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22 January 2016
(By Fax: 2543 9197)

Mr Anthony Chu
Clerk to Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
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**Consideration of Chapter 3 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 65
Use and disposal of vacant school premises (VSP)**

I refer to your letter of 6 January 2016 on the captioned subject and would like to provide the information requested in paragraph 1(a) vide your letter.

(a) According to the meeting held by the then Steering Committee on Housing Land Supply (SCHLS) in October 2011, a central clearing house mechanism was introduced for handling VSP in a coordinated manner. It was agreed that the Planning Department ("PlanD") would serve as the central clearing house to consider suitable alternative uses for VSP returned by the Education Bureau ("EDB") to the Government. However, PlanD would not be the management agent for VSP before their reallocation. Please explain why PlanD is not assigned a greater role to coordinate and promote alternative uses for VSP amongst government bureau/departments. If PlanD is not tasked to oversee the allocation of VSP for its optimal use, how could the

Government ensure a timely and efficient disposal of VSP not required for educational purposes by EDB in a coordinated manner?

2. As requested by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the details of the central clearing house mechanism have been set out in paragraph II.1 of ~~the~~ ^{Appendix 27} ~~reply issued by the Education Bureau (EDB) dated 31 December 2015.~~

3. According to the established mechanism following the decision of the Steering Committee on Housing Land Supply in October 2011, PlanD serves as a central clearing house to consider suitable long-term alternative uses (e.g. Government, Institution or Community, residential and other uses) for vacant or to-be-vacated school sites when EDB notifies PlanD and other relevant departments that it no longer requires such sites for school use. If a long-term alternative use is identified, PlanD would proceed with the statutory rezoning procedures, if necessary, to facilitate development of the sites for the relevant uses.

4. For VSP falling on government land under the purview of different bureaux and departments, the relevant bureaux/departments are responsible for their disposal according to the long-term alternative uses identified by PlanD. The relevant bureaux/departments would, where appropriate, pursue and arrange short-term uses to ensure efficient use of land resources. For example, the Lands Department (LandsD) has disposed of individual sites on government land which were identified for residential use pursuant to PlanD's review of long-term use, as well as processed applications by bureaux/departments or private parties for making use of VSP compatible with the long-term land use zonings as advised by PlanD. For VSP on government land not immediately required for the long-term uses identified and under LandsD's control, LandsD has been endeavouring to put those VSP to gainful use by inviting users through circulation to other bureaux/departments as well as District Councils, District Offices and District Social Welfare Offices. The lists of sites are available in District Land Offices for public inspection by any interested party. For VSP on sites governed by private land leases and government land licences, LandsD would seek the return of the sites to the Government where such action is in line with the terms of the leases/licences.

5. The above deals with arrangements for putting VSP to gainful uses. As regards the day-to-day management of the premises, that was addressed in part II.2 of ~~the~~ ^{Appendix 27} ~~reply issued by EDB dated 31 December 2015.~~

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Cyrus CHEUNG', written in a cursive style.

(Cyrus CHEUNG)

for Secretary for Development

c.c. Secretary for Education

Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury

Director of Lands

Director of Planning

Director of Housing

Director of Audit