

Women's Commission

Purchase of Premises for Provision of Welfare Facilities

Purpose

In response to the suggestion of some Members, the Women's Commission has invited the Government to brief the Commission on the Social Welfare Department (SWD)'s programme on the purchase of premises for the provision of welfare facilities. In addition to the above initiative, this paper also sets out information on the Government's multi-pronged approach to identify suitable sites or premises for the provision of welfare services for Members' reference.

Background

2. The Government has all along been adopting a multi-pronged approach with long-, medium- and short-term strategies to identify suitable sites or premises for the provision of more welfare services which are in acute demand.

3. As a long-term strategy, the Government has in recent years formulated or is actively considering formulating planning ratios for various types of welfare facilities on a population basis for incorporation into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG), so as to facilitate the relevant departments to reserve suitable premises during the planning process of new development projects for the construction of relevant welfare facilities to better meet the service demands in new communities. These initiatives include –

- (a) on elderly services, the Government, having taken into account the relevant recommendations in the Elderly Services Programme Plan, promulgated amendments to the HKPSG in December 2018, which

stipulate planning guidelines and population-based planning ratios in respect of subsidised residential care services for the elderly, subsidised community care services for the elderly, District Elderly Community Centres and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres;

- (b) regarding child care services, the Government has, having taken into account the relevant recommendations in the study on “Long-term Development of Child Care Services”, incorporated the planning ratio and guidelines in respect of child care centres (CCCs) into the HKPSG in March 2020; and
- (c) the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee has formulated a new Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Programme Plan in 2020, which recommended, among others, formulating planning ratios for long-term residential care services, day rehabilitation services, pre-school rehabilitation services and community support services. The Government will incorporate relevant planning ratios into the HKPSG in 2021-22.

4. As regards the medium-term strategy, SWD has been maintaining close contact with relevant departments to identify suitable sites in the development or redevelopment of public housing estates and urban renewal projects for providing welfare facilities. SWD has also endeavoured to make use of available government accommodation including vacant school premises. Moreover, the Government has launched the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses (the Special Sites Scheme), where non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can apply for grants from the Lotteries Fund for expansion, redevelopment or new development on the sites owned by themselves, thereby providing diversified subvented and self-financing facilities, in particular additional places of elderly, rehabilitation and child care services. The Government launched a new phase of the Special Sites Scheme in April 2019. As at end 2020, five projects under the Special Sites Scheme had been completed and commenced service, and one had entered the construction stage with expected completion in 2021. Four other projects are at the pre-works detailed design or study stage and 17 others were at the technical feasibility stage. We also work with the Development Bureau to identify suitable land sale sites and require private developers through land sale conditions to design and construct bare-shell premises for proposed welfare facilities according to the specifications of SWD, with the

construction cost funded by the Lotteries Fund. Upon completion of the construction works, SWD will take over the facilities and select suitable service operator(s) through competitive bidding.

5. In tandem with all other possible means to secure and identify premises, SWD has taken forward the initiative of purchasing premises in the private property market, as a short-term measure, to help meet the imminent need for premises for early provision of welfare facilities.

The “Purchase of Premises” Exercise

6. As announced in the 2019-20 Budget, the Government needs to purchase premises for the provision of welfare facilities to help meet the shortage of welfare facilities and premises. On 30 June 2020, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved an allocation of \$20 billion for the Government to purchase premises over some 3 years for the provision of welfare facilities.

7. Taking into account new day services which are in acute demand, existing welfare facilities facing space shortfall or requiring reprovisioning, as well as district profiles, preliminary assessment of the availability of suitable premises, and the number of planned projects of welfare facilities in specific districts, etc., SWD has prepared a list of around 160 welfare facilities spreading among the 18 districts, the details of which are at **Annex**. Among the additional services planned under the premises purchase exercise, we have included the provision of at least 1 additional CCC in each district, while those districts with more young families will have more CCCs. Likewise, we have included a total of 15 Day Care Centres for the Elderly to help meet the service demand for day care services for the elderly. With the regularisation of On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services since 2018-19, we have plans to provide 12 permanent office-bases for the OPRS teams which are serving some 330 kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-CCCs in the territory. We have also included those facilities which are either suffering space shortfall or pending the provision of permanent premises to meet the service needs of respective regions or districts, e.g. 48 Neighbourhood Elderly Centres, seven District Elderly Community Centres, as well as other region-based or district-based rehabilitation, family and youth support services. SWD will identify NGOs to operate the service facilities in the premises to be acquired.

8. The Government has set up a Steering Committee to take forward the purchase exercise. The Steering Committee, with the Director of Social Welfare as Chairman and the Government Property Administrator and Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services) as members, assumes the overall responsibility of overseeing the conduct of the premises purchase exercise and makes decisions on the purchase of premises.

9. In mid November 2020, SWD completed the consultation with the 18 District Councils on the lists of welfare facilities proposed in the relevant districts. The Government Property Agency (GPA) is currently assisting SWD to identify suitable non-domestic premises by different channels, including openly inviting owners with potentially suitable non-domestic premises available for sale in the 18 districts over the territory to submit their sale proposals to GPA for consideration. SWD is in the process of assessing the suitability of potential premises offered.

10. The number of premises to be purchased and welfare facilities to be provided in individual years will be market driven and subject to a basket of factors, such as the availability of suitable and reasonably priced premises in the market. SWD will optimise the use of the \$20 billion allocation to purchase as many premises as possible for the welfare facilities proposed to be provided. We envisage that the first set of premises concerned will be purchased in 2021-22 at the earliest, and the purchase exercise will be completed by 2023-24. The progress of the purchase exercise is dependent upon the availability of suitable and reasonably priced premises in the market. We will update the information on the welfare facilities for which suitable premises have been purchased on GPA's website.

Way Forward

11. The Government will assess from time to time the community's demand for different welfare services, and will continue to allocate resources to increase the provision of relevant services. SWD will sustain its efforts in exploring with the relevant government departments the reservation of sites or premises in development projects for the provision of welfare facilities, so as to meet the needs of the localities for welfare services.

Advice Sought

12. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Labour and Welfare Bureau
Social Welfare Department
February 2021**

Annex

Welfare facilities planned to be accommodated in premises to be purchased

Type of facility	Number of facilities proposed
<i>Family and child care facilities</i>	
(a) Child Care Centre	28
(b) Co-parenting Support Centre	5
(c) Integrated Family Service Centre	6
<i>Elderly facilities</i>	
(d) Day Care Centre for the Elderly	15
(e) Neighbourhood Elderly Centre	48
(f) District Elderly Community Centre	7
<i>Rehabilitation facilities</i>	
(g) Day Activity Centre	3
(h) Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centre	3
(i) Special Child Care Centre (SCCC)	5
(j) Office-base for On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services	12
(k) Support Centre for Persons with Autism	3
(l) District Support Centre for Persons with Disabilities	5
(m) Parents/Relatives Resource Centre	9
(n) Community Rehabilitation Day Centre	1
(o) SCCC cum Early Education and Training Centre	1
<i>Youth facilities</i>	
(p) Integrated Children and Youth Services Centre	1
(q) Youth Outreaching Team	1
(r) Cyber Youth Support Team	5
Total:	158