

Doc Type	HA
Paper No	19/95
Title	Proposals to Improve the Complaints Monitoring System and Public Enquiry Service
CONTENTS	<p>HA 19/95</p> <p>THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY</p> <p>Memorandum for the Housing Authority</p> <p>Proposals to Improve the Complaints Monitoring System and Public Enquiry Service</p> <p>PURPOSE</p> <p>This paper advises Members of proposals to improve the Authority's complaints monitoring system and public enquiry service in support of its mission.</p> <p>BACKGROUND</p> <p>2. Over the past two years, the Authority has introduced a number of measures to increase its accountability to its tenants and the community at large. For example, we have made the Housing Authority regular meetings and the annual debate meeting open to the public; the appeal tribunal hearings are held in public; there is a system for registering and declaring interests for Members of the Authority and its Committees; the Management and Operations Committee has regular meetings with concern groups and tenants' representatives on specific subjects; the Committees' decisions are announced via post-meeting media briefings, press releases, newsletters, the HA-bimonthly, pamphlets, the budgets are published in an easy-to-read format etc. More recently, we have decided to introduce an estate management advisory committee structure on trial in eight estates and a revised system to improve minor maintenance works, both of which aim at providing better feedback in line with tenants' rising expectations.</p> <p>3. At the estate level, we will be providing a customer service assistant to each estate office to answer general enquiries and receive complaints and requests for minor repairs. The Building Committee has also approved the appointment of three consultants who will re-design and fit out a total of sixty existing estate offices over the next two to three years. The client's brief will focus on providing a warm and open office setting which is conducive to customer- friendly service. This estate improvement programme, when it is rolled out, will give our estate offices an entirely different outlook.</p> <p>4. At the headquarters level, we have commissioned a management consultant firm which will team up with a public relations firm to examine our front-line customer service delivery and how we can promote our corporate image. We expect the findings</p>

of this study to be available by this autumn. Concurrently, we have strengthened the Public Relations Unit by creating a full-fledged Information and Community Relations Division which will provide not only the traditional services such as news, publicity and publications but also a capability to monitor centrally the complaints system, to develop an enquiry service, to prepare the way for the eventual introduction of a code of practice for information access and to expand the community relations activities. Following the Establishment and Finance Committee's approval late last year, we have successfully recruited most of the additional staff required to support this new Division and we can expect many more new initiatives in these areas in the months ahead.

5. Most public organisations strive to provide a swift and customer-driven service, particularly in areas which have a direct consumer focus, such as the way complaints and enquiries are being handled. We in the Housing Authority should be moving in this direction.

6. Under the new Information and Community Relations Division, a Complaints and Enquiries Section has been set up since December 1994. We have now developed a computerised complaints monitoring system and a hot-line service which should significantly improve our capability in these two areas. The proposals relating to the computerised systems are described below.

PROPOSALS

(A) Monitoring of Complaints

Current situation

7. At present, reports on the number of complaints and requests received by the Department and the Chairman's Office are presented for the information of the Complaints Committee and the Management and Operations Committee quarterly and half-yearly respectively. The reports contain an analysis of the source and nature of complaints.

8. Statistics on complaints and requests received are hitherto captured manually. At the end of each quarter, the Estate Offices receiving complaints and requests provide the figures to the headquarters through the district and regional offices. The headquarters consolidate the data and provide a report to the Committees' Section for compilation.

Deficiency of existing system

9. The existing reporting system is a time-consuming and labour intensive exercise involving consolidation of figures at the district, regional and headquarters levels. The reports provide an overall picture of the complaints and requests received without further analysis, e.g. the situation in respect of individual estate offices.

The Computerised Complaints/Requests Register

10. In order to reduce the manual effort and to make better use of the data for management purpose, a Computerised Complaints/ Requests Register has been

developed.

11. Under the computerised system, the Estate Offices would input into the system first-hand the following data -

- (i) the number and nature of complaints/requests received;
- (ii) the source of complaints; and
- (iii) the number and duration of outstanding cases.

Once the input is completed, the system could generate at any point in time different types of reports showing the overall up-to-date situation as well as the position of individual estates and housing blocks.

Benefits

12. With the introduction of the computerised system, we will be much better placed to enhance our accountability and meet our performance pledges. Staff dealing with complaints and enquiries will be monitored centrally and locally on progress.

13. In addition, considerable effort could be saved on the consolidation of figures and more timely reports could be produced. The system would also enhance the production of reports to facilitate the Complaints and Enquiries Section to conduct further analysis, down to the block level. The monitoring of these statistics and subsequent remedial action will be of immense benefits to the Department.

Implementation

14. The new system will be introduced in April 1995. Statistics on complaints received by the Department in the first quarter of 1995 will be captured and processed by the new system. Training has been given to all staff concerned to equip them with the knowledge and skill of inputting data.

(B) INTERACTIVE VOICE PROCESSING SYSTEM (IVPS)

Current situation

15. Currently, most of the enquiries from the public are answered in person either at the estate counter or by the operator of the central system. There are a number of hotlines now in operation, including one for handling complaints, requests and views, one for enquiries on public housing applications and one for enquiries on the tender results of commercial properties. The workload of our telephone operators is heavy. This is particularly so for the Applications and Home Ownership Division where the public are keen to know the criteria, procedures and the current position in their applications. The Applications Section has to handle as much as 900 calls per day. As for the Home Ownership Centre, there are 700 calls per day during the sales period whereas on ordinary days, about 300 calls per day.

16. The existing enquiry system not only imposes heavy pressure on the part of the Department but also proves inadequate for members of the public to reach the operators readily. We have no such service after office hours.

The new hotline

17. To improve the existing enquiry service and to provide a better service to the public, the Department has developed the IVPS, an automatic telephone enquiry system which has the following features -

- (a) it can communicate with the Departmental main frame computer;
- (b) it can interface with the existing voice mail hotline system which records 24-hour public complaints and comments;
- (c) it can prompt a caller for input and response appropriately by using pre-recorded messages; and
- (d) it can send fax automatically as requested by callers.

18. The system will be accommodated in the Departmental Communication Centre in Housing Authority Headquarters and has a total of 64 lines. A copy of the main menu of the system is at Annex. A leaflet setting out how to access the system direct to obtain answers to the most commonly asked questions will also be published when the publicity programme is launched.

19. For easy identification by the public, the system will be called "Housing Department Hotline (☎, p¹/₄ö¹/₂u)". An easy to remember telephone number of "2712 2712" will be allocated to this hotline.

Benefits

20. Through implementation of the integrated system, members of the public can obtain a lot of basic information about housing application policy and procedures through a digital phone during and outside office hours. Such information can also be obtained via fax. There will be an exit to speak to the operators manning the Home Ownership and Application centres during office hours. The hotline will also be linked to the Departmental Communication Centre to deal with emergencies outside office hours.

21. Since the number and nature of enquiries made are recorded on the computer, such information can be used for further analysis and improvements made to provide a better enquiry service.

Limitations

22. The computerised hotline can only be accessed via digital (tone) telephones. It can exit to operators during office hours. Those using the 'dial' (pulse) phone will be advised of the steps to take if they wish to obtain normal enquiry service or access emergency service. We have examined the possibility of providing operator service outside office hours for this minority group of users but have concluded that it will not be cost-effective to do so.

Implementation

23. The hotline will be introduced in April 1995. The components of the enquiry menu can be expanded in modular form in response to public feedback.

Publicity Package

24. A publicity programme will be launched in April to tie in with the implementation of the system. It will include -

- (a) TV and radio APIs (Announcements in Public Interest);
- (b) Newspaper advertisements;
- (c) MTR and KCR advertisements (tube cards);
- (d) LED board advertisements at public ferry and KCR concourses;
- (e) Bus body advertisements;
- (f) Poster display;
- (g) Leaflet distribution; and
- (h) Give-away items.

25. The cost of the publicity programme will be absorbed within the 1994/95 and 1995/96 budgets.

PRESENTATION

26. A demonstration of the two computer systems will be conducted for Member at the Housing Authority meeting on 30 March 1995. The TV and radio APIs will also be broadcast, and the associated publicity materials displayed during the meeting.

27. Members are invited to note the proposals in this paper.

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