

LCQ19: Assisting owners' organisations in inviting tenders for consultancy, cleaning and security services

Following is a question by the Hon Chu Hoi-dick and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

In May 2016, the Urban Renewal Authority launched the "Smart Tender" Building Rehabilitation Facilitating Services to strengthen the technical assistance and professional advice provided to property owners in respect of carrying out building repair and maintenance works. "Smart Tender" provides owners' organisations with a DIY tool-kit with guidance on arranging building rehabilitation, arranges independent professionals to provide technical advice and a market estimate on the cost of works, and has put in place an electronic tendering platform to engage contractors, so that owners may make appropriate decisions in arranging building rehabilitation works. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Secretary for Development indicated in October last year that the authorities would consider expanding the functions of the "Smart Tender" electronic tendering platform so that owners' organisations might engage consultants through the platform, of the progress of such work; and

(2) as the media have uncovered in recent years that bid-rigging was suspected to have been involved in the tender exercises for cleaning services of certain housing estates, whether the authorities will consider providing owners' organisations with services similar to those of "Smart Tender" in respect of cleaning and security services; if so, of the details (including the government department/public organisation responsible and the implementation timetable); if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) which is responsible for building management policy, the Development Bureau provides a consolidated reply as follows:

(1) To assist owners to engage consultants for their building repair and maintenance works through the electronic tendering (e-tendering) platform under "Smart Tender", the URA is arranging interested and qualified consultancy firms to register under the e-tendering platform and plans to implement the initiative from early 2019 onwards.

(2) Bid-rigging involves complicated issues. Currently, various government

departments and organisations have been adopting a multi-pronged approach to provide support to owners, with a view to preventing and combating the problem of bid-rigging.

Separately, the Government has been providing a legal framework through the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344) (BMO) to assist owners in discharging their responsibilities on building management effectively. To ensure that the BMO keeps pace with societal changes, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) under the HAB has reviewed the BMO and will introduce amendments on various aspects, including procurement of large-scale maintenance projects. Although the proposed amendments to the BMO cannot solve the problem of bid-rigging and the associated crimes at source, the relevant amendments seek to enhance owners' participation and transparency and accountability in building management, with a view to raising owners' awareness and better protecting their interests.

Meanwhile, the HAD has also enhanced support to owners' corporations and owners in discharging their responsibilities on building management. For example, the HAD has launched the Central Platform on Building Management in September 2018, under which one-stop briefings on building management and maintenance are organised regularly. At each briefing, representatives from relevant government departments and organisations will provide information and introduce their services and schemes on building management and maintenance. The Government has been providing assistance through various means to owners in properly managing their buildings. The Government will keep under review the existing services for building owners and introduce new support services as appropriate.