

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

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## **Panel on Housing**

**Meeting on 10 February 2014**

### **Background brief on "Improving the design of the bathrooms of Po Tin Estate and related issues" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the measures implemented by the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA") to improve the design of the bathrooms of Po Tin Estate, and gives a brief account of the views and concerns expressed by Members on the subject.

#### **Background**

2. Po Tin Estate, with nine 28-storey blocks comprising 8 736 units, was completed in 2000 and was originally designed as an interim housing estate. Due to the decline in demand for interim housing, the occupancy rate of Po Tin Estate fell to 52.3% in 2004. To maximize the utilization of public rental housing ("PRH") resources, HA endorsed in June 2004 to gradually convert the vacant and any subsequently recovered units in Po Tin Estate into PRH units for allocation after enhancing the building security system. As at end April 2013, of the 8 736 units in Po Tin Estate, 1 916 were interim housing units and 6 820 were public rental units. The overall occupancy rate was 95%.

3. Having regard to the relatively small size of the bathrooms, PRH applicants who are allocated a unit in Po Tin Estate will be offered three incentives, as follows –

- (a) the rental are fixed at the level of the licence fee of interim housing, which is equivalent to 95% of the district best rent for PRH units;
- (b) additional one-month rent-free period in addition to the usual 14-day rent-free fitting-out period; and
- (c) a maximum of three other allocation offers even if applicants eventually reject the allocation offer of a PRH unit in Po Tin Estate.

4. Effort has been made by HA to implement various measures to provide a better living environment of Po Tin Estate. These include exploring the feasibility of enlarging the bathrooms in addition to upgrading the security system, estate redecoration, barrier free access and environmental improvement works. However, due to the constraints of the building structure and the nuisances that might be caused, HA considered that it was impracticable to implement re-configuration or enlargement works. To address tenants' aspiration for a more spacious bathroom, HA has been providing tenants with enhancement measures for free since 2006. These include relocating the wash basin from the bathroom entrance to the inside corner by using a new type of "corner basin" and repositioning the shower. As at April 2013, HA had already carried out the above modification works in around 5 400 units.

5. HA will make arrangement for special transfer for tenants of Po Tin Estate if they have special needs or encounter genuine difficulties (such as persons with disabilities) when using the small-sized bathrooms after moving in.

### **Deliberations by the Panel on Housing**

6. The Panel on Housing ("the Panel") discussed the measures implemented by HA to improve the living environment of Po Tin Estate and related issues at its meeting on 3 June 2013.

7. Members were particularly concerned about the small size and layout of the bathrooms. While the Administration claimed that all units of Po Tin Estate were provided with small but functional bathrooms, members criticized that the small bathrooms were substandard and should be improved. They requested the Administration to consider re-configuring the layout of all units in Po Tin Estate with a view to enlarging the bathrooms. The Administration responded that it was not feasible to enlarge the bathrooms by re-configuring the layout from a technical point of view as some of the structures were pre-fabricated and alteration of the bathrooms might lead to water seepage problem. Besides, there were constraints in the building structure as the units had not been designed for larger bathrooms. Some other members supported that consideration should be

given to the redevelopment of the Po Tin Estate. The Administration advised that there were difficulties in redeveloping Po Tin Estate which was built less than 20 years ago when there were other estates aged 40 or more awaiting redevelopment. The demolition of Po Tin Estate would result in losing about 9 000 units at a time when there were a large number of applicants on the Waiting List.

8. Some members considered it unfair to require tenants to sign an undertaking to the effect that they could not request for transfer on grounds of the small bathrooms. The Administration explained that the objective of signing the undertaking was to ensure that those moving in were aware of the living conditions and tenants who had signed the undertaking could approach the Housing Department for assistance if they had special needs or difficulties.

9. The Panel passed two motions on the subject. In the first motion, the Panel "requests the Housing Authority to submit the proposal for enlarging the small bathrooms in the flat units of Po Tin Estate; if this is not possible, to demolish such substandard buildings". The second motion stated that "Given that the facilities of Po Tin Estate are not up to standard, in particular that as its bathrooms are small and of inhuman design, residents have been suffering a lot and easily get hurt, this Panel expresses regret at the Administration for requesting residents to sign declarations for accepting the small bathrooms at the time of intake and disallowing residents to demand for relocation on the above ground; this Panel is of the view that the Administration should immediately improve the design of the bathrooms of Po Tin Estate; if this is not feasible, it should make plan to redevelop the entire Estate and residents should be rehoused in-situ; in addition, the Housing Department should immediately stop requiring residents to sign the declarations."

10. The Panel requested the Administration to conduct a feasibility study on the different ways for enlarging the bathrooms in the flat units of Po Tin Estate and the alternative of redeveloping the entire Estate, and report the outcome to the Panel. After completing the feasibility study, arrangement should be made for Panel members to pay a site visit to observe the living environment of Po Tin Estate, to be followed by a meeting of the Panel on this issue.

### **Latest development**

11. The Panel conducted a site visit to Po Tin Estate on 14 January 2014 and received a briefing on the findings of the feasibility study on improving the design of the bathrooms and the recommended improvement works. The Administration will brief members on the result of the study findings at the Panel meeting scheduled for 10 February 2014.

**Relevant papers**

12. A list of relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
5 February 2014

Improving the design of the bathrooms of Po Tin Estate and related issues

List of relevant papers

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Housing	3 June 2013	<p>Administration's paper on "Improving the Living Environment of Po Tin Estate" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1153/12-13(04)) <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0603cb1-1153-4-e.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/hg/papers/hg0603cb1-1153-4-e.pdf</a></p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)258/13-14) <a href="http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20130603.pdf">http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20130603.pdf</a></p>