

**Speaking Points of the Secretary for Development
at the Special Finance Committee Meeting (Planning and Lands)
on 19 April 2018 (Thursday)**

Chairman,

1. I would like to thank Members for their interest in the Estimate of the Development Bureau (DEVB). My respective Controlling Officers of the Planning and Lands Branch and relevant departments have provided answers to 234 written questions from Members accounting for the use of resources under their purview. We are here to respond to any further questions that Members may wish to raise.
2. The 2018-19 Recurrent Expenditure on Planning and Lands is \$5,620 million, representing an increase of \$490 million (about 9.5%) compared with the revised estimate for 2017-18. There will be a net increase of 548 civil service posts in the Planning and Lands Branch and departments under its purview (the Buildings Department (BD), the Lands Department (LandsD), the Planning Department (PlanD) and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD)), including 17 civil service posts in replacement of non-civil service contract posts. The establishment of directorate civil service posts will increase by three.
3. The additional recurrent resources this year are mainly deployed to the following areas:
 - firstly, to take forward the work of land development (involving additional resources of about \$260 million);
 - secondly, to strengthen the work of safeguarding building safety (involving additional resources of about \$120 million);
 - thirdly, to step up enforcement on matters of land administration and planning (involving additional resources of about \$53 million).

4. Increasing land supply is the top priority of the DEVB's work. We will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to create and find land on all fronts, including rezoning, co-ordinating studies on brownfield sites, taking forward new development area projects, enhancing the harbourfront and providing full support to the work of the Task Force on Land Supply. Two studies, one on the profile and operation of brownfield sites and one on accommodating brownfield operations in multi-storey buildings, are expected to complete within this year to provide the basis for policy formulation on development of brownfield sites. During the implementation of development projects, we will enhance communication with affected households, business operators and other stakeholders and make the best effort in explaining and making compensation and relocation arrangements. The Task Force on Land Supply is also working at full steam to make the final preparations for the five-month public engagement exercise which will commence at the end of this month.
5. Expediting the process of development approval is another key area of our work. In this regard, additional manpower will be deployed to the BD to handle the work of building plan approval, while a centralised coordinating section dealing with land supply will be established under the LandsD to focus on the process of "big ticket" lease modification and land exchange cases. In addition, an inter-departmental steering group has been set up under the Planning and Lands Branch of the DEVB to study ways to streamline or improve the development approval arrangements. We will engage the industry during the process, including the special committee comprising representatives of relevant professional bodies and associations to be formed shortly under the auspices of the Land and Development Advisory Committee. We aim to roll out the first batch of streamlined arrangements in the latter half of 2018.
6. Apart from developing additional land, we will also make optimal use of existing land resources. The Financial Secretary has advised that \$1 billion will be set aside to support non-governmental organisations to make use of vacant government sites (including vacant school premises) for community purposes. We will consult the Panel on Development in the latter half of 2018 before seeking funding approval from the Finance Committee upon finalisation of the specific implementation arrangements. In the meantime, we are also reviewing ways to facilitate revitalisation of industrial buildings. Our aim is to come up with the proposed initiatives in mid-2018.

7. As for the work to safeguard building safety, these include providing support to the implementation of Operation Building Bright 2.0, stepping up the BD's enforcement actions relating to building and slope safety and enhancing support for BD's other related work, including among others, to enhance the efficiency of the Joint Office in handling water seepage cases. The Government plans to allocate a sum of \$3 billion non-recurrent expenditure for Operation Building Bright 2.0. Subject to the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2018, the Government plans to accept applications from mid-2018 onwards. In view of the lead time required for organising repair works, the Urban Renewal Authority, together with relevant departments and organisations, have already held briefings for first round target buildings to explain the arrangement. Our aim is to provide appropriate technical and financial assistance to 2 500 eligible domestic and composite buildings to comply with the building inspection and rehabilitation work required under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme in the next five years.
8. Last but not least, both the LandsD and the PlanD have been allocated additional manpower to enhance enforcement against illegal use of land, including stepping up patrol at black spots against unlawful occupation of government land and taking resolute enforcement actions against offenders.
9. Chairman, the above is a brief account. My colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions that Members may wish to raise. Thank you.