

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Housing-related Initiatives in the 2009-10 Policy Agenda

Introduction

On 14 October 2009, the Chief Executive delivered his 2009-10 Policy Address. This paper provides the details of the coming year's new and ongoing housing-related initiatives as stated in the Policy Address and the Policy Agenda.

New Initiatives

Quality City And Quality Life

Increase the greening ratio of all new public rental housing estates to at least 20%. We will also provide green roofs in low-rise buildings and provide vertical greening in some pilot projects wherever feasible.

2. Increasing the greening ratio can help reduce urban heat island effect and bring more environmental benefits. The Housing Authority (HA) therefore supports the initiative of increasing the greening ratio proposed by the Council for Sustainable Development, and plans to adopt a greening ratio of at least 20% for all future public rental housing (PRH) developments in planning and design stages.

3. We will adopt the following measures to increase the greening ratio of our new PRH estates:

- (a) Provide more planting areas at grade level;
- (b) Provide green roof or green decking to covered walkways, low-rise structures, carparks and/or vehicular access; and
- (c) Provide grass-paving system to open carparks, loading and unloading bays, Emergency Vehicular Access and other less trafficked areas.

4. To further enhance the greening coverage, we have been piloting vertical greening in some new PRH estates, such as Ching Ho Estate completed in early 2008 and Yau Lai Estate Phase 4 to be completed in late 2009. We will also provide green roof in low-rise buildings due for completion in 2009/10 onwards.

Investing for a Caring Society

Invite Non-Government Organisations for enhanced partnering functions with Estate Management Advisory Committees to promote community building and neighbourliness in public rental housing estates.

5. Since 1995, the Estate Management Advisory Committees (EMACs) have been making suggestions and reflecting tenants' views on daily management matters, and strengthening tenants' sense of belonging to the community through organising various community activities. In view of the well-established foundation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), their rich experiences in providing social services, thorough understanding of the local situations and their ability to provide PRH tenants with a multitude of social services according to local needs, the HA approved in July 2009 to invite NGOs to organise EMAC activities. This would help foster community building and neighbourliness in PRH estates, and enable the cooperation between EMACs and NGOs be conducted in a more standardised and effective manner. The HA plays the role of a facilitator in promoting the partnership between EMACs and NGOs. After launching the arrangements, the HA will regularly collect data and feedback from Chairmen of the EMACs on the activities organised. It will also review the effectiveness of the arrangements for future improvement.

Ongoing Initiatives

Quality City And Quality Life

Promoting sustainable public housing developments by designing for green and healthy living, and ensuring effective and rational use of housing resources.

6. In response to the rising public aspirations for environmental conservation and a better living environment, the HA will continue to implement a series of environment-friendly measures and new designs. In line with the "Functional and Cost Effective" design principle and our allocation standards, we have established a new set of Modular Flat Design in order to enhance the overall housing design and built quality. Not only will this design improve utilisation and ventilation of habitable space, it will also help achieve economies of scale through mass production which in turn leads to higher cost-effectiveness.

Investing for a Caring Society

Installing as far as practical lifts/escalators connecting common areas in hillside public housing estates and lifts in low-rise public housing blocks without lifts to facilitate access of residents.

7. To facilitate access of tenants living in hillside PRH estates and PRH blocks without lifts, the HA has been installing lifts or escalators in the common areas or housing blocks of some PRH estates. The scheme comprises three parts and costs \$950 million –

(I) To improve the connection of common areas in hillside PRH estates

8. The Housing Department (HD) will install 37 lifts and escalators in the existing hillside estates having regard to the estate topography, the population of the elderly and mobility-handicapped tenants in the estates, the project feasibility and the residents' views. In Kwai Chung Estate, Kwai Shing East Estate and Sai Wan Estate, the lifts installed came into operation in late 2008, June 2009 and July 2009 respectively. The HD plans to install lifts or escalators in the following 18 hillside PRH estates – Tze Lok Estate, Shun Tin Estate, Ping Shek Estate, Ping Tin Estate, Oi Man Estate, Yiu Tung Estate, Wah Fu (I) Estate, Wah Fu (II) Estate, Tin Wah Estate, Kwai Shing West Estate, Lai King Estate, Lei Muk Shue Estate, Cheung Ching Estate, Shek Lei (II) Estate, Cheung Hong Estate, Cheung Hang Estate, Lai Yiu Estate and Kwai Chung Estate (another project).

(II) To improve lift installations for residential blocks

9. The HA will install additional lifts mainly in the seven-storeyed buildings aged over 28 years and without lift service. This involves the installation of 43 lifts. To date, the two lifts in Hing Wai House of Tai Hing Estate have come into service since late 2008, whereas the construction of lift towers in Yue Wan Estate (Yue Fung, Yue On and Yue Tai Houses) and Block 4 of Lei Muk Shue (II) Estate is underway. The HD is studying the feasibility of installing lifts in the following PRH blocks which are currently without lift service – Choi Hung Estate, Shui Pin Wai Estate, Ping Shek Estate, Shun On Estate, Wo Lok Estate, Pak Tin Estate, Fuk Loi Estate, Lei Muk Shue (II) Block 1, Lek Yuen Estate and Kwai Shing West Estate.

10. In order to expedite the installation of lifts and reduce the nuisance to tenants, the HD drew reference from overseas experience and made use of the latest technology in developing the “prefabricated steel lift tower construction” method. This method does not require the use of concrete. The skeleton of the lift tower can

be welded up elsewhere before transporting to the estate for erection on a finished foundation by a crane. Piling works are not required. Construction time can be shortened. Nuisance to the tenants can be minimised. This method was first applied to the addition of lift in Bik Shui House in Shui Pin Wai Estate and the result was satisfactory. The HA will strongly promote this construction method to expedite the works for improving the living environment.

(III) To modernise the lifts aged 30 or above

11. To ensure safe and smooth daily operation of the lifts, the HA will take into account the age of the lifts, the extent of their wear-and-tear, etc, and replace them if necessary. Where the building structure permits, the HA will retrofit lift landings on floors not provided with the service when replacing the lift. The progress of lift modernisation is satisfactory. There are about 30 PRH estates currently undergoing or planning the modernisation work.

Investing for a Caring Society

Maintaining supply of PRH for needy applicants with an average waiting time of around three years.

12. The thrust of the Government's subsidised housing policy is to provide subsidised rental housing to low-income families who cannot afford private rental accommodation with an average waiting time (AWT) of around three years¹. In the coming year, we would continue to strive to attain such an objective. As at end August 2009, the AWT for PRH was 1.9 years for general applicants and 1.2 years for elderly one-person applicants. In the next five years, the HA will build about 15 000 new PRH units per year. We estimate that this level of new production, together with the PRH flats estimated to be recovered from the existing stock every year, would allow us to continue to meet the objective. The Government would continue to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of land for the HA to implement a sustainable PRH programme.

Conducting the first PRH rent review in 2010 under the new rent adjustment mechanism.

13. The Housing (Amendment) Ordinance 2007 (the Amendment Ordinance) introduced a new income-based PRH rent adjustment mechanism and came into force on 1 January 2008. To provide an appropriate starting point for the new rent adjustment mechanism to operate effectively, the HA reduced the PRH rent by 11.6%

¹ Not applicable to non-elderly one-person PRH applicants.

in August 2007. Subsequent adjustment will be made on the basis of this reduced level and the rate of change will be determined by the rate of change in the income index over the first and second periods of each rent review as defined in section 16A(8) of the Housing Ordinance (Cap. 283).

14. In compiling the income index, the HA will use income data collected from its Survey on PRH Household Income. The Survey collects monthly household income data from randomly-sampled PRH households each month² through a declaration arrangement. In accordance with section 16A(7) of the Housing Ordinance, the Commissioner for Census and Statistics shall compute the concerned income index for each rent review. The computation results of the first rent review are expected to be available in mid-2010. We will then report the review results to the HA, Legislative Council and the public.

Implementing a set of enhanced public housing arrangements to promote mutual family support and care for the elderly.

15. To support the Government’s policy of fostering harmonious families, the HA reviewed the public housing allocation policies in May 2007 and October 2008 respectively and endorsed a number of enhanced arrangements to help establish a family-based support network and further encourage young families to live with their elderly parents or dependent elderly relatives in order to take better care of them and to promote harmony within families. The latest enhanced arrangement implemented in January 2009 is the merging of the Families with Elderly Persons Priority Scheme and the Special Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons to create the Harmonious Families Priority Scheme. Satisfactory responses are received from the various schemes since October 2007, and the number of households benefited are as follows:

Enhanced Public Housing Arrangements (as at July 2009)	Number of Households Benefited
Harmonious Families Priority Scheme ³	about 10 720 ⁴
Harmonious Families Addition Scheme	about 3 650
Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme	about 830
Harmonious Families Amalgamation Scheme	about 230
Total	about 15 430

² A random sample of some 2 000 PRH households would be drawn each month, meaning a total sample of some 24 000 PRH households a year. No PRH household would be selected for more than once within a period of 12 months.

³ Combining the Families with Elderly Persons Priority Scheme and the Special Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons.

⁴ Including 3 100 households which were housed.

16. To encourage mutual support among family members and promote care for the elderly, the HA will continue to review the progress of these schemes and make further improvements.

Continuing to facilitate the implementation of an elderly housing project by the Hong Kong Housing Society on Tanner Road, North Point.

17. In September 2008, the Government approved in principle the Hong Kong Housing Society's (HKHS) proposal to develop a new elderly housing project (the Project) on HKHS' former Tanner Hill Estate site in North Point. The Project will comprise about 500 elderly rental flats and various supporting services and facilities. The Project is expected to be completed by the end of 2013. We will continue to assist HKHS in bringing forward the Project in collaboration with the relevant bureaux and departments.

Developing the Infrastructure for Economic Growth

Launching the sale of the remaining surplus Home Ownership Scheme flats in phases.

18. The HA has formulated plans to sell approximately 16 600 surplus Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats in batches in an orderly manner from 2007 onwards to Green Form and White Form applicants. The HA completed the sale exercises of Phases 1 to 4 in May 2007, December 2007, June 2008 and December 2008 respectively with a total of 11 277 flats sold, and will put up for sale Phase 5 in end October 2009 with a total of 1 392 flats (i.e. 370 unsold flats in Yau Chui Court Stage I and 1 022 flats scattered in 7 HOS courts). The remaining some 4 000 surplus HOS flats are tentatively planned for sale in an orderly manner from 2010 onwards after Phase 5. The HA would formulate detailed proposals on the sales programme having regard to the sales result of Phase 5 and the prevailing market conditions.

Transport and Housing Bureau October 2009