

Government Property Agency Work in 2009

The work of the Agency mainly covers three programme areas, namely Acquisition and Allocation, Property Management and Estate Utilisation.

I. ACQUISITION AND ALLOCATION

2. The aim of this programme is to meet Government's accommodation needs, mainly for offices and quarters, in an economical and cost-effective manner.

Demand and supply of office accommodation

3. In 2009, the Agency assisted 36 bureaux/departments in meeting their needs for offices and allocated about 10,100m² of space to them. New leasing and renewal of leased office accommodation amounted to about 15,800m² and 79,000m² respectively. As at 31 December 2009, the total area of office space under the purview of the Agency was about 983,600m². During the year, the Agency maintained a 99.9% occupancy rate of office accommodation.

4. In 2009, the Agency continued to pursue deleasing opportunities where possible and, through an annual accommodation review mechanism, encouraged bureaux and departments to undertake a regular and critical review of their office accommodation requirements in the short and medium terms. A saving of \$52 million per annum in rental for all deleasing cases was achieved in 2009. Compared with 2008, however, there has been a net increase of 5,400m² in leased office accommodation due to the demand for additional office space.

5. To facilitate reprovisioning of government accommodation affected by the implementation of the Central Kowloon Route (CKR) project, a new government office building is planned in west Kowloon. The Agency has taken the lead in co-ordinating the departments affected in pursuing the new project in support of the CKR programme.

6. In the context of the Kai Tak Planning Review conducted by Development Bureau and Planning Department, the Agency is planning to develop another new government office building at Kai Tak. The proposal has afforded Government an opportunity to consolidate government offices which are otherwise scattered, reduce government expenditure on renting accommodation and release government accommodation at prime sites for other uses. The Agency has been working closely with works departments and identified users with a view to implementing the project as soon as possible.

Overseas properties

7. In 2009, the Agency managed 12 owned overseas properties (five in North America, three in Europe, three in Asia and one in Australia) and six leased properties (one each in London, Brussels, Toronto, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Chengdu) for the Economic and Trade Offices.

Quarters

8. Quarters are classified as non-departmental, departmental and post-tied quarters. For better control of quarters utilisation and portfolio management, the Agency has further classified departmental quarters as disciplined services quarters, judiciary quarters, operational quarters and general quarters in 2003 to replace the former categorisation of operational quarters and general quarters.

9. During the year, the Agency continued to conduct regular reviews on the use of departmental quarters to ensure their proper and effective utilisation. In 2009, the Agency completed an annual review of 38 operational quarters and approved the retention of 17 of them. For those quarters no longer required for their originally approved purposes, they have been put to alternative beneficial uses such as reclassification as general quarters or declassified to become surplus accommodation.

10. In 2009, the Agency released 10 disciplined services quarters. At the end of 2009, there were about 22,300 departmental quarters.

New Quarters Project

11. A new quarters project with 336 units at Wu Hong Street, Tuen Mun for married junior police officers of the Hong Kong Police Force will be completed in 2010 as scheduled. During 2009, two quarters projects endorsed by the Agency have obtained funding approval for commencement of works. The project at Tsing Chau Street and Lee Kung Street, Hung Hom will comprise 80 quarters for married inspectorate officers of the Customs and Excise Department. Another project at Wo Yi Hop Road, Kwai Chung will provide 144 units for rank and file officers of the Immigration Department. Both projects are scheduled for completion in 2012.

Vetting of accommodation requirements

12. One of the functions undertaken by the Agency in connection with acquisition of government properties is the setting of space standards and the vetting of space provision proposals. The Agency is a member of the Property Vetting Committee which examines and sets government accommodation and building design standards. The Committee also examines the schedules of accommodation and facilities for proposed departmental specialist buildings and ensures that due consideration will be given to the optimum utilisation of space.

13. In 2009, the Agency completed the processing of a total of 448 applications for accommodation from 54 bureaux/departments covering a total area of about 433,000m².

Minor building works projects

14. The Government Property Administrator and Deputy Government Property Administrator are members of the Accommodation Strategy Group (ASG) and the Minor Building Works Committee (MBWC) respectively. The ASG and MBWC vet, examine and approve funding applications from bureaux/departments for minor building works projects under block vote 3101GX. The Agency has completed vetting of 49 proposals for minor building works projects under the block vote. Some 40 funding applications were received, out of which 25 projects were supported for implementation in 2009.

II. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

15. The aim of this programme area is to manage government properties under the control of the Agency efficiently and cost-effectively; to improve and modernise them to meet changing needs; and to ensure that Government's rights and responsibilities as owner of Government, Institution and Community (GIC) accommodation in private developments are incorporated in the appropriate legal documents.

16. The Agency managed a total of 49 joint-user office buildings covering about 0.67 million m², nearly 22,300 quarters totalling about 1.58 million m² and 213 non-residential Financial Secretary Incorporated (FSI) owned properties.

Property management services contracts

17. The Agency first outsourced property management work to private Property Management Agents (PMA) in 2001. The outsourcing work covers all its residential and non-residential properties through four outcome-based PMA contracts, one each covering Kowloon, New Territories and two covering Hong Kong Island. The four new PMA contracts took effect from 1 April 2007.

18. The four PMA contracts operated efficiently in 2009. The average performance level was 96% against the target of 95%. The Agency will continue to monitor the performance of its property management services contractors with a view to enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness.

Management of FSI properties

19. As the representative of FSI, the Agency manages FSI owned properties in private developments. The objective of this activity is to fulfill the landlord's role and obligations in respect of these properties such as paying management charges and vetting management budgets and renovation/repair estimates. The Agency also handles complaints against building defects or nuisances caused by occupants. The Agency staff also attend management meetings of Owners' Committees and Owners' Corporations of these properties as the FSI's representative.

Commenting on Deed of Mutual Covenants (DMC) and Assignments in respect of Government Accommodation in private developments

20. The Agency has delegated powers from FSI to execute DMCs and Assignments in respect of FSI owned properties. To ensure that Government's intentions, interests, rights and obligations as owner of Government Accommodation (GA) in private developments are properly reflected in the DMCs and Assignments of these properties, the Agency vets draft DMCs on behalf of FSI, liaises and negotiates with other government departments and/or developers as required. It represents Government as the owner of the GA with a long term financial interest in the management, maintenance and recurring charges relating to Government's share in the development. In 2009, the Agency vetted 16 DMCs and Assignments.

III. ESTATE UTILISATION

21. The aim of this programme is to optimise the utilisation of all government sites and surplus properties with potential for alternative government use or commercialisation. Estate utilisation work mainly includes –

- (a) advising government bureaux/departments on ways to optimise site utilisation at the site reservation stage; providing inputs to planning proposals and studies, government land allocations and short terms tenancies;
- (b) reviewing under-utilised sites managed by government bureaux/departments and, if conditions are appropriate, assisting the bureaux/departments in releasing them for alternative uses; and
- (c) monitoring the utilisation of sites to be developed by government bureaux/departments with a view to optimising the utilisation of the site potential and, where appropriate, assisting them in identifying joint users.

22. In 2009, six under-utilised sites with a total area of about 2.8 hectares were ready to be released for alternative use or disposal. Site utilisation endorsements in respect of 32 cases were given during the year.

Commercialisation

23. The Agency's work in this programme area covers commercialisation of suitable space (including surplus accommodation) in government buildings by tender or direct negotiation and letting out of such buildings to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at commercial or nominal rent as appropriate. Commercialisation services include public tendering of commercial opportunities; direct negotiation of lettings for commercial uses; cost effective use of surplus buildings; leasing of government accommodation to NGOs; and management of commercial and NGO tenancies. In 2009, there were 696 lettings for commercial uses with a total revenue of about \$406 million.

Leasing out of surplus government quarters

24. Another major initiative to optimise the use of properties is the leasing out of surplus government quarters. The Agency has appointed property leasing agents to provide services in the marketing of properties, arranging viewing of properties by prospective tenants, obtaining information of prospective tenants and making offers on their behalf.

25. Overall in 2009, more than 290 surplus quarters were leased out to the private sector generating a total income of \$186 million.

Sale of surplus government quarters

26. Government's established policy is to dispose of surplus quarters as circumstances permit. In 2009, 102 surplus government quarters were sold by public auction and tender generating proceeds of \$2 495 million in total.

Sale of confiscated properties

27. Apart from surplus government quarters, there were 12 properties acquired through the litigation in 2006. In 2009, four of these properties were sold by public auction generating proceeds of \$110 million in total.