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**Legislative Council**

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**Panel on Housing**

**Meeting on 28 April 2020**

**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 taken by the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA") to facilitate the mobility needs of elderly residents, 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 widening the flat entrance, installing larger switches and doorbell buttons at height levels which are easier to access, providing a sunken shower area, 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.

4. For eligible elderly tenants living in old PRH blocks, HA undertakes necessary home modification/adaptation works in their units to cater for their needs. In 102 PRH estates with a higher proportion of elderly residents, HA has gradually increased the provision of diversified recreational facilities, such as fitness facilities/equipment. According to the Administration, all the relevant works are expected to be completed by March 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 involves 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 in operation 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 at its meetings 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\(1\)532/18-19\(03\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)19/17-18\(01\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> According to the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)532/18-19\(03\)](#)) provided to the Panel in February 2019, HA had completed the modernization works of more than 1 100 aged lifts since the start of LMP in the 1990s and had planned to upgrade about 440 lifts in 24 PRH estates in the next five years.

### Elderly fitness facilities

7. Members asked whether HA had encountered difficulties or resistance in its implementation of the works to provide elderly fitness facilities in PRH estates. Some members enquired about the funding available for the provision of elderly facilities in individual PRH estates.

8. The Administration advised that HA had taken forward its plans over past years to provide more elderly fitness facilities in PRH estates which had a high proportion of elderly tenants, and the relevant works were expected to be completed by March 2019. In planning the elderly facilities to be provided in an existing estate, HA would take into account the views of the relevant Estate Management Advisory Committee ("EMAC") and residents, and the elderly facilities already installed in the estate. Apart from the funds allocated to EMACs, recurrent fund was available for HD to undertake improvement works in PRH estates.<sup>4</sup>

### Provision and maintenance of facilities in existing estates

9. Noting that the proportion of elderly residents in Tenants Purchase Scheme ("TPS") estates was increasing, some members expressed concern about the inadequate provision and maintenance of facilities in some of these estates, such as barrier-free access facilities, play equipment, etc. They enquired whether the Administration/HA would consider providing financial support for improving these estates' facilities for the convenience of elderly residents.

10. The Administration advised that same as other private properties in general, all TPS estates, regardless of the percentage of ownership shares held by HA, were subject to the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344), relevant land leases and Deeds of Mutual Covenant ("DMCs") in terms of property management. TPS estates had already formed their Owners' Corporations ("OCs"). OCs and the appointed property management companies were obliged to fulfill their responsibilities to carry out repair works in the common areas and for the facilities in accordance with the terms of DMCs.<sup>5</sup> As the owner of unsold flats in TPS estates, HA all along supported the construction of new facilities to cater for the needs of elderly residents and residents with impaired mobility in these estates, and communicated proactively with relevant stakeholders in this regard. HA would share the cost of any projects for providing such facilities in proportion to its share of ownership.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)971/18-19](#)

<sup>5</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)1103/18-19\(01\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)971/18-19](#)

11. Members were concerned about how HA would address the limited space in existing public housing estates for providing additional facilities for elderly residents. Some members enquired about the Administration/HA's considerations for raising the plot ratios in an estate co-owned by HA and other owners, such as Link Real Estate Investment Trust, in order to take forward certain works projects such as those for providing covered facilities or retrofitting a cover for existing facilities. They also enquired how the Administration/HA would deal with cases where other owners were unwilling to share the cost of such works.

12. The Administration advised that plot ratios of an estate co-owned by HA and other owners were stipulated under the land lease conditions and the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123). To provide covered facilities or cover to existing facilities in the estate, HA needed to secure other owners' consent for the project, study the feasibility of providing the facilities, and submit the plans for the project to relevant authorities for approvals. HA and other owners who had given consent to implementation of a works project in an estate should have the obligations to share the project cost in proportion to its share of ownership defined in the Deed of Mutual Covenant for the estate.<sup>7</sup>

#### Lift modernization works

13. On the concern that elderly residents with impaired mobility might be forced to stay at home when HA's lift modernization works in their PRH blocks was underway, the Administration advised that HA would ensure that the lift modernization works would affect only one of the lifts in the PRH block concerned at any one time. If necessary, HA would provide appropriate facilities/equipment to assist needy tenants who had problems using the staircases.

#### Carrying out home modification/adaptation works for meeting elderly tenants' needs

14. In view that HA would undertake certain home modification/adaptation works in PRH units for sitting/prospective elderly tenants upon their requests and as recommended by physiotherapists or medical officers, members enquired how HA would handle the situation where the elderly tenant concerned could not engage a physiotherapist or medical officer to follow up his/her case.

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<sup>7</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)971/18-19](#)

15. The Administration advised that for simple works such as installing grab rails in bathrooms, referrals from medical officers, occupational therapists/physiotherapists or social workers were not necessary and HA would carry out the works for elderly and disabled tenants free of charge. For other modification works, HA would decide whether it was necessary to consult medical officers or occupational therapists/physiotherapists subject to the actual need of a case. With tenants' consent, HA might also refer cases to the Social Welfare Department or medical social workers for professional advice before carrying out specific modification works. HA believed that such arrangement would better meet the tenants' needs.

16. Members opined that as home modification/adaptation works might take time, HA should consider making available certain vacant units on some floors of PRH buildings suitable for accommodating elderly tenants with special needs and liaise with relevant government bureaux/departments to arrange community organizations to provide services for them in these units. In view that HA had in earlier years provided hostel-type Housing for Senior Citizens ("HSC") units, members enquired about the reason that HA no longer provided such housing for accommodating needy elderly.

17. The Administration advised that compared to HSC, self-contained PRH units had become a preferred choice among elderly people in society. As HSC units were less preferable to the elderly, some had been converted to normal PRH units. Some other HSC units which could not be allocated to the elderly were also rented out to non-elderly singletons, in order to fully utilize public housing resources.<sup>8</sup>

### **Latest development**

18. 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 28 April 2020.

### **Relevant papers**

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

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
24 April 2020

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<sup>8</sup> LC Paper No. [CB\(1\)971/18-19](#)

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

**List of relevant papers**

<b>Council/ 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(04)</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> )

<b>Council/ Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Housing	5 February 2018	<p>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)529/17-18(03)</a>)</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1031/17-18</a>)</p> <p>Administration's supplementary paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1176/17-18(01)</a>)</p>
Panel on Housing	12 February 2019	<p>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)532/18-19(03)</a>)</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)971/18-19</a>)</p> <p>Administration's supplementary paper (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)358/19-20(01)</a>)</p>