

LCQ 9: Change of use of non-domestic units in housing estates under subsidised sales schemes

Following is a question by Hon Lau Kwok-fan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

It has been reported that nine units in Yung Shing Court (YSC) in Fanling, a Buy-or-Rent Option (BRO) estate, originally used as a children hostel, have been left vacant since the social welfare organisation (SWO) concerned moved out in 2006. The Housing Department (HD) intends to change the use of those units as rental housing units. However, the Lands Department has indicated that the owners' corporation of YSC must obtain the consent of all owners before the use of such units may be changed. As it is difficult to get in touch with some of the owners, the matter has been caught in a gridlock, resulting in a waste of housing resources. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current total number of subsidised housing units which have been left vacant for more than one year and the average duration for which they have been left vacant, with a breakdown of such units by the vacant period (i.e. more than one year to three years, more than three years to five years, and more than five years); among such units, the number of those which have been left vacant since the moving out of SWOs;

(2) of the required procedure for changing the use of the aforesaid units;

(3) whether the Government has specific solutions to the problem that some units in YSC and other housing estates (if any) have been left vacant for prolonged periods of time; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that and whether it will devise such solutions expeditiously; and

(4) whether HD had, before deciding to put a particular public rental housing estate into a subsidised home ownership scheme (e.g. BRO), taken into account the possibility that there might be a need in future to change the uses of certain units in that estate; if so, of the reasons for the occurrence of the situation that some units have been left vacant for prolonged periods of time; if not, whether it will conduct a review and streamline the arrangements for effecting a change in the uses of units, in order to avoid the occurrence of similar situations?

Reply

President,

My consolidated reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan is as follows:

In planning for new public housing projects, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) will take into account the relevant Government policies and planning requirements in deciding the provision of various facilities including social welfare premises. During this process, HA will also consider the scales of the projects under planning, the vicinity environment as well as the views of the relevant departments and organisations. Under the prevailing practice, HA will lease social welfare premises to eligible non-government organisations (NGO)s (footnote 1) providing direct services to estate residents at concessionary rent on the recommendation of the Social Welfare Department (SWD).

HA also reviews the usage of non-domestic properties in public housing developments from time to time. Depending on the actual circumstances of individual cases, such as changes in residents' needs, community development, etc., the usage of these facilities may vary. Some organisations may move out due to various reasons. HA will consult SWD as to whether they will reserve the units concerned and nominate NGOs to provide other suitable welfare services. If SWD considers it not necessary to reserve the units for other welfare services, HA will upload information about such units onto HA's website to invite applications from other interested NGOs to provide services. HA will also share the list with SWD on a regular basis. As mentioned above, HA will, upon the recommendation of the relevant Government departments, lease the social welfare premises to approved NGOs at concessionary rent.

Some of the above-mentioned leasing applications may involve changes of the use of the premises. The required procedures vary for individual cases and depend on the circumstances of the premises concerned. If the premises concerned are held under Government leases, modification of the development conditions in the leases may be required. HA will conduct feasibility studies according to needs of leasing applications.

Regarding the situation in Yung Shing Court, under the relevant conditions in the Government lease, HA is required to provide designated social welfare/educational facilities (including small group home) in the Court. Due to constraints of the actual circumstances, e.g. no separate entrance leading to the external area of the building, the premises being scattered on different floors, headroom of the units not fulfilling the prevailing requirements for small group home and the need for sharing lifts and lobby with the domestic portion, other community and social welfare organisations may have certain concerns when applying to lease this premises. HA has previously considered changing the uses of these units, including public rental housing units, and will continue to review all possible options with relevant departments, such as the Lands Department, SWD, etc., in a proactive manner in order to identify other suitable uses for the relevant units with a view to optimising the use of resources.

As at the end of May 2018, there are six social welfare premises under HA with vacant units. Units in one of these premises has been vacant for less than three years and the signing of tenancy agreement with the relevant organisation is being prepared. Other premises, including the welfare services units in Yung Shing Court, have been vacant for more than five years. HA is either preparing to sign tenancy agreements with the relevant organisations or conducting feasibility studies and consultations with residents for these units.

Footnote 1: Including charitable or non-profit making organisations exempted from tax under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance.

LCQ3: Use of site reserved for phase two development of Hong Kong Disneyland

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

Some members of the public have suggested the development of transitional housing using a 60-hectare site which has been reserved for the second phase development of Hong Kong Disneyland (Phase 2 site), in order to improve the living environment of more than 200 000 residents in sub-divisions of flat units (commonly known as "sub-divided units"). On the other hand, a Hong Kong-based event organiser signed co-operation agreements with a Dutch floriculture expert last month on the development of a flower-themed garden in Hong Kong, and is considering locating the garden at the Phase 2 site. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the criteria adopted for vetting and approval of applications for short-term tenancies for the Phase 2 site; whether it has received or approved the application concerning the flower-themed garden;
- (2) whether the Government conducted, in the past three years, any study on the construction of transitional housing at the Phase 2 site; if so, of the details and the outcome; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (3) given that due to the restrictions imposed by the Deed of Restrictive Covenant signed between the Government and the Hongkong International Theme Parks Limited (HKITP), the permitted land uses of the Phase 2 site do not include residential use, whether the Government will discuss with HKITP

amending the Deed to the effect that the provision of transitional housing such as modular housing is a permitted land use of the site; if so, of the details and the expected completion time for the discussion; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In 1999, the Government and the Walt Disney Company (TWDC) reached an agreement to develop the Phase 1 of Hong Kong Disneyland Resort (HKDL) at a reclaimed site of about 126 hectares at Penny's Bay, Lantau Island. Since its opening in September 2005, HKDL has been in operation for nearly 13 years. It is a major component of the tourism infrastructure in Hong Kong and one of the most popular tourist attractions for both local and non-local visitors. It also helps consolidate our position as an international premier tourist destination.

In its first 12 years of operation, HKDL received over 70 million guests. Their additional spending in Hong Kong was around \$166.2 billion, which generated total value-added of \$90.9 billion for Hong Kong's economy, equivalent to 0.35 per cent of Hong Kong's gross domestic product. HKDL also created a total of 232 500 jobs for Hong Kong's economy over the same period, providing considerable job opportunities for frontline workers and the Hong Kong's tourism industry.

Over the years, HKDL has been strengthening its appeal to visitors through sustained efforts to enrich its attractions and entertainment offerings. Apart from the new ride Iron Man Experience and the new hotel Disney Explorers Lodge launched last year, HKDL has been actively taking forward its expansion and development plan since the second half of last year and various newly built attractions are being launched progressively from this year to 2023.

When the development of HKDL was finalised in 1999, the Government, considering HKDL's further expansion and development in future, agreed to reserve a reclaimed site of around 60 hectares to the east of HKDL for its possible Phase 2 development (the Phase 2 site). The Government understands the concerns of this Council and the general public about better utilisation of land, and thus considers from time to time whether the Phase 2 site can be put to compatible use(s). In fact, the Phase 2 site was used for hosting some short-term activities in the past, such as sports activities and group events.

Last month, there was an announcement in the Netherlands about the plan to develop an European design flower-themed garden in Hong Kong, and that the organisers concerned are considering locating the garden at the Phase 2 site. The Government welcomes this proposal which, if materialised, would not only bring a new attraction for enjoyment by our local community, but would also enrich our tourism offerings, and thereby further enhancing Hong Kong's position as an international premier tourist destination.

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) According to the Option Deed signed in 2000 between the Government and the Hongkong International Theme Parks Limited (i.e. the joint venture with the Government and TWDC as shareholders, "the joint venture"), the joint venture has an Option to purchase the Phase 2 site for taking forward HKDL's further development.

Before the joint venture exercises the Option for the Phase 2 site, the site can be put to short-term uses that comply with the permitted uses as listed in the Deed of Restrictive Covenant (DRC), including recreational, sports and cultural facilities, etc. When considering these short-term uses, we also need to take into account whether such uses are compatible with the use and atmosphere of HKDL.

As at end-June this year, the Government has not yet received any short-term tenancy application from the organisers of the flower-themed garden for developing the garden at the Phase 2 site.

(2) & (3) As mentioned in my reply to part (1) above, before the joint venture exercises the Option for the Phase 2 site, the short-term uses of the site have to comply with various permitted uses as listed in the DRC, including recreational, sports and cultural facilities, etc, but not residential use (e.g. development of transitional housing). Considering the Option Deed signed in 2000, the Government agrees to reserve the Phase 2 site for HKDL's possible Phase 2 development. We have no intention to change the existing land use arrangements.

In the light of the proposed short-term uses of the Phase 2 site recently received, we will continue to follow up with the relevant parties and make announcement at an appropriate juncture, with a view to further exploiting the recreation, tourism and entertainment positioning in the vicinity of HKDL. This would be conducive to HKDL's on-going development, the Hong Kong's tourism industry as well as the overall economy.

Thank you, President.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (July 4). The arrangements will come into effect one and a half hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp outside Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Vehicles from eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road except for vehicles heading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and Queen's Road East; and
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

B. Traffic arrangements during the race meeting

1. Road closure

The following roads will be closed from 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of HKJC;
- Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East; and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of HKJC will be closed from about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

2. Traffic diversions

The following traffic arrangements will be implemented from 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be

reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;

- Vehicles from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;
- Vehicles from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from Canal Road East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic on southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm during day racing, from 4.30pm to 11.59pm during evening racing, and from 5pm to 11.59pm during night racing.

Any vehicles found illegally parked within the precincts of the above affected areas will be towed away without prior notice.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.

[SLW visits employment and elderly care](#)

services in Dublin (with photos)

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, who is conducting a six-day visit to Ireland, toured employment services and dementia care facilities in Dublin on July 3 (Dublin time) with his delegation.

Dr Law and the Director of Social Welfare, Ms Carol Yip, first met with the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection of Ireland, Ms Regina Doherty, and discussed the employment policies and social welfare systems of both places.

They exchanged views on retirement protection policies in an ageing society. Dr Law was briefed on the development of a defined contribution system to make the retirement protection system more sustainable. Issues related to challenges in labour supply and demand caused by ageing population and technology, particularly artificial intelligence, were also discussed. The Irish government officials shared their experience on the extension of the retirement age, which is currently 66, and will be gradually increased to 68 by 2028. They noted that the average life expectancy in Ireland is about 81.5, slightly lower than that in Hong Kong, which is about 84. The provision of support for people with disabilities in employment was also discussed.

Dr Law and Ms Yip then visited the Alzheimer Society of Ireland along with representatives of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. The society works with day care centres, home care services, carer support groups and respite centres to provide dementia-specific care for elderly persons with dementia and support for their families. They also toured facilities in an elderly centre for dementia patients.

Earlier, Dr Law also called on the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Ireland, Ms Yang Hua, on July 2 (Dublin time) to update her on recent developments in Hong Kong.

He will attend the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development 2018 later today (July 4, Dublin time).



LCQ1: Policy on and support for street sleepers

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-chun and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question :

In the past four years, the number of street sleepers registered with the Social Welfare Department rose from 746 to 1 127 (representing a 50 per cent increase) and, among them, the number of female street sleepers rose from 35 to 104 (representing a two-fold increase). Moreover, the findings of a survey on homeless people who stay overnight in fast food restaurants operating 24 hours a day have shown that there were 57 such type of homeless people across the territory in 2013, whereas the number in four districts alone was 384 at the end of last year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will conduct a survey on the number of street sleepers (including homeless people) across the territory as well as the districts and locations where they sleep or stay, so as to provide reference when a policy on street sleepers is formulated;

(2) whether it has studied the causes for the rise in the number of female street sleepers in recent years, and whether it will enhance the support for them, such as increasing the number of accommodation places provided for them; and

(3) whether it will, by making reference to the service model of the Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams in New York, set up a dedicated department to deal with the issue of street sleepers and send out outreach workers to show them care, provide immediate assistance as well as arrange long-term accommodation; if so, of the implementation timetable?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) To keep track of the demand for social welfare support services of street sleepers, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been collecting information about the particulars of street sleepers in Hong Kong, including the number of street sleepers and their street-sleeping locations, through the SWD's service units and four non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving street sleepers. The relevant information is captured in the SWD's "Computerised Street Sleeper Registry" and will be updated continuously. The SWD will also review the methods for collecting data from time to time to ensure data accuracy, and make reference to the relevant data for the purpose of service planning.

(2) The SWD did not conduct analysis on the reasons of changes in the number of street sleepers based on their gender. The number of female street sleepers in 2017-18 was 104. To address the emergency and short-term accommodation needs of street sleepers, the SWD provided 20 additional subvented hostel/shelter places in 2016-17 through deploying additional resources, of which five were female places, thus increasing the total number of subvented female places to 31. Together with the 132 female places provided by other NGOs on a self-financing basis, the total number of female hostel/shelter places provided is 163.

Besides facing the same problems and needs as male street sleepers, female street sleepers are more in need of social and emotional support to improve the motivation for receiving services and to change their street sleeping lives. In view of the increasing number of female street sleepers, in addition to increasing the number of female hostel/shelter places, the Integrated Services Teams for Street Sleepers (ISTs) subvented by the SWD have also enhanced the support facilities of their hostel/shelter places and, through early intervention and counseling during their stay in the hostel/shelter, strengthen their confidence and ability to re-integrate into

the community.

(3) Street sleeping is a complex social problem, involving policies and work of various bureaux and departments. Various government departments and service units in districts have been collaborating closely to support street sleepers and improve their motivation for receiving support, with the hope to encourage them to quit street sleeping as soon as possible. The SWD is concerned about the welfare needs of street sleepers and has been providing them with appropriate social welfare support services.

At present, the SWD subvents three NGOs to each operate an IST to provide street sleepers with integrated services, including emergency shelter or short-term accommodation, emergency fund, personal care (e.g. bathing, haircut and meal arrangement), counselling, long-term accommodation arrangement, employment support and service referrals, etc. The ISTs also conduct day and late-night outreaching visits to approach street sleepers for early identification of their needs and render them the assistance needed. However, street sleeping may be due to various reasons. Personal factors and changes in socio-economic situation aside, street sleepers usually require more time before they will accept the services and make a change to re-integrate into the community. The ISTs will therefore render appropriate assistance to the street sleepers in accordance with the situation of each individual case.

The SWD considers that the existing strategies and support services can overall respond to the social welfare needs of street sleepers, but will continue to monitor the situation closely and take appropriate measures in response to the changing needs for social welfare services.