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**Legislative Council**

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**Panel on Housing**

**Meeting on 5 February 2018**

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
on measures to facilitate the mobility needs of  
elderly residents taken by the Hong Kong Housing Authority**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the measures to facilitate the mobility needs of elderly residents taken by the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA"), and gives a summary of the views and concerns expressed by members of the Panel on Housing ("the Panel") on the subject.

**Background**

2. HA has since 2002 implemented the concept of universal design in new public rental housing ("PRH") estates. Barrier-free facilities are provided in the residential buildings, flats and common areas. In line with the Government's policy of "Ageing in Place", HA takes into account the needs of the elderly and other residents with impaired mobility in the design, management and maintenance of PRH estates, with a view to providing a safe and convenient living environment.

3. HA has made reference to the requirements of the Buildings Department's "Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 2008", and has adopted universal design inside residential flats, including using safer materials such as non-slip-floor tiles, providing a sunken shower area, widening the flat entrance, etc., so that residents can continue to reside in the same flat even in their old age or when their mobility is impaired. For the convenience of the elderly, wheelchair users and others, ramps, tactile guide paths and handrails are provided at appropriate locations in common areas of PRH estates. HA also provides lean benches at the lift lobbies of new domestic floors for the elderly and people who need to rest temporarily while waiting for lift services.

4. For eligible elderly tenants living in old PRH blocks, HA will modify the facilities inside their units to cater for their needs. In around 100 PRH estates with a higher proportion of elderly residents, HA plans to increase the provision of recreational facilities for the elderly, such as fitness equipment, pavilions and benches, etc., or modify the use or the design of public space in those estates based on tenants' needs. According to the Administration, the works are expected to complete in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

### **Lift Addition Programme and Lift Modernisation Programme**

5. To support the Universal Accessibility policy of the Administration, and to enhance pedestrian access within PRH estates, HA has been implementing the Lift Addition Programme ("LAP") since 2008. Lifts are added in external common areas, in PRH blocks without lift services and next to existing footbridges within boundaries of PRH estates. LAP also provides barrier-free access, particularly for the elderly and disabled persons who are living in PRH estates built in hilly areas. According to the Administration, LAP involved the addition of 85 lifts, six escalators and 28 footbridges in 33 existing PRH estates.<sup>2</sup> In addition, HA has put in place the Lift Modernisation Programme ("LMP") for PRH estates. Under LMP, annual condition assessment and checking are conducted by HA for all lifts that have been operated for 25 years or more. Taking into account factors including the overall operating conditions of lifts, deployment of resources, etc., HA will formulate a timetable for renewing the lifts concerned.<sup>3</sup>

### **Members' views and concerns**

6. The Panel has discussed with the Administration matters relating to the programme for adding lifts, escalators and footbridges to public housing estates.<sup>4</sup> At the meeting on 6 March 2017, the Administration briefed members on the measures taken by HA for facilitating the mobility needs of elderly residents. The major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

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<sup>1</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)19/17-18\(01\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> According to the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)19/17-18\(01\)](#)) provided to the Panel on Housing in October 2017, the majority of the projects under LAP had been completed while the remaining ones were expected to be completed by 2019.

<sup>3</sup> According to the [Administration's reply](#) to a written question at the Council meeting of 10 May 2017, contracts of lift modernization for 607 lifts in 27 PRH estates had been awarded under LMP during the period from 2010 to 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Panel meetings on 15 April 2013, 7 April 2014 and 1 June 2015.

### Barrier-free access for residents

7. While supporting the implementation of LAP and LMP, members opined that the barrier-free living environment in some public housing estates required improvement, and the Administration should speed up the provision of adequate barrier-free access facilities for the residents. The Panel passed a motion at the meeting on 6 March 2017 urging the Housing Department ("HD") to expeditiously implement the programmes for adding lifts and escalators by streamlining the administrative procedures and making use of dedicated funds to expedite the progress of such works, so as to provide convenient access for the elderly and for people in need.

8. The Administration advised that HA had improved barrier-free access and facilities in about 240 of its properties, including PRH estates, commercial centres, carparks, factory buildings, etc. Examples of the improvement works included the provision of hand railings at staircases, dropped kerbs at main road accesses, as well as access ramps at main accesses and entrances of buildings; the addition of covered walkways; and the provision of tactile guide paths connecting the domestic blocks with the main facilities in the estates. Depending on the need and actual circumstances, HA would install new lifts in suitable locations in PRH estates; provide new lift openings at floors without lift services if it was structurally and technically feasible; and add automatic doors at commercial centres to facilitate access by residents.<sup>5</sup>

### Impact of the estate improvement works on residents

9. Members emphasized the need to reduce the inconvenience caused by the installation of lifts and shorten the time required for the installation or modernization works. Some members opined that HA should ensure adequate provision of barrier-free access facilities when designing a new PRH estate, as adding such facilities after the population intake would cause inconvenience to residents.

10. The Administration explained that in the course of conducting the LMP works, services of some lifts would have to be suspended. HA understood that such works would affect PRH tenants, especially the elderly or wheelchair users. In view of this, during the design stage of the works, project teams would brief local District Council members and Estate Management Advisory Committee members regarding the design and the work process and seek their views. Prior to commencing the works, project teams would post up notices to inform tenants of the details of the works, such as commencement dates, estimated completion dates, affected areas, etc. Electrical staircase climber would be arranged for use by tenants in need throughout the installation period.

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<sup>5</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)1452/16-17\(01\)](#)

### In-flat modification works

11. In view that for eligible elderly tenants living in old PRH blocks, HD might modify the facilities inside their units to cater for their mobility needs, members were concerned about the duration of such in-flat modification works.

12. The Administration advised that HD would carry out appropriate modification works in relevant PRH units in accordance with the needs of the residing elderly or the disabled, and in consideration of the advice from professionals such as medical officers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and medical social workers. In general, it took a few months to complete the modification works for a flat depending on the scope and complexity of the works.

13. Some members asked whether HA would accept wheelchair or walking-aid users' requests for replacing the doors of their PRH units, such as those for kitchens and toilets compartments, with folding doors, and whether HA would install electric gates for its PRH units to facilitate the use by the elderly.

14. The Administration advised that the entrance doors and most kitchen doors of PRH units were designed to have adequate fire resistance period, and they should not be removed or replaced. Nevertheless, tenants might apply for replacing toilet doors with folding doors. HA had commenced a five-year programme to replace old-type collapsible gates in phases for tenants living in older PRH estates. The new gates were lighter in weight, and could facilitate the use by the elderly. During the implementation of the programme, HD had consulted the relevant Estate Management Advisory Committees, and recommended to accord a higher priority to units occupied by elderly or disabled tenants. At present, HD had no plan to install electric gates for its PRH units.<sup>6</sup>

### Public rental housing units allocated to families with wheelchair users

15. Members enquired whether the Administration would allocate a larger PRH unit to a household comprising a wheelchair or walking-aid user. The Administration advised that according to the prevailing PRH allocation arrangement, if a PRH applicant or whose family member depended on wheelchair for mobility at home on a non-temporary basis, required renal dialysis treatment at home, or suffered from hyperactivity problem or tetraplegia, the application might, with the support of medical documents, be considered as having an additional household member, and be allocated with a PRH unit with extra space. For example, if both members of a two-member household were elderly who depended on wheelchair for mobility at home on a non-temporary basis, a four-person unit would be allocated.

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<sup>6</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)1452/16-17\(01\)](#)

### **Latest development**

16. The Administration will brief the Panel on the measures taken by HA to facilitate the mobility needs of elderly residents at the Panel meeting on 5 February 2018.

### **Relevant papers**

17. A list of relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
30 January 2018

**Measures to facilitate the mobility needs of  
elderly residents taken by the Hong Kong Housing Authority**

**List of relevant papers**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Housing	15 April 2013	Administration's paper on "Progress Report on Addition of Lifts and Escalators to Existing Public Rental Housing Estates" (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)826/12-13(05)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1638/12-13</a> )
Panel on Housing	7 April 2014	Administration's paper on "Progress Report on Addition of Lifts and Escalators to Existing Public Rental Housing Estates" (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1189/13-14(05)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1946/13-14</a> )
Panel on Housing	1 June 2015	Administration's paper on "Progress Report on Addition of Lifts and Escalators to Existing Public Rental Housing Estates" (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)787/14-15(08)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1244/14-15</a> )
Panel on Housing	6 March 2017	Administration's paper on "Measures to facilitate the mobility needs of elderly residents by the Hong Kong Housing Authority" (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)617/16-17(05)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)900/16-17</a> )  Administration's supplementary paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1452/16-17(01)</a> )