THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY

Memorandum for the Management and Operations Committee

Disposal of Unpopular Flats

PURPOSE

To seek Members’ approval of the proposed arrangements for disposal of unpopular flats.

BACKGROUND

2. From time to time, we will recover public rental housing (PRH) units where there have been incidents of murder, suicide or arson, or they are at unfavourable locations such as near refuse collection points/pump rooms etc. Despite numerous offers made (ranging from 10 to 36 times), very few applicants would accept these unpopular flats. At present, there are some 100 such flats which have been left vacant for over 12 months. For obvious reasons, it is necessary to introduce measures to let out these flats as soon as possible.

PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS

3. To facilitate prompt disposal of these unpopular flats, we propose to invite applications by direct mailing to the registered applicants on the Waiting List (WL). Details of the arrangements are listed in the ensuing paragraphs.
Selection of Flats

4. Unpopular flats which have been rejected 10 times or more by WL applicants would be pooled. For better and easy administration, the flats will be classified into two major broad districts according to their current average waiting time, viz. (a) urban, extended urban and Tai Po; and (b) Tuen Mun and Islands.

Selection of Target Applicants

5. The number of applicants to be invited for registration under the two separate districts will depend on the number of unpopular flats in the district. As a first start, we may fix it at 50 times the number of flats. If a district has 50 unpopular flats, invitation letters will be sent to 2,500 applicants on the top of the WL who have opted for that district as their first choice of locality and have not yet been offered flats. In the invitation letter, a list of estates with unpopular flats will be enclosed with a clear message that unhappy incidents have happened in these flats or that the flats are at unfavourable locations.

6. Interested applicants are required to reply to the Applications Section within a specified period of time by using a designated form enclosed to the letter.

Processing

7. All applications received will be sorted in accordance with the order of the G-number of the applicants. A preliminary checking such as residence qualification will be made to discard unqualified cases. Applicants will then be invited to attend vetting interviews to confirm their eligibility.

Flat Selection

8. Eligible applicants will be asked to select a flat of their choice in the appropriate district relevant to their household sizes. They will also be asked to undertake not to request any subsequent transfer within the first three years of intake. An offer letter will then be issued for signing up formalities at the estate office.
9. As this is a separate exercise targetted at quick consumption of unpopular flats, successful applicants will only be given one offer instead of three which is our established policy in flat allocation. If they decline the offer, they will be placed back on the original WL for their normal turns.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

10. Two Housing Officers and three Clerical Officers will be temporarily redeployed to carry out this exercise until all unpopular flats are let.

CONSIDERATION

11. To invite applications for certain flats may stigmatize these flats. Nonetheless, the proposed arrangements can promptly let out the flats thus increasing revenue and saving staff cost in making futile offers repeatedly. At the same time, WL applicants who do not have strong views on the background or locations of the flats can be rehoused earlier subject to their fulfillment of WL eligibility criteria.

PRESUMPTION

12. It is not thought that Members will object to the proposed arrangements listed in paragraphs 3 to 9. If no objection or request for discussion is received by the Committees’ Secretary by noon on 3 September 1997, Members’ approval will be presumed and appropriate action taken.

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