

For Information

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Old Application Form for Public Rental Housing

PURPOSE

This paper provides information on matters relating to the old version of the application form for public rental housing (PRH).

DETAILS

Background

2. At the Legislative Council Panel on Housing Panel meeting held on 10 May 2016, some Members pointed out that they had recently received views from individual PRH applicants, claiming that since insurance scheme was not specifically mentioned as an asset item to be declared under “investments” in the old version of the PRH application form, applicants concerned failed to declare their insurance schemes, resulting in their applications being cancelled by the Housing Department (HD). Members considered that there was inadequacy in the design of the old version of the PRH application form, and applicants were not made aware of the asset items that they needed to declare.

Handling of PRH application

3. PRH is a precious community resource for which demand exceeds supply. In order to ensure that PRH units are allocated in a consistent and equitable manner, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) formulates and promulgates eligibility criteria for the application for PRH. Such criteria include income and asset limits, so as to ensure that PRH units are allocated to the most needy households. It is the duty of the applicants to honestly provide information necessary for establishing their eligibility, and to declare that they have provided information that is true and correct. The

“Application Guide for Public Rental Housing” (the Guide) also clearly states that from the date of completing the application form to the date of signing the tenancy agreement of the PRH units thus allocated, the applicant and his/her family members must still fulfill all the eligibility criteria.

4. The following paragraphs explain the PRH application procedure and application documents, with specific reference to the eligibility criterion of asset limit.

5. Applicants for PRH are required to complete and submit an application form. To assist applicants in completing the application form, a copy of the Guide and “Sample of Completed Application Form” is provided with the PRH application form. The application form requires the applicants to read the Guide and the Sample carefully before completing the form. It also requires applicants to declare that they have carefully read and understood the Guide before completing the form. Though the Guide does not give an exhaustive list of asset items, since the 2005 version, the Guide has listed “insurance schemes” as an example of assets. If applicants have questions about assets, other eligibility criteria, or about the application documents, they can enquire by phone or at the HA Customer Service Centre.

6. Upon receipt of PRH application forms, HD will conduct preliminary paper checking of the applications based on the information and documents submitted by the applicants. No interview of applicants by HD staff will be conducted at this stage. If the applicant and his/her family members fulfill the eligibility criteria for PRH, have properly completed the application form and have submitted the required documents, the application will be deemed as having passed the preliminary vetting and the application will be registered. During the waiting period, if the applicant submits supplementary information to HD or updates his/her particulars, HD will assess whether the applicant is still fulfilling the PRH eligibility criteria.

7. When a PRH application is due for detailed vetting, HD will invite the applicant, together with his/her family members, to attend the detailed vetting interview. In the invitation letter, HD will attach copies of documents including the “Applicant’s Declaration” (Declaration), “Notes on Declaration on Income and Assets for completion of Applicant’s Declaration” (Notes) and

“Checklist for Documents and Important Notes” (Checklist) to enable the applicant to read the information and complete the declaration form in advance. The Declaration requires the applicant to read the Notes carefully before completing the Declaration. While the Notes does not give an exhaustive list of asset items, since the 2004 version, the Notes has listed “savings or investment-linked insurance scheme” as an example of assets. The Checklist similarly could not give an exhaustive list of asset items, however, since the 2004 version, it has also included “insurance statements” as an example of documents which applicants need to bring along in attending the detailed vetting interview. The Declaration also advises the applicant to inquire with HA if they have any questions. Besides, HD staff will caution the applicant and his/her family members during the detailed vetting interview that all the information provided must be true and correct; and that if the applicant and his/her family members make false declaration, it will constitute a violation of the Housing Ordinance, and HD will cancel the PRH application and may initiate prosecution.

8. As seen from the above, at various points in the application process and in various application documents that the applicants are required to read, insurance schemes have been listed as an example of asset items.

9. Given the large number of categories of assets and the emergence of new types of savings and investment products from time to time, it is not possible for HD to exhaustively list investment or asset items in the application documents. However, HD updates the application documents from time to time to list more common types of assets as examples for reference. HD will continue to do so in updating the application documents.

10. It is the duty of PRH applicants to declare all their income and assets honestly. Providing false information and making false declaration is an offence under the Housing Ordinance. Upon discovery of suspected false declarations on applications, HD will collect evidence and will consider initiating prosecution actions.