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Panel on Housing

Meeting on 29 June 2016

**Background brief on "Water pressure in public rental housing units"
prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the issue of insufficient water pressure in public rental housing ("PRH") units and gives a brief account of the concerns expressed by Legislative Council Members on the issue recently.

Background

2. Insufficient water pressure in fresh water supply is a chronic issue found in the PRH units of older estates. Although the water pressure design standard for the top floors of PRH blocks was adequate at the time of completion, aging, damage or blockage of water pipes and relevant plumbing fixtures may give rise to insufficient water supply pressure in individual PRH units. Insufficient water pressure causes inconvenience to PRH tenants, such as lengthening the time needed for laundry and preventing gas water heaters from activating properly. Units on the upper floors of PRH blocks are more susceptible to the problem.

3. The Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA") is responsible for carrying out maintenance and providing management services for PRH estates. Upon completion of construction, HA conducts final inspection and test on PRH units, which includes water pressure tests, to ensure that the fresh water supply system is adequate. Regular inspections are also conducted by staff of the Housing Department ("HD") on the fresh water supply system of PRH estates, which includes water pipes and water pumps in common areas of PRH blocks.

Follow-up measures by the Housing Department on insufficient water pressure

4. Under the Total Maintenance Scheme implemented in 2006, if insufficient water pressure in fresh water supply is found in PRH units, tenants may request for prompt repairs. Upon receiving enquires or complaints from PRH tenants, staff of HD will commission works teams to conduct inspections at the units concerned. If the above-mentioned problems are found in the water pipes and their associated parts, HD will instruct works contractors to carry out repair and replacement works and the water supply pressure will improve under normal circumstances.

5. If water supply pressure remains low after the repair and replacement works, and the same problem is found in other units on the same floor of the same building, HD will study the feasibility of installing an additional booster pumping system in that building, with a view to improving the water supply pressure thoroughly. Until recently, HD has installed booster pumping systems in over 200 blocks in some 40 PRH estates in response to reports by PRH tenants on cases of insufficient water supply pressure.

Survey by HD in 2015

6. According to HD's survey with all estate offices in September 2015, some 190 cases of insufficient water supply pressure were reported since January 2014. The situation of about 100 cases (i.e. 52%) had shown some improvement after the repair or replacement of water pipes and associated parts.

7. Also, according to HD's records, for 68 blocks in 15 PRH estates, water supply pressure remained low after repair and replacement of water pipes and associated parts. For these 68 blocks, HA commenced preparatory work for installing new booster pumping systems, including conducting feasibility studies, planning and system designs, etc.

8. In addition, HD is arranging a systematic inspection of PRH blocks which have not been installed with the booster pumping system to formulate an improvement plan to solve the problem of low water supply pressure in PRH units on upper floors.

Deliberations by the Panel on Housing

9. The Panel on Housing ("the Panel") discusses a variety of issues related to the maintenance of facilities of PRH estates in regular meetings. At the Panel meeting held on 1 February 2016, a member expressed concern about weak water pressure for supplying fresh water to top floors of buildings in aged PRH estates and urged the Administration to address the issue.

Council question

10. At the Council meeting of 18 November 2015, Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen raised a question about weak water pressure in PRH units and the Administration's plan to assess and address the issue. The Council question and the Administration's reply are hyperlinked in the **Appendix**.

Latest development

11. Hon KWOK Wai-keung requested in his letter dated 11 September 2015 that the Administration be invited to brief the Panel on the cause of weak water pressure for supplying fresh water to public housing flats, and the improvement measures taken/to be taken.

12. On the request of the Panel, the Administration will brief members on the subject at the Panel meeting on 29 June 2016.

Relevant papers

13. A list of relevant papers is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
23 June 2016

Water pressure in public rental housing units

List of relevant papers

Council Question:

Date	Council Question
18 November 2015	Council question raised by Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen