

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 2033/99-00
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration and cleared
by the Chairman)

Ref : CB1/PS/1/99/1

**Subcommittee on
Rehousing Arrangements for Residents Affected
by Clearance of Squatter Areas**

**Minutes of first meeting
held on Wednesday, 15 December 1999, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room B of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan (Chairman)
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung

**Public officers
attending** : **Housing Bureau**

Miss Sandy CHAN, Principal Assistant Secretary

Housing Department

Mr K N CHEUNG, Assistant Director/Operations and
Redevelopment

Clerk in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG, Chief Assistant Secretary (1)6

Staff in attendance : Miss Becky YU, Senior Assistant Secretary (1)3

I Election of Chairman

Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was elected Chairman of the Subcommittee.

II Terms of reference and internal discussion

2. Members agreed to the terms of reference of the Subcommittee as set out in Appendix IV to LC Paper No CB(1)587/99-00, which aimed at identifying the means to address the housing needs of residents affected by clearance of squatter areas.

3. Before inviting the Administration to the meeting, members had an internal discussion on how the deliberation should proceed. They decided to focus on the following areas -

(a) for squatter clearances who were eligible for public rental housing (PRH) -

- the choice of resettlement district;
- the allocation criteria; and
- the number of offers to be given.

(b) for squatter clearances who were ineligible for PRH -

- the 1984/85 Squatter Occupancy Survey (SOS) and the 923 policy;
- the distribution of interim housing (IH) units;
- the waiting time;
- the allocation of unpopular PRH flats as IH;
- provision of urban IH units; and
- quality of IH units and transit centres.

III Meeting with the Administration

4. As the Principal Assistant Secretary for Housing (PAS/H) had advised that the Administration was more prepared to discuss the provision of IH at this meeting, members agreed to defer discussion on the subjects of SOS and 923 policy to the next meeting and to invite the subject officers to attend for discussion.

Distribution of IH units

5. At members' invitation, the Assistant Director/Operations and Redevelopment (AD/OR) briefed members on the present distribution of IH units. He said that the Housing Department (HD) had converted three old rental blocks due for redevelopment (i.e. Block 12 of Kwai Shing Estate and Blocks 10 and 11 of Shek Lei Estate) for use as IH in order to meet short-term demands. To meet the demand for IH in coming years, new IH blocks were being built in Tuen Mun and Tin Shui Wai. The design of these new IH blocks was similar to that of PRH blocks i.e. with self-contained toilet and kitchen facilities. To facilitate a better understanding of the facilities and design of new IH units, AD/OR provided members with a brochure on the Po Tin IH. Members noted that the new IH facilities were much better than those in the traditional Temporary Housing Areas (THAs).

Provision of IH in urban areas

6. Members were aware of the difficulties faced by squatter clearerees who were forced to surrender their homes as a result of clearance operations. They supported the use of refurbished units as well as blocks scheduled for redevelopment in the urban area to be used as IH units. Miss CHAN Yuen-han stressed that since it was the Administration's decision to demolish the homes of those affected by squatter clearance, it should have the responsibility to rehouse them according to their needs. She pointed out that the affected clearerees would be pleased with the offer of Block 23 in Tung Tau Estate for use as IH units and that such provision would resolve the problem of urban rehousing within South East Kowloon and would cater for the redevelopment needs of the area. She further pointed out that the overall planning of South East Kowloon should be adjusted to allow for the retention of the block for IH purposes. PAS/H said in response that members' request would have to be carefully considered and the views from the relevant departments would have to be sought.

7. AD/OR supplemented the following points regarding provision of IH units in urban areas-

- (a) As new applicants on the Waiting List (WL) could only apply for PRH in the extended urban areas and the New Territories (NT), IH accommodation should likewise be provided in NT;
- (b) As regards the proposed deferment of clearance of THAs, the Government had pledged to clear all remaining THAs by the end of 2000 in order to improve the living conditions of those affected and to free land for development. For instance, the tenure of the THA sites in Kowloon Bay would soon expire and the cleared sites have to be handed over to the Lands Department immediately after clearance for construction of a school; and
- (c) Block 23 of Tung Tau Estate was a 33-year old Mark IV block scheduled for redevelopment under the Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme. The block would be demolished in mid-2001 for public housing development. Any delay in the demolition of this rental block would affect the overall redevelopment programme. Besides, the structural conditions and the age of the block would render the proposed conversion not feasible.

Use of unpopular PRH units as IH units

8. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed concern about the financial and adjustment difficulties imposed on affected clearerees who were forced to move away from the neighborhood they were accustomed to. He requested that full use be made of the urban unwanted/unpopular flats which had been rejected by WL applicants. Sharing the same concern, the Chairman said that since some of the unpopular PRH flats in the urban areas were left vacant for a long time, consideration could be given to allocating them to squatter clearerees as IH to maximise the use of housing resources.

Action

Admin

9. Mr LEE Wing-tat requested the Administration to provide information on the number of these unwanted flats, how long these had been left vacant, whether these units had been included in one of the offers made to WL applicants, and whether these units had been offered to applicants at the lower end of WL who would not otherwise have a chance to be allocated a PRH flat in the near future. Mr LI Wah-ming also requested that the policy of providing IH units in NT should be relaxed to allow for their provision in the urban areas. He quoted some cases where applicants on WL awaiting PRH units in the extended urban areas and NT could sometimes be allocated PRH units in the urban areas subject to their availability. Therefore, flexibility should likewise be considered in the provision of IH units in the urban areas if these were available. He indicated support for the provision of urban unpopular PRH flats to be used as IH units.

10. AD/OR said that the Administration considered it undesirable to use urban PRH flats as IH accommodation. He stressed that it was the policy of the Housing Authority to provide new IH units to meet the operational demands from residents affected by Government clearances and victims of natural disasters who were not eligible for PRH. HD would continue to carry out special flat selection exercise regularly to let “unpopular” flats to WL applicants. To avoid queue jumping, all squatter clearances rehoused to IH were required to register on WL. PAS/H added that while the Administration was prepared to consider carefully the housing needs of the squatter clearances, it would also have to take account of the overall housing policy in meeting the demand for public housing and the need to reduce the average waiting time for WL applications to three years by 2005/06.

Mixed provision of IH and PRH units

11. Members considered that the policy for providing new purpose-built IH blocks needed to be reviewed. They pointed out that it was unfair that eligible WL applicants had to spend years waiting for the allocation of PRH units which were in some cases inferior to new IH units. Meanwhile, some residents of old PRH units would also prefer to live in new IH units. Members asked the Administration to consider giving priority to WL applicants and tenants of old urban PRH units if they opted for these new IH units. As a result, a number of PRH units in the urban area could be freed either for use as IH or for re-allocation. Members found the mixed provision of IH and PRH units within the same block an acceptable arrangement as IH blocks had also been built adjacent to PRH blocks. They considered that the proposed arrangement would fully utilize all available PRH units and would allow greater flexibility.

12. PAS/H said that it was a matter of opinion that new IH units were better than existing PRH units. She stressed that IH units were meant to provide housing in the interim for those awaiting PRH units. The provision of PRH units as IH units would defeat the intent of the IH policy. Furthermore, there were also practical difficulties in implementing the mixed provision of IH and PRH units within the same block. This was because such provision would not only give rise to situations where ineligible households would be able to jump the queue and move into PRH units, they could also be paying lower rentals as IH occupants. It would therefore be unfair to those on WL as well as other PRH tenants who were paying the full rental for the same quality of housing.

Action

13. Mr LEE Wing-tat did not agree that the mixed provision of IH and PRH units would pose a problem. He pointed out that such provision was no different from the prevailing situation at Shek Lei Estate where Blocks 10 and 11 served as IH units while the remaining blocks were PRH units, all of which shared the same facilities. It was to Mr LEE's understanding that Blocks 10 and 11 had been refurbished but had been yielding a lower rental because these were serving as IH. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung also shared the view that the mixed provision of IH and PRH units within the same block was acceptable. The lower rental for IH was justified as its occupants were subject to lower space allocation standards. They would have to pay market rental after one year of occupancy.

Diamond Hill Squatter Clearance

14. Responding to members' enquiry on the progress of the Diamond Hill Squatter Clearance, AD/OR advised that the clearance date had been scheduled for mid-2000. A number of IH units in Shek Lei Estate and Kwai Shing Estate had been made available to residents affected by the Diamond Hill Squatter Clearance. Some of the affected residents would be offered units in the Po Tin IH. A trawling exercise had been arranged for eligible households living in the IH blocks in Shek Lei Estate and Kwai Shing Estate. This would make available more IH units for squatter clearerees. Mr LEE Wing-tat urged the Administration to take more proactive steps in its trawling exercise to encourage eligible households living in IH Blocks of Shek Lei Estate and Kwai Shing Estate to accept offers for PRH units so that more urban IH units could be made available to the residents affected by the Diamond Hill Squatter Clearance.

Rehousing policy for elderly residents affected by clearance of squatter areas

15. Mr LEE Wing-tat pointed out that the Administration had introduced a number of priority housing schemes for elderly WL applicants and those affected by redevelopment. He queried why no such schemes were available for elderly residents affected by clearance of squatter areas. Sharing the same concern, the Chairman urged that a rehousing policy should be formulated for elderly residents affected by clearance of squatter areas. Such policy would be more preferable than compassionate rehousing where each case had to be considered on its own merits. He was aware that there were about 60 elderly families residing in Diamond Hill Squatter Area awaiting rehousing to urban areas and requested the Administration to expedite their applications. He hoped that a reply could be given by the Administration before the case conference on the Diamond Hill Squatter Clearance to be held on 29 December 1999. PAS/H agreed that the concern raised by members would be looked into.

Admin

16. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman requested the Administration to consider providing IH units in the urban area for residents affected by clearance of squatter areas and to formulate a rehousing policy for elderly clearerees. Members agreed to meet again in 10 January 2000 at 4:30 pm.

17. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:30 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat

8 September 2000