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<b>Title</b>	Minutes of the Open Meeting of the HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY held on Thursday, 5 January 1995.
<b>CONTENTS</b>	<p>File Ref.: HA/COM/2/2 Paper No. HA 5/95</p> <p>Minutes of the Open Meeting of the HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY held on Thursday, 5 January 1995.</p> <p>---O---O---O---</p> <p>PRESENT:</p> <p>Hon Rosanna WONG Yick-ming, CBE, JP (Chairman)  Mr FUNG Tung, OBE, JP (Director of Housing) (Vice-Chairman)  Ms LEUNG Wai-tung, MBE, JP  Hon HUI Yin-fat, OBE, JP  Rev Sean Patrick BURKE, JP  Mr Victor SO Hing-woh, JP  Mr HAU Shui-pui  Prof YEUNG Yue-man  Mr Stanford MILLER, JP  Ms HO On-nei  Mr CHAN Kam-man, JP  Mr Nicholas BROOKE  Hon LEE Wing-tat  Mr Daniel LAM Chun  Mr YEUNG Ka-sing  Mr Joseph CHOW Ming-kuen, JP  Mr Dominic WONG Shing-wah, OBE, JP (Secretary for Housing)  Mr M J T ROWSE (Deputy Secretary for the Treasury)</p> <p>ABSENT WITH APOLOGIES:</p> <p>Mr PAO Ping-wing, JP  Hon Edward S T HO, OBE, JP  Hon FUNG Kin-kee  Mr LEUNG Chun-ying (Out of Hong Kong)  Mr Anthony WONG Luen-kin  Miss Audrey EU Yuet-mee, QC, JP  Mr A G EASON, CBE, JP (Secretary for Planning, Environment &amp; Lands)</p> <p>IN ATTENDANCE:</p> <p>Mr LEE Kai-fat (Deputy Director/Administration &amp; Policy)  (Secretary of the Authority)  Mr Y G LIM (Deputy Director/Housing Management &amp; Works)  Mrs Fanny LAW, JP (Deputy Director/Housing Management &amp; Works)(Designate)  Mr R A BATES, JP (Senior Assistant Director/Maintenance &amp; Construction Services)  Mr Stephen S C POON, JP (Senior Assistant Director/New Development)  Mr Marco M H WU, JP (Senior Assistant Director/Housing Administration)  Mr HO Wing-him (Assistant Director/Policy)  Mr M L YUEN (Assistant Director/Housing Architect)  Mr R N CARPENTER (Assistant Director/Construction Services)  Mr R J AVON (Assistant Director/Finance)  Mr Y L CHAN (Assistant Director/Commercial Properties)  Mrs Joy AU (Assistant Director/Regional Management (1))  Mr Peter K W YIP (Assistant Director/Operations &amp; Redevelopment)  Mr Vincent TONG (Assistant Director/Maintenance)  Mr J J NG (Assistant Director/Regional Management (2)) (Acting)  Mr Edward LAW (Assistant Director/Administration)  Mr Safat HOOSAIN (Public Relations Officer)  Mr W S CHEUNG (Chief System Manager)  Miss Grace KONG (Assistant Committees' Secretary/1)  Miss Olivia TSANG (Assistant Committees' Secretary/2)  Miss Sabrina LEE (Assistant Committees' Secretary/3)  Mr Raymond KO (Committees' Secretary)(Meeting Secretary)</p> <p>---O---O---O---</p> <p>INDEX</p> <p>PARAGRAPH</p>

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The Chairman opened the meeting at 8:45 am and welcomed Mr Dominic WONG Shing-wah, OBE, JP (Secretary for Housing) who replaced Mr Michael SUEN Ming-yeung, CBE, JP (Secretary for Home Affairs) as a Member of the Housing Authority. She also welcomed Mr. M J T ROWSE (Deputy Secretary for the Treasury) as next alternate Member of Secretary for the Treasury to the meeting. The Chairman informed Members that Mr Y G LIM (Deputy Director/Housing Management and Works) would proceed on pre-retirement leave on 18 January 1995. The meeting recorded a vote of thanks to Mr Lim for his contributions to the Authority over the years.

2. Apologies for absense were recorded from Mr PAO Ping-wing, JP, Hon Edward S T HO, OBE, JP, Hon FUNG Kin-kee, Mr LEUNG Chun-ying (Out of Hong Kong), Mr Anthony WONG Luen-kin, Miss Audrey EU Yuet-mee, QC, JP and Mr A G EASON, CBE, JP (Secretary for Planning, Environment & Lands).

3. The Chairman informed Members that the proceedings of the meeting would be broadcast to the Lecture Hall for the benefit of departmental officers.

CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 1994

4. The Minutes were confirmed and signed.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

5. Members noted the information paper No. HA 66/94.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

(AGENDA Housing Authority's Revised Operating Account, Item 3) Capital and Cash Budgets (1994/95), Proposed Budgets (1995/96) and Five Year Financial Forecasts 1994/95 to 1998/99  
(Paper No. HA 67/94)

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6. Mr Stanford MILLER, Chairman of the Establishment and Finance Committee (EFC) highlighted the following points in the paper with visual aids -

(a) the accounting arrangements were different from those of last year because the changes brought about by the 1994 Supplemental Agreement to the Financial Arrangements with Government had been incorporated; (b) on public rental housing, an operating deficit of \$1.5 billion would be incurred in 1995/96 with a total deficit of \$11.8 billion projected over the five year period 1994/95 to 1998/99, showing that the subsidy to public rental housing remained substantial in the coming years. The deficit was mainly a result of large increase in the expenditure on maintenance and improvements, and upgraded estate management. It should be noted that the deficit was in pure cash terms and did not include any interest element;

(c) on commercial properties, the surplus before payment of dividend would be around \$2.2 billion in 1995/96 while a total surplus of \$13 billion was expected over the five-year forecast period. The substantial surplus was mainly due to increased stock of commercial properties and better rental yields;

(d) the Home Ownership Operating Account would show a surplus of \$12.7 billion in 1995/96, and an overall surplus of \$63.4 billion from 1994/95 to 1998/99;

(e) the consolidated accounts showed an operating surplus of \$13.4 billion for 1995/96 while a total surplus of \$64.8 billion was projected over the forecast period;

(f) as a result of the Authority's effort to accelerate the maintenance and improvement programmes, expenditure in this area would increase significantly over the five-year period, with an estimated total commitment of \$20.4 billion. In addition, a further \$3.1 billion was included in the Capital Expenditure forecasts for a similar purpose;

(g) the total amount of land costs to be paid to Government in cash for the period 1994/95 to 1998/99 would amount to about \$5 billion;

(h) the overall open market land value was estimated to be at \$139.5 billion over the five-year period, showing the value of subsidized land provided by Government to the Authority. There would have been an operating deficit if land value had been included in the accounts;

(i) a total capital expenditure of \$71.1 billion was forecast for the period 1994/95 to 1998/99;

(j) a positive cash flow amounting to \$18 billion was projected over the five-year period; and

(k) the Authority's cash balances were forecast to increase to \$34.9 billion at the end of the five year period, of which \$13.4 billion was in respect of the Development Fund. As the programme under the Development Fund had yet to be finalised between Government and the Authority, it was assumed that there would be no expenditure on the Fund throughout the forecast period. The forecasts would need to be updated once the programmes were confirmed.

Mr Miller informed Members that the budgets and forecasts had been thoroughly discussed by the EFC at its meeting on 9 December 1994. Although a Committee Member had expressed reservation on the proposed establishment growth, the budgets and forecasts were endorsed by EFC and recommended for the Authority's approval. Nevertheless, the Committee had requested the Department to exercise strict control over future establishment growth.

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7. Mr HUI Yin-fat pointed out that surplus generated from the Home Ownership Operations had constituted a major part of the Authority's income. He asked what financial impact it would have on the Authority if property prices fell in future. In response, Mr Marco WU said that HOS/PSPS prices were set not in direct relation to market prices but in relation to the applicants' affordability. However, it was envisaged that unfavourable market conditions could have some impact on HOS/PSPS prices even though they were set below market prices.

8. Mr HUI Yin-fat also pointed out that expenditure on rates represented nearly 20% of the total cost of public rental housing. He said that it might be necessary to look into the possibility of containing such spending within reasonable limits. Mr Y G LIM responded that similar to the rates assessment for private buildings, rates for public rental housing were assessed at 5.5% of rateable value. Since public housing rents were set in accordance with affordability and did not reflect the real market rental value, expenditure on rates appeared to constitute a higher proportion of the total rental income. While noting Mr Hui's concern, he pointed out that rates assessment was a form of tax. The Chairman added that the Authority merely collected rates on behalf of the Government. The improved quality of public rental estates in recent years might also give rise to higher assessed rates.

9. Mr Nicholas BROOKE cautioned that the large amount of surplus in the forecasts might present a false sense of security since the surplus might be off-set by possible increases in construction costs in future. Moreover, these figures were also very sensitive to changes in the sales proceeds of the Home Ownership Scheme. Mr Stanford MILLER agreed with Mr Brooke but assured Members that the Authority would still have sufficient reserve to meet its needs should the worse scenario in the sensitivity analysis arise.

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10. Mr LEE Wing-tat pointed out that the rate of return on the investment of the Authority's funds was less than the inflation rate, and opined that the Authority should make better use of its funds as early as possible in order to prevent its funds from diminishing in real value. He suggested that with the existing cash surplus, the Department should consider accelerating its improvement programmes, particularly the installation of security gates and the implementation of other related security measures. Ms LEUNG Wai-tung shared Mr Lee's view and pointed out that there was a genuine need to provide security guards, especially for those rental blocks with no security gates. In response, Mr Y G LIM said that the Department had made its best effort in carrying the improvement programmes forward. Regarding the improvement programme on security measures, Mr Lim explained that the implementation of the programme might take longer time since it involved more than 1,000 blocks and difficulties had been encountered in recruiting security personnel and security guards. Staff shortage problem was also experienced in the Department's Maintenance Division. Some of the works had already been contracted out to private firms. It was anticipated that the programme would take three years to complete subject to availability of resources. In addition, the Director of Housing pointed out that there had been significant increases in the expenditure on maintenance and improvements in recent years and such trend was expected to continue. He assured Members that the Department would endeavour to make the best use of the Authority's funds.

11. While supporting the paper in general, Mr Lee Wing-tat expressed reservation over the forecast establishment growth which made up part of the budgets and forecasts under consideration. He commented that there were insufficient justifications in the EFC paper to substantiate the proposed staff growth. Moreover, he opined that the present procedure for creating new posts, which was done mostly in-house, should be reviewed to tighten up the control on staff increase. Mr LEE Kai-fat responded that there had been steady increases in the Department's establishment since 1990/91 with an annual growth rate of about 400 to 600 new posts. Staff growth appeared to have slowed down in recent years mainly because additional staff members were partly offset by the deletion of posts in the clearance and squatter control division. He pointed out that with increasing stock of public rental flats and commercial properties, and additional housing projects arising from infill site developments, it was inevitable that the Department had to increase its establishment to cope with growing workload. Furthermore, the Authority's various new initiatives to enhance its services to tenants, e.g. the setting up of Estate Management Advisory Committees, improvements to minor maintenance services, upgraded slope inspection and maintenance works, stepped up action against illegal parking and hawking in the estates would all require extra staffing support. Instead of recruiting additional staff, the Department would also consider contracting out some of the services wherever appropriate. We had done this in the past and would continue to explore options and areas in the future. He emphasized that the estimates in the forecasts were only a ceiling. Every staffing proposal would be scrutinized by the Departmental Establishment Committee, and major staffing proposals involving an annual cost of more than \$1.5 M each would be submitted to the EFC for approval. He assured Members that the Department was subject to the same set of rules as other government departments in the creation of new posts.

12. With the aid of some transparencies, Mr Edward LAW illustrated to Members that there was a direct relationship between the Authority's establishment and the -

(a) total number of PRH units;

(b) total retail space; and

(c) expenditure on maintenance and improvements.

Mr Law pointed out that the above helped to demonstrate part of the increased workload faced by the Department. He also informed Members that the Department's additional staffing bids for 1995/96 was originally over 1,000 which was now reduced to about 600 after internal scrutiny.

13. Mr Stanford MILLER considered that there was already adequate control on the Department's establishment as the EFC received quite comprehensive information on staffing proposals by way of presumption papers. He said it should be noted that a lot of staff increases were mainly due to decisions taken by the Authority or its policy committees to improve services to tenants. Moreover, he remarked that 250 posts were required in accordance with standard manning scales.

14. Having regard to the explanations given by the Department, Mr YEUNG Ka-sing considered that the proposed staff increase was well justified on a need basis. However, he pointed out that the Authority's huge establishment should be seen in the context of its vacancy position. He said this was an area of concern and the Department might need to look into this.

15. Ms HO On-nei echoed Mr Yeung's views. She opined that the Housing Department was very different from other government departments in its work. She was of the view that existing control on staff growth was already adequate and should continue unless there were real shortcomings with the current system.

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16. Mr LEE Wing-tat said that although the work and the needs of the Housing Department might not be strictly comparable with other government departments, it might warrant Members' further examination since the variation between their annual staff increases was rather large, with 4% to 5% for the Housing Department and only approximately 1.9% for other government departments.

17. The Chairman pointed out that it would be important for a huge and complex organisation like the Authority to have sufficient staffing support to perform all its duties efficiently and at the same time achieving the required standards. Nevertheless, Members' concern over the control on staff growth was well noted. She suggested, and Members agreed that the matter could be further taken up at the next EFC meeting in February when the Department would give more detailed justifications on the proposed staff growth.

18. Mr Daniel LAM said that past experience had indicated that there would probably be problems with lowly-priced contracts if construction costs subsequently increased significantly. In such cases, the final contract sum might turn out to be larger than expected. As construction costs were anticipated to rise in the near future, he asked if there was any plan to deal with the problem. In response, Mr S S C POON said that the Department was aware of such a potential problem, but the budgets and forecasts had already included an inflation factor of 7.5% on construction expenditure to cater for possible increases in this regard.

19. Having regard to the Authority's current healthy financial position and the prevailing low property prices, Mr Daniel LAM suggested that consideration should be given to using the Authority's funds to purchase flats on the private market as a means to increase public housing supply. In response, the Director of Housing said that the Department had looked into the suggestion before but found that there would be a lot of practical difficulties in the implementation. Nevertheless, he undertook to give further thoughts to the proposal.

20. Mr Victor SO congratulated the EFC Chairman and the Department for having produced a set of succinct and easy-to-read document on a very complex subject. He suggested that in future budget exercises, the budgets and forecasts of each major activity or programme could be accompanied by policy statements and an explanatory note on the assumptions, mainly to assist the public in understanding the Authority's policy directions. Both the Chairman and Ms LEUNG Wai-tung supported Mr So's suggestion. The Chairman informed Members that it was the intention to increase the transparency of the Authority's budgets and accounts to the public. She added that PRO consideration was being given to publish the Authority's approved budgets to the public in the form of a booklet.

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21. Mr Dominic WONG Shing-wah also agreed with Mr So that policy statements should be included in the budgets and forecasts. As regards the increasing deficit incurred in the Public Rental Housing Account, Mr Wong asked if the Authority had any intention to review and improve the situation and achieve a break-even position on the account. Furthermore, he said it might be useful to give more detailed explanations on land values to show Government's significant contribution to public housing. In response, Mr LEE Kai-fat explained that the increased deficits in the Public Rental Housing Account was partly due to increased housing stock, higher maintenance and improvement costs as well as the Authority's rent policy which was a matter for the Management and Operations Committee. He envisaged that it would be difficult to achieve break-even on the account in the near future under the current rent policy having regard to likely public reaction. As regards the point made on land values, the Chairman said that an explanatory footnote had already been included in the budgets.

22. With the above comments, Members approved the Authority's Revised Budget for 1994/95, Proposed Budget for 1995/96 in respect of -

- (a) the Consolidated Operating Account Budgets at Annex A(i) of the paper;
- (b) the Consolidated Appropriation Account Budgets at Annex B of the paper;
- (c) the Capital Expenditure Budgets at Annex C(i) of the paper;
- (d) the Budgets under the Development Fund at Annex D of the paper; and
- (e) the Consolidated Cash Budgets at Annex E of the paper.

Members also noted the Five Year Financial Forecasts at Annexes G to J of the paper Mr LEE Wing-tat's reservation on the part relating to the establishment forecasts was recorded. Members were informed that the Budgets would be submitted to the Governor for formal approval in accordance with Section 4(3) of the Housing Ordinance following the Authority's endorsement. (AGENDA Minor Maintenance Item 4) (Paper No. HA 68/94)

23. Mr R A BATES presented the paper which proposed a number of measures to improve the minor maintenance services provided to public housing tenants with visual aids. The Chairman thanked the Department for their efforts in conducting a thorough review and their initiatives in

proposing corresponding improvements.

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24. Members generally supported the paper and considered the Department's proposals constructive.

25. Mr LEE Wing-tat shared his observations of the Condition, Appraisal, Repair and Examination (CARE) Programme at Cheung On Estate in Tsing Yi with members and remarked that it was important that the effectiveness of the maintenance works should not be hampered by the lack of communication with tenants. In this regard, he suggested that tenants should be informed of the work procedures beforehand and encouraged to comment on the workmanship of the maintenance contractors. The current system of requesting tenants to give appraisals of the contractors' performance should also be expanded to the 12 dedicated contractors proposed in the paper. Mr HAU Shui-pui suggested that a point system should be introduced to assess the contractors' performance. Mr R A BATES shared Mr Lee's views regarding the importance of good communication between the Department and tenants and frequent monitoring of contractors' performance. He pointed out that the proposed Estate Management Advisory Committee (EMAC) would be an useful forum for the exchange of views regarding maintenance works in estates. The Department would also conduct separate tenant survey to gauge their views from time to time. The Chairman agreed with Mr Lee's views and suggested that tenants should SAD/MCS be informed of the general work procedures in respect of minor maintenance and repairs in the form of a pamphlet.

26. In response to Mr LEE Wing-tat's concern over the demarcation of the Assistant Housing Manager (AHM)'s responsibilities, Mr R A BATES explained that the proposal to designate an AHM for handling minor repairs was to ensure that every housing estate would have a senior officer who had an overview of all the maintenance works being undertaken at that particular estate. The provision of technical staff as proposed in paragraph 22 of the paper would help to facilitate the AHM's contact and liaison with the maintenance contractors on a regular basis.

(Mr Nicholas BROOKE left the meeting at this juncture).

27. Mr Victor H W SO considered the Department's proposal of apportioning minor maintenance works among 12 dedicated contractors an improvement to the current mechanism which had not been very satisfactory in terms of efficiency. Having regard to the volume of minor maintenance work undertaken each day, Mr So remarked that an analysis of these works would be useful to the Department in its formulation of future maintenance programmes as well as necessary precautionary measures. Mr R A BATES responded that the Department had done some analysis of this subject before and one of the objectives of setting up a technical support unit was to put in place persons responsible for analyzing these information and providing feedbacks on a regular basis. As to Ms LEUNG Wai-SAD/MCS tung's question concerning the volume of works for which public housing tenants should be responsible, Mr Bates undertook to provide the information after the meeting.

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On Mr Victor H W SO's further enquiry, Mr R A BATES said that the Department had, in the context of the current review, considered and defined more thoroughly the types of works to be undertaken by various parties involved in minor maintenance works i.e. the artisans, the maintenance contractors and the technical staff of the Department. A study on the effective use of in-house artisans was also in progress.

28. Referring to the proposed increase in an estate's maintenance cost limit from \$10,000 to \$20,000, Mr Victor H W SO commented that the Housing Manager at the estate level should be capable of handling works costing more than this limit. Mr R A BATES explained that the proposed limit was a general limit only and the technical team deployed to the estates could exercise discretion to initiate maintenance work within flats costing more than \$20,000, in the same way as emergency works. The proposed limit would nevertheless be reviewed regularly by the Authority's Establishment and Finance Committee.

29. In response to Ms HO On-wei's concern over the adequacy of technical support to meet tenants' demand under the Department's proposals, Mr R A BATES said that it was believed that staff of the Department would be receptive and responsive to tenants' requests. The Department would have a better assessment of the staffing resources required after the implementation of Phase 1 of the programme in October 1995.

30. On Mr LEE Wing-tat's request for a comparison of the Department's work flow before and after the adoption of the SAD/MCS proposed improvement measures which should also show the AHM's role, Mr R A BATES said a paper regarding this aspect would be submitted to the Building Committee and the Management and Operations Committee for information. On an enquiry from Mr HUI Yin-fat, the meeting noted that tenants who were not satisfied with the new improvement initiatives might utilize the existing avenues to lodge their complaints to the Department.

31. With the above comments, Members endorsed the proposals described in paragraphs 9 to 22 of Paper No. HA 68/94.

(AGENDA Housing Conference 1996 Item 5) (Paper No. HA 69/94)

32. Mrs Fanny LAW introduced the paper which set out the objectives and the planning parameter of the Housing Conference 1996.

33. Rev S P BRUKE supported the paper. Commenting on the format of the Conference, Rev Bulhe suggested that the Department might consider introducing more opportunities for the free flow of views between the delegates, such as creative workshops or public debates. Prof YEUNG Yue-man and Ms LEUNG Wai-tung expressed reservation over Rev Burke's proposal of public debate in view of the difficulties in exercising control to achieve meaningful discussions and suggested that panel discussion would be a more advisable alternative. Mr Y G LIM opined that further exploration of Rev Burke's ideas should nevertheless be made with a view to increasing the attractiveness of the conference.

34. Prof YEUNG Yue-man hoped that the proposed Housing Conference would be well justified and beneficial to the Authority and the public at large. Having regard to the fact that the Housing Conference 1996 would be a forerunning event in Hong Kong, Prof Yeung commented that the timing of this event should best be tied in with the milestone in the Authority's history e.g. 40th anniversary. Since the 40th Anniversary was over, 1996 might not be the most suitable year for holding the Housing Conference. Mrs Fanny LAW explained that 1996 was considered an appropriate year to launch the Housing Conference as the thrust of the event was to look ahead and plan for the further development of public housing beyond 2001, the year the current Long Term Housing Strategy ends. Forward planning of up to five years was necessary. As regards the ultimate benefits of the Housing Conference, she said that the discussion at the Conference could shed light on new approaches in developing public housing for Hong Kong in the next decade. Opportunity would also be taken, through the participation of other countries, to widen public perspective of Hong Kong's housing situation. She assured Members that the Department would make every endeavour to ensure the cost-effectiveness of the Conference. Ms LEUNG Wai-tung added that the Housing Conference would also be a useful media to help cultivate a positive image for the Authority both locally and overseas.

35. Prof YEUNG Yue-man recalled that an international conference titled "Habitat II - City Summit" would be held in Turkey in June 1996. He suggested that it might be timely to hold the Housing Conference in May 1996 as a gesture to respond to this international event. He also suggested that a formal report on the Conference incorporating all records of proceedings, findings, recommendations and so on should be published afterwards.

so that the benefits of the Conference could be shared by as many organisations and individuals as possible.

36. With the above comments, Members -

(a) gave approval for a Housing Conference to be held in Hong Kong 1996, to be hosted by the Housing Authority with the support of professional bodies;

(b) endorsed the theme and general outline of the Conference;

(c) delegated the organization of the Conference to the Housing Department; and

(d) committed funds of up to \$3 million for the Conference.

(Prof YEUNG Yue-man left the meeting at this juncture).

(AGENDA Cases referred to the Housing Department by the Item 6) Commissioner for Administrative Complaints (Paper Nos. HA 70/94; CC 23/94)

37. Mr HO Wing-him presented the paper.

38. Referring to the footnote of the paper, Mr HUI Yin-fat wanted to know the criteria used by the Commissioner for Administrative Complaints (COMAC) to decide which cases should be referred to the Department for comment or action. Mr. HO Wing-him said that he understood that the COMAC sometimes would not refer to the Department cases which were very minor and which they could deal with straightaway. Also time was required for COMAC to screen the cases before they were referred to Departments for follow-up. In this connection, AD/P the Chairman suggested that the Department should clarify the situation with the COMAC.

39. Mr CHAN Kam-man was concerned with the heavy workload being placed on the directorate staff by the increasing COMAC referrals. Mr Chan suggested that the Department's system of handling COMAC referrals should be reviewed so that minor complaints could be dealt with at less senior levels in order to alleviate the burden of directorate staff. The Chairman thanked Mr Chan for his concern but emphasised that the Department must continue to render its best co-operation with COMAC in his investigations. The manpower implications should however be closely monitored.

40. The paper was noted with the above comments.

#### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

##### Policy on Rehousing of Rooftop Squatters

41. In relation to the recent eviction of rooftop squatters at Tsuen Wan during which some squatters had refused to move into transit centres, Rev Sean BURKE commented that the Department should look into the condition and quality of these centres and consider possible improvements. Mr LEE Wing-tat supported Rev Burke's views. Mr Marco WU responded that the overall condition and quality of transit centres were acceptable. However, as temporary shelters, their facilities were, of course, not comparable to permanent housing.

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42. Both Ms LEUNG Wai-tung and Mr LEE Wing-tat pointed out that the Authority's existing rehousing policy in respect of rooftop squatters as recently reported by the press was unclear and confusing. They urged the Department to clarify the policy. Mr Marco WU explained that rooftop squatters were eligible for rehousing to public rental housing (PRH) or Temporary Housing Areas (THAs) as appropriate upon clearance if they could prove that they had resided in the affected structures before 1 June 1982. Other ineligible rooftop squatters would be rehoused to transit centres. He informed SAD/HA the meeting that a paper of the Management and Operations Committee (MOC) was being prepared to explain the relevant policy.

43. Ms LENG Wai-tung was in support of maintaining the existing rehousing policy for rooftop squatters. She was not in favour of initiating a survey to register the rooftop squatters afresh as this would create additional rehousing commitments to the Authority. Ms Leung also said that ineligible rooftop squatters should not be rehoused to THAs upon clearance because by doing so, they would likely be rehoused to PRH within a very short period of time as a result of the accelerated THA clearance programme, thus jumping the queue of the Waiting List applicants who had been waiting for allocation of PRH for a long time.

44. Mr LEE Wing-tat commented that the current policy for rehousing rooftop squatters was outdated and should be reviewed as more demolitions of rooftop structures were in the pipe line.

45. The Chairman, in response to Ms Leung and Mr Lee, explained that the enforcement department of clearance of rooftop structure was the Buildings Department. Housing Department was only responsible for rehousing eligible clearances. She said that the existing policies should be explained to the MOC in detail.

##### Rehousing of Displaced Tenants of Bedspace Apartments

46. Mr LEE Wing-tat commented that the Authority and the Housing Department should assist the Home Affairs Branch in rehousing the 2,000 to 3,000 displaced bedspace tenants so as to get rid of this unsatisfactory situation. In this connection, Rev Sean BURKE remarked that the inter-departmental working group headed by Home Affairs Branch (HAB) and joined by the Housing Department and Social Welfare Department (SWD), had been dormant for a long time.

47. Mr Y G LIM explained that according to the agreed arrangement, the displaced bedspace tenants would be rehoused through compassionate rehousing to PRH; or to the hostels operated by SWD and Home Affairs Department. Rehousing would be carried out in phases and the Department was prepared for it. The Chairman supplemented that the problem had not been satisfactorily resolved because some displaced bedspace tenants persistently requested for local rehousing, which was hard to entertain given the existing limited housing resources available in urban areas. The Chairman however pointed out that the Department was developing various means, such as flats for small households, to try to cater for such rehousing demand.

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48. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

CONFIRMED on

Hon Rosanna WONG Yick-ming, CBE, JP  
(Chairman)

Raymond KO  
(Meeting Secretary)

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