

**Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of  
the Joint Committee on Information Technology  
for the Social Welfare Sector held at 9:30 a.m. on 20 June 2002**

Present: Mrs Carrie Lam (Chairperson)  
Mrs Patricia Chu  
Mrs Eliza Leung  
Mr Alex Ma  
Mr Chan Wing-tai  
Mr Chong Chan-yau  
Mr Philip Ho  
Ms Christine Fang  
Mr Lam Ka-tai  
Mr Li Wai-chiu  
Mr Chan Ping-cheong, Ashton (Secretary)

In attendance: Mr John Fung  
Miss Shirley Kiang  
Mr Eric Chan  
Miss Mina Chow  
Mr Lee Wing-wai (for agenda items 3 & 4 only)  
Mr Fu Tsun-hung (for agenda items 3 & 4 only)  
Mr Tik chi-yuen (for agenda item 3(a) only)  
Mr Lam Chi-fai (for agenda item 3(a) only)  
Mr K M Chan (for agenda item 3(b) only)  
Mrs Grace Chan (for agenda item 3(c) only)  
Mr Fred Leung (for agenda item 3(c) only)  
Revd. Dorothy Lau (for agenda item 3(d) only)  
Mr Joseph Man (for agenda item 3(d) only)  
Miss Sally Law (for agenda item 3(d) only)  
Mr Charles Chan (for agenda item 3(d) only)

Absent with apologies: Ms Peggy Leung  
Mr T K Kang

## **Opening Remarks**

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting. She said that in view of more time taken to process and seek clarifications from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) about their information technology (IT) related applications submitted under the Business Improvement Project (BIP) Scheme, the meeting of the Joint Committee originally scheduled for 28 May 2002 had been deferred to give Members more time to read the papers.

2. The Chairperson introduced Mr Ashton Chan Ping-cheong, the new Secretary to the Joint Committee, to the meeting. Mr Kok Che-leung was on course and Mr Lam Ka-tai attended the meeting on his behalf.

## **Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting**

3. The Chairperson said that the draft minutes of the last meeting had been sent to Members for comments on 6 May 2002 and no comments on the draft minutes had been received. As such, the draft minutes were taken as confirmed.

## **Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Last Meeting**

4. The Chairperson said that at the last meeting, Members had discussed some of NGOs' IT-related BIP proposals and examined in detail the substance of each proposal. While we aimed to be as transparent as possible, it was not advisable to put discussion on funding matters in the public arena lest this would inhibit Members from offering their frank advice or induce unnecessary copycat behaviour. She pointed out that as a general rule, funding or funding-related papers considered by committees that operated in camera were not disclosed to the public. Taking the practice of the Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee (LFAC) as a reference, all its discussion papers and minutes of meetings were kept confidential and were not to be disclosed. The Chairperson suggested and Members agreed that in the version of the minutes to be posted on the web site, details on BIP discussion be omitted and be referred to by the following simple statement -

“At the meeting, Members deliberated on (number) BIP applications and offered their advice for the further processing of these funding requests to LFAC for consideration.”

The Chairperson said that for official record purpose, Members would be provided with the minutes of the meeting in full version.

5. With regard to some of the issues set out in the minutes of the last meeting, the Chairperson briefed Members about the progress as follows -

#### Paragraph 8

6. The Chairperson revealed that a total of about \$44 million against a total provision of \$73 million had been approved to 2,210 units operated by 204 welfare NGOs under the initiative of broadband Internet access and e-Cert provision. The balance of the Lotteries Fund (LF) commitment to this initiative amounted to \$29 million and would be returned to LF. Mr Lam Ka-tai reported that of the 204 welfare NGOs provided with LF grants for broadband Internet access and e-Cert provision, 138 were from the subvented sector and 66 from the non-subvented sector. As non-subvented NGOs' requirement under this initiative was not as great as expected and opening up such initiatives to non-subvented bodies did not lead to excessive requests, the Chairperson said that the needs of the non-subvented sector should continue to be taken into account when planning other IT projects for the social welfare sector in the future. The Chairperson also expressed her thanks to Members for their advice on the implementation of the initiative.

#### Paragraph 10

7. Miss Shirley Kiang reported on the initiative to enhance the accessibility of NGOs' web sites. The Information Technology Resource Centre (ITRC) had completed adding alternate text (alt-text) to the web sites of 35 NGOs and was working on the web sites of another 7 NGOs. Miss Kiang said that some NGOs had reservations to release the passwords of their homepages to the ITRC with the result that it had taken more time than expected to arrange transfer of files. Upon completion of the alt-text addition work, the ITRC would provide a detailed report to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in due course.

#### Paragraph 14

8. The Chairperson said that at its meeting held on 12 April 2002, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved a non-recurrent commitment of \$241 million for the implementation of a technical infrastructure (TI) and a client information system (CIS) within SWD. The SWD had also obtained a LF grant of \$2 million to carry out a mini-feasibility study on CIS for family services centres (FSCs) in the subvented sector. On 13 May 2002, a briefing session with representatives of NGOs operating subvented FSCs was held to kick-start the mini-feasibility study. Mr Lam Ka-tai said that the first meeting of the Project Assurance Team had been held on 5 June 2002 to endorse the project initiation document for the mini-feasibility study and that a walk-through of the core user requirements for the CIS with NGO staff had been done through two identical sessions held on 10 and 12 June 2002 respectively.

#### Paragraph 29

9. The Chairperson said that at its meeting held on 26 March 2002, the LFAC endorsed a LF grant of \$1.5 million for allocation to the HKCSS to meet the cost of conducting a consultancy study on developing core applications on human resource management (HRM) and financial management (FM) for NGOs. A total of 43 NGOs joined the study. Mr John Fung reported that the ITRC had completed the first round of meetings with all the participating NGOs to find that quite a number of NGOs had not clearly set out their requirements for the proposed HRM and FM systems in their respective BIP proposals. Some NGOs had come up with additional requirements during their deliberations with the consultants for the study. The ITRC would submit an interim report to SWD in mid-July 2002 and would organise a briefing session to inform NGOs about the progress of the consultancy study as well as the ITRC's observations about NGOs' requirements for the HRM and FM applications.

10. The Chairperson said that NGOs had high expectations on the outcome of the consultancy study and the implementation of the core applications on HRM and FM. SWD would try to start the implementation of the core applications as early as possible upon availability of the final report of

the consultancy study that would contain detailed set-up of the systems for NGOs based on their user requirements. The Chairperson also shared her observation that the quality of the first batch of BIP proposals submitted by NGOs varied a lot and some of them were not well-thought proposals. SWD would organise a seminar in late September 2002 to orient NGOs towards their management challenges and kick-start the second round of invitation for BIP applications. A session on the use of IT might be included in the workshop to throw light on the experiences gained and consolidated from the vetting of the BIP proposals in the first round.

#### Paragraphs 38 and 46

11. The Chairperson said that supplementary information on the BIP proposals lodged by the Heep Hong Society and the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong had been circulated to Members by e-mail on 18 March 2002 and 22 March 2002 respectively. At its meeting held on 26 March 2002, the LFAC approved funds for the implementation of these two IT-related BIP proposals.

#### **Business Improvement Projects**

12. At the meeting, Members deliberated on four BIP applications and offered their advice for the further processing of these funding requests to LFAC for consideration.

#### **Framework for Evaluating the Work of the Information Technology Resource Centre**

13. The Chairperson referred Members to the discussion paper (JC 11/02) on a proposed framework for evaluating the work of the ITRC. She requested representatives of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) to leave the meeting at this juncture as the discussion that followed would be concerned about the evaluation of the work of the ITRC. Before leaving the meeting, Ms Christine Fang made some points for Members' consideration. First, she proposed that Members should review the objectives of setting up the ITRC and re-assess their relevance to the IT development in the social welfare sector at this point in time. Second, it was not appropriate to confine the

outcome measure of the ITRC's services to NGO users' satisfaction perception. It would be more balanced if emphasis could also be placed on the ITRC's contribution to heightening the NGOs' capability of using IT to enhance their service delivery and management. Third, it would be useful if the ITRC could work with SWD in fine-tuning the wording of the questionnaire to be issued to NGOs to measure their satisfaction about the ITRC's services. Consideration should also be given to forming focus groups to collect and collate customer feedback.

(Ms Christine Fang, Mr John Fung and Miss Shirley Kiang left the meeting at this juncture.)

14. The Chairperson said that SWD would take an open and objective approach to evaluating the ITRC's performance and would be ready to discuss with the HKCSS on the design of the self-administered questionnaire to be used in the customer satisfaction survey. Mr Lam Ka-tai said that the proposed questionnaire was to collect customer feedback on the ITRC's services in different areas including Research and Development (R&D), IT Supplies, Technical Consultation and On-site Maintenance. Customer satisfaction, however, was only one of the parameters for measuring the ITRC's service performance. Other parameters included the business volume and revenue achieved, the usage rate of the ITRC's services, and some other qualitative and quantitative measures of the ITRC's work. The progress made by the ITRC in the first seven months of its operation might form an initial benchmark for evaluating the performance of some of its services.

15. Mr Chan Wing-tai suggested that it would also be useful to obtain relevant feedback on the ITRC's services collected on other occasions such as questionnaires completed at the end of each of the training workshops organised by the ITRC. As he saw it, we should be forward looking rather than just dwelling on the ITRC's past performance in conducting the evaluation. While the evaluation would cover NGOs' experiences with the use of the ITRC's services in the first 12 months of its operation, the evaluation should also collect NGOs' views on the areas where the ITRC's services could be improved to better meet their IT needs in the future.

16. Mr Chong Chan-yau declared his interest as a member of the HKCSS's Executive Committee. He said that the evaluation of the ITRC's

performance would be more objective and positive if it did not carry any funding implications. On the customer satisfaction survey to be included as part of the evaluation, it would be appropriate to include NGOs' demand for and expectation of IT services so that the evaluation could cover the future trend as well.

17. Mr Chong Chan-yau said that there existed no benchmarks or objective criteria on the level of standard against which the ITRC's service performance was to be measured. Furthermore, he had second thought on the training and capacity building activities currently included in the ITRC's R&D work. As those activities were well received by NGOs, it was worth considering putting them under a new objective of the ITRC.

18. The Chairperson agreed that the evaluation of the ITRC's performance should not be a purely funding-related exercise but for accountability purpose it did carry a purpose to review whether with its operation for 12 months, the ITRC was justified to continue to exist with public funds as was required in the funding paper. In respect of the ITRC's R&D work, the Chairperson said that the original intention was to put it in a peripheral or secondary position. As she recalled, the funding paper had made it clear that the funding requirements for R&D should come from the SWD recurrent subvention to the HKCSS following its repositioning. As the deliberations on the HKCSS's repositioning were still under way at the time of funding approval, it was proposed to help the HKCSS with the first year of running cost for R&D on the understanding that the repositioning and identification of resources for redeployment to meet R&D should be completed within one year. The Chairperson said that in the long run, it would be more sustainable for R&D to be subsumed under a core business of the HKCSS upon its repositioning. As the HKCSS's business plan and budget for 2002-03 had been endorsed by its Executive Committee, the HKCSS's Funding and Service Agreement was unlikely to take effect until the start of the next financial year. As such, the Chairperson was of the view that SWD might consider releasing part of the second year running cost for R&D to the ITRC until end-March 2003. With a fine line drawn on the work between the HKCSS and the ITRC, there should be in principle no further cross-subsidisation.

19. The Chairperson proposed and Members agreed that the ITRC's work be evaluated as per the parameters set out in the discussion paper (JC

11/02). The meeting also agreed that focus group discussion be arranged to collect participants' qualitative feedback on the ITRC's services which would supplement the quantitative response to be collected through the questionnaire. The Chairperson further suggested and Members agreed that Mr T K Kang be invited to help with the focus group discussion and the refinement of the questionnaire in conjunction with SWD and the ITRC. As for the benchmarking required for the evaluation, the Chairperson said that the output indicators obtained in this round of evaluation might form an initial benchmark for future evaluative work.

20. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

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Social Welfare Department  
July 2002