THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY

Memorandum for the Management and Operations Committee

Progress on Overcrowding Relief

PURPOSE

To report on the progress of overcrowding relief (OR) in public rental housing estates.

BACKGROUND

2. A new OR arrangement was introduced in July 1995 and subsequently reviewed in May 1996. The results of the review were reported to Members in July 1996 via Paper No. MOC 55/96. Except with some slight modifications in the administrative arrangement which included the restricted invitation in making flat offers, release of OR flats to estates on a monthly basis and display of OR flat lists for tenant information, the overall arrangement proved to be effective.

PRESENT OVERCROWDING SITUATION

3. The numbers of overcrowded households who lived at a density of 5.5m² per person in the past ten years are given at the Annex. As at March 1997, there are 34,855 overcrowded households. Compared with last year’s figure, the number of overcrowded households is further reduced by 7,272 (17%). Among these households, 1,670 nos. have acquired a larger flat through OR while the others have improved their living condition through either home purchase, Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme or subsequent deletion of household members.
4. The addition of family members coming from China upon family reunion does have some impact on the overcrowding condition. In the last quarter of 1996, a total of 1,501 new immigrants were added into 1,001 households, about 30% (303 households) of which resulted in overcrowding.

5. Due to limitation of available resources, efforts on overcrowding are mainly focused on those with more serious overcrowding problem i.e. those with living density below 4.5m² per person. Flats not taken up by these households will then be used to resolve the overcrowding condition of those households with a higher living density but below 5.5m² per person. At present, there is approximately 30% of the overcrowded households (10,497 nos.) whose living density is below 4.5m² per person.

**HIGH REFUSAL RATE**

6. The refusal rate in the OR process still remains high though the introduction of a ‘restricted invitation’ system has, to some extent, smoothen the overall flat allocation process. In 1996/97, 1,802 offers were made under the revised OR arrangement and 1,114 households refused the offers, representing a refusal rate of 62%, compared with 61% of last year. As usual, reasons for refusal are mainly unsatisfactory flat size, floor level and orientation. Their choosy attitude is understandable. So far, 200 households who refused three OR offers without acceptable reasons, have their OR eligibility being frozen for one year.

**REDUCED COMPLAINTS**

7. The revised OR arrangement proved to be an effective, open and fair system. The operation is simple and easy to understand. There is an obvious drop of complaints since the introduction of the revised OR arrangement. In the year 1996/97, one complaint on OR was referred by The Ombudsman for direct handling by estate staff.
OVERALL ASSESSMENT

8. Since the introduction of the revised OR arrangement in July 1995, a total of 4,190 overcrowded cases were resolved through OR. With so much competing demand on housing, the Department had endeavoured to tackle the overcrowding problem within all constraints. The high refusal rate and the addition of new immigrants upon family reunion do, to some extent, counter the results of the OR exercises.

9. As long as addition of family members is allowed under the existing policy, new overcrowded households will form. The Department will monitor the situation closely and take necessary action where appropriate.

INFORMATION

10. This paper is submitted for Members’ information.

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