

## LCQ19: Use of Chun Yeung Estate as temporary quarantine centre

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 3):

Question:

To cope with the epidemic, the Government announced on January 25 this year its intention to use the unoccupied Fai Ming Estate in Fanling as quarantine facilities and temporary accommodation for healthcare staff in need. On the following day, a number of facilities in the Estate were vandalised by some persons who were opposed to the arrangement. Since the restoration works concerned would take at least six to eight months to complete, the Government instead requisitioned in early February the unoccupied Chun Yeung Estate in Fo Tan for use as quarantine facilities. Some prospective tenants who have accepted advance allocation offers of units in these two public rental housing (PRH) estates have indicated that the above situation has disrupted their arrangements for relocation, and those prospective tenants living in subdivided units even need to continue to live in deplorable conditions and pay exorbitant rents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on each of the various quarantine facilities since January this year:

- (i) name,
- (ii) address,
- (iii) total number of quarantine units,
- (iv) dates on which operation commenced and ceased (if applicable), and
- (v) monthly numbers of units used and numbers of persons admitted thereto;

(2) of the progress of the construction of quarantine facilities by the Government at a government site at Penny's Bay, and the respective anticipated dates of completion and commissioning; whether it will, upon completion of those quarantine facilities, forthwith return Chun Yeung Estate to the Hong Kong Housing Authority to enable prospective tenants to move in; if so, of the expected duration between the date of returning the Estate and the handing-over date of the units to the prospective tenants;

(3) of the number of prospective tenants who have accepted advance allocation offers of units in Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate and the total number of persons involved, with a breakdown by the number of family members of the prospective tenants; the respective numbers of prospective tenants who have chosen the following arrangements after learning that the intake would be deferred:

- (i) admission to Po Tin Interim Housing,
- (ii) acceptance of allocation of another unit in a new PRH estate,
- (iii) acceptance of allocation of another unit in an old PRH estate,
- (iv) continuing to wait for the originally allocated PRH unit, and
- (v) other arrangements;

(4) given that at present some hotels have indicated willingness to provide their rooms for use as quarantine facilities, of the reasons why the Government still uses unoccupied PRH estates as quarantine facilities;

(5) given that some prospective tenants of Chun Yeung Estate and Fai Ming Estate have indicated that the one-off ex-gratia allowance of \$6,000 per household granted by the Government to them is insufficient to compensate for the losses incurred on them due to the delay in intake, whether the Government will provide additional allowance, e.g. an extra allowance of \$6,000 per month per household from the date on which the letter on advance flat allocation was issued to the date of intake;

(6) of the respective numbers of PRH units in Sha Tin District and the North District which are available for allocation, with a breakdown by name of housing estate and type of units; whether it will offer to the prospective tenants of Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate the choice of residing temporarily in PRH units in the same districts; and

(7) of the average duration in the past five financial years between the time when a prospective tenant completed the intake formalities in an estate office and the time when the unit was handed over to the tenant; how such duration is expected to compare with the relevant duration concerning the prospective tenants of Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Food and Health Bureau, my reply to the question raised by the Hon Andrew Wan is as follows:

(1) Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an unprecedented disease that is highly contagious and fast-spreading, and the outbreak situation is evolving rapidly. Apart from admitting patients confirmed or suspected to be infected to hospitals for isolation and treatment, another equally important element of the Government's strategy is to put close contacts who may have been exposed to the risk of contracting COVID-19 (including close contacts of confirmed patients) under compulsory quarantine at quarantine centres, including Chun Yeung Estate. Since January 2020, the Government has set up quarantine centres consecutively at the following locations:

- (a) Lady MacLehose Holiday Village, providing 45 units;
- (b) Po Leung Kuk Jockey Club Pak Tam Chung Holiday Camp, providing 25 units;
- (c) Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village in Chai Wan (including the extra constructed units at basketball court and football field), providing 379

units in total;

(d) Heritage Lodge of Jao Tsung-I Academy, providing 53 units;

(e) Junior Police Call Permanent Activity Centre in Pat Heung, providing 208 units; and

(f) Chun Yeung Estate, currently providing 3 121 units among 4 846 units.

In order to deploy manpower more effectively and make good use of the facilities, two relatively smaller quarantine facilities, namely the Lady MacLehose Holiday Village and the Po Leung Kuk Jockey Club Pak Tam Chung Holiday Camp have no longer been in used for housing close contacts since early March 2020.

From January 2020 till now, over 6 000 persons have been accommodated at quarantine centres, among whom 114 persons showed symptoms during their stay and were affirmed as confirmed cases subsequently. This demonstrates the effectiveness of quarantine centres in preventing community outbreaks. Owing to various factors such as the development of outbreak and operational arrangements, as well as the quarantine period being 14 days in general, the occupancy rate of each quarantine centre varied at different periods. While the outbreak has slightly eased recently, over 200 units were used each day on average over the past month. As at 9am of May 28, 257 units were occupied, involving 574 persons.

(2) While the outbreak of COVID-19 in Hong Kong has slightly eased recently, it has already become a global pandemic and its future development is difficult to predict. Therefore, it is necessary for the Government to keep these quarantine facilities in order to cope with the quarantine need that may arise. The Government has been setting up additional quarantine facilities through construction works. It is expected that the construction works at the government site and the site reserved for future tourism development at Penny's Bay would be completed by phase between July and September 2020, providing some 1 500 additional units. If the epidemic situation stabilises and there is no local community outbreak with unknown sources by then, the Government will cease the use of Chun Yeung Estate as quarantine centre as soon as possible, and complete thorough disinfection and relevant repair works such that the prospective tenants can move in as soon as possible.

(3) In order to utilise public rental housing (PRH) resources more effectively, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has implemented the Modified Advance Allocation Scheme (MAAS) since 2000. Under MAAS, before a newly completed PRH estate has been issued occupation permit (OP), its units will be allocated in advance to eligible PRH applicants, enabling them to complete the intake formalities as soon as possible after OP is issued. HA allocated the uncompleted Chun Yeung Estate and Fai Ming Estate in late 2019 under MAAS. About 4 700 PRH application households involving about 11 400 persons have accepted the advance offer.

As with other letters issued under MAAS, the offer letters in respect of Chun Yeung Estate and Fai Ming Estate clearly reminded all PRH applicants that the intake date of the units under advance allocation could not be

confirmed, and they were recommended not to make premature arrangements for moving to the district of allocation such as switching jobs or schools. Nonetheless, HA understands that applicants who have accepted the advance housing offer of Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate may experience inconvenience or problems due to the deferred intake. HA hence issued letters to the prospective tenants concerned on February 20 this year, informing them of the special arrangements, under which they may opt to (1) retain the advance allocated unit until flat intake and, where necessary, apply for admission to Po Tin Interim Housing (IH) in Tuen Mun District in the New Territories during the period; or (2) cancel the current offer and be reallocated to another suitable unit in other housing estates in their original chosen district. HA will endeavour to meet and accord priority to their needs, subject to public housing resources available for deployment and availability of suitable vacant PRH units.

Among the 4 700 prospective tenants, 3 450 have chosen to wait for intake of Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate without applying for IH. Another 330 households who have decided to wait for the intake of Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate have applied for Po Tin IH in Tuen Mun (of which 180 households have accepted the IH offer). The remaining about 920 households have applied for a unit in other estates (of which 210 households have accepted housing offer in other PRH estates).

(4) The Department of Health has earlier touched base with the hotel industry to explore the feasibility of using hotels as quarantine facilities, but it involves consideration from various aspects. While a number of hotels have indicated willingness to support the anti-epidemic work, they specified that the hotel rooms could only be used as temporary accommodation for healthcare staff and expressed major reservations about the use of hotels as quarantine facilities for close contacts. Even though a few hotels were willing to make their rooms available for use as quarantine facilities, they generally indicated that manpower for supporting the operation could not be provided, and most of the hotels concerned were close to residential buildings. In addition, facilities for use as quarantine centres must fulfill infection control requirements, including the availability of independent air-conditioning, fresh air ventilation, and that the interior and environment and facilities should be friendly for cleansing and disinfection, etc. In general, hotels are not designed for the purpose of quarantine. Most of the rooms are enclosed and equipped with central air-conditioning, and fitted with carpet that could hardly be thoroughly disinfected on a daily basis. Therefore, hotels may not be able to meet the above requirements.

(5) Under the Anti-epidemic Fund (the Fund) set up by the Government, an one-off ex-gratia allowance of \$6,000 per household has been granted to eligible PRH applicants who have accepted the advance allocation offer of Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate, so as to help them tide over the problems and inconvenience caused by the deferred intake. We understand that the ex-gratia allowance under the Fund may not be able to resolve all the problems of the prospective tenants but hope that this could provide some relief to meet their pressing needs. Cheques for the payment of the ex-gratia allowance have been issued to all the affected prospective tenants.

(6) At present, there are about 390 and 130 recovered PRH units in Sha Tin District and North District respectively which can be used for re-allocation. HA will endeavour to meet and accord priority to the requests for flat allocation in other estates in the same chosen district from the prospective tenants of Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate. For applicants with temporary housing need, they could apply for accommodation in Po Tin IH in Tuen Mun District in the New Territories.

(7) Once a PRH applicant is allocated a recovered PRH unit, HA will arrange contractors to conduct "Simple Touch-up Works". In general, the contractor will complete the works within 44 days after taking over the flat. The applicant could then proceed with flat intake after completion of the refurbishment.

For PRH units in estate to be completed, as PRH applicants can only proceed with flat intake after these newly completed buildings have been issued with OP, the time of physical intake for applicants accepting advance housing offer cannot be generalised.