken WOO
Senior Council Secretary (1)5

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)1

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I. Information paper issued since last meeting

Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting –

(LC Paper No. CB(1)237/13-14(01) — Land Registry Statistics for October 2013 provided by the Administration (press release)

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LC Paper No. CB(1)241/13-14(01) — Referral memorandum from the Public Complaints Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat regarding the request for shelving the policy on transfer of under-occupation households in public housing estate (Chinese version only) (Restricted to Members)

LC Paper No. CB(1)306/13-14(01) — Letter from Hon WONG Kwok-hing, Chairman of the Panel on Housing, to the Secretary for Transport and Housing regarding the clothes-drying racks in public housing estates (Chinese version only))

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)411/13-14(01) — List of follow-up actions

LC Paper No. CB(1)411/13-14(02) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

2. Members agreed to discuss the following three items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 6 January 2014, at 2:30 pm –

- (a) The work of the Sales of First-hand Residential Properties Authority;
- (b) Proposed creation of directorate posts in the Housing Department for coping with the additional workload arising from the new public housing production targets; and
- (c) Replacement of laundry poles holders to laundry racks in public rental flats.

III. Public Housing Construction Programme 2013/14 to 2017/18

(LC Paper No. CB(1)411/13-14(03) — Administration's paper on "Public Housing Construction Programme 2013/14 to 2017/18"

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LC Paper No. CB(1)411/13-14(04) — Updated background brief on "Public Housing Construction Programme" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

3. The Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) ("PSTH(H)") briefed members on the Public Housing Construction Programme ("PHCP") of the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA") for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18 by highlighting the salient points of the paper. The Deputy Director of Housing (Development & Construction) ("DDH(D&C)") gave a power-point presentation on the subject.

(Post-meeting note: A set of the power-point presentation materials was circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(1)452/13-14(01) on 3 December 2013.)

Public Rental Housing

4. Mr Vincent FANG asked why there would only be 6 900 public rental housing ("PRH") units in the Urban and Extended Urban Districts in 2014/15, which were much less than those of other years under the five-year rolling PHCP from 2013/14 to 2017/18. The Chairman also sought explanation from the Administration on the absence of new PRH units in the New Territories in 2017/18.

5. DDH(D&C) explained that the number of sites made available for PRH development differed across the territory. While there would be no new units in the New Territories in 2017/18, 4 700 new units would be provided in Tuen Mun in 2016/17. HA would commence work on the available sites expeditiously. The Chairman expressed concern that the Administration might face difficulty in taking forward its plan for PRH development over the second five-year period starting from 2017/18 if it failed to secure appropriate land resources for PRH development for the first five-year period starting from 2012/13.

6. Noting that the number of new productions for 2013/14 and 2014/15 would be the lowest among the current five-year rolling PHCP, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether there was no way to speed up the offer of PRH to applicants on the Waiting List ("WL") in the next two years. PSTH(H) explained that HA could not raise the set production target because the relevant construction contracts had been entered into and works had already commenced in some cases. HA would nevertheless endeavour to bring forward the completion schedule as far as practicable.

7. Mr Albert CHAN was concerned that the current PRH production rate at about 16 000 units per year could not match the housing supply target of

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470 000 units for the next 10 years as proposed by the Long Term Housing Strategy Steering Committee ("the Steering Committee"). There would still be a shortage of about 13 000 units per year even if the supply of private housing was increased to 18 000 units per year. In view of the foregoing, the Administration should introduce short to medium term measures to address the shortage, such as providing temporary housing. PSTH(H) responded that while the Administration would explore different options for addressing the housing shortage, it must obtain additional land in order to increase the supply of permanent housing.

8. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that many young married couples had expressed concern about the high rental of private housing and the long waiting time for PRH. He asked whether the construction time of PRH under the PHCP could be shortened, and whether the shortage in construction manpower and the objection of district councils were the main causes for the slow progress made in taking forward new PRH projects. DDH(D&C) explained that in order to fast track the construction of public housing, works at the planning and design stage, which would normally require three years to complete in the past, were compressed to one year. As a result, the total construction time which generally took seven years in the past were reduced to about five years where possible. In fact, the time available for achieving part of the production target for 2017/18 would only be 4.5 years. It was therefore impossible to further compress the construction time. PSTH(H) advised that both the construction industry and the Housing Department ("HD") encountered shortage in manpower, and it was also a big challenge to secure the public's agreement on the sites selected for development at the district level. Notwithstanding the difficulties, the Administration would spare no efforts in communicating with the relevant stakeholders and addressing their concerns.

9. Mr Christopher CHUNG was unconvinced that it would take as much as five years to develop public housing given the standard block designs of PRH and the use of large amount of prefabricated components. PSTH(H) responded that HA had been extremely efficient in the production of public housing and its construction speed was as fast as private developers. However, the sites made available for public housing production were often not cleared and formed, and this would inevitably entail a longer construction time.

10. Mr Frederick FUNG said that the problem with the supply of PRH was caused by erroneous planning in respect of PRH provision in the previous years as evident by a higher percentage of PRH to be provided in the Urban District in the coming years. He asked about the Administration's plan to increase the provision of PRH in the Extended Urban District and the New Territories in the coming years, and whether the rezoning of the Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Food Market Site 3 for PRH development had been confirmed. Mr FUNG further pointed out that the supply of 2-bedroom flats was on the low side as

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compared to other flat types under the current five-year rolling PHCP. He was concerned about the shortage of such flats for allocation to bigger households with four or five persons. PSTH(H) responded that the Transport and Housing Bureau had joined hands with the Development Bureau, Planning Department and Lands Department to identify sites throughout the territory for PRH development. Regarding the supply of 2-bedroom flats, PSTH(H) advised that given the lead time for planning and construction, the flat mix for new PRH flats in any particular year would normally be determined five years ahead. HA would regularly assess and update the flat mix for new PRH production taking into account the latest distribution of household size among WL applicants, the standard for allocating different sizes of PRH flats, etc.

11. Noting that the Administration had identified sufficient land for PRH production for the second five-year period from 2017/18 to 2021/22, Dr KWOK Ka-ki asked if it was possible to advance the production schedule. As new PRH units would be provided at Anderson Road in both 2015/16 and 2016/17, he also asked if the completion target for 2016/17 could be advanced to 2015/16. DDH(D&C) replied that HA was committed to compressing the production time to the possible minimum. As regards the housing developments at Anderson Road, site formation works had just been started. It was not until the site formation works were completed that the main construction works could be carried out.

12. Mr KWOK Wai-keung was pleased to note that the Administration had identified sufficient land to produce more than 100 000 units in the second five-year period from 2017/18 to 2021/22. Given that there were nine years from now till the end of the second five-year period, he urged the Administration to display resolve in addressing the housing issues by identifying even more sites for PRH development and enhancing its manpower for taking forward such works. PSTH(H) replied that the Administration had been trying to strengthen its establishment over last two years for taking forward various housing-related initiatives. Moreover, the Administration had proposed to discuss separate establishment proposals at the current and next meeting of the Panel.

13. The Chairman noted with concern that the total number of public housing for the coming 10 years would only be around 232 000 units (with 182 000 PRH units and an assumption of 50 000 Home Ownership Scheme ("HOS") units), which would be some 50 000 units below the supply target of 282 000 public housing units as recommended by the Steering Committee. He asked what the Administration would do to address such a great shortfall in public housing supply. PSTH(H) acknowledged the possibility of a shortfall, and advised that the Administration was actively identifying sites for public housing developments from various sources, such as new development areas, reclamation and redevelopment. The support of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") for the relevant public works and staffing proposals was also

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essential for the smooth implementation of public housing projects.

Home Ownership Scheme

14. Noting that there would be no supply of HOS flats in the Urban District in 2016/17 and only 700 in 2017/18, Dr KWOK Ka-ki asked about the Administration's plan to increase the supply of HOS flats in the Urban District. PSTH(H) explained that while the Administration had endeavoured to secure sites from all districts for public housing developments, it did not get the sites among all districts on an even basis and could only work on those sites that were immediately available.

15. Pointing out that the Administration had committed to producing about 17 000 HOS units from 2016/17 to 2019/20, Mr Frederick FUNG said that the production of about 3 150 HOS units in 2016/17 and 2017/18 on average was falling behind the expected target of about 5 000 units per year. In this connection, he enquired about the progress made in respect of securing sites for HOS development in 2018/19 and 2019/20. PSTH(H) responded that HA had identified sites to ensure that a total of about 17 000 HOS units would be completed from 2016/17 to 2019/20 in accordance with the Administration's commitment.

Increasing public housing supply through redevelopment projects

16. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that apart from implementing the PHCP, the Administration should also increase public housing supply through redevelopment projects. He suggested using the sites of the Urban Renewal Authority for public housing production, and speeding up the demolition of the Long Bin Interim Housing which, upon redevelopment, would provide a large number of PRH units. PSTH(H) responded that the Administration had been trying to release sites, including vacant quarter sites and vacant HA sites, for redevelopment purpose. In taking forward the redevelopment projects, however, various challenges would need to be overcome, such as the possible contentions and lengthy consultation process in cases involving rezoning, reprovisioning of affected households, and the long time required for affected tenants to move out. Redevelopment projects would thus take a very long time to complete.

17. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted with concern that comparing to the annual PRH production from 1988 to 1997 of some 40 000 units and 1998 to 2002 of some 50 000 units, the annual PRH production since 2003 had only been around 15 000 units. The poor living environment of the needy people had given rise to increasing safety and hygienic concerns. Pointing out that PRH estates decanted for redevelopment could be left idle for years, he asked whether the Administration would consider using such estates for providing temporary housing. PSTH(H) responded that such proposal would add to the

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Administration's pressure while it was already engaged in rehousing tenants affected by redevelopment projects. It was also undesirable to require the temporary tenants to move again within a short time when the estates were due for demolition. Moreover, as such proposal could only provide a small number of units for time-limited accommodation, it would be more practical to complete the redevelopment projects as soon as possible as this could provide much more units for permanent accommodation.

Waiting time for general applicants on the Waiting List

18. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that he had recently met with a four-person household who lived in a subdivided flat and an elderly aged 62, both had not received any flat offer even having waited for over five years on the WL. He considered that the Administration had misled the public by claiming that the Average Waiting Time ("AWT") target of around three years could be maintained, and requested the Administration to advise the percentage of WL applicants who received a flat offer within three years. Expressing a similar view, Dr KWOK Ka-ki pointed out that as the Administration could only provide some 47 000 PRH units for the three-year period from 2013/14 to 2015/16, it was impossible to house over 230 000 applicants currently on the WL within the three-year AWT target.

19. PSTH(H) responded that as revealed in an analysis conducted by HA on the housing situation of WL applicants as at the end of June 2013, the AWT for general applicants was 2.7 years. About 52% to 56% of the general applicants on the WL were allocated flats within three years. The Administration was proceeding with the PHCP in full swing with a view to meeting the AWT target.

20. Mr Christopher CHUNG queried the Administration's analysis and pointed out that the percentage of applicants who were allocated flats within the AWT should be less than 50% after discounting those housed on compassionate rehousing grounds or through the Express Flat Allocation Scheme. Considering that the Administration should work towards housing at least 80% of the WL applicants within the AWT of around three years, he asked what the Administration would do to achieve this target. PSTH(H) explained that the AWT was only an average figure and deviations from the average were envisaged. The figures relating to the AWT had recently been scrutinized by the Director of Audit who had not queried the figures.

21. Pointing out that the provision of new units in the Extended Urban District was 19 000 as opposed to 31 000 in the Urban District under the current five-year rolling PHCP, Mr Albert CHAN urged the Administration to accede to the requests of sitting PRH tenants in the Extended Urban District for relocating to the Urban District. PSTH(H) replied that the Administration had announced in 2012 that WL applicants could apply for flats in the Urban District even if

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they had chosen flats in the Extended Urban District initially.

Addressing the housing needs of non-elderly singletons

Refinement of the Quota and Points System

22. In response to Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's concern that the waiting time of many non-elderly one-person applicants under the Quota and Points System ("QPS") had consistently been lengthened by new elderly applicants entering the WL, PSTH(H) acknowledged the issue and advised that the Administration would work with HA to address the relevant concern. Responding further to Mr LEUNG's question on whether a target had been set to house non-elderly one-person applicants, PSTH(H) advised that the Steering Committee had recommended that HA should develop a mechanism to review the income and assets of QPS applicants and conduct regular reviews with a view to removing from the WL those applicants who were no longer eligible. The Steering Committee had also recommended that the QPS be refined by allocating extra points to those above the age of 45 with a view to improving their chance to gain earlier access to PRH, and progressively extending the three-year AWT target to those over 40 and then over 35. The Administration would explore the above proposals with HA.

23. Mr Vincent FANG enquired about the number of WL applicants at the age of 18 to 23. He was concerned that as most of these applicants were students when registered on the WL and would likely earn an income exceeding the WL income limit after graduation, they would become ineligible for PRH.

24. Mr Albert CHAN said that he was strongly opposed to the suggestion of depriving university graduates and well-off tenants of the right of access to PRH. He commented that these groups of people should not be held responsible for the shortage in the supply of PRH which was due to the mal-administration of the previous terms of Government on housing policies. Expressing similar views, Dr KWOK Ka-ki sought the Administration's explanation on the rationale for deducting points from a WL applicant on the QPS on ground of education attainment. Mr James TO opined that education attainment might not necessarily be related to income level. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung also did not agree that a person's right to PRH resources should be affected by education attainment. He cautioned that a policy to remove applicants on the WL on ground of education attainment would certainly be open to judicial review.

25. PSTH(H) explained that under the QPS, points were assigned to applicants based on three determining factors, namely, age of the applicants at the time of submitting their PRH applications; whether the applicants were PRH tenants; and the waiting time of the applicants. At the public hearing of the Public Accounts Committee recently, a member had made the suggestion of

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deducting a WL applicant's points on ground of age and education attainment. While the Administration currently had no plan to do so, it was obliged to study the suggestion and make a recommendation to HA as appropriate.

Developing infill sites within existing Public Rental Housing estates

26. Mr KWOK Wai-keung opined that smaller flats should be provided in infill sites to address the housing needs of non-elderly singletons. He also said that the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions had advocated increasing PRH production by resuming the construction of Group B PRH for renting by non-elderly singletons. This would help them to save money for purchasing HOS flats or private properties, hence minimizing their need for public housing resources. PSTH(H) advised that in order to help younger singletons to save money for HOS flats or private housing, the Administration had come up with the hostel approach for time-limited accommodation.

27. Miss Alice MAK remarked that in order to make infill sites more acceptable to the local community, the Administration should enhance the ancillary facilities of the districts concerned, such as roads and transport networks, in developing infill sites. She commented that the Administration's effort in this respect had not been effective, thus resulted in delaying and even shelving of some of such project proposals.

28. PSTH(H) advised that the Administration had all along explored ways to optimize the development potential of its PRH sites. It was also mindful about the provision of facilities for institutions and organizations against the need for additional housing. DDH(D&C) added that in the course of securing land resources for public housing development, the Administration would consult the district councils concerned and the local community, and would take on board their views on the ancillary, community and recreational facilities needed as appropriate with a view to adding vibrancy to the districts.

Other concerns

29. Noting from Chapter 3 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 61 on "Allocation and utilization of public rental housing flats" that some 90 000 PRH tenants were classified as "well-off tenants" under the "Well-off Tenants Policies", Mr Vincent FANG asked if the Administration was prepared to take forward more stringent measures to recover more units beyond the present annual average of about 7 000 units. PSTH(H) explained that PRH flats were recovered due to a variety of reasons, such as abusing, tenants passing away or moving out to the elderly home. To ensure the allocation of public housing to those in genuine need, HA had critically reviewed the income and assets limits for PRH. HD had also enhanced the manpower of its special duties team to verify the declarations made by sitting tenants. In taking forward these

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initiatives, however, HA was well aware that the situation of tenants could change quickly, such as when the tenants lost jobs and hence had less income.

30. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that it was getting increasingly difficult for residential institutions to secure venues for operation. He asked whether HA would consider working with the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") to accommodate such facilities in PRH developments. PSTH(H) advised that HA had been working with SWD to develop a social welfare site which would provide venues for the operation of welfare agencies. LegCo would be consulted on the relevant proposal in due course.

IV. Public Works Programme Item No. B195SC – Community Hall at Sau Ming Road, Kwun Tong

(LC Paper No. CB(1)411/13-14(05) — Administration's paper on "Public Works Programme Item No. B195SC – Community Hall at Sau Ming Road, Kwun Tong"

LC Paper No. CB(1)411/13-14(06) — Background brief on "Community Hall at Sau Ming Road, Kwun Tong" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat

Relevant papers

LC Paper No. CB(1)1153/12-13(03) — Administration's paper on "Public Works Programme Item No. B195SC – Community Hall at Sau Ming Road, Kwun Tong"

LC Paper No. CB(1)258/13-14 — Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2013)

31. The Chairman said that the Panel was consulted at its meeting on 3 June 2013 on the Administration's proposal to upgrade Public Works Programme Item No. B195SC to Category A for the construction of a Community Hall ("CH") adjoining the public housing development at Sau Ming Road, Kwun Tong. The Panel requested the Administration to provide supplementary information on the arrangements for reprovisioning the services currently provided by the non-government organizations ("NGOs") at the

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existing Sau Mau Ping (Central) Estate Community Centre ("SMP(C)ECC"), and maximization of the plot ratio of the project site to facilitate the provision of more social services. At the request of the Panel, the Administration submitted the item for the Panel's consideration again.

32. PSTH(H) briefed members on the supplementary information provided by the Administration, and DDH(D&C) gave a power-point presentation accordingly.

(Post-meeting note: A set of the power-point presentation materials was circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(1)452/13-14(02) on 3 December 2013.)

33. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted with concern that HD had requested the Kwun Tong Youth Service Corps ("KTYSC"), being one of the NGOs affected by the demolition of SMP(C)ECC to make way for the proposed CH, to register as a charitable institution under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112) before HD would make reprovisioning arrangements for its long-term accommodation. Pointing out that KTYSC had been established for some 40 years and might have difficulty in furnishing the necessary records in support of the relevant application, he requested the Administration to undertake to reprovision KTYSC in June 2014 as planned in case its application was still being processed at that time. PSTH(H) responded that HD would coordinate with the Home Affairs Department to handle the case, and would make sure that KTYSC would be reprovisioned to its long-term accommodation in time.

34. Noting that SMP(C)ECC was a six-storey building while the proposed CH would only have two storeys, Dr Fernando CHEUNG queried the rationale of providing a new CH with fewer storeys. He urged the Administration to make good use of the proposed CH to allow more services to be provided, in particular those services which were in great demand such as day-time rehabilitation centres. DDH(D&C) responded that all of the five NGOs affected by the proposal would be reprovisioned permanently at either Sau Mau Ping Estate or the public housing developments at Anderson Road. Their services to the Kwun Tong community would be maintained. The proposed CH was restricted to two-storey as it would abut the domestic block, and the prescribed window plane of the domestic flats had to be projected over the roof of the CH in accordance with the Building Regulations. As the roof of the proposed CH would also serve as an open space for the domestic tenants of the adjoining public housing estate, the design of the proposed CH had already maximized the potential of the site. The Assistant Director (2), Home Affairs Department ("AD(2)/HAD") added that two multi-purpose rooms were proposed to be provided in the CH, and these would be conducive to meeting the needs of the local community for activity venues.

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35. Mr Albert CHAN opined that more multi-purpose rooms should be provided in the proposed CH. He also asked whether the multi-purpose hall to be provided in the CH could be converted into smaller rooms to meet the great demand of the local community for smaller activity rooms. AD(2)/HAD responded that the multi-purpose halls in all new CHs would be provided with a ceiling height sliding partition to enable two groups to use the hall at the same time. However, there would be operational difficulties if more than one partition was provided in a multi-purpose hall. To meet the demand of the local organizations for small venues, new multi-purpose rooms could likewise be provided with a ceiling height partition to accommodate two user groups at the same time. In a newly commissioned CH in the Kowloon City district, two partitions had indeed been provided in the multi-purpose room to facilitate three groups to use the multi-purpose room at the same time. Whether it was possible to provide more than one partition in a multi-purpose room depended on the size of the room. Mr CHAN pointed out that the competition for CH facilities at the local level had been great as they were severely falling short of demand, and he requested the Administration to provide at least four multi-purpose rooms in future CH projects.

36. Noting that the roof of the CH would serve as an open space for the tenants of the adjoining PRH estate, Mr Tony TSE urged the Administration to ensure the accessibility between the CH and the PRH estate and the proper maintenance of the roof. DDH(D&C) advised that the design of the proposed CH had been carried out in conjunction with the adjoining public housing development. In addition, a footbridge was being planned to allow barrier free access to the adjoining neighbourhood. The Kwun Tong District Office and the Hong Kong Housing Authority would be responsible for managing the CH and its roof respectively.

37. The Chairman concluded that members supported the submission of the proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee.

V. Proposed creation of one supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C in the Housing Department for the implementation of the initiatives under the Long Term Housing Strategy review

(LC Paper No. CB(1)411/13-14(07) — Administration's paper on "Proposed creation of one supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C in the Housing Department for the

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implementation of the initiatives under the Long Term Housing Strategy review")

38. PSTH(H) briefed members on the Administration's proposal to create a supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C ("AOSGC") (D2) in the Strategy Division of HD with effect from 1 April 2014 for two years to cope with the increased workload relating to the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS") review.

39. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked why the proposed supernumerary AOSGC post was not created at the early stage of the LTHS review when the workload arising from policy formulation should be the heaviest. He also questioned why the Administration only proposed to create the post for two years, given that it would take years to implement the various initiatives relating to LTHS. PSTH(H) responded that upon completion of the three-month public consultation on the LTHS, the Steering Committee would consolidate the views collected and compile a report for submission to the Government. The Government would take into account the wide range of views collected, such as those concerning increased land supply and housing production and subdivided flats, in formulating the LTHS and relevant policy measures. The proposed supernumerary AOSGC post was suggested to be created starting from 1 April 2014 for two years with a view to ensuring that the policy formulation and various LTHS initiatives could be taken forward as soon as possible.

40. Mr Tony TSE pointed out that as the Steering Committee had yet to submit its report to the Government and the way forward was not yet known, it might be premature to take forward the establishment proposal at this stage. PSTH(H) explained that the Administration had to work on some of the recommendations as set out in the Consultation Document on the LTHS for the time being, and would take into account the community's feedback on the recommendations when the Steering Committee's report was available. In response to Mr Tony TSE's question on the work schedule of the Steering Committee, PSTH(H) advised that the Steering Committee would hold a series of meetings in December 2013 and January 2014, and would submit its report to the Government in the first quarter of 2014 for consideration. The next step would be policy review, development and implementation. The Administration had carefully considered the timing of the start of the post and this was the reason why it was proposed to be created starting from April 2014.

41. Mr Albert CHAN commented that the expansion of the directorate establishment in the Government in recent months had been unprecedented. Pointing out that the average annual housing supply target of the present-term Government at about 47 000 units was in fact far below that of the Government

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of the previous terms at about 85 000 units, he queried the justifications for increasing HD's manpower. He also said that he was opposed to the establishment proposal. PSTH(H) explained that when the then Housing Bureau was combined with HD in 2002 and for the single housing organization to be taken up by the then Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau, HD had reduced its establishment substantially, including directorate posts. Currently, the number of posts in HD was still far below that of its establishment in 2002. Moreover, PSTH(H) clarified that the proposed directorate post for the implementation of the initiatives under the LTHS review was related to the policy side instead of the construction side.

42. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok declared that he was a member of the Building Committee and Tender Committee of HA. He asked whether HA and other departments would be tasked to implement the initiatives arising from the LTHS review upon expiry of the proposed supernumerary AOSGC post. PSTH(H) responded that depending on the outcome of the consultation and the Steering Committee's report, implementation of the LTHS initiatives would involve different government departments. The proposed post was important as it would be responsible for liaising with relevant bureaux and departments as well as other stakeholders to follow up on the agreed initiatives and take forward the LTHS. In reply to Ir Dr LO's further question, PSTH(H) advised that the Administration planned to consult the Panel in early 2014 on the proposed creation of directorate posts in HD for coping with the additional workload arising from the new public housing production targets, during which members' support would be sought for the creation of technical and professional grade posts for implementing the public housing construction programme. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok said that he supported the staffing proposal.

43. The Chairman proposed to extend the meeting until all items on the agenda had been dealt with. There was no dissenting voice to the proposal.

44. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he remained unconvinced of the justifications of the proposal and he did not support it. Dr CHEUNG also requested that the proposal, if eventually submitted to the Finance Committee for approval, should be voted on separately. The Chairman clarified that the proposal would be submitted to the Establishment Subcommittee before the Finance Committee. Mr Albert CHAN reiterated his request for more information on the changes in HD's staff establishment since the 1990's to justify its need for additional posts despite the decreased public housing production volume as compared to the past.

Admin 45. In response to members' concerns, the Administration was requested to provide the following additional information to justify the creation of the supernumerary AOSGC post –

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- (a) a comparison between the staff establishment of HD and the Transport and Housing Bureau (and its equivalent) when public housing production peaked in the 1990's and as at today, and the volume of public housing production at the relevant years; and
- (b) more details on the duties and responsibilities of the proposed supernumerary AOSGC post.

46. The Chairman concluded that the Panel would discuss the proposal again at the next meeting to be held on 6 January 2014 after receiving the additional information.

VI. Any other business

47. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:47 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 February 2014