

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)910/19-20
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/HG/1

Panel on Housing

**Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 28 April 2020, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH (Chairman)
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH

Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan

Members attending : Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon KWONG Chun-yu

Members absent : Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP

Public Officers attending : Agenda Item IV

Mr Ricky YEUNG
Deputy Director of Housing (Estate Management)
Housing Department

Mr Steve LUK
Assistant Director (Estate Management) 3
Housing Department

Mr Ricky LAM
Chief Manager/Management (Project Management)
Housing Department

Mrs Harriet LAU
Chief Manager/Management (Support Services Section) 2
Housing Department

Mr Stephen YIM
Chief Architect/Development & Standards
Housing Department

Ms Catherine FONG
Chief Housing Manager/Applications
Housing Department

Agenda Item V

Mr Ricky YEUNG
Deputy Director of Housing (Estate Management)
Housing Department

Mr Steve LUK
Assistant Director (Estate Management) 3
Housing Department

Mr Ricky LAM
Chief Manager/Management (Project Management)
Housing Department

Agenda Item VI

Mrs Alice CHEUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Transport & Housing (Housing)/
Deputy Director of Housing (Strategy)
Housing Department

Mr Samuel LAI
Senior Administrative Officer/Strategic Planning 2
Housing Department

Mrs Harriet LAU
Chief Manager/Management (Support Services Section) 2
Housing Department

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

Staff in attendance : Mr Fred PANG
Senior Council Secretary (1)5

Ms Michelle NIEN
Legislative Assistant (1)5

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(1)544/19-20 — Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2019)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2019 were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since last meeting

2. Members noted that the following papers had been issued since last meeting –

LC Paper No. CB(1)450/19-20(01) — Letter dated 9 March 2020 from Hon SHIU Ka-chun regarding review of income and asset limits for public rental housing for 2020-21 (Chinese version only)

LC Paper No. CB(1)454/19-20(01) — Land Registry Statistics for February 2020 provided by the Administration (press release)

LC Paper No. CB(1)503/19-20(01) — Administration's response to the letter dated 9 March 2020 from Hon SHIU Ka-chun requesting the Administration to provide information about "Review of income and asset limits for public rental housing for 2020-21" (LC Paper No. CB(1)450/19-20(01))

LC Paper No. CB(1)509/19-20(01) — Land Registry Statistics for March 2020 provided by the Administration (press release)

Action

LC Paper No. CB(1)508/19-20(01) — Submission from Hong Kong Subdivided Flats Concerning Platform dated 27 March 2020 expressing views on tenancy control and inadequate housing (Chinese version only)

LC Paper No. CB(1)555/19-20 — Report of the Subcommittee to Follow Up Issues Related to Inadequate Housing and Relevant Housing Policies

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)491/19-20(01) — List of follow-up actions

LC Paper No. CB(1)491/19-20(02) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, 4 May 2020, at 2:30 pm –

- (a) Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement in Public Housing Estates of the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA"); and
- (b) Performance of the environmental targets and initiatives of HA in 2019-20.

(Post-meeting note: The notice of meeting and agenda were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)561/19-20 on 23 April 2020).

IV. Measures to facilitate the mobility needs of elderly residents by the Hong Kong Housing Authority

(LC Paper No. CB(1)491/19-20(03) — Administration's paper on measures to facilitate the mobility needs of elderly residents by the Hong Kong Housing Authority

Action

LC Paper No. CB(1)491/19-20(04) — Paper on measures to facilitate the mobility needs of elderly residents taken by the Hong Kong Housing Authority prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief))

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Director (Estate Management), Housing Department ("DD(EM), HD") briefed members on HA's measures in assisting elderly residents in public rental housing ("PRH"). With the aid of PowerPoint, Assistant Director (Estate Management)3, Housing Department ("AD(EM)3, HD") elaborated on the details.

(Post-meeting note: Presentation materials (LC Paper No. CB(1)580/19-20(01)) for the item were issued to members on 29 April 2020 in electronic form.)

Facilities and services in public housing estates

5. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok declared that he was a member of HA. He considered it appropriate to provide facilities in PRH units and at common areas of PRH estates to cater for the needs of elderly residents and residents with impaired mobility. In response to Ir Dr LO's view that the Administration/HA should take every opportunity, including redevelopment of existing old estates, to provide more social welfare facilities in public housing development projects, such as residential care services for the elderly, elderly activity centres, etc, DD(EM), HD advised that the Administration/HA would continue to provide social welfare facilities in new public housing estates where practicable, taking into account the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPSG"). Ir Dr LO remarked that the Administration should adopt an open mindset to alleviate the currently severe shortage of such facilities.

6. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan did not subscribe to the claim in the Administration's paper that HA supported charitable organizations to provide Mobile Chinese Medical Van services in PRH estates. She criticized that the estate management staff in Nam Shan Estate, Tai Hang Tung Estate and Tak Long Estate had taken different approaches to handle charitable organizations' applications for providing the services in these estates, and considered it necessary for the Administration/HA to ensure consistent and

Action

efficient implementation of the relevant supporting measures in order to cater for the elderly residents' demand for such services. The Chairman remarked that HA should consider putting in place guidelines on handling such applications for its staff to follow. DD(EM), HD replied that the Administration would study the matter in light of members' views. HA had provided space for the provision of similar Mobile Van services in about 25 PRH estates. In considering the feasibility of a proposal for providing such services in an estate, HA would take into account factors like the provision of similar services in the estates, availability of electricity supply, whether the proposal would cause obstruction to emergency vehicle access, etc.

7. Mr WU Chi-wai opined that apart from providing adequate barrier-free access facilities, the Administration/HA should also ensure that public housing residents using such facilities did not need to take a circuitous route. AD(EM)3, HD replied that the Administration/HA provided barrier-free access facilities in public housing estates in accordance with the relevant legislation, and would continue to communicate with local communities/residents regarding the enhancement of such facilities to cater for elderly and disabled persons.

8. Mr LAU Kwok-fan opined that HA very often could not retrofit a cover to existing facilities in PRH estates owing to the gross floor area ("GFA") restriction, and this might hinder the provision of more elderly facilities. He asked whether the Housing Department ("HD") would liaise with relevant authorities to address the problem, such as obtaining exemptions from the GFA restriction. AD(EM)3, HD replied that HD would discuss with relevant authorities, such as the Independent Checking Unit of the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing, the suggestion of obtaining appropriate exemptions from the GFA restriction to enable the provision of more elderly facilities in HA's estates. HD would also continue to explore the feasibility of converting the ground floor empty bays in PRH blocks for providing facilities for residents, taking into account the local communities' views.

9. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan opined that most of the HA's measures to facilitate the mobility needs of elderly residents as set out in the Administration's paper had been implemented for many years. She asked whether HA would consider introducing new measures to assist elderly residents, such as through the application of gerontechnology. Mr Andrew WAN opined that HA should continue to improve the PRH design and facilities in order to cater for elderly residents' mobility needs.

Action

10. AD(EM)3, HD replied that upon receiving suggestions, HA had explored the feasibility of providing Visual Fire Alarm ("VFA") Systems inside PRH units, notwithstanding that individual units in residential buildings were not required to be equipped with VFA under the prevailing legislation. HD had liaised with the Fire Services Department to study relevant statutory issues and HA had endorsed the provision of the systems in PRH. In response to Ms YUNG's enquiry about the implementation plan of VFA, AD(EM)3, HD advised that HA would install the systems for hearing-impaired persons free of charge in all its PRH estates upon request of the tenants concerned. To notify tenants about this new provision, HD staff would proactively communicate with PRH households with hearing-impaired members and display notices at the ground floor lift lobby of PRH blocks.

Lifts in estates

11. Mr WU Chi-wai and Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern that elderly PRH tenants might be living in the top floor units which were not provided with lifts. Mr WU enquired why HA did not add lift openings for these top floors. He opined that the HD's present practice of helping these tenants to transfer to other PRH units provided with lift services might not meet the latter's aspirations for remaining in their familiar neighbourhood. AD(EM)3, HD replied that under the Lift Modernisation Programme ("LMP"), HA would add lift openings in PRH buildings for floors currently without one, where the building structure permitted. It was more difficult for HA to carry out works for adding lift openings for the top floor of a building mainly because the operation of all lifts in the same lift well concerned had to be suspended when carrying out such works. Tenants living on floors without lift services could apply for transfer to other units in the same estates or other estates and HA would make appropriate arrangements as far as practicable.

12. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that elderly residents with impaired mobility might be forced to stay at home when HA carried out LMP works in their PRH blocks. Apart from procuring adequate staircase climbers for deployment, HD should also liaise with local service units to use such equipment to assist the elderly residents affected by LMP works. The Chairman requested the Administration/HA to consider Dr CHEUNG's views.

Action

13. As regards HA's plan to upgrade about 450 lifts in around 25 PRH estates in the next five years under LMP, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan asked whether HA would speed up the programme so that more aged lifts would be modernized in a timely manner. AD(EM)3, HD replied that under LMP, HA conducted annual condition assessment and checking for all lifts that had been in operation for 25 years or more. Taking into account the overall operating conditions of lifts and other relevant factors, HA would formulate a timetable for renewing the lifts concerned. The frequency of maintenance inspections conducted by HA on the lifts in PRH estates was generally higher than that required under the relevant legislation and these lifts in general operated well. In considering whether it was practicable to speed up the programme, HA would take into account the limited supply of lift practitioners in the industry.

14. The Chairman said that many HA's tenants in Tenants Purchase Scheme ("TPS") estates, such as Tak Tin Estate, were elderly persons but they could not benefit from the Lift Addition Programme or LMP. He asked whether HA would take forward projects to retrofit lifts in TPS estates to cater for residents' needs. AD(EM)3, HD replied that under the Universal Accessibility Programme, the Administration would launch a special scheme for retrofitting lifts at the walkways in or connecting to the common areas of three types of housing estates, including the 39 TPS estates, estates under the Buy or Rent Option Scheme and PRH estates with non-residential properties divested. The Highways Department was conducting the relevant studies.

Elderly fitness facilities/equipment

15. Mr WU Chi-wai opined that the HA's requirements regarding the safety mats beneath some of the elderly fitness equipment might be much more stringent than those adopted by the Leisure and Cultural Department ("LCSD"), and this might affect the quantity of such equipment that could be provided in HA's estates. He suggested that HA should review afresh the requirements. AD(EM)3, HD replied that HD had all along exchanged views with LCSD regarding playground or fitness equipment. In considering whether a particular type of elderly fitness equipment should be carpeted with safety matting, HD would make reference to the advice of relevant professional bodies. HD would follow up the matter taking into account Mr WU's suggestion.

Action

16. Dr Helena WONG enquired about the criteria adopted by HA for deciding the distribution of elderly fitness facilities/equipment among individual PRH estates. AD(EM)3, HD replied that when designing individual public housing development projects, HA would make reference to HKPSG and provide a variety of facilities for use by residents, including elderly fitness facilities/equipment. In considering a suggestion for installation of additional elderly fitness facilities/equipment in an existing estate, HA would take into account factors such as changes in the demographic structure of the estate, actual needs of residents, usage of facilities, space availability, etc. HD would invite contractors on its List of Contractors to submit proposals for its consideration, and consult the Estate Management Advisory Committee concerned on the suggestion. In response to Dr WONG's enquiry about how HA would collect data on the usage of different types of elderly fitness facilities/equipment to facilitate its planning for their provision in future, AD(EM)3, HD advised that HD frontline staff conducted routine inspections on the facilities in estates, and hence would know whether a particular type of facilities was well received.

17. Mr LAU Kwok-fan enquired whether HA would assist Incorporated Owners of TPS estates to provide elderly fitness facilities/equipment in TPS estates. AD(EM)3, HD replied that as in the case of private properties, the costs of providing and maintaining facilities at common areas of TPS estates were shared by all owners. HA, as the owner of unsold TPS units, would contribute to the payment of management and maintenance expenses of a TPS estate in proportion to its share of ownership in the estate.

Adaptation/home modification works in public rental housing units

18. Mr Tony TSE opined that apart from carrying out adaptation/home modification works in PRH units upon tenants' requests, HA should also proactively communicate with sitting elderly tenants on the appropriate works in their units that would help cater for their mobility needs. DD(EM), HD replied that the Administration/HA would consider Mr TSE's view. He and AD(EM)3, HD further advised that when carrying out refurbishment works for a recovered PRH unit for re-allocation, HA would convert the bath tub to a shower area and install suitable facilities in the unit to cater for the tenant's mobility needs, such as non-slip floor tiles on suitable floor surfaces, grab rails in bathrooms and larger doorbell buttons.

Action

19. In view that elderly sitting tenants might need to convert the bath tub in their PRH units into a shower area, Mr Andrew WAN sought clarification on whether a doctor's recommendation was required for HA to carry out such conversion works. AD(EM3), HD replied that HA would carry out such conversion upon recommendations by a doctor, and advice from specialist doctors was not required.

Flat allocation

20. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok enquired on how the prevailing PRH allocation policy of HA would encourage the younger generation to live together with their elderly parents. DD(EM), HD replied that under the Harmonious Families Priority Scheme, eligible PRH applicants with elderly parents/dependent relatives would enjoy a six-month period of priority processing over the applications by ordinary families. Under the Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme, PRH tenants residing in different District Council districts from their offspring/elderly parents might apply for transfer to the same or nearby estate for mutual care. The Harmonious Families Addition Scheme and Harmonious Families Amalgamation Scheme would allow younger families to live with their elderly parents and dependent relatives in the same PRH unit respectively.

21. Mr SHIU Ka-chun asked about HA's measures to shorten the average PRH waiting time for elderly one-person applicants, which was currently about three years or more. He further enquired on the proportion of units in new PRH developments which would be used for allocation to these applicants, and whether HA would increase the proportion in future. DD(EM), HD replied that the fundamental solution to shortening the PRH waiting time was to increase public housing supply. HA determined the mix of flat sizes in new PRH projects according to the established arrangement. Apart from elderly one-person applicants, HA also allocated one-person PRH units to non-elderly one-person applicants. In general, the PRH waiting time for elderly one-person applicants was shorter than that for family applicants.

22. Dr Fernando CHEUNG welcomed the HA's present practice of allocating to a household requiring non-temporary indoor use of wheelchair with a PRH unit which was one grade up of the standard entitlement. In view that such arrangement could not cater for some families who needed a larger unit to accommodate devices and equipment to assist their severely disabled members, he asked whether HA would exercise discretion to deal with these families' needs, pursuant to recommendations of doctors/physiotherapists. DD(EM), HD replied that HA would consider these families' requests on their

Action

own merits, taking into account the layout of PRH flats, recommendations of doctors/physiotherapists, etc. In response to Dr CHEUNG's suggestion that instead of considering such requests case by case, HA should put in place an established mechanism/guidelines to deal with them, DD(EM), HD advised that the Administration/HA would study the suggestion.

Under-occupation households

23. Mr SHIU Ka-fai declared that he was a member of HA. He opined that a PRH household might become an under-occupation household, as deletion of family members due to moving-out, marriage, death, etc., might leave the remaining family members with more living space than the prescribed allocation standard. As these under-occupation households might have one elderly member only, the Administration/HA should consider putting in place measures to allow these elderly persons to transfer to other suitable accommodations in which they would receive elderly care services so that their PRH units could be released for allocation to larger families in need.

24. In response to Mr SHIU Ka-fai's enquiry on how HA would obtain information about the occupancy position of its PRH units, DD(EM), HD advised that if there was a departure of a family member in a PRH unit, the household concerned should inform HD and proceed with the necessary formalities for deletion of family members from the tenancy. By conducting flat visits under its biennial inspection system, HA could also obtain information about the occupancy position of a PRH unit, such as non-occupation, which might enable HA to follow up on tenancy abuse cases. HA had put in place the under-occupation policy under which an under-occupation household might have to move to a PRH unit of suitable size. As regards households with all elderly members aged 70 or above, they would be excluded from the under-occupation list. Mr SHIU Ka-fai remarked that HA should consider increasing the frequency of flat inspections in order to have a grasp of the occupancy position of PRH units in a timely manner.

25. In view that HA had implemented a trial scheme whereby under-occupation households whose family members were all aged 70 or above were allowed to enjoy life-long full rent exemption upon transfer to suitably-sized units, Mr Tony TSE asked whether the scheme was well received. He opined that as the trial scheme might meet the needs of elderly tenants and facilitate better utilization of PRH resources, HA should explain more to PRH residents about the scheme. DD(EM), HD replied that HA had launched the trial scheme in end 2019 and its implementation would last for one year. About 200 applications had been received under the scheme so far. HA had issued letters to invite eligible tenants to indicate in the attached reply form

Action

the PRH estates in the same District Council district, including new PRH blocks, that they wished to transfer to. Tenants might also approach their estate management offices for assistances in completing the reply form.

26. In view of the recent increase in unemployment rate of persons aged 60 or above, Mr SHIU Ka-chun enquired whether HA would also exclude under-occupation households with all elderly members aged 60 to 69 from the under-occupation list. Mr Andrew WAN suggested that HA should consider excluding under-occupation households with all elderly members aged between 65 and 69 from the under-occupation list and allow them to enjoy life-long full rent exemption if they were willing to transfer to smaller units. DD(EM), HD replied that the Administration/HA would consider the suggestion as part of the review of the trial scheme.

27. The Chairman opined that due to the coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic, more PRH households including under-occupation households whose income had reduced might need rent assistances. He suggested that as elderly members of under-occupation households might have difficulties in adapting to a new environment and hence might not be able to transfer to other PRH units of smaller size with lower rent, HA should consider allowing under-occupation households to apply for HA's rent assistances. DD(EM), HD replied that the Administration/HA would study the suggestion. He advised that the number of elderly beneficiaries of HA's rent assistances was about 13 000. In view of the worsening economic situation, HA would process applications for rent assistances as quickly as possible.

[At 11:54 am, the Chairman directed the meeting be extended by 15 minutes.]

V. Progress of the Total Maintenance Scheme

(LC Paper No. CB(1)491/19-20(05) — Administration's paper on progress of the Total Maintenance Scheme

LC Paper No. CB(1)491/19-20(06) — Paper on Total Maintenance Scheme prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief))

Action

28. At the invitation of the Chairman, DD(EM), HD briefed members on the progress of the Total Maintenance Scheme ("TMS") for PRH estates implemented by HA. The Chairman advised that the presentation materials provided by the Administration for the item had been tabled at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: Presentation materials (LC Paper No. CB(1)580/19-20(02)) for the item were issued to members on 29 April 2020 in electronic form.)

Access for in-flat inspections

29. Mr SHIU Ka-chun said that according to LC Papers No. CB(1)532/18-19(05) and CB(1)491/19-20(05), for PRH estates where TMS had been completed, the overall access rate of in-flat inspections was about 80%. He enquired on how HA would encourage elderly and disabled tenants to participate in TMS. The Chairman asked about the percentage of inspected PRH units where HA had completed the repair works under TMS. He expressed concern about the PRH units not accessible for inspections and HA's measures to facilitate more tenants' participation in inspections.

30. AD(EM)3, HD replied that among the 62 estates with TMS completed, the overall access rate of in-flat inspections was maintained at about 80%. HA had carried out instant repair works for more than 99% inspected flats and would liaise with contractors to follow up on those flats involving repair works of higher complexity. To facilitate more tenants' participation in in-flat inspections, HA had optimized the visit arrangement and appointment services. During the inspection, HA would review records of unsuccessful attempts from time to time and arrange visits at three different timeslots. In case of unsuccessful attempt, HA would leave notice to invite tenants to make appointments with public relation officers for maximizing the chance of successful visits. HA would conduct interim assessment as well. When the accessible rate of individual blocks was unsatisfactory or some units had not been inspected in the last TMS cycle, HA would allocate resources and assign in-flat inspection ambassadors ("IIAs") to call or visit tenants at non-office hours for arranging appointments. When tenants from the units not inspected in last two consecutive TMS cycles requested Responsive In-flat Maintenance Services, technical teams would take the opportunity to inspect specified items and handle safety-related repairs during the visit. Mr SHIU Ka-chun requested the Administration to provide information on the annual number of PRH tenants aged 65 or above and disabled PRH tenants who had participated in TMS and the proportion of these tenants to the annual number of tenants participating in TMS.

Action

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)840/19-20(01) on 2 July 2020.)

In-flat Inspection Ambassadors

31. Mr Tony TSE asked about the qualification requirements of IIAs, and whether they were qualified to handle and follow up improper alterations of drainage system. He further enquired whether IIAs would proactively provide suggestions to PRH households on the appropriate adaption/home modification works in their units to help meet the mobility needs of the elderly household members. AD(EM3), HD replied that the entry requirements for the post of IIA were equivalent to those for the post of Works Supervisor II, including possession of a certificate in Building Studies or equivalent. HA had recently stepped up training of IIAs to equip them with the knowledge to cope with problems in relation to the coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic. When visiting a PRH unit, IIAs would inspect the in-flat conditions, and arrange follow-up works to repair defects, including drainage defects, if any. They would also communicate with the household members to identify any repair needs inside their flats, and educate the tenants on the maintenance issues in their flats that they should report to the estate management office.

Quality of contractors' work

32. Mr SHIU Ka-chun said that the Director of Audit's Report No. 67 had mentioned that the Surprise Check Teams of HD had inspected 133 PRH units between February 2014 and March 2016, and had found 385 unsatisfactory among the 2 800 work items of these units. In view that the Report had recommended that HA should strengthen the inspections of repair works under TMS, he requested the Administration to provide supplementary information on whether and how HA had increased the frequency of periodic inspections; the annual number of surprise checks conducted by HA; the annual number of unsatisfactory contractors' repair works found by HA and the punishments imposed on the contractors concerned; and the number of contractors punished by HA by shortening their contract period or terminating their contract due to their low performance scores.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)840/19-20(01) on 2 July 2020.)

Action

33. Dr CHENG Chung-tai expressed concern whether HA had monitored contractors' works adequately under TMS and whether the existing monitoring mechanism could produce adequate deterrent effects. He said that he had handled a case involving problems of concrete spalling, exposed bar tendons and water leakage inside a flat in Cheung Hang Estate, and the repair works that had been undertaken were very unsatisfactory. He enquired how HA would deal with the case under TMS. AD(EM3), HD replied that the case might involve workmanship problems and Dr CHENG might refer it to him for follow-up. According to experience, maintenance problems such as concrete spalling were often found in the about 20% of PRH units which HA could not gain access for in-flat inspections under TMS. In general, a TMS contractor who had not completed a repair item satisfactorily was required to carry out rectification works at the contractor's own cost. If a contractor's unsatisfactory performance persisted, HA might issue warning letters to the contractor, hence affecting the contractor's performance scores. TMS was currently included in the work scope under the District Term Maintenance Contracts ("DTC"). As eligible contractors would be invited to submit bids for DTC based on their past performance scores, contractors with lower scores would be given less tendering opportunity. For contractors of serving DTC with sub-standard performance, HA might shorten their contract period or remove them from the HA's list of contractors. In the past five years, the contract period of a DTC contractor had been shortened from three to two years.

Drainage system and vent pipes

34. The Chairman opined that many residents were concerned about the maintenance of drainage pipes inside their PRH units and the contractors' workmanship in this regard. He suggested that in view of the coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic, apart from inspecting drainage system of individual PRH units upon tenants' requests, HA should proactively inspect the drainage pipes of all PRH units by phases. Dr Helena WONG was concerned that there might be leakages in drainage pipes and improper modifications of drainage system including vent pipes in PRH units, which would give rise to public hygiene problems. She further expressed concern whether the design of rooftop vent pipes in Fu Heng Estate was in compliance with the relevant legislation, and whether air emissions from rooftop vent pipes in some newly completed or redeveloped estates, such as So Uk Estate, would pose health risks to households living near the exits of the vent pipes. She asked whether apart from conducting in-flat inspections under TMS, HA would launch a special programme to inspect the drainage system of its estates, including vent pipes. Mr Andrew WAN said that some PRH blocks/units might be installed with communal drainage pipes, anti-siphons and rooftop vent pipes,

Action

and was concerned whether the PRH residents living there would be exposed to higher risks of infection even if the design of such installations met the relevant standards. He opined that HA should consider including under TMS the improvement works required for addressing such risks.

35. AD(EM)3, HD replied that the scope of TMS covered all standard facilities provided by HA in PRH units, including drainage system. The Administration/HA would consider the Chairman's suggestion, taking into account the total number of PRH units under HA and the resources required to take forward the suggestion. There were some public housing blocks where two adjacent units shared communal drainage pipes or U-shaped water traps, and such design would not give rise to health hazards. In the cases where two adjacent units shared the same water trap, HA would take the opportunity to add a new water trap in order to allow easy maintenance in future. In view of the public concern about the hygiene risks arising from the coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic, HA had established a mechanism under which when HA had received notifications from the Centre for Health Protection that there was a confirmed case in a PRH estate, HA would inspect the drainage system of all PRH units that used the same soil pipe and vent pipe with the unit with the confirmed case and arrange repairs to them during the inspection as appropriate. For other PRH units, if tenants were concerned about the current conditions of their drainage pipework or the hygienic risks arising from their alterations, they might seek assistance from the estate management office which would arrange inspections and follow-up as appropriate. HA had completed the inspection of the vent pipes at roof levels of its PRH buildings, and their design was compliant with the relevant legislations and standards. HA would make reference to any new guidelines issued by relevant authorities and future recommendations of the inter-department expert group regarding drainage system/vent pipes, and carry out improvement works accordingly.

VI. Accelerating the sale of unsold Tenants Purchase Scheme flats

(LC Paper No. CB(1)491/19-20(07) — Administration's paper on accelerating the sale of unsold Tenants Purchase Scheme flats

LC Paper No. CB(1)491/19-20(08) — Paper on Tenants Purchase Scheme prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief))

Action

36. With the aid of Powerpoint, Senior Administrative Officer/Strategic Planning 2, Housing Department briefed members on HA's plans to put up rental flats recovered from TPS estates for sale and the Administration's preliminary analysis regarding the sales arrangements of recovered TPS flats and other feasible measures for accelerating the sale of unsold TPS flats.

(Post-meeting note: Presentation materials (LC Paper No. CB(1)580/19-20(03)) for the item were issued to members on 29 April 2020 in electronic form.)

Sales arrangements of recovered flats

37. Dr CHENG Chung-tai enquired whether HA would set a target on the number of unsold TPS flats to be put up for sale, and how HA would take into account the impacts of the economic downturn and the ages of these flats when setting the target. Mr SHIU Ka-chun enquired about the time needed for completing the sale of all unsold TPS flats.

38. Deputy Secretary for Transport & Housing (Housing)/Deputy Director of Housing (Strategy), Housing Department ("DS(H)) replied that HA's Subsidised Housing Committee ("SHC") had endorsed freezing the letting of rental flats recovered from TPS estates starting from 11 March 2020, with a view to putting up the unsold TPS flats for sale at end-2020/early 2021. HA recovered about 1 100 rental flats from TPS estates through normal course annually. DS(H) advised that the sales performance of unsold TPS flats might hinge on a number of factors including the details of the sales arrangements (e.g. target buyers, pricing mechanism etc.) and incentives. SHC had generally agreed that the target buyers of recovered TPS flats should include Green Formers (i.e. sitting tenants of other PRH units or PRH applicants who had passed detailed eligibility vetting), and might consider extending the target buyers to other categories of buyers. The Administration would put up concrete recommendations regarding the sales arrangements of recovered TPS flats for HA's consideration in the second/third quarter of 2020, taking into account members' views.

39. Mr Andrew WAN opined that the Administration/HA should ensure that the proposed measures to accelerate the sale of unsold TPS flats would bring about benefits to sitting tenants and buyers/owners of TPS flats as well as society as a whole. Mr Tony TSE expressed a similar view, and opined that in order to work out suitable sales arrangements of recovered TPS flats, the Administration/HA should study the reasons why part of the about 184 000 TPS flats could be sold out, and why there were 39% or more of TPS flats remained unsold in some individual TPS estates.

Action

Flat prices

40. Mr WU Chi-wai asked about the details of the Adjusted Replacement Cost approach adopted by HA for pricing TPS flats. DS(H) replied that under the approach, the average list prices of TPS flats were set based on the current replacement cost which comprised building cost, project management cost, funding cost, with adjustments to reflect their age and location, and with the land cost payment to the Government taken into account. Then, in setting of the prices of individual TPS flats, factors such as the floor level were also relevant. The average list prices of unsold TPS flats currently ranged from around \$11,000 per square metre to \$22,000 per square metre, representing around 15% to 19% of assessed market value on average.

41. Mr Andrew WAN and Mr WU Chi-wai enquired about the distribution of the list prices of unsold TPS flats by geographical areas (e.g. Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories), the criteria or factors (such as floor levels and orientation of flats) and their respective weightings in determining the list prices of unsold TPS flats, and the details of calculation of the list prices of unsold TPS flats. DS(H) replied that the Administration would provide supplementary information in these regards.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)883/19-20(01) on 17 July 2020.)

42. Mr WU Chi-wai opined that flat prices would be a key consideration of whether to purchase unsold TPS flats. To increase the attractiveness of such flats to existing TPS tenants and new target buyers, HA might need to adopt a new pricing mechanism. Mr SHIU Ka-chun asked about whether HA would renovate recovered TPS flats in order to attract buyers to purchase them. DS(H) replied that the Administration/HA agreed that flat prices would be an important factor in the decision of buying recovered TPS flats, and would consider the suitable pricing mechanism.

Incentive measures

43. Dr CHENG Chung-tai was concerned on how the measures to accelerate the sale of unsold TPS flats would affect the TPS tenants who had no intention or could not afford to buy the flats they were living in. Mr SHIU Ka-chun noted that HA would provide incentives to tenants who did not purchase their TPS flats to transfer out of TPS estates, and asked about the details. Mr Andrew WAN opined that HA should not force TPS tenants to

Action

move out from the flats they lived, and considered that providing time-limited rent-free or rent-reduction period to tenants accepting transfers, allowing them to choose the other PRH estates to which they transferred including newly built PRH estates and providing additional domestic removal allowance might serve as incentives for tenants to transfer out of TPS estates. DS(H) replied that there would likely be certain sitting TPS tenants who had no intention to purchase their residing flats and hence HA would need to incentivize them to move to non-TPS estates. Possible incentives to be considered included but were not limited to cash allowance, but the amount and relevant arrangement required further consideration. HA had no plans to force TPS sitting tenants to move out from the flats being leased to them. To free up more TPS flats for sale, HA would draw up measures to incentivize sitting tenants to transfer out of TPS estates to other non-TPS estates.

Estate management and maintenance

44. Mr KWOK Wai-keung declared that he was a member of HA. He opined that the proposal to accelerate the sale of unsold TPS flats was intended to solve the management problems in TPS estates arising from the co-existence of individual flat owners and HA's tenants within the same blocks, rather than to help PRH households to realize their home ownership aspirations. DS(H) replied that in deciding whether HA should explore measures to expedite the sale of unsold TPS flats, SHC had not only taken into account the maintenance and estate management problems in TPS estates arising from mixed ownership, but also the persistent and ardent demand for subsidized sale flats in society. The Administration/HA believed that putting up recovered TPS flats for sale to buyers other than the TPS sitting tenants might facilitate more families to achieve their home ownership aspirations.

45. Mr KWOK Wai-keung opined that target buyers would not have confidence in purchasing TPS unsold flats if the various problems in the TPS estates, including those relating to estate maintenance and land leases, etc. remained unresolved. Mr Tony TSE opined that in deciding whether to purchase TPS flats, target buyers would consider not only the flat prices, but also the ages and maintenance issues of TPS buildings. It was important for HA to resolve the estate management and maintenance problems effectively.

46. Mr Andrew WAN opined that the funding of \$14,000 per domestic flat under the Maintenance Fund for TPS estates provided by HA many years ago was insufficient to meet the cost required for maintaining an estate. Mr KWOK Wai-keung opined that flat owners in TPS estates were facing difficulties in affording the cost of repair and maintenance for common areas and facilities in their estates, and enquired whether the Administration/HA

Action

would consider injecting additional funding into the Maintenance Fund. Mr SHIU Ka-chun raised the same enquiry, and asked about the remaining balance of the Maintenance Fund. DS(H) replied that the Administration took note of members' concerns regarding the Maintenance Fund. There could be further discussions and exchange regarding these concerns, no matter whether HA would implement the measures to accelerate the sale of unsold TPS flats.

47. In view that many TPS buildings had an age of about 30 years or more, Mr KWOK Wai-keung was concerned about their increasing maintenance needs and remaining life spans. He asked whether the Administration/HA would take care of the redevelopment of these buildings in future. DS(H) replied that in general, the life span of a residential block such as a TPS building was much longer than 30 years. Regardless of whether HA would accelerate the sale of unsold TPS flats, issues arising from the ageing of TPS buildings would emerge in future. Issues regarding redevelopment of TPS estates and other private residential developments should in principle be the same.

48. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen opined that in deciding whether to purchase TPS flats, target buyers would take into account various factors, including their future responsibilities for estate maintenance. He referred to the recent concern about the design of rooftop vent pipes in Heng Tai House, Fu Heng Estate, and asked whether HA as the owner of rental flats in this TPS estate would consider bearing the cost for following up any design problems of the vent pipes in the building in order to demonstrate to target buyers of recovered TPS flats that HA was willing to alleviate owners' burden of improving the facilities that HA had provided in TPS buildings. DS(H) replied that as an owner of TPS flats, HA had all along been contributing funds in accordance with its ownership shares held to share the repair and maintenance charges with other owners. The Chairman said that the Administration should further study the views and concerns raised by Mr CHAN.

49. Mr WU Chi-wai asked whether HA would provide new structural guarantee for future owners of individual TPS estates to address their concerns on the conditions of structural components of such flats and whether the structural guarantee would apply to the whole estate. DS(H) replied that HA had provided structural guarantee for each of the TPS estates, which covered a limited period of time in earlier years. To increase the attractiveness of TPS flats to target buyers, instead of providing structural guarantee, it might be more appropriate to consider other options like discounts on the flats' selling prices, etc.

Action

[At about 1:00 pm, the Chairman proposed to extend the meeting time until all items on the agenda had been dealt with. Members present did not raise objection to the extension.]

Home ownership aspirations of families in public rental housing

50. The Chairman said that he all along supported the sale of PRH units to sitting tenants. He expressed concern that the proposal to accelerate the sale of unsold TPS flats might not be well received and the Administration/HA might use this as a reason for not accepting the suggestion of putting up the flats in other PRH estates for sale to sitting tenants in future. He opined that HA should take a more proactive approach in meeting its tenants' aspirations for buying the flats they were living in. The problems arising from mixed ownership in the 39 TPS estates, such as estate management issues, would affect the incentives of sitting tenants and other target buyers to purchase TPS flats, and HA needed to tackle such problems effectively in order to address the concerns of these prospective buyers.

51. DS(H) replied that the Administration/HA had all along endeavored to make the proposed initiative of accelerating the sale of unsold TPS flats successful. In the existing TPS estates, the co-existence of flat owners and HA as the landlord of PRH tenants had given rise to a number of estate maintenance problems, and the Administration/HA would continue to resolve them as far as practicable. She explained that since HA usually owned substantially more ownership shares in a TPS estate than individual owners amongst the attendees at owners' meetings, different tenants/owners had different expectations regarding HA's role in maintenance and management. In handling matters in respect of management of common areas and facilities in TPS estates, HA had all along been cautious as far as possible in order not to dominate estate management and maintenance affairs while promoting owners' effective participation and ownership in estate management.

52. Mr KWONG Chun-yu opined that families in PRH estates might wish to buy the flats in which they resided. The Administration/HA should learn a lesson from the implementation of TPS in earlier years and propose an enhanced TPS for public discussion. He criticized that the Administration/HA so far had neither reviewed TPS nor introduced measures to address the issues arising from mixed ownership in TPS estates.

Action

53. DS(H) replied that as mentioned in the 2019 Policy Address, extending TPS to PRH estates other than the 39 TPS estates would reduce the number of PRH units available for allocation in the short term, which would inevitably lengthen the waiting time for PRH. Instead of re-launching TPS amid the current acute PRH supply shortage, HA would put up the recovered TPS flats for sale to help cater for the home ownership aspirations. When there was more certainty on the overall public housing supply, the Administration could invite HA to look into the subject of re-launching TPS meticulously. Mr KWONG remarked that the rental units recovered by HA in its estates was far from adequate to meet the PRH demand, and the Administration had the responsibility to construct adequate PRH units.

54. The Chairman said that the Research Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat had prepared an information note on "Tenants purchase schemes in selected places",¹ which highlighted the approaches/measures adopted for promoting home ownership among public housing tenants/lower-income families in selected places. He suggested that HA might make reference to it, as well as the arrangements adopted by the Housing and Development Board of Singapore regarding its sold flats, including the repair, maintenance and management work, when working out the arrangements for putting up its rental flats for sale to sitting tenants.

Motion

55. The Chairman advised that he had received a motion proposed by Mr KWOK Wai-keung, which he considered relevant to the agenda item under discussion. He proposed that owing to meeting time constraints, the Panel would deal with the motion at the meeting on 4 May 2020. Members raised no objection to the proposed arrangement.

VII. Any other business

56. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:11 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 August 2020

¹ LC Paper No. IN06/19-20, published on 16 March 2020