

LCQ8: Re-allocation of recovered public rental housing units

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (May 13):

Question

Under the prevailing arrangements, if the public rental housing (PRH) units surrendered by existing tenants upon their moving out are situated in those PRH estates which have been included in any redevelopment programme of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) or the Hong Kong Housing Society (HS), such units will not be reallocated; if otherwise, the said organisations will reallocate the units after refurbishment to eligible households. Regarding the existing PRH units which have been/will be recovered and the newly built PRH units, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of PRH units recovered by HA and HS in each of the past five financial years which might be used for reallocation (set out in Table 1);

Table 1

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Total
HA						
HS						
Total						

(2) of the respective numbers of new PRH units built by HA and HS in each of the past five financial years (set out in Table 2);

Table 2

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Total
HA						
HS						
Total						

(3) of the respective numbers of PRH units surrendered by tenants of (a) HA and (b) HS in each of the past five financial years which might be used for reallocation (excluding those units surrendered due to transfer); whether these organisations have grasped a breakdown of such numbers by different reasons for surrendering the units; if they have grasped a breakdown of such numbers by all or some of the reasons, set out the breakdown by the following major reasons for surrendering the units in tables of the same format of

Table 3; if these organisations have not grasped a breakdown of such numbers by all the reasons, whether they will keep such records in a comprehensive manner in future; if not, of the reasons for that;

- (i) death of the principal tenants,
- (ii) the principal tenants being admitted to residential care homes,
- (iii) the principal tenants having purchased subsidised sale flats,
- (iv) the tenants moving out in compliance with the requirements of HA/HS as they had breached the tenancy agreements,
- (v) the tenants' family income/total household net asset value having exceeded the limits prescribed under the "Well-off Tenants Policies", or tenants owning domestic property,
- (vi) voluntary surrender of units by tenants (for reasons including emigration to other regions/countries, moving to other places of residence, or for unknown reasons), and
- (vii) other reasons;

Table 3:

Name of organisation:

Major reason	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Total
(i)						
(ii)						
(iii)						
(iv)						
(v)						
(vi)						
(vii)						
Total						

(4) as the Government indicated in the Long Term Housing Strategy Annual Progress Report 2019 that the supply target for PRH/Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme units within the 10 years from 2020-2021 was 210 000 units, whether the 210 000 units will all be newly built or will include the PRH units to be recovered within the period, as envisaged by HA and HS, which may be used for reallocation; and

(5) in the three financial years from 2016-2017 to 2018-2019, of the respective average numbers of days lapsed from the date on which the units mentioned in (3) were received by (i) HA and (ii) HS to the date on which the units concerned were ready for reallocation upon completion of refurbishment works; whether HA and HS have concrete plans to shorten the said period, in order to maximise the use of public resources?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Andrew Wan is as follows:

(1) In the past five years, the number of public rental housing (PRH) units recovered by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) and the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) each year which might be used for re-allocation (excluding units surrendered due to transfer) is set out in Annex I.

(2) In the past five years, the number of new PRH units built by HA and HKHS each year is set out in Annex II.

(3) In the past five years, the number of PRH units surrendered by tenants of HA and HKHS each year which might be used for re-allocation (excluding units surrendered due to transfer), categorised by reason, is set out in Annex III.

(4) According to the Long Term Housing Strategy (LTHS), the Government updates the long term housing demand projection annually and presents a rolling 10-year housing supply target to capture social, economic and market changes over time, and make timely adjustments where necessary. The projection methodology adopted under LTHS aims to project the total number of new housing units required to provide adequate housing to each and every household in the 10 years.

As announced by the Government in the LTHS Annual Progress Report 2019, the total housing supply target for the 10-year period from 2020-21 to 2029-30 is 430 000 units. According to the public/private split of 70:30 for new housing supply, the public housing supply target for the said 10-year period is 301 000 units, including 210 000 PRH/ Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) units. This target refers to newly built PRH/ GSH units and does not include PRH units recycled by HA and HKHS for re-allocation.

(5) HA will normally arrange refurbishment works after recovering vacant PRH units. Upon issuance of the order for the refurbishment works, HA will allocate the units to PRH applicants in advance. If such a PRH unit is provisionally accepted by the applicant concerned, the relevant estate office will invite the applicant to complete the intake formalities as soon as possible once the refurbishment works is completed.

HA has already formulated a work procedures timetable for vacant flat refurbishment in order to closely monitor its timely completion. In addition, HA has introduced a key performance indicator specifying that the target average turnaround time for vacant flat refurbishment should "not exceed 44 days". In the three years from 2016-17 to 2018-19, the average turnaround time was 42.6 calendar days. HA will review the workflows and processes from time to time with a view to speeding up vacant flat refurbishment works.

In the three years from 2016-17 to 2018-19, the average time required for HKHS to refurbish a vacant flat was 47 calendar days. If circumstances

allow, HKHS would complete the relevant works as soon as possible.

LCQ1: Improvement to pedestrian facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (May 13):

Question:

The Government commenced in December 2017 the 30-month Review of Assessment Mechanism for Hillside Escalator Links and Elevator Systems and Preliminary Feasibility Studies as well as Consultancy Study on Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong respectively, so as to tie in with the promotion of the "Walk in HK" initiative. In addition, the Government announced in 2019 the launch of the Special Scheme under the "Universal Accessibility" Programme for retrofitting lifts at the walkways in or connecting to the common areas of three types of public housing estates part of the ownership of which has been disposed of. Regarding improvement to pedestrian facilities, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of those proposed projects for hillside escalator links and elevator systems (HEL) for which investigation and design work is underway, including (i) the names of the projects, (ii) the commencement dates and anticipated completion dates of the investigation and design work, (iii) whether the process of consulting the relevant District Councils (DCs) has been completed, and (iv) the planned timing for submitting the funding applications to the Finance Committee of this Council;

(2) of the latest progress of the first consultancy study mentioned above and how, as it is envisaged, the implementation of HEL projects can be expedited upon implementation of the recommendations made by the consultancy study;

(3) when it will consult the relevant DCs on the projects under the Special Scheme, and of the works schedules of the various projects; whether it has plans to expand the scope of the Special Scheme to retrofit lifts at the walkways in or connecting to the common areas of various types of subsidised sale housing courts (including Home Ownership Scheme courts); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) of the anticipated completion dates of the two aforesaid consultancy studies and the related follow-up work, e.g. whether it is necessary to conduct follow-up studies and whether the recommendations of the consultancy studies can be implemented within this year; and

(5) of the relevant expenditure incurred (e.g. the fees for engaging consultants to conduct studies) and the actual results achieved since the Government took forward the "Walk in HK" initiative in 2017?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to promoting the "Walk in HK" initiative to create a pedestrian-friendly environment, thereby enhancing the overall walkability of Hong Kong and encouraging citizens to walk more. Both the Review of Assessment Mechanism for Hillside Escalator Links and Elevator Systems and Preliminary Feasibility Studies and the Consultancy Study on Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong (Walkability Study) are measures under the "Walk in HK" initiative. Meanwhile, the Government continues to take forward current hillside escalator links and elevator systems (HEL) proposals with a view to enhancing the accessibility of hillside areas and facilitating people to commute.

Besides, the Government has been striving to create a barrier-free and accessible environment and has launched the "Universal Accessibility" (UA) Programme to proactively retrofit barrier-free access facilities (e.g. lifts) at walkways. Since 2012, the Government has progressively launched various phases of the UA Programme with a view to covering more walkways.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Wu Chi-wai's question is as follows:

(1) As at end-April 2020, the Highways Department (HyD) is conducting investigation and design work at various stages for eight HEL projects. Details are at Annex.

(2) The Transport Department (TD) commenced the Review of Assessment Mechanism for Hillside Escalator Links and Elevator Systems and Preliminary Feasibility Studies in December 2017 with the aim to review and improve the assessment mechanism established in 2009 for HEL proposals and, based on the revised mechanism, carry out initial screening, shortlisting and prioritisation of a total of 114 HEL proposals received over the past few years. The latest progress of the proposed revision of the assessment mechanism was reported to the Subcommittee on HEL under the Legislative Council Panel on Transport in November 2019. Members expressed support for the revised mechanism.

Under the revised mechanism, more comprehensive technical assessments on the HEL proposals will be conducted at the initial screening stage and new criteria will be included to better ascertain the necessity and feasibility of the proposals. Besides, taking into account the past experience in taking forward HEL projects, the TD has refined the scoring weightings and improved the assessment standards. For instance, "Implementation Readiness" is one of the key assessment criteria under the revised mechanism. We believe the revised mechanism will enable a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of HEL proposals for determining the priority for implementation, and hope that

the implementation of projects can be expedited.

The consultant is conducting preliminary assessments on the 114 HEL proposals received over the last few years in accordance with the revised assessment mechanism. The TD plans to consult District Councils within this year so as to finalise the first batch of projects for implementation.

(3) The Government announced in the 2019 Policy Address that the ambit of the UA Programme would be further expanded by launching a "Special Scheme" to retrofit lifts to walkways in estates under the Tenants Purchase Scheme, the Buy or Rent Option Scheme, as well as public rental housing estates with properties divested under the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA).

The HyD has begun consultations with the relevant District Councils on the Special Scheme since May this year and is inviting District Councils to suggest items for implementation under the scheme. Following the completion of District Council consultation, the HyD plans to carry out investigation and related design work in 2021 for the items proposed by the District Councils with a view to commencing the retrofitting works as soon as possible.

In expanding the ambit of the UA Programme to cover the three types of housing estates mentioned above, the Government mainly takes into account the fact that although part of the ownership of these estates have been disposed, many of their residents are still tenants of the HKHA. As these tenants are no different from those in regular public housing estates, the Government considers that it should facilitate the residents in these housing estates in using barrier-free access facilities.

As for the various types of subsidised sale housing (including those under the Home Ownership Scheme), as they are entirely private properties, it should be left to the owners of these properties to consider the retrofitting of the related facilities so as to ensure the proper use of public funds.

(4) Regarding the Review of Assessment Mechanism for Hillside Escalator Links and Elevator Systems and Preliminary Feasibility Studies, the TD plans to consult the respective District Councils on a batch of HEL proposals with higher effectiveness based on the preliminary scoring results, and complete the entire scoring process by 2020 so as to finalise the first batch of projects for priority implementation.

As regards the Walkability Study, it is expected to be completed in 2020. The TD has been making reference to the recommendations of the Walkability Study and has implemented various measures progressively to improve the pedestrian environment. The measures include:

(i) relaxed in 2019 the criteria for provision of covers for walkways stipulated in the Transport Planning and Design Manual. In this connection, the Chief Executive announced in the 2019 Policy Address that the Government would provide covers for the walkways connecting to public hospitals as well as those eligible new and existing walkways progressively based on the relaxed criteria, and would invite District Councils to each nominate a

suitable walkway on which a cover is to be provided. The TD has carried out various follow-up work with relevant departments;

(ii) rolled out since the end of 2019 short-term enhancement measures for the walking environment in two pilot areas, namely Central and Sham Shui Po, including decluttering of traffic signs and removing of unnecessary railings. Meanwhile, the TD is refining the long-term measures recommended in the Walkability Study and implementation plan will be formulated;

(iii) developing the design standards for a new pedestrian wayfinding signage system through a follow-up study in the second half of 2020 in the light of the Walkability Study's recommendation and the public's positive feedback on the pedestrian wayfinding system in Tsim Sha Tsui, with a view to commencing the manufacturing and installation of the new wayfinding signage throughout the territory by phases starting from 2021; and

(iv) updating the existing planning guideline and design standards regarding pedestrian environment and facilities progressively in 2021, in accordance with the Walkability Study's recommendations.

(5) Under the "Walk in HK" initiative, the TD has substantially completed the "Pedestrian Connectivity in Hong Kong Island North from Wan Chai to Sheung Wan – Feasibility Study" in 2019 and implemented in phases the footpath widening work near Jaffe Road starting from the fourth quarter in 2019. The consultancy fee was about \$3.6 million. The TD will continue to take forward the remaining proposed enhancement works at Sheung Wan, Central, Admiralty and Wan Chai, with a view to further improving the pedestrian connectivity in Hong Kong Island North from Wan Chai to Sheung Wan.

With regard to the Walkability Study, the consultancy fee was about \$13.9 million. The TD has progressively implemented various short-term measures on a pilot basis in late 2019, including decluttering or removal of unnecessary traffic signs on the footpaths in order to make room for pedestrians. The TD will review the effectiveness of the enhancement measures in the two pilot areas in due course and consider whether to extend the measures to other districts.

The consultancy fee of Review of Assessment Mechanism for Hillside Escalator Links and Elevator Systems and Preliminary Feasibility Studies was approximately \$22 million.

The walking route search function of "HKeMobility", including barrier-free walking route search function, currently covers Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai and Central and Western District. The TD plans to extend its coverage to all districts by the end of 2020. The estimated cost of expanding the pedestrian network database is about \$1 million.

LCQ9: Termination of the employment agreements of principal officials

Following is a question by the Hon Jeremy Tam, and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (May 13):

Question:

According to a government paper entitled "Procedures for appointment and removal of principal officials under the accountability system" in 2003, the Government may, subject to the relevant provisions in the Basic Law, terminate the employment of a principal official under the Accountability System (now called a "political appointee") at any time by giving the principal official one month's written notice or by paying that official an amount equal to one month's salary in lieu of such notice (payment in lieu of notice). On the other hand, the Government and the official concerned may resolve the employment agreement by mutual agreement. On April 22 this year, the State Council approved the removal of five officials from the following posts: the Secretary for Home Affairs, the Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS), the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, and the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (SCMA), as well as approved the appointment of the person who had just been removed from the office of SCMA as SCS. Regarding the termination of the employment agreements of these officials, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the four aforesaid officials who left the Government had been dismissed by the Government with immediate effect by way of giving them payments in lieu of notice, or they had resolved their employment agreements after reaching an agreement with the Government; if the former is the case, of the total amount of such payments in lieu of notice; if the latter is the case, whether the Government additionally paid them any amount of money or gave them any non-monetary benefits (if so, of the amount or the details of the non-monetary benefits received by each of them, as well as the contents of the agreements concerned); and

(2) whether the said change of appointment from SCMA to SCS involved the termination of the original employment agreement; if so, whether the Government gave him a payment in lieu of notice (if so, of the amount) or additionally paid him any amount of money or gave him non-monetary benefits (if so, of the amount or the details of the non-monetary benefits concerned, as well as the content of the agreement)?

Reply:

President,

The Government's reply to the question raised by Hon Jeremy Tam is as

follows:

Pursuant to Article 48(5) of the Basic Law, the Chief Executive may nominate and report to the Central People's Government (CPG) for appointment of principal officials, and recommend the removal of principal officials.

Under the political appointment system, the employment agreement of principal official stipulates various terms of employment, including provisions relating to the departure of the official. These departure-related provisions stipulate that a principal official may resign from his office by giving to the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSARG) one month's prior written notice or by paying the HKSARG an amount equal to one month's salary in lieu of such notice. The HKSARG may also terminate the employment of a principal official at any time by giving the principal official one month's prior written notice or by paying the principal official an amount equal to one month's salary in lieu of such notice. In addition, the government and a principal official may resolve the employment agreement at any time by mutual agreement.

After the CPG has approved the appointment, the HKSARG will enter into an employment agreement with the principal official. After the CPG has agreed to remove the principal official, the HKSARG will terminate the employment in accordance with the provisions of the employment agreement.

The appointment and removal of all principal officials must be conducted in accordance with the Basic Law, and must also comply with the terms of employment agreement. Since the relevant arrangements involve employment of public officers and personal privacy, the HKSARG will not disclose the details.

"Still & Motion – Hong Kong International Poster Triennial 2020" extends submission deadline

"Still & Motion – Hong Kong International Poster Triennial 2020", jointly presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Hong Kong Designers Association, is now calling for entries. The submission deadline is extended to September 30, 2020. Designers worldwide are welcome to participate in the event organised by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum.

Since its debut in 2001, the "Hong Kong International Poster Triennial" is now in its seventh edition. The event comprises three major parts, namely an international poster design competition, an exhibition and a symposium. It aims to assemble a distinct international poster collection, while fostering graphic design education and cultural exchanges with other countries and

regions.

The theme of this year is "Still & Motion". The international poster design competition will be organised under four categories: "Ideology", "Promotion of Cultural Events", "Commercial and Advertising" and "Animated Poster". The assessments will be based on originality, creativity and technical competence. In addition to printed posters, the competition welcomes the submission of animated posters to record poster development.

Each category will feature Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards. Moreover, there will also be the Judges Awards, to be named after the respective judges. All award winners will receive trophies and every selected entry will be published in the catalogue and be featured in the exhibition to be held in 2021 tentatively at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum.

Please visit www.postertriennial.hk for competition details and submission methods. The assessment results and any event updates will be announced on the "Hong Kong International Poster Triennial" website. Enquiry email: triennial@lcsd.gov.hk.

LCQ13: Supplying flushing water and connecting public sewers to the villages in the New Territories

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 13):

Question:

â€‹On supplying flushing water and connecting public sewers to the villages in the New Territories, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in respect of those villages in the New Territories which are currently using fresh water for toilet flushing, of the (i) number of such villages and (ii) number of residents therein, as well as the quantity of water used for toilet flushing by such villages in each of the past three years, with breakdowns by District Council district; if the relevant information is unavailable, whether it will collect such information;

(2) whether it has plans to supply the villages mentioned in (1) with reclaimed water for toilet flushing; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that upon the completion of the North East New Territories Sewerage

System Upgrade project proposed by the Government, the trunk sewers of the system will have sufficient capacity to cover those villages in the area which are not connected to the public sewerage system, whether the Government has plans to include the works for connecting the trunk sewers to such villages in the scope of the said project; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted relevant departments, I provide my responses to the three parts of the question raised by Hon Chan as follows:

(1) Currently, villages in the New Territories using fresh water for flushing are mainly located in the Yuen Long, North, Tai Po, Islands, Sai Kung and Tuen Mun District Council districts. In the past three years, the villagers' consumption of fresh water for flushing in these districts is provided as follows:

District	Year	Consumption of fresh water for flushing (million cubic metres)	Approximate no. of villages using fresh water for flushing
Yuen Long	2016-17	0.9	150
	2017-18	1.1	
	2018-19	1.3	
North	2016-17	0.7	100
	2017-18	0.8	
	2018-19	0.9	
Tai Po	2016-17	0.4	90
	2017-18	0.4	
	2018-19	0.5	
Islands	2016-17	0.4	70
	2017-18	0.5	
	2018-19	0.5	
Sai Kung	2016-17	0.2	60
	2017-18	0.2	
	2018-19	0.2	
Tuen Mun	2016-17	0.3	20
	2017-18	0.3	
	2018-19	0.3	

As it takes time to collect statistics on the number of residents in these villages, the relevant information cannot be provided before the

deadline for the reply.

(2) As the Shek Wu Hui Sewage Treatment Works will be upgraded to an effluent polishing plant (EPP) by adopting tertiary treatment, we will further process the tertiary treated effluent from the EPP to produce reclaimed water for supply to the northeast New Territories in phases from 2022 onwards for flushing and other non-potable uses. Besides, there are no plans to supply reclaimed water to other districts at this stage.

â€œFor villages located within the reclaimed water supply network, we will lay reclaimed water mains to supply reclaimed water to these villages for flushing purpose whenever technically feasible and cost-effective. However, since some villages are situated far from the reclaimed water supply network, supplying reclaimed water to these remote villages for flushing purpose will not be cost-effective.

We will continue to review and expand the supply of reclaimed water to those areas still being supplied with fresh water for flushing whenever technically feasible and cost-effective to further save fresh water resources.

(3) At present, the North East New Territories Sewerage System is serving many villages and is operating near its full capacity. There is an urgent need to upgrade the trunk sewer to provide capacity for connection from more villages and new facilities. We have completed the detailed design and many aspects of preparatory work for the upgrading project, with a view to submitting funding application to the Legislative Council for commencing the relevant works to timely benefit more citizens. Therefore, it is not appropriate at this stage to incorporate village sewerage projects that are yet to be studied into the project scope of the trunk sewer upgrade.