

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)359/15-16
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/HG/1

Panel on Housing

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 2 November 2015, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP (Chairman)
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP, PhD, RN
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
- Members absent** : Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip

Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS

**Public Officers
attending** : Agenda Item IV

Mr YAU Shing-mu, JP
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing

Mr Stanley YING, JP
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

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

Agenda Item V

Mr Stanley YING, JP
Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)

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

Ms Portia YIU
Acting Chief Planning Officer (2)
Housing Department

Clerk in attendance : Mr Derek LO
Chief Council Secretary (1)5

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

Ms Michelle NIEN
Legislative Assistant (1)5

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I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(1)64/15-16 — Minutes of meeting held on 15 October 2015)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2015 were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since the meeting on 6 July 2015

2. Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the meeting on 6 July 2015 –

(LC Paper Nos. CB(1)1075/14-15(01), — Land Registry Statistics for
CB(1)1172/14-15(01), June to September 2015
CB(1)1221/14-15(01) and provided by the
CB(1)1292/14-15(01) Administration (press
release)

LC Paper No. CB(1)1059/14-15(01) — Referral memorandum from
the Public Complaints Office
of the Legislative Council
Secretariat regarding the
building quality of public
rental housing flats and
monitoring of outsourced
property management
companies (Chinese version
only) (Restricted to
Members)

LC Paper No. CB(1)1112/14-15(01) — Referral arising from the
meeting between Legislative
Council members and Kwai
Tsing District Council
members on 11 June 2015
regarding the provision of lift
connecting Lok Yiu House
and Wah Yiu House of Lai
Yiu Estate (Chinese version
only) (Restricted to
Members)

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- LC Paper No. CB(1)1228/14-15(01) — Referral arising from the meeting between Legislative Council members and Kowloon City District Council members on 11 June 2015 regarding the feasibility to increase public housing supply at the Kai Tak Development Area (Chinese version only) (Restricted to Members)
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1237/14-15(01) — Letter dated 11 September 2015 from Hon KWOK Wai-keung on the problem of weak water pressure for supplying water to public housing flats (Chinese version only)
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1242/14-15(01) — Administration's paper on Progress report of the enhanced phasing-out programme of housing for senior citizens of HS1 design
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1261/14-15(01) — Letter dated 18 September 2015 from the Commerce, Industry and Housing Committee of Tuen Mun District Council on the problem of excessive lead in drinking water (Chinese version only)
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1301/14-15(01) — Letter dated 8 October 2015 from Hon LEUNG Che-cheung on the planned closure of Tin Yiu Market by Link (Chinese version only)

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- LC Paper No. CB(1)1302/14-15(01) — Extract of the Third Annual Report on the implementation of Law Reform Commission's recommendations by the Government
- LC Paper No. CB(1)88/15-16(01) — Referral memorandum from the Public Complaints Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat regarding the possible rental adjustment to be implemented by the Hong Kong Housing Society (Chinese version only) (Restricted to Members))

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)63/15-16(01) — List of follow-up actions
- LC Paper No. CB(1)63/15-16(02) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 7 December 2015, at 2:30 pm –

- (a) Head 711 projects no. B062RG and B082TI – Community facilities and infrastructure to support public housing development at Northwest Kowloon Reclamation Site 6, Sham Shui Po; and
- (b) Performance of the environmental targets and initiatives of the Hong Kong Housing Authority in 2014-15.

4. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed concern about the decision of the Link Asset Management Limited ("the Link") to close Tin Yiu Market as it would undermine the provision of market retail facilities to residents of Tin Shui Wai on the one hand, and was in breach of the relevant covenants made with the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA") in respect of the provision of facilities and services to residents of public housing on the other. In view that HA had undertook to adopt measures to regulate the continued provision of services to residents by the Link when it divested certain retail facilities of its public

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housing estates to the Link in 2005, he requested to invite the Administration to a Panel meeting as soon as possible to discuss the subject matter. Members including Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Miss Alice MAK, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Mr Frederick FUNG and Mr WONG Yuk-man expressed similar views. Mr WONG Kwok-hing requested to invite also representatives of the Link to attend the discussion of the matter.

5. The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing ("USTH") responded that the Administration had on various occasions explained the regulatory regime applicable to the Link in the operation of the divested facilities. Since the concern raised by Mr LEUNG Che-cheung also involved the provision of market retail facilities which fell under the purview of the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB"), the Administration would address Members' concerns by making a coordinated response to a relevant oral question to be raised at the Council meeting of 11 November 2015.

6. The Chairman held the view that, in light of the grave concerns expressed by Panel members on the issue, the Administration should be invited to a Panel meeting to explain its policy and take questions at the earliest opportunity.

Clerk

(Post-meeting note: Upon seeking the Administration's views and with the concurrence of the Chairman, an item "Conversion of Tin Yiu Market into shopping complex by the Link Asset Management Limited" would be discussed at the Panel meeting to be held on 7 December 2015.)

7. Relaying the concern of a deputation on the possible rental adjustment to be implemented by the Hong Kong Housing Society ("HKHS") (LC Paper No. CB(1)88/15-16(01)), Mr KWOK Wai-keung requested to discuss the item "Work of the Hong Kong Housing Society" which was on the Panel's list of outstanding items for discussion as soon as possible. The Chairman agreed to liaise with HKHS to bring forward discussion of the item.

Clerk

IV. Incidents of excess lead in drinking water in public housing estates

(LC Paper No. CB(1)63/15-16(03)

— Administration's paper on the incidents of excess lead in drinking water in public housing estates

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- LC Paper No. CB(1)63/15-16(04) — Paper on the lead in drinking water incidents prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief)
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1288/14-15(01) — Letter dated 29 September 2015 from Hon CHAN Han-pan on offering concession on water charges and rent relief to public housing tenants affected by the "excess lead in drinking water" incident (Chinese version only)
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1309/14-15(01) — Administration's response to Hon CHAN Han-pan's letter dated 16 September 2015 to the Panel on Development on offering concession on water charges and rent relief to public housing tenants affected by the "excess lead found in drinking water" incident)

8. USTH briefed members on the latest developments of the incident of excess lead in drinking water ("the incident") in public rental housing ("PRH") estates and the follow-up actions taken by HA.

(Post-meeting note: A copy of USTH's speaking note was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)102/15-16(01) on 3 November 2015.)

Conducting water sampling tests

9. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung enquired the basis for setting the sampling size in conducting water sampling tests for PRH estates and whether more samples would be collected for estates constructed by the four contractors who did not comply with the contractual specifications that soldering materials used for drinking-water pipes should not contain lead. The Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) ("PSTH(H)") explained that in determining the overall water quality of PRH estates completed after 2005 in terms of lead content, the Water Supplies Department ("WSD") would conduct systematic

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water sampling tests for each block covering every independent fresh water supply system. For some estates such as Shui Chuen O Estate, additional samples had been collected to re-confirm the results.

10. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked if the Administration would consider conducting water sampling tests for the welfare units located within the 11 PRH developments the water samples taken from which were found to contain excess lead. PSTH(H) responded that for non-domestic facilities located within PRH estates, HA had conducted water sampling tests for the fresh water supply systems installed by HA's main contractors in the common areas only. Most of the fresh water supply systems inside non-domestic units were installed by the tenants themselves. These tenants might consider conducting water sampling tests themselves according to their operation needs. Notwithstanding the above, the Government had been according priority for conducting water sampling tests for PRH estates with kindergartens and welfare units serving children aged below six located therein. With the assistance of WSD, Housing Department ("HD"), Social Welfare Department ("SWD") and the Education Bureau had been following-up with the relevant water sampling work.

11. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked why the Administration had refused to meet with the tenants of Shui Chuen O Estate where excess lead was found in tap water samples in the tests commissioned by various political parties. PSTH(H) pointed out that the Administration had conducted repeated tests for water samples taken from Shui Chuen O Estate, and had indicated publicly on various occasions that the lead content of the samples collected complied with the World Health Organization ("WHO")'s standard. In particular, in view of the claims of some organizations that water samples in individual units in Shui Chuen O Estate had exceeded the limit, the Administration had taken samples from the units concerned for lead testing and found that all samples complied with the WHO's guideline limit. The Chairman considered that HA should affirm the safety of the drinking water supplied to tenants of Shui Chuen O Estate by issuing letters to the households from which water samples had been taken and posting notices in the public area of the estate.

Extending the coverage of free blood tests

12. In light of the health impact brought by the incident, Mr WU Chi-wai requested HA to make use of its own resources to provide free blood tests to children who were aged under eight when moving into the PRH developments where the water samples were found to exceed the WHO's standard. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung and Dr Fernando CHEUNG echoed Mr WU's views. Dr CHEUNG also requested the Administration to provide updated information on the follow-up plans on board with progress made in respect of the eight children who showed signs of developmental delay.

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Admin 13. USTH responded that Mr WU Chi-wai's suggestion would have additional resource implication for other units such as the Government Laboratory and the Hospital Authority, and should thus be considered with care. The Chairman requested the Transport and Housing Bureau to liaise with FHB to consider Mr WU's request and to provide the information requested by Dr Fernando CHEUNG.

Compensation for the affected tenants

14. Miss Alice MAK sought the Administration's latest position in respect of Members' call for waiving the water charges and/or rentals of the households affected by the incident for a reasonable period of time. USTH advised that the Government's present priority was to provide relief measures to the affected tenants and to arrange for replacement of water pipes that did not meet the standard. The proposal of waiving water charges and/or rentals involved complicated issues and required further study.

15. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung asked whether the Administration would consider applications for transfer made by the affected tenants on the ground that the drinking water was unsafe. USTH replied that the affected tenants had been provided with bottled water and safe fresh water through the water filters installed and connection pipes extended from the roof-top water tank to each floor. PSTH(H) explained that as the supply of PRH remained very tight, applications for transfer would be considered individually based on actual circumstances, including recommendations of the Hospital Authority or SWD.

Regulatory measures against non-compliant contractors

16. Considering that public money should not be spent on making up for the fault of the contractors who failed to observe contractual obligations, Mr WONG Kwok-hing sought information on the compensations that the Government would claim from the contractors and subcontractors concerned. Expressing similar concerns, Miss Alice MAK suggested that the contractors and subcontractors concerned be requested to set up a fund for carrying out the remedial measures in the affected PRH estates and compensating for the loss that the affected tenants might claim in the future.

17. USTH responded that after excess lead had been found in the drinking water in PRH estates, the four contractors concerned implemented various relief measures at the request of HA, including extending connection pipes from the roof-top water tank to each floor of the building concerned and, for affected households, installing filters with U.S. National Sanitation Foundation

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53 certification for lead reduction free-of-charge. The contractors also undertook to replace the filter cores for the affected households free-of-charge within two years. In addition, HA had requested the four contractors concerned to rectify the situation. The contractors had all submitted proposals on a comprehensive investigation as well as replacement of water pipes which did not comply with the requirements. HD and WSD were now studying the proposals in detail.

18. With regard to the regulatory measures against non-compliant contractors, USTH advised that HA had all along acted in accordance with the established mechanism, including giving due consideration to the actual situation and details of non-compliance. As for the incident in question, HA fully agreed to take the necessary regulatory actions against the contractors concerned. HA's Tender Committee decided on 30 September 2015 that it would not consider new works tenders submitted by the four contractors concerned and two related companies for seven months. In addition, three building contractors would be removed from HA's Premier League of building contractors.

19. Mr WONG Yuk-man was unconvinced of effectiveness of the above regulatory measures. He envisaged that the contractors concerned would become active again bidding for public housing contracts upon expiry of the relevant sanction period.

20. Mr KWOK Wai-keung asked about the impact of the Tender Committee's sanction imposed on the building contractors, if any, on the employment of labourers of various skills. PSTH(H) replied that he learned from the deliberations of HA's Review Committee on Quality Assurance Issues Relating to Fresh Water Supply of Public Housing Estates ("the Review Committee") that the supply of plumbers in the labour market remained tight and their salary was growing healthily.

Relief measures for affected tenants

21. Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Mr WU Chi-wai requested the Administration to provide a timetable for replacing water pipes which did not comply with the requirements and for conducting water tests for households for whom water filters had been installed. Mr WU also requested the Administration to conduct water sampling tests for the affected estates again upon completion of the pipe replacement exercises. Mr TAM Yiu-chung was keen to ensure that the affected tenants would be consulted and explained clearly the pipe replacement works within their premises prior to taking forward the works.

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22. USTH indicated that the pipe replacement works would take time to complete as they involved complex procedures as well as technical and staffing considerations. The contractors concerned planned to conduct trial works in certain blocks of the affected estates prior to working out more detailed work plans and timetable. The current plan was to replace the water pipes in the common areas first, before replacing those inside individual units. The tenants affected would be consulted on the works and the contractors would be requested to take measures to minimize inconvenience caused to tenants. Detailed arrangements would be announced in due course.

23. As regards the effectiveness of the water filters installed for lead reduction, USTH advised that the Administration had conducted water sampling tests again for the units in the 11 affected estates where excess lead content had been found in water samples and where filters were subsequently installed. Of the 78 units involved, tenants of two units refused the water sampling tests, and all samples taken from the remaining 76 units met the WHO's standard.

24. Expressing concern on the confidence of PRH tenants on the fresh water supplied to them upon implementation of various relief measures, Mr TAM Yiu-chung enquired whether the affected tenants in the four PRH estates where excessive lead content was found in the drinking water and where connection pipes had subsequently been extended from the roof-top water tanks to each floor of the building obtained fresh water from these connection pipes or from the household water taps direct upon installing water filters. PSTH(H) undertook to provide the relevant information.

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Investigating into the incident

25. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung sought elaboration on the direction of investigation of the incident. USTH responded that the Task Force on Investigation of Excessive Lead Content in Drinking Water ("the Task Force") had submitted its final investigation report to the Secretary for Development on 31 October 2015. It concluded that excess lead in drinking water was caused by the use of leaded solder materials in the solder joints. While copper alloy fittings also leached lead, they did not result in excess lead in drinking water. During the investigation, the Task Force dismantled more than 100 components of pipes and fittings from the three water supply chains in Kai Ching Estate and Kwai Luen Estate Phase 2 and conducted leaching tests, elemental analyses, lead isotopic analysis and mathematical modeling. In response to Mr LEUNG's question on whether the above final investigation report would be provided to WHO or other authorities monitoring water safety, USTH said that the report had been made accessible to the general public.

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26. In connection with the four building contractors who were found to have been involved in the construction of the 11 PRH estates where excessive lead content was found in the drinking water, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan requested the Administration to provide information on the number of plumbing subcontractors commissioned by these contractors in these projects, and the number of PRH estates completed in or after 2005 where these plumbing subcontractors were commissioned for the construction works. This in his view would shed light on the spread of the use of soldering materials containing lead among the PRH developments. USTH advised that the plumbing subcontractors commissioned by the four building contractors concerned were in fact also involved in the construction of other PRH developments completed in or after 2005 from which the water samples collected were found to meet the WHO's standard.

27. Mr WONG Yuk-man criticized the Secretary for Transport and Housing for offering apologies on the incident in his capacity as the Chairman of HA and not on the Government's behalf as a politically appointed official. He was also unconvinced of the preventive measures as highlighted in the Review Committee's interim report as in his view these would not address the core issues of the lack of construction labour as well as the Administration's prevailing practice of awarding contracts to the lowest bidders.

28. Mr KWOK Wai-keung asked whether the Administration would consider the suggestion of the Hong Kong Construction Industry Employees General Union for stipulating in HA's building contracts the number of foremen required for monitoring works. He was also concerned about the need to enhance the manpower of HA to strengthen its monitoring efforts. PSTH(H) responded that while HA was proceeding with public housing construction in full swing, it had re-deployed manpower to respond to the incident. HA would keep its workload under review and would seek to strengthen its manpower as appropriate.

V. Public Housing Construction Programme 2015-16 to 2019-20

(LC Paper No. CB(1)63/15-16(05) — Administration's paper on Public Housing Construction Programme 2015-16 to 2019-20

LC Paper No. CB(1)63/15-16(06) — Paper on the Public Housing Construction Programme prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief))

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29. With the aid of PowerPoint, the Deputy Director of Housing (Development & Construction) ("DDH(D&C)") briefed members on the Public Housing Construction Programme ("PHCP") of HA for the period 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

(Post-meeting note: Presentation materials (LC Paper No. CB(1)99/15-16(01)) for the item were issued to members on 3 November 2015 in electronic form.)

(At 4:23 pm, the Chairman suggested and members agreed to extend the meeting for 30 minutes to 5:00 pm to allow more time for discussion.)

Progress of public housing production

30. Members noted that following the methodology set out in the Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS") in December 2014, the Government had adopted a total housing supply target of 480 000 units for the ten-year period from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025, with public housing being 290 000 units, comprising 200 000 PRH units and 90 000 subsidized sale flats.

31. Mr KWOK Wai-keung, Miss Alice MAK and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed concern on the low number of PRH units scheduled to be completed in 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2019-2020. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Dr Fernando CHEUNG cast doubt on HA's ability to meet the PRH supply target within the ten-year period in view of the unsatisfactory progress made so far. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung asked whether the Administration would adjust downward the ten-year public housing supply target regard to the current progress.

32. PSTH(H) responded that given the lead time required for housing development, housing supply for the first few years of the ten-year period had largely been fixed. The pace of housing production hinged essentially on the timely availability of sites, and the Administration would endeavor to enhance inter-departmental coordination to provide the sites required and to take forward the projects expeditiously. Also, with PRH units released upon sitting tenants' purchase of Home Ownership Scheme flats, and with a net gain of an average of about 7 000 PRH units recovered annually from units surrendered by sitting tenants as well as enforcement actions against abuse of PRH resources, more PRH units could be made available in addition to the new PRH units produced under PHCP.

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33. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung was concerned that there were fewer PRH units provided under the Hung Shui Kiu Area 13 projects in the current PHCP than in the previous PHCP. DDH(D&C) advised that units completed in earlier phases in 2014-2015 had not been shown on this table anymore. Mr LEUNG requested the Administration to provide information on the latest position of the 2 300 units which were supposed to be provided under the Hung Shui Kiu Area 13 instead of only Phase 3 project and were scheduled for completion in 2014-2015. The Administration undertook to provide the requested information.

Securing "spade ready" sites for public housing production

34. Mr WU Chi-wai asked whether "spade ready" sites had been secured for public housing projects estimated to be completed in 2020-2021 and beyond. He also requested the Administration to raise the proportion of public housing in new development areas in order to better achieve its ten-year public housing supply target. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung echoed Mr WU's views. Mr KWOK Wai-keung suggested that HA should consider exchanging sites it held which were not ready for housing production for "spade ready" sites held by the Government in order to expedite production process.

35. PSTH(H) referred members to Annex 4 of the Administration's paper and advised that about 30 public housing projects were expected to be completed in 2020-2021 or beyond. Most of the sites identified for such projects were however not "spade ready". As regards members' suggestion to increase the proportion of public housing in new development areas, PSTH(H) pointed out that the Government needed to ensure a proper mix of private and housing to cater for public need.

36. Expressing concern on the availability of sufficient "spade ready" sites for public housing developments in the second five year period from 2020-2021 onwards, Mr WONG Kwok-hing suggested that the Administration should make available annual updates on the availability of "spade ready" sites to enhance the public's understanding about the progress made and difficulty encountered in securing the sites required. PSTH(H) replied that the relevant information would be provided to members as appropriate.

37. Mr KWOK Wai-keung considered it unfair to ascribe the slow pace of public housing production to the local communities who expressed views over proposed housing developments. Miss Alice MAK held the view that the long time usually required for consultation was mainly due to the Administration's failure to put forward proposals to effectively address the concerns of the local communities about the provision of transport infrastructure and ancillary facilities which they considered necessary for new public housing developments.

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Mr CHAN Kam-lam was pleased to note that quite a large number of PRH units would be provided under the Anderson Road projects in the coming years. He urged the Administration to take measures to address the concerns of the local community on the increased pressure on transport and ancillary facilities brought by the new housing developments.

38. PSTH(H) pointed out that the time required to consult the local communities and address their concerns was one of the factors affecting project delivery. He took note of members' views, and undertook to consult the district councils concerned in taking forward public housing projects.

Waiting time for public rental housing

39. Noting that the total number of PRH applications had surged to about 285 300 at end-September 2015 and the average waiting time ("AWT") for general applicants who were housed to PRH had risen to 3.6 years, Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned whether HA would consider reviewing and amending the three-year AWT pledge. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked what HA would do to stop AWT from worsening further.

40. PSTH(H) replied that despite the pressure on AWT due to the increasing number of PRH applicants, HA would still strive to achieve the AWT target of around three years for general applicants in the long run.

41. Mr CHAN Kam-lam sought elaboration on HA's measures to remove non-elderly one-person applicants under the Quota and Points System ("QPS") who were no longer eligible for PRH. PSTH(H) advised that HA's Subsidised Housing Committee ("SHC") decided in 2014 to issue letters to QPS applicants who had waited for five years but were not yet due for detailed vetting within the next two years, requesting them to declare their latest income and assets. HA would cancel the applications from those applicants who made no response after three rounds of requests or those who were found to be no longer eligible for PRH.

42. Pointing out that non-elderly one-person applicants who were aged 45 at the time of application would have to wait for as long as 12 years to reach the stage of detailed vetting under HA's new measures implemented in 2014, Mr WU Chi-wai asked whether HA would consider reviewing QPS further to address the issue. PSTH(H) said that while SHC had already accorded priority to applicants under QPS who were aged 45 or above under the refined system, their waiting time would be affected by a number of factors, including the number of applicants aged 45 or above.

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(At 4:56 pm, the Chairman suggested and members agreed to further extend the meeting for 10 minutes to 5:10 pm to allow more time for discussion.)

Relieving the rental burden of grassroots tenants

43. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung reiterated his request for granting rent subsidy for those PRH applicants. Dr Fernando CHEUNG criticized the Administration for refusing to grant rent subsidy or reinstate tenancy control to relieve the rental burden of grassroots tenants on private accommodation.

44. PSTH(H) responded that as explained in the LTHS Report on Public Consultation, there were concerns that any rent assistance introduced in a market with tight supply would be counter-productive, as the subsidy would most likely prompt the landlords to raise rents and take the windfall, thereby partially or even wholly offsetting the benefits. An increase in the supply of private housing units in coming years was expected to bring a relief to the rental market, and HA would continue to proceed with PHCP in full swing to meet the demand for public housing.

Conclusion

45. Summing up, the Chairman urged the Administration to make an effort to shorten the waiting time of PRH applicants by ensuring the timely provision of "spade ready" sites required for public housing production.

VI. Any other business

46. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:06 pm.