

Doc Type	HA
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Title	Estate Management Advisory Committee
CONTENTS	<p>Paper No. HA 59/94</p> <p>THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY</p> <p>Memorandum for the Housing Authority</p> <p>Estate Management Advisory Committee</p> <p>PURPOSE</p> <p>This paper -</p> <p>(a) Examines the existing channels of communication with local and district groups and tenants' participation in estate management; and</p> <p>(b) proposes the establishment of estate-based advisory committee with tenants' participation as a means to improve services for tenants.</p> <p>BACKGROUND</p> <p>2. Good estate management is part and parcel of a successful public housing programme. to ensure that testate management is effective and efficient, and is attuned to tenants needs an aspirations, it has been the long-standing objective of the Housing Authority to continuously improve its local estate management. The authority regards this as one of its very first priorities, as better estate management means better living for 2.4 million of the population in Hong Kong, or 600,000 households in public rental housing.</p> <p>3. In her annual address on 2 June 1994, the Chairman of the Housing Authority made it clear that the Authority was committed to the continuous improvement of local estate management, and that the Housing Department should come up with proposals to further improve services to tenants.</p> <p>4. The Department has recognized the growing aspirations among tenants for higher standards of service greater opportunities for direct participation I the management of their estates, especially in areas relating to improvement works and management services in the estate. We have considered in detail the increased responsibilities and changing role of the Housing Manager in estate management, and light of the Authority's huge housing stock and expanding public housing programme, as well as the social and political changes in the community. We have come to the conclusion that, to further improve services to tenants, it is now time for the Authority to :-</p> <p>. further decentralize the management of housing estates to a local level;</p>

. enhance contact and communication with tenants on estate management matters; and

. increase the opportunities of participation by tenants in local estate management.

This paper sets out the thinking behind this new management initiative, and recommends a course of action having regard to the above objective.

EXISTING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION WITH LOCAL AND DISTRICT GROUPS

(a) Management presence in estates

5. At present, every public rental housing estate has an estate office headed by a Housing Manger with a team of support staff. The estate Housing Manger reports to the Senior Housing Manager based in the district. An estate office functions as a front-line office to resolve tenants' complaints and deal with their requests. The estate Housing Manager and his staff keep a very close contact with tenants and local groups through day-to-day liaison and periodic meetings. To ensure that local estate management matters are attended to promptly and efficiently, the relevant power with regard to estate management such as enforcement of tenancy conditions and control of estate environment, etc. has already been delegated to individual Housing Mangers.

(b) Meetings with Mutual Aid Committees (MACs)

6. The estate Housing Manager normally conducts meeting with MACs on a bi-monthly basis to discuss matters of mutual concern if the MACs are active. If at any time an MAC seeks clarification nor explanation on certain policy affecting the estate, or if the Housing Manager wishes to consult the MAC on measures affecting the block, ad hoc meetings will also be convened. The Housing Manager is required to follow up the discussions at meetings with MACs and report to is regional headquarters about such meetings on a quarterly basis.

(c) Meeting with Area Committees (Acs) and District Boards (DBs)

7. While discussions at MACs may mainly focus on localized housing issues, such as security and cleanliness of a particular housing block, discussions at Acs and DBs normally concentrate more on issues affecting the entire estate, or the estates in the area or district. Such issues include programme for redevelopment, major repairs and maintenance, etc. Discussions at these meetings are reported to the Housing Authority (HA) via the HA Secretary's report. Housing management matters raised at DBs are reported to the Authority's Management and Operations Committee (MOC) on a quarterly basis. At present, the role of AC is being reviewed by the City and New Territories Administration.

(d) Members' Pre-MOC meeting and visists to estate

8. Members of the Authority and MOC also meet residents groups or tenant representatives at pre-meetings. In 1993, 45 such meeting had been held, two-thirds of which were about management and operations matters in estate. Apart from pre-meetings, Members of the Authority and MOC also conduct regular

visits to estates to listen to tenants; views and gain a first-hand understanding of the problems in different estates.

EXISTING TENANTS' PARTICIPATION IN ESTATE MANAGEMENT

9. At present, tenants are involved in estate management through the following avenues -

(a) contributing views at meetings with MACs, Acs and DBs; contributing views via periodic survey conducted by the Department on certain policy issues affecting the estate

(b) through meetings with the Housing Manager, providing the Department with feedback on the performance of contractors providing services in the estate. Tenants' views in this respect are recorded in an appraisal form and are taken into account when the service contract is considered for extension or renewal; and

(c) through MACs, tenants help promote and participate in various activities relating to the estate community, such as cleanliness and security campaigns and various other functions during festive seasons.

NEED FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN ESTATE MANAGEMENT

(a) The Authority is getting bigger

10. At present, the Authority already has a housing stock of 650,000 rental flats housing about 40% of the population. The Authority's housing stock will continue to expand. There is a need for the Authority to keep under review its decentralization arrangement for housing management to ensure that its services are being delivered efficiently.

(b) Greater expectations from tenants from better services

11. As Hong Kong society becomes more affluent and public housing estates are now better built, tenants expect a correspondingly high standard of management services. In older estates, there is a strong demand for improvement works to modernize estate facilities.

(c) Tenants' wish to have a greater say in estate management

12. Today, tenants of public housing are more civic-minded and are more ready to express their views. Given the changing political, social and economic situation in Hong Kong, tenants are keen to have a say in the day-to-day management of their estate.

(d) Importance of tenants' support of management decisions and actions

13. As estate management is getting more complex, and the Authority is moving towards greater openness, tenants' understanding of and support for the Authority's policies and management actions is becoming increasingly important. Tenants' support is indeed crucial in the successful implementation of any estate management measures.

ADVANTAGES OF AN ESTATE-BASED COMMITTEE

14. In view of the point described in paragraphs 10 to 13, we believe that there is a need to establish estate-based committees with tenants' participation as a means to improve housing management. An estate-based committee, to be named as Estate Management Advisory Committee (EMAC), offers the following advantages -

(a) it provides a dedicated and well-structured forum for the estate Housing Manager to communicate with and consult tenants on estate management matters, and to gain tenants' understanding and support in the implementation of our management policies;

(b) it provides tenants with a greater say in estate management matters, and turns estate management matters and turns estate management into a dynamic partnership between tenants and housing staff. It provides a formal avenue to involve tenants in public housing management, and to further decentralize estate management to local staff - an objective which becomes increasingly important as the Authority's housing stock is getting bigger;

(c) it provides an opportunity for the Authority to strengthen as well as streamline its contact with tenants, MACs and local residents associations, and to enhance the communication with them; and it represents a proactive move to increase our openness and accountability, which we believe is crucial as housing management today is getting more complex, and tenants are expecting greater transparency and accountability from the Authority.

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THE PROPOSALS

Role and Functions of EMAC

15. It is proposed that the main role of EMAC should be to advise the Housing Manager on local estate management matters. The broad functions of EMAC are proposed below -

(a) to advise the estate Housing Manager on :

- priorities of maintenance and improvement works within the estate;

- proposals relating to security, orderliness and cleanliness, control over roads and carparks noise and amenities in the estate;

(b) to provide feedback and reflect tenants' views on estate management matters; to involve or participate in -

(c) to involve or participate in -

- appraising the performance of contractors who provide services in the estate, e.g. cleansing, security, maintenance and improvements;

- estate community activities, e.g. Estate Liaison Officer Scheme and cleaning campaigns; and

(d) where funds are made available for the purpose, to recommend a list of works and activities including minor local improvement works for implementation in the estate.

16. It is also proposed that the Housing Manager should retain an overall control of the management of the estate. The following functions, many of which can only be executed with the powers vested in the Housing Ordinance, should continue to rest solely with estate Housing Manager -

- (a) tenancy control and enforcement;
- (b) tenancy transfers and exchanges
- (c) rent matters (rent payment, rent assistance, etc.);
- (d) control and monitoring of estate budget;
- (e) prosecutions of illegal hawkers, illegal parking on roads and car parks;
- (f) rendering emergency assistance; and
- (g) planning and leasing of non-domestic properties.

17. In lieu with the objective that EMAC should focus on local estate management, territory-wide housing policies such as those concerning rent, increase in fees and charges, etc. should continue to rest with the Authority's policy committees.

Structure and Composition

18. To ensure that EMAC would work efficiently and effectively, the Committee should be kept within a manageable size. It is proposed that each EMAC be the estate Housing Manager. Membership should comprise -

- (a) chairman or an elected representative from each MAC in the estate;
- (b) chairman or an elected representative from a residents association and a commercial tenants association respectively in the estate [Note]; and
- (c) current elected member of District Board whose constituency covers the estate.

19. If a person appointed to EMAC in his capacity as mentioned in paragraph 18 (a) to 18(c) ceases to be in office, he should also cease to be a member of EMAC. As regards official representation, representative from Housing Department (Assistant Housing Manager and maintenance staff) should be in regular attendance; representatives from other Government departments such as Police, City and New Territories Administration, etc should be invited to attend on a need basis.

Allocation of Funds

20. It is proposed that each EMAC be given the role to advise on the use of funds allocated on an annual basis. To facilitate accounting and execution of work

using the funds, the estate Housing Manager should be the controlling officer of the funds allocated. The board parameters for fund allocation should include age and size of the state, past expenditure pattern, general facilities in the estate and so on. to being with, an average estate with 4,000 - 5,000 flats and sizeable shopping centre should be allocated around \$800,000 to \$1 million a year. If there were eight estates involved in the pilot scheme (see paragraphs 22-23), the overall financial outlay in the first year would be around \$7 million.

[Note : Residents association and commercial tenants association in this context refer to those registered under the Companies Ordinance or Societies Ordinance. A residents association should have membership of at least 15% of the estate households, while a commercial tenants association must have a membership of at least 50% of the estate's commercial tenants. It is noted that at present, only a limited number of estates have residents associations and/or commercial tenants associations.]

21. It is proposed that detailed guidelines governing the use of funds by EMAC should be drawn up. The funds should mainly be expended on local improvement works, betterment of building management and environmental improvement. Funds to be used on estate activities such as festive decoration, estate carnivals, etc. should not exceed 10 per cent of the total funds allocated. Some broad categories of work using the funds allocated are suggested at the Annex.

Pilot Implementation

22. As EMAC would represent a new initiative in estate management, it would be prudent to try out the concept in certain estates before considering full-scale implementation. It is proposed that EMACs should initially be established in eight estates in April 1995. The estates to be involved should comprise estates of different size, age and characteristics in the four management regions. Tenants and the public should be consulted and their views should be closely monitored during the pilot scheme. Public views on EMAC should be compiled and submitted to the Management and Operations Committee (MOC) for consideration.

23. It is proposed that the MOC be delegated with task to come up with a detailed implementation plan and publicity approach for the pilot scheme. The MOC should also conduct a review of the scheme in a year's time to fine-tune operational procedures and recommend to the Authority the way forward, having regard to feedback from tenants and the public.

Financial and Staffing Implications

24. The additional funding of \$7 million (paragraph 20) will be sought in the proposed budget for 1995/96.

25. During the pilot scheme, additional staff would be required by the state offices concerned and secretarial staff would be required to service EMAC. Additional staff would also be needed to co-ordinate the work of EMAC and provide support from Headquarters.

26. It is proposed that detailed staffing requirements should worked out as part of the implementation plan of the pilot scheme, and that the relevant staff associations should be consulted in this respect.

PUBLIC REACTION

27. It is our assessment that the proposals would be welcome by tenants as it opens up more opportunities for them to participate I and express views on estate management. Some pressure groups, however, are likely to criticize that the proposals does not go far enough to involve tenants in the decision-making process in estate management.

RECOMMENDATION

28. Members are invited to consider and endorse the proposal as set to in paragraphs 15 to 26 of this paper.

PRESENTATION

29. This paper will be presented to the Housing Authority meeting on 24 November 1994.

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