

# LCQ12: Expediting processes for public housing production

Following is a question by the Hon Doreen Kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (February 16):

Question:

In reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council at the Council meeting on June 2, 2021, the Government indicated that it would take at least six years to transform a piece of "primitive land" (i.e. land without concrete development plan) into a "spade-ready site" (i.e. land ready for commencement of works), as this involved processes for technical feasibility study, rezoning, seeking funding approval, land resumption, site formation and infrastructural works, etc. (pre-flat-construction processes). The subsequent building of flats (flat construction processes) would take another four to five years. In respect of expediting these two categories of processes for public housing production, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider appointing a senior government official or establishing a steering committee to oversee those pre-flat-construction processes that involve various government departments and statutory bodies, so as to shorten the six-year period needed;

(2) given that currently the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) and the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) have intertwined leaderships, with the Housing Department (HD) acting as the HA's executive arm, and that the HA has its own committees to plan and monitor public housing projects (PHPs), whether the Government will, in its proposal of re-organising the Government Structure for consideration by the next-term Government (re-organisation proposal), include:

(i) reviewing the HA's organisation structure and its relationships with the THB and the HD,

(ii) appointing a senior government official or establishing a steering committee to oversee all the flat construction processes for PHPs, and

(iii) appointing a dedicated managing director for the HA by drawing reference from the practice of the Urban Renewal Authority, so as to shorten the four to five-year period needed for flat construction processes; and

(3) whether it will, in its re-organisation proposal, include appointing a project manager to coordinate the aforesaid two categories of processes for PHPs from inception to completion, so as to expedite the processes for public housing production?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Development Bureau (DEVB) and the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office, the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Doreen Kong is as follows.

The Government has all along been sparing no effort in identifying land for housing development. In order to expedite land and housing supply, efforts have been stepped up at all levels and in various bureaux/departments within the Government. In particular, as announced in the Policy Address 2021, the DEVB and the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) will submit quarterly reports on the progress of public housing projects estimated to be completed in the five-year period from 2027-28 to 2031-32 to the Chief Executive, who will give instructions personally if the timing for delivering formed sites for housing construction to commence or the progress of the housing construction is less than satisfactory.

The DEVB is also working with relevant bureaux/departments, including the Department of Justice, to review various statutory processes under various development-related legislation. The DEVB plans to consult the Legislative Council Panel on Development on the specific recommendations in March this year, and seek to introduce legislative amendments within this year.

Under the existing institutional framework, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) is a statutory organisation responsible for formulating and implementing the public housing programme. The Secretary for Transport and Housing and the Director of Housing are the ex-officio Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the HA respectively. In addition, the Housing Branch under the THB adopts a "merging of bureau and department" operating model, under which the Permanent Secretary assumes the office of the Director of Housing.

Six standing committees have been formed under the HA to formulate and administer policies in specified areas, and oversee their implementation progress. To monitor public housing development, the Strategic Planning Committee considers the viability of projects relating to public housing developments and subsidised home ownership schemes and approves the inclusion of sites in the development programme; the Building Committee approves the project budget, scheme design and monitors the progress of projects under the five-year Housing Construction Programme through regular reviews; and the Tender Committee considers and decides on any matters relating to procurement, tenders and quotations.

The Development and Construction Division (DCD) under the Housing Department (HD) is responsible for supporting the HA and its standing committees in implementing and monitoring its Housing Construction Programme, as well as the planning, design and construction of public housing developments. After the Government handed over the relevant public housing

sites to the HA, the DCD carries out project management duties for the planning, design and construction stages of public housing developments. The HD will continue to work closely with the government departments concerned so as to increase and expedite the supply of public housing units.

As regards the re-organisation of the Government Structure, as mentioned in the paper to the Legislative Council on January 12, 2022, the current-term Government has proposed to split the THB into two policy bureaux, namely the Transport and Logistics Bureau and the Housing Bureau. The Housing Bureau will focus on handling housing matters, including public housing projects, and the Secretary for Housing will focus on steering the Housing Authority/Housing Department in implementing a series of new initiatives on housing introduced by the current-term Government as well as maintaining close liaison with other public bodies including the Hong Kong Housing Society, the Urban Renewal Authority and the MTR Corporation Limited. As the Chairman of the Steering Committee on Land Supply, the Financial Secretary will be able to step up co-ordination between the Housing Bureau and the DEVB under the proposed new Government Structure.

The proposed re-organisation is intended to address the distribution of policy functions among policy bureaux and the corresponding reshuffling of departmental functions among the bureaux. The new posts involved in the re-organisation will largely be confined to additional posts of directors of the proposed new bureaux and staff of their respective offices.