

## LCQ15: Planning for the facilities in various districts

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (February 27):

Question:

Some residents from Yuen Long, Tsuen Wan and Tuen Mun have relayed to me that with the successive intake of residents by newly completed public and private housing estates in those districts in recent years, the shortage of facilities, such as social welfare and healthcare facilities, in such districts has become more acute. Moreover, in recent years, there has been an upsurge in the number of inbound Mainland visitors going to those districts for shopping, thereby aggravating the problem of insufficient retail facilities in such districts. Regarding the planning for the facilities in various districts, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the current ratios of public general outpatient clinics to population of Yuen Long and Tuen Mun are lower than that proposed in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) (i.e. the provision of one general clinic for every 100 000 persons), whether the Government will provide, apart from the community health centre proposed to be built at Tuen Mun Area 29 West, new public general outpatient clinics in those two districts in the coming three years; if so, of the details;

(2) given that as at December 31, 2017, the general beds to population ratios for the New Territories West Cluster (which covers the public hospitals in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long) and the Kowloon West Cluster (which covers the public hospitals in Tsuen Wan) were 2.3 beds and 2.5 beds/1 000 persons respectively, which were lower than the overall ratio for the Hospital Authority (HA) (i.e. 3.0 beds/1000 persons), whether the Government knows if HA has plans in the coming three years to increase the numbers of general beds in those two clusters and to allocate the additional resources required; if HA does, of the details;

(3) since it is provided in HKPSG that there should be one District Elderly Community Centre (DECC) in each new development area with a population of around 170 000 or above, and the Government indicated in July last year that "...where appropriate, there should be one Neighbourhood Elderly Centre in each new and redeveloped public rental housing estate and one in private housing areas with a population of 15 000 to 20 000 in new residential areas", whether the Government will, in the coming three years, provide Neighbourhood Elderly Centres or DECCs in Yuen Long, Tsuen Wan and Tuen Mun respectively; and

(4) whether the Government will, in response to the growing number of inbound

Mainland visitors, review afresh the estimated demand and planning approach for the retail facilities in the relevant districts?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Development Bureau and the Hospital Authority (HA), my reply to the various parts of the question raised by Hon Andrew Wan is as follows:

(1) HA is committed to providing community-based primary care services through its general outpatient (GOP) services. Its service users mainly include the elders, low-income individuals, and patients with chronic diseases. At present, the number of General Outpatient Clinics (GOPCs) in Tsuen Wan, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun Districts are two, five and three respectively.

In order to enhance public primary healthcare services and meet growing service demand, HA has implemented a series of measures to augment the service capacity of existing GOPCs. These measures include actively recruiting additional staff, carrying out clinic renovation and renewing its facilities, so as to streamline patient flow, improve the clinic environment and increase clinical space.

Apart from the above, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and HA have been working closely with Government Property Agency, Planning Department, Housing Department (HD), Lands Department, etc. in exploring suitable sites in each district so as to facilitate long term planning for public primary healthcare service development. In view of the service demand in Tsuen Wan District, FHB, HA and the Department of Health are working together to explore the feasibility of redeveloping the current Lady Trench Polyclinic Site with a view to expanding its GOP service in the district. As for Yuen Long District, the Government is proactively identifying suitable sites for primary care purpose in the longer run. Regarding Tuen Mun District, apart from HA's planned Community Health Centre in the public housing development in Tuen Mun Area 29 West led by HD which is expected to be completed by 2024, concerned Government departments are also exploring the proposal of redeveloping the Tuen Mun Clinic Site (where HA's Tuen Mun Clinic is currently located). Initial assessment on its land use is being conducted.

(2) In the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG), the beds as referred to in the beds to population ratio include all types of hospital beds (general (acute and convalescent), infirmary, psychiatric and mentally handicapped beds) in public and private hospitals, and are not limited to general beds in public hospitals. With the growing and ageing population, HA has drawn up plans to increase the number of beds to cope with the rising demand for medical services.

The Kowloon West Cluster covers the service requirement from the residents in Sham Shui Po, Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan and Lantau Island. In the

recent years, development of North Lantau Hospital (NLTH), phase 2 redevelopment of Caritas Medical Centre and redevelopment of Yan Chai Hospital in the cluster have been completed and put into operation. The NLTH has commenced operation in September 2013 by phases. The first phase development of NLTH will provide 180 hospital beds. As at December 31, 2018, 90 beds have been put into service. The second 10-year Hospital Development Plan under planning will cover the study of in-situ redevelopment of Princess Margaret Hospital and expansion of NLTH.

For the New Territories West Cluster, which covers the service requirement from the residents in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long Districts, the new hospital constructed in Tin Shui Wai has commenced operation in the first quarter of 2017 by phases and will provide 300 hospital beds. As at December 31, 2018, 32 beds have been put into service. In the long run, HA has considered making use of the adjoining site of Tin Shui Wai Hospital for future expansion of the hospital in the second 10-year Hospital Development Plan to further increase service capacity. At the same time, the Government has reserved a site at Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area for the construction of a new hospital to meet the growing healthcare demand of the population in the New Territories West.

(3) The Government will construct the following two projects in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long Districts in the coming three years –

- A Neighbourhood Elderly Centre (NEC) at Sites 1&1A of the Public Housing Development Project at Tuen Mun Area 54
- An NEC at the ex-Long Bin Interim Housing site and its adjoining area

At the same time, in accordance with the recently announced planning ratios for elderly services in the HKPSG, the Government will proactively follow-up with the relevant departments and units with a view to further increasing the number of District Elderly Community Centres and NECs to satisfy the districts' demand for the services.

(4) The retail industry as one of the major economic activities in Hong Kong is a commercial use in terms of land use. The Government has been monitoring the market demand for commercial floor space and is committed to increasing the supply of sites, space and hardware for commercial uses in order to facilitate the development of different economic activities and maintain Hong Kong's competitiveness. The development and choice of uses for commercial land and floor space is preferably market-driven, allowing business operators to respond to the fast-changing market situations and make timely and flexible decisions. The existing planning system, including the statutory plans, has embodied sufficient flexibility to facilitate retail activities in many land use zones. For example, "retail shops" is an always permitted use on the land zoned "Commercial" in the core business areas and major shopping areas. In the "Residential (Group A)" zones of major residential areas, retail shops are also always permitted in the lower storeys of buildings. Developers can also propose change of land use for sites considered suitable for development of retail business via planning applications.