

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(1)67/19-20(05)

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**Panel on Housing**

**Meeting on 4 November 2019**

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat on  
Transitional Housing**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on transitional housing, and gives a summary of the views and concerns expressed by Members on the subject since the 2017-2018 session.

**Background**

2. According to the latest figures, there are some 147 900 general applicants (i.e. family and elderly one-person applicants) for public rental housing ("PRH") as at end-June 2019<sup>1</sup> and an estimated 116 600 inadequately housed households ("IHHs")<sup>2</sup> in Hong Kong. In view of the time required to identify land for housing construction, the current-term Government has since 2017 supported community initiatives on transitional housing to alleviate the hardship faced by these families<sup>3</sup>, and has indicated in the 2017 Policy Address various specific measures including:

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<sup>1</sup> HA's [website](#)

<sup>2</sup> LC Paper No. CB(1)388/18-19(03)

<sup>3</sup> The 2017 Policy Address states that the current-term Government will think out of the box to facilitate the implementation of various short-term community initiatives to increase the supply of transitional housing, with a view to alleviating the hardship faced by families on the PRH waiting list and the inadequately housed.

- (a) optimizing the use of idle government premises by providing rental housing units like those under the "Light Housing" project launched by Light Be in Sham Tseng;<sup>4</sup>
- (b) supporting the Community Housing Movement ("CHM") initiated by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service ("HKCSS") on a pilot basis<sup>5</sup>, including encouraging the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") to participate by offering units in old buildings;
- (c) facilitating the Hong Kong Housing Society ("HS") in allowing the owners of its subsidized housing to rent out their flats with premium unpaid to needy families at below market rentals on a pilot basis;
- (d) exploring the wholesale conversion of industrial buildings ("IBs") into transitional housing with waiver of land premium; and
- (e) supporting non-profit-making organizations to explore the feasibility of constructing pre-fabricated modular housing on idle sites.

### Task Force on Transitional Housing

3. The Chief Executive announced in June 2018 that a task force would be set up under the Transport and Housing Bureau ("THB") to provide one-stop co-ordinated support to facilitate the implementation of community-initiated transitional housing projects ("the Task Force").<sup>6</sup> According to the Administration, the Task Force has facilitated the implementation of a number of transitional housing projects initiated by the community, including several projects in

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<sup>4</sup> The Sham Tseng Light Housing project, which involves a previously vacant factory staff quarters building belonging to the Government, is the first collaboration between the Government and the social enterprise Light Be. With the support of donations from the business sector, Light Be has renovated the building to provide more than 40 units of rental housing with affordable rent below the market level to families in need for a maximum of three years (The [Government's Press release](#)).

<sup>5</sup> According to the Administration, CHM was launched by HKCSS in October 2017 through soliciting idle or under-utilized private housing resources held by URA, private developers or ordinary landlords, with a view to providing short-term accommodation and support services to individuals or families in need of transitional housing. HKCSS has commissioned various NGOs to operate CHM and provide support services to community housing users (LC Paper No. CB(2)1720/17-18(08)).

<sup>6</sup> The Task Force comprises five dedicated officers (including two project directors) led by the Under Secretary for Transport and Housing (LC Paper No. CB(1)388/18-19(03)).

existing vacant residential buildings through CHM. As at March 2019, a total of ten major non-profit community organizations/social enterprises provided about 610 transitional housing units, of which about 220 were launched under CHM.

### Financial support

4. The Finance Committee approved the Administration's proposal in January 2019 to set up a \$1 billion fund to support non-government organizations ("NGOs") for the gainful use of vacant government sites. According to the Administration, the fund can provide funding support to applicable transitional housing projects and the Development Bureau has commenced to receive funding applications.

5. To further increase the funding support, the Financial Secretary announced in the 2019-20 Budget that \$2 billion would be set aside to support NGOs in constructing transitional housing. According to the Administration, THB will consider the experience in transitional housing and views from the community to map out the detailed arrangements.

### **Major views and concerns**

6. Members have expressed views on transitional housing at meetings of the Legislative Council and its committees. The major views and concerns are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Supply target for transitional housing

7. Members opined that the Administration should include transitional housing in the Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS") and set a supply target for transitional housing, so as to ensure its stable supply to ease the hardship of those living in poor conditions. The Administration advised that when determining the total housing supply target under LTHS, the Administration had already taken into account the housing needs of IHHs. Given the short-term nature of transitional housing, the timing and amount of its supply were unstable and might be subject to changes in different periods of time. It was therefore not suitable to include these housing units in the ten-year housing supply target.

### Increasing the supply of transitional housing

8. Members opined that the Administration should play a leading role in implementing the transitional housing policy and should undertake the responsibility of producing adequate transitional housing, rather than solely assisting with and facilitating short-term community initiatives. Some Members opined that the Government had much more resources to take forward transitional housing projects and could expedite the delivery of such projects.

9. The Administration advised that transitional housing might come in different arrangements and with different ideas. The Administration hoped to bring together community efforts, especially allowing different NGOs to extend their creativity to provide various kinds of transitional housing projects. The Task Force would provide necessary support to suitable projects advocated by NGOs upon consultation with relevant bureaux and departments, offer advice on relevant administrative or statutory procedures, and render assistance in funding applications, etc. To facilitate more transitional housing projects initiated by NGOs and to reduce their financial burden, the Chief Executive in Council had approved in April 2019 the exemption of waiver fee, rent and associated costs for land applications related to the provision of transitional housing.<sup>7</sup>

### Participation of other organizations in providing transitional housing

10. Members enquired whether the Administration would invite URA to make use of the residential buildings/units acquired under its projects for providing transitional housing. The Administration explained that a majority of the URA redevelopment projects involved buildings of over 50 years, whose conditions were mostly "varied" or "poor", with unauthorized building works or falling short of modern facilities (such as lifts and fire services systems). The structure of these buildings suffered damage to a certain extent due to the conversion of certain flats into sub-divided units. It was thus necessary for URA to carry out substantial rehabilitation and improvement works at these

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<sup>7</sup> According to the prevailing policy, if NGOs plan to utilize private non-residential sites or premises for provision of transitional housing, the owners should submit waiver applications to the Lands Department and pay the waiver fees and associated costs for a temporary permit to use the sites or premises for residential purposes if residential use is not permitted in the leases. Additionally, if the NGOs plan to use temporary vacant government sites or premises for provision of transitional housing, they also need to apply to the Lands Department for Short Term Tenancy and pay the rents and associated costs (LC Paper No. CB(1)1073/18-19(02)).

buildings before they were suitable for residential use. This was not only time-consuming but there would also be difficulties in meeting the redevelopment schedule of the project for enhancing the community environment. The Administration advised that URA had set aside some units in its rehousing blocks for participating in CHM, and it would continue to encourage URA to provide more suitable units for transitional housing.

11. On the question of whether and how HS and the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA") would help increase the provision of transitional housing, the Administration advised that in an effort to increase the supply of transitional housing by optimizing the use of existing rental housing resources, HS had launched in July 2018 its first "T-Home" Transitional Housing Scheme, under which 217 small-sized flats which had been vacated under Phase I of redevelopment programme of Yue Kwong Chuen were made available for eligible persons who had been waiting for PRH for a certain period of time for temporary stay. HS had also launched the Letting Scheme for Subsidised Sale Developments with Premium Unpaid ("the Letting Scheme") in September 2018, which allowed eligible owners in HS's subsidized sale flats to sublet their rooms to targeted tenants,<sup>8</sup> without paying premium, with a view to improving the latter's housing situation before PRH allocation. HS had been reviewing the Letting Scheme and would fine-tune the operational details as and when necessary. As suggested in the 2018 Policy Address, HA would consider joining the scheme in light of the operational experience of the scheme.<sup>9</sup>

#### Potential sites for transitional housing

12. Members opined that the Administration should make good use of idle government lands or facilities, including lands or facilities the short term tenancies or tenancies of which were due to expire within one year, so as to increase transitional housing supply. Some Members enquired whether the Administration would use the sites of vacant school premises ("VSPs") for providing transitional housing given that considerable VSPs were not being used or no longer suitable for educational use.

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<sup>8</sup> Targeted tenants include family and elderly applicants who have been waiting for PRH for three years or more, and non-elderly one-person applicants who have been waiting for PRH for six years or more.

<sup>9</sup> According to [Government's press release](#) dated 29 July 2019, HA would join the Letting Scheme on a trial basis, allowing eligible owners of HA's subsidized sale flats to let their flats with premium unpaid to families in need.

13. The Administration advised that the Government's GeoInfo Map web page compiled and published a list of vacant government sites (including VSPs) currently available for community, institutional or non-profit making purposes. The list provided site information such as location, site area, long-term use (where applicable), etc. The some 800 sites on the list were available for NGOs or social enterprises to apply for community, institutional or non-profit making uses on a short term basis, including but not limited to transitional housing. To determine if an individual site was suitable for transitional housing purpose, further consideration had to be given to its site conditions (such as site area, topography, planned use, environmental issues and supporting facilities, etc.). The Administration had also put in place a mechanism under which the Education Bureau would inform the Planning Department ("PlanD") and other relevant departments of VSP sites, if any, which would no longer be required for school or other educational uses. PlanD would then consider the suitable alternative long-term uses for the concerned VSP sites.

#### *Temporary works areas*

14. On the suggestion of providing transitional housing at the temporary land allocation sites used for construction works or temporary works areas under the Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link project and the Shatin to Central Link project which were to be returned by the Highways Department and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited, the Administration advised that the Task Force would follow up the land use arrangements of these sites. Based on preliminary information, some of these sites were currently occupied by permanent facilities (such as railway associated facilities, roads, re-provisioned facilities, etc.), might have been reserved for other long-term uses, or were relatively small in size. The Task Force would look into the latest situation of these sites with relevant departments/organizations to consider whether they were suitable for transitional housing.

#### *Site reserved for the Phase 2 development of the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort*

15. Some Members opined that the Administration should consider using part of the site which had been reserved for the Phase 2 development of the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort ("HKDL") for the purpose of transitional housing. The Administration advised that according to the Option Deed signed between the Government and Hong Kong International Theme Parks Limited (i.e. the joint venture with the Government and The Walt Disney Company as shareholders) ("the joint venture") in 2000, the joint venture had an Option to purchase the Phase 2 site for taking forward the HKDL's further development. The Phase 2 site could be put to short-term uses before the joint venture

exercised the Option, and such short-term uses had to comply with various permitted uses as listed in the Deed of Restrictive Covenant, including recreational, sports and cultural facilities, etc. but not residential use (e.g. transitional housing). When considering the short-term uses of the Phase 2 site, the Administration also needed to take into account whether such uses were compatible with the use and atmosphere of HKDL. The Administration had no intention to change the existing land use arrangements for the Phase 2 site.

#### Measures for encouraging owners to convert their properties into transitional housing

16. Members asked about the Administration's measures for encouraging private property owners to convert their residential properties or whole blocks of their IBs into transitional housing. The Administration advised that the Task Force, based on the amount of funding sought by various NGOs, had been holding discussions with them on the appropriate support to be rendered to their projects, which included making use of the funding under CHM subsidized by the Community Chest of Hong Kong and the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund for paying the renovation and conversion expenses of suitable units, thereby encouraging more property owners to dedicate their idle units for the purpose of transitional housing.

17. The Administration further advised that in November 2018, the Town Planning Board had announced an initiative that transitional housing projects co-ordinated by the Task Force in permanent buildings, including wholesale-converted IBs in the "Commercial", "Comprehensive Development Area" and "Other Specified Uses" annotated "Business" and "Residential" zones in the urban and new town areas, could be regarded as for temporary use, which was always permitted under the relevant Outline Zoning Plans if such projects were for a period of five years or less.

18. Some Members opined that to promote community-led transitional housing projects in wholesale-converted IBs, the Administration should subsidize the conversion cost as it would be unattractive for IB owners if they had to bear the relevant cost. The Administration advised that under the revitalization scheme for IBs, the Administration would exercise flexibility in the application of planning and building design requirements, and charge a nil waiver fee for the specific use of transitional housing, if owners provided transitional housing in portions or entire blocks of IBs located in "Other Specified Uses" annotated "Business", "Commercial", "Comprehensive Development Area" and "Residential" zones which had already undergone or would pursue wholesale conversion into non-industrial uses.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> LC Paper No. CB(1)450/18-19(01)

Modification/exemption regarding the application of the regulations under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123)

19. Noting that the Buildings (Planning) Regulations ("the Regulations") required the provision of windows in living areas to provide natural ventilation and lighting, Members enquired how the Administration would deal with proposals to provide transitional housing in buildings which did not comply with the requirement. The Administration advised that if eligible transitional housing projects within tenement buildings had difficulties in fully complying with the requirements under the Regulations because of building designs, the Buildings Department ("BD") would consider granting exemptions to the project proponents from part of the requirements, but would, at the same time, require them to provide artificial lighting and mechanical ventilation systems, as well as communal living areas that met the relevant natural ventilation and lighting requirements. The proponents would also be required to entrust authorized persons to conduct annual inspections to ensure that the compensatory measures continued to operate effectively. Regarding any proposed wholesale conversion of IBs into transitional housing, BD would also adopt a similar pragmatic approach.

Construction of pre-fabricated modular housing

20. In view that the Commission on Poverty had endorsed the implementation of the Subsidy to Purchase and Construct Modular Housing as a Pilot Scheme to facilitate HKCSS to implement the Modular Social Housing Scheme - Nam Cheong Street, Members enquired about the role of the Administration in the pilot scheme. The Administration advised that the pilot scheme's total funding provision was \$35.74 million and the site concerned had been leased to HKCSS by the property developer owning the site for a token fee of \$1. HKCSS would purchase and construct modular housing through assembly of synthetic building technology which must meet the safety requirements for housing under the existing law and regulations. The Administration had all along provided policy support and advice to HKCSS on the project and would render administrative and accounting support once the pilot scheme had been rolled out.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> LC Paper No. CB(2)2044/17-18



### Rental levels of transitional housing projects

21. Members enquired whether the Administration would regulate the rental levels of the community-initiated transitional housing projects, such as setting a ceiling on the rental levels. The Administration advised that as each transitional housing project had its own characteristics, the rental levels of individual projects might vary and depend on the financial capabilities and needs of the target groups of the community organizations. In general, the rental levels of the transitional housing projects were lower than the market one in the same district. Some organizations would focus on helping families receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, while some would mainly serve other lower-income families. There were also some organizations seeking to subsidize families with financial hardship. In this regard, imposing a rental ceiling across-the-board might not be the most appropriate approach in this respect.<sup>12</sup>

### Rehousing residents affected by Government's clearance exercises

22. Members enquired whether the Administration would reserve some transitional housing units for rehousing the households affected by the Government's clearance and enforcement actions, including those living in inadequate housing, taking into consideration that the number of interim housing ("IH") units might not be adequate to meet the rehousing need of these households. The Administration advised that according to the prevailing Government's policy, clearances living in illegal squatter structures not covered by the 1982 survey, illegal rooftop structures built after 1 June 1982, or living in industrial premises needed to find their own accommodation if they were evicted. However, if they were rendered homeless due to Government actions and had the need for temporary accommodation, they might, upon referral by relevant government departments, be accommodated in the Po Tin Transit Centre while waiting for eligibility vetting for further rehousing or looking for alternative accommodation themselves. If these persons had stayed in Po Tin Transit Centre for three months, passed the "homeless test" and fulfilled the eligibility criteria for PRH, they could be admitted to the Po Tin IH while awaiting PRH allocation. HA anticipated that the existing IH should be able to meet the needs of households who would be affected by Government clearances and enforcement.

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<sup>12</sup> LC Paper No. CB(1)450/18-19(01)

### **Latest developments**

23. The Policy Address delivered in October 2019 mentioned that the provision set aside by the Government for transitional housing would increase from the \$2 billion announced earlier in the 2019-20 Budget to \$5 billion, and the Administration would put forward measures to increase the number of transitional housing projects for providing a total of 10 000 transitional housing units within the next three years.

24. The Administration will brief members at the meeting on 4 November 2019 on the proposed implementation arrangements for the funding scheme for supporting NGOs in constructing transitional housing, with a view to seeking funding approval of the Finance Committee.

### **Relevant papers**

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

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
31 October 2019

## Appendix

### Transitional Housing

#### List of relevant papers

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Housing	30 October 2017	2017 <a href="#">Policy Address</a>
Panel on Housing	9 January 2018	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)892/17-18</a> )
Council	11 April 2018	<a href="#">Council question</a> on provision of transitional housing by making use of vacant government properties and idle lands
Panel on Housing and Panel on Welfare Services	4 June & 6 July 2018	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1413/17-18</a> ) (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)352/18-19</a> )
Panel on Home Affairs	25 June 2018	Administration's paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(2)1622/17-18(01)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(2)2044/17-18</a> )
Council	4 July 2018	<a href="#">Council question</a> on use of a site reserved for Phase 2 development of the Hong Kong Disneyland
Panel on Welfare Services	9 July 2018	Administration's paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(2)1720/17-18(08)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(2)2038/17-18</a> )
Panel on Housing	29 October 2018	Administration's paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)14/18-19(01)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)798/18-19</a> )

<b>Council/ Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Papers</b>
Panel on Housing	5 November 2018	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)400/18-19</a> )
Council	21 November 2018	<a href="#">Council question</a> on support for tenants in inadequate housing
Panel on Housing	3 December 2018	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)630/18-19</a> )
Panel on Development	19 December 2018	Administration's paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)323/18-19(03)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1087/18-19</a> )  Administration's responses to the motion passed under agenda item III of the meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)450/18-19(01)</a> )
Panel on Housing	7 January 2019	Administration's paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)388/18-19(03)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1112/18-19</a> )
Subcommittee to Follow Up Issues Related to Inadequate Housing and Relevant Housing Policies	22 January 2019	Administration's paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)485/18-19(02)</a> )  Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)706/18-19</a> )  Administration's supplementary paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)588/18-19(02)</a> )
Subcommittee to Follow Up Issues Related to Inadequate Housing and Relevant Housing Policies	19 February 2019	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)920/18-19</a> )  Administration's supplementary paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)719/18-19(02)</a> )

<b>Council/ Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Papers</b>
Council	20 February 2019	<a href="#">Administration's response to the motion</a> on "Increasing transitional housing supply" passed at the meeting
Subcommittee to Follow Up Issues Related to Inadequate Housing and Relevant Housing Policies	19 March 2019	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1007/18-19</a> )  Administration's supplementary paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1073/18-19(02)</a> )
Council	20 March 2019	<a href="#">Council question</a> on supply of housing
Council	20 March 2019	<a href="#">Council question</a> on provision of transitional housing
Council	3 April 2019	<a href="#">Council question</a> on making good use of government properties and lands
Council	8 May 2019	<a href="#">Council question</a> on windows provided for units of transitional housing.
Subcommittee to Follow Up Issues Related to Inadequate Housing and Relevant Housing Policies	21 May 2019	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1333/18-19</a> )