

LCQ1: Delivery of transitional housing projects

Following is a question by the Hon Joephy Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 27):

Question:

It has been reported that the transitional housing project at the junction of Hoi Hing Road and Hoi Kok Street in Tsuen Wan, which is the first of such projects proposed to be built by modular construction using ready-made underground pipes as building materials, is unable to commence works and be completed on schedule because the costs in the tenders received have exceeded the budget. Regarding the delivery of transitional housing projects, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total number of projects which experienced delays in the past two years, and set out, by the type of reasons for the delays, the names, up-to-date time periods of the delays and the latest works progress of the projects concerned;

(2) of the latest design, construction schedule, expected completion date and unit cost of the aforesaid Hoi Hing Road project;

(3) apart from the Hoi Hing Road project, whether there are other projects that will, or are planning to, adopt the same approach of modular construction using pipes; if so, whether the Government will, together with the operating organisations of such projects and professionals, review if such construction approach is suitable for use in Hong Kong in terms of costs and techniques; and

(4) given that the operating organisations of quite a number of projects are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and they have encountered quite a number of difficulties in delivering the projects, whether the Government will step up its support for such organisations, including engaging organisations which specialise in housing construction to be responsible for the construction of transitional housing units, and then hand over the units to various NGOs for them to operate; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government is making every effort to promote the development of transitional housing by making better use of vacant land and premises for providing short term housing with a view to alleviating the hardship faced by families who are living in inadequate housing and waiting for public rental housing for a long time. The Task Force on Transitional Housing (the Task

Force) under the Transport and Housing Bureau has been actively advocating and facilitating non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in implementing transitional housing projects. "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" proposed to further increase the overall supply of transitional housing from 15 000 to 20 000 units in the coming few years by providing 5 000 additional units.

Currently, we have already identified land for the provision of over 19 000 transitional housing units. Of these, over 2 600 units are in operation; over 4 100 units are under construction and scheduled to complete for operation in 2022; about 11 500 units have been activated with different advance works (such as planning, tendering and/or design review works) and scheduled to complete for operation before the end of 2023; and projects involving about 1 200 units are under in-depth study.

My reply to various parts of the Hon Joephy Chan's question is as follows:

(1) As at April 2022, the Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing Projects by Non-government Organisations (the Funding Scheme) has approved a total of 35 projects. The progress of these projects is generally smooth. Two large scale projects, namely the Kong Ha Wai project and the United Court project, were completed ahead of the anticipated completion date. For the Former Tsuen Wan Lutheran School project, the works progress has been affected by the earlier severe pandemic situation by about one month as the workers were infected successively, resulting in the shutting down of the construction site for cleaning and disinfection for several times. Notwithstanding the above, the project has already been completed for intake in mid-April 2022. For the remaining 32 activated projects, six of them, including the Yip Shing Street project, the Junction of Hoi Hing Road and Hoi Kok Street project, the Wong Yue Tan Plover Cove Tai Po project, the Yau Ma Hom Road project, the Former Salvation Army Sam Shing Chuen Lau Ng Ying School project, and the Cheung Shun Street Cheung Sha Wan project have been delayed for about one to six months due to the time required for addressing the different views received from local consultation; technical problems encountered during development; longer time than expected for engaging professional consultants and tendering; impact of adverse weather, etc. The Task Force will continue to do its best to assist NGOs in resolving the problems and challenges encountered during project implementation in a timely manner, such that the projects can be completed as soon as possible.

(2) The transitional housing project at the junction of Hoi Hing Road and Hoi Kok Street in Tsuen Wan would have two floors and could provide about 110 to 130 units for one to four persons according to the original preliminary plan. Taking into account the building cost of the returned tenders in the initial tender exercise, the operating NGO of the project decided to re-tender in March 2022 with the scope of works revised, including a significant reduction of pipe-form residential units to two trial ones, and leaving three pipe-form modules for property management use and residents' communal activities. This can allow more flexibility for the contractors to increase cost efficiency by adopting Modular Integrated Construction modules with different production specifications from different manufacturers. The number of units to be

provided by the project has also increased to about 210 by making use of the adjoining land. The project is currently anticipated to commence its works in July 2022 and to complete in June 2023. According to the requirements of the Funding Scheme, the funding ceiling for each transitional housing unit involving erection of temporary structures on vacant land is \$0.55 million. The final cost of this project will depend on the tender result.

(3) Apart from the project at the junction of Hoi Hing Road and Hoi Kok Street in Tsuen Wan, no other transitional housing projects will or are being planned to use pipe-form units as living units.

(4) The Government has been actively spearheading the policy and closely collaborating with NGOs in implementing and providing different types of transitional housing through flexible deployment of public resources. The Task Force has all along been providing one-stop co-ordinated support and flexibly rendering appropriate support and facilitation to the NGOs where necessary, including offering advice and assistance on relevant administrative or statutory procedures (such as funding application, short term tenancy application of government land or other relevant statutory procedures). The Task Force also provides advice and technical support to NGOs on various aspects of the projects (e.g. statutory requirements on building plans, traffic and fire services provisions) and acts as a communication conduit which facilitates the discussions among NGOs and relevant departments (e.g. the Buildings Department, the Lands Department, the Transport Department and the Fire Services Department, etc.), with a view to resolving various problems encountered during project implementation and expediting the process for obtaining the relevant approvals required.

In addition, in implementing the projects, NGOs can apply for funding under the Funding Scheme for employing professional design consultants and approved building contractors, etc. to assist in the design, project management and construction of transitional housing units. As we understand from most of the NGOs involved in the transitional housing projects through daily collaboration and communication, the current arrangement is largely appropriate and satisfactory. There are many different arrangements and ideas for transitional housing and we wish to bring together the community forces, especially allowing different NGOs to unleash their creativity, to provide various types of transitional housing projects. Therefore, the current collaborative model can better enable the NGOs to flexibly provide diversified transitional housing units according to the characteristics of each project and the needs of the target tenants, so as to provide adequate housing for families with imminent housing needs.