

**Islands District Council**  
**Community Affairs, Culture and Recreation Committee Meeting**  
**CACRC Paper No. 48/2020**

**Purchase of Premises for the Provision of Welfare Facilities**

**Purpose**

This paper seeks to brief Members on the details of welfare facilities proposed to be accommodated in Islands District under the Social Welfare Department (SWD)'s initiative on purchase of premises for the provision of welfare facilities.

**Background**

*Shortage of sites for welfare premises*

2. There has been a shortage of welfare premises, resulting in long waiting time for different types of services and area shortfall for some existing services. At the same time, there is an increasing demand for welfare facilities as a result of the ageing population, keen community demand for child care services, need for more population-based or district-based welfare facilities, as well as new service requirements or enhancements arising from the promulgation of new initiatives in response to changing societal needs. While the Government has been embarking on a multi-pronged approach, there are specific constraints for those measures (see paragraph 4 below for details). There is a need for the Government to adopt a special short-term approach for an early increase in the provision of appropriate welfare facilities, so as to address the problem of acute shortfall.

*Multi-pronged approach to secure premises for the provision of welfare services*

3. 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. As a long-term strategy, we have reinstated the population-based planning ratios in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) in respect of elderly facilities, with a view to reserving necessary sites and space for these facilities early in the planning process of new and redeveloped areas. Similarly, we have incorporated the population-based planning ratio for the provision of child care centre (CCC) places

into the HKPSG to facilitate the planning and reservation of suitable premises for the provision of child care facilities.

4. As regards the medium-term strategy, SWD has been maintaining a 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. In addition, intensive efforts have been made with respect to the Land Sale Programmes and the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses to increase the provision of welfare facilities as appropriate. We have also endeavoured to make use of available government accommodation including vacant school premises. However, the arrangement is subject to other competing government purposes and the suitability of the premises for conversion into welfare facilities (in terms of location, accessibility, available floor area, height restrictions of some welfare facilities, barrier-free facilities, surrounding environment, supply and demand for services in the local community, etc.). We have further embarked on the planning and development of stand-alone welfare facilities on suitable vacant Government, Institution or Community sites.

5. In tandem with all other possible means to secure and identify premises, we also need to take 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 the earlier provision of welfare facilities.

### **Implementation Plan**

6. The Government needs to purchase premises for the provision of welfare facilities, as announced in the 2019-20 Budget, to help address the shortage of welfare facilities and premises. On 30 June 2020, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved a funding of \$20 billion for the Government to purchase premises for 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 area 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 18 districts, the details of which are set out at the **Annex**. Among the additional services proposed 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 (OPRS) 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 district-based facilities, e.g. 48 Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs), 7 District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs), as well as other region-based or district-based rehabilitation, family and youth support services, which are either suffering area shortfall or pending the provision of permanent premises to meet the service needs of respective regions or districts. SWD will identify non-governmental organisations to operate the service facilities in the premises to be acquired.

8. The number of premises to be purchased and welfare facilities to be provided each year will be essentially market driven and subject to a basket of factors, such as the availability of suitable and reasonably priced premises in the market. We will optimise the use of the \$20 billion allocation to purchase as many premises as possible for the proposed welfare facilities and, if market situation permits, additional welfare facilities.

9. SWD and the Government Property Agency (GPA) have started preparing for the purchase exercise, with a view to purchasing the first set of premises in the first quarter of 2021 at the earliest. Taking into account the time required for completing the transaction and carrying out fitting-out works, etc., new services at the first set of purchased premises will commence by 2021-22 at the earliest. We envisage that the last set of premises concerned will be purchased in 2023 with service of the relevant facilities to commence by 2024-25 at the earliest.

### **Details of the Welfare Facilities to be Accommodated in Islands District**

10. SWD proposes to set up the following welfare facilities in Islands District under the premises purchase exercise.

#### **Child Care Centres**

11. CCC service aims to provide day care for children aged from birth to under 3, so as to promote their growth and development as well as to provide support for parents who cannot take care of their young children temporarily because of work or

other reasons. In Islands District, there is no aided standalone CCC but there are 5 aided CCCs attached to kindergartens, providing 195 places for children aged 2 to under 3. SWD plans to set up 2 aided standalone CCCs in Islands District under the premises purchase exercise, to provide about 200 aided long whole-day CCC places for children aged from birth to under 3.

### Elderly Centres

12. Elderly centres, including DECCs and NECs, provide a range of community support services to elderly persons aged 60 or above and their carers at district level to enable the elderly persons to lead a healthy, respectful and dignified life in the community. These services include community education, health education, educational and developmental activities, reaching out and networking, volunteer development, counselling services, educational and supportive programmes on dementia, carer support services, provision of information on community resources and referral services, social and recreational activities, meal services, and drop-in service, etc. The centres also provide outreach services to hidden and vulnerable elderly persons and their carers, so as to encourage and help them develop their social life, and provide referral and support services to those in need. DECCs are also responsible for co-ordination of elderly services in the district. At present, there are 1 DECC and 1 NEC located in 2 different Integrated Services Centres operated by different organisations, and 3 other NECs in Islands District, providing a range of community support services to elderly persons and their carers. SWD proposes to identify suitable premises for establishment of sub-bases in Islands District, 1 for each of the 2 undersized NECs, under the premises purchase exercise.

### Operation Mechanism

13. To adhere to the principles of prudent use of public resources and public accountability, the Government will put in place an operation mechanism with a robust system of checks and balances. We will set up a Steering Committee and sub-committees with different roles and responsibilities. The Steering Committee, with the Director of Social Welfare as Chairman and the Government Property Administrator as member, assumes the overall responsibility of overseeing the conduct of the premises purchase exercise and makes collective decisions on the purchase of premises. There will be 2 sub-committees under the Steering Committee. One sub-committee, comprising representatives from SWD, GPA and the Architectural Services Department including professional staff of property managers, valuation surveyors, architects, engineers etc., is tasked to identify suitable

premises<sup>1</sup>, conduct valuation assessment, evaluate, make recommendations for and negotiate the purchases, etc. In carrying out these tasks and as checks and balances, this sub-committee has to act on the professional advice of another sub-committee, comprising professional staff of GPA at various ranks, in respect of valuation assessment of potential suitable premises. In conducting valuation assessments, the sub-committee will be governed by GPA's established mechanism. The involvement of government professional staff of relevant disciplines in these 2 sub-committees can ensure the proper use of public funds, and will safeguard the integrity of the purchase exercise under the well-established policy and regulations. The mechanism also facilitates timely purchase decisions in view of the fluid market situation while ensuring the proper checks and balances of the procedures. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has been consulted on the proposed mechanism and the checks and balances of the procedures.

### **Advice Sought**

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

Social Welfare Department  
August 2020

---

<sup>1</sup> GPA will identify suitable premises through different channels, including considering property information provided by owners or real estate agents, and approaching the property owners directly, identifying suitable properties from advertisements of newspapers, developers/owners or property agents, conducting site visits at targeted districts, and inviting through the Government's website saleable properties from owners.