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Panel on Security

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 18 March 2014**

**Construction and provision of departmental quarters for
disciplined services departments**

Purpose

This paper summarizes past discussions of the Panel on Security ("the Panel") on the issues relating to the construction and provision of departmental quarters ("DQ") for disciplined services departments ("DSDs").

Background

2. According to the Administration, it is the Government's policy to provide quarters for eligible civil servants as a type of housing benefits or for operational needs. DQs are provided, subject to the availability of resources, for married officers of the rank and file, local married officers in the rank of inspectors and superintendents of the Hong Kong Police Force and comparable ranks in the Correctional Services Department ("CSD"), the Customs and Excise Department ("C&ED"), the Fire Services Department ("FSD"), the Government Flying Service, the Immigration Department ("ImmD") and the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The policy objective on the provision of DQs is to maintain morale in these DSDs.

Deliberations of the Panel

3. The Panel had been briefed on the funding proposals for construction of DQs at a number of meetings. In general, members expressed support for the proposals and their major views and concerns were summarized below.

Location and design of DQs

4. Noting that the construction sites for new DQs were located at remote areas instead of proximity to the workplaces of DSDs as in the past, some members raised concern as to whether the new DQs would be well received by disciplined services staff. The Administration explained that DQs might be built at locations in the vicinity of the workplace or at a site identified by the Planning Department. In general, there were two ways to identify a lot for the construction of DQs, i.e. a DSD to identify a suitable lot and seek policy support from the Security Bureau ("SB"), or alternatively, the Planning Department to inform SB of the availability of a suitable lot and SB to liaise with the relevant DSD after considering the percentage of shortfall in DQs among DSDs.

5. Some members expressed concern about the environmental-friendly and energy-saving measures for the new DQs. The Administration advised that DQs would adopt green and sustainable building features, such as the provision of green roofs. In addition, renewable energy technology would be applied and energy efficient features would be incorporated into the lighting systems, lifts, air conditioning systems and power supply systems.

6. Some members expressed concern about the low ratio of the car-parking spaces to the number of DQ units. According to the Administration, there were two reference guidelines for determining the number of car-parking spaces at DQ. First, the Transport Department's assessment on the public transportation infrastructure provided for the area. Second, the standard set by the Government Property Agency ("GPA") on the basis of the number of DQ units and the number of vehicles required by the staff of DQ. Any adjustment of the number of car-parking spaces should be based on these two reference guidelines.

Policies governing allocation of DQs

7. Regarding the allocation of DQ units, members were advised that all DSDs had their own policies which had been accepted by their respective staff members. In general, a scoring system would be adopted in allocating DQs, which took into account the staff member's rank and salary, seniority, household size, etc. Staff members with different pay points would be eligible to apply for units for the corresponding grades and priority would be accorded in accordance with the score. The Administration further advised that the rent of DQ units, which generally fell within the range of 5% to 7.5% of the staff's monthly salary, would be determined based on the rank of the staff and the size of the unit.

8. Clarification was sought on whether housing allowance would be provided to those eligible staff while awaiting DQ allocation. The Administration explained that disciplined services staff would either receive housing allowance (normally for 10 years) for buying their own flats or be allocated with DQs, subject to the option of the housing benefits they had taken. Disciplined services staff on the waiting list of DQs would not be entitled to receive housing allowance so as to avoid double benefits.

Shortfall of DQs

9. Another issue of concern of the Panel was the continuous shortfall in DQs. Members were advised that as at January 2012, there were around 11 600 married rank and file staff who were eligible for DQ in CSD, FSD, ImmD and C&ED. Only around 8 100 DQ units were available for allocation to these four disciplined services, with a shortage of around 3 500 DQ units, representing a shortfall of 30%. Eligible rank and file staff of these four disciplined services needed to wait for four to five years on average to be allocated a DQ unit. Members were further advised that consequent upon the recruitment of additional staff by various disciplined services to meet operational needs, it was estimated that the percentage of shortfall in DQs of these four disciplined services would rise to around 46% by 2016 if the supply of DQs remained unchanged.

10. In response to some members' suggestion of constructing more units and maximizing the plot ratio in the construction projects in order to shorten the waiting time of DQ allocation, the Administration assured members that the land use and plot ratio had already been fully utilized. Members also noted that some DSDs would continue to explore with GPA the feasibility of identifying more DQ units vacated by other government departments.

Latest development

11. As announced in the Chief Executive's 2014 Policy Address, the relevant departments were actively collaborating to expedite the progress of eight construction projects with a view to providing over 2 200 DQ units to the six disciplined services by 2020.

12. The Administration will brief the Panel on the funding proposal of construction of DQs for customs officer grade officers at Yau Yue Wan Village Road, Tseung Kwan O at the forthcoming meeting on 18 March 2014.

Relevant papers

13. A list of relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
14 March 2014

Appendix

Relevant papers on the construction and provision of departmental quarters for disciplined services departments

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Security	6.6.2006	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Security	7.4.2009	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Security	5.5.2009	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Security	3.4.2012	Agenda Minutes

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