

**Minutes of the Thirteenth Meeting of
the Joint Committee on Information Technology (JCIT)
for the Social Welfare Sector held at 2:30 p.m. on 12 April 2006**

Present: Mr Paul Tang (Chairperson)
Miss Nancy Law
Mr Kok Che-leung
Ms Peggy Leung
Professor Chan Wing-tai
Dr Law Chi-kwong
Mr Kang Tsi-kit
Mr Chong Chan-yau
Mr Leung Wai-fung, Joseph
Mr Ma Chiu-tong, Nigel
Ir Li Wai-lim, William
Mr Lam Bing-chun (Secretary)

Absent with apology: Mr Alex Ma

In attendance: Mr Ashton Chan
Mr Li Kam-chiu
Ms Monita Yuen
Miss Ann Hon
Mr Fu Tsun-hung
Dr John Fung (for agenda items 2 and 4 only)
Mr Edmond Keung (for agenda items 2 and 4 only)
Ms Helen Ho (for agenda item 3 only)
Mr Tony Fu (for agenda item 3 only)

Opening Remarks

The Chairperson informed Members that Mr Sit Tung had been posted to head the Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services Branch of the Social Welfare Department (SWD). Mr Kok Che-leung had replaced him as a Member of JCIT. He also welcomed Mr Ashton Chan, the former Secretary of JCIT, who attended the meeting in the capacity of Chief Social Work Officer (Information Systems and Technology).

Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting

2. The draft minutes of the 12th meeting were confirmed without further amendment.

Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Last Meeting

Paragraph 9: The Information Technology (IT)-related Business Improvement Project (BIP)

3. The Secretary reported that four applications had been received in the 4th batch BIP. One application would be discussed in the meeting. Of the remaining three applications, SWD had requested the concerned non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to supplement information for assessing the support-worthiness of their proposals. Their replies were not available yet.

Paragraphs 16 to 23: Core Applications Development Project (CAP) on Human Resource Management (HRM) and Financial Management (FM) for Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)

4. The Chairperson referred Members to the progress report (August 2005 to March 2006) prepared by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) on the first two batches of CAP. He invited Dr John Fung to highlight the key points.

5. Dr John Fung reported that the implementation of the first and second batches of CAP had been completed except for one NGO, which would make a decision on whether to join CAP in a month's time because the agency had changes in its HR policy and was conducting a review on its HR requirements. From March 2005 to February 2006, the help desk of CAP received over 3000 calls on enquires and problems, of which the resolution rate was over 90%.

6. The Secretary reported the views of Mr Alex Ma that the technical problems that would require vendor's assistance to customise the core codes of the Oracle system to suit the user requirements had been outstanding since August 2005. He questioned the feasibility of pursuing changes to core codes of the package as a means to meet the user requirements while work around solutions were put in place. Mr MA suggested HKCSS to negotiate with the contractor on its extent of commitment on customising the solution for CAP and the availability of on-going maintenance and support services in case of version/release upgrade of the package and the additional cost that would incur. While awaiting the reply from the vendor, Mr MA considered that HKCSS could explore the work around solutions to resolve the change requests of NGOs.

7. Dr John Fung responded that NGOs might not accept the work around solutions and preferred the contractor to customise CAP to suit their business needs. If the change requests were raised after accepting the system, there would be additional cost. Dr Fung agreed to provide a detailed account on the background and reasons why the technical problems were not settled yet.

8. Professor Chan Wing-tai suggested HKCSS to set a time limit for NGOs to submit their change requests and advise them on the cost implication. Mr Joseph Leung and Ir Li Wai-lim, William shared the same view. Mr Joseph Leung also suggested HKCSS to review the service contract to assess whether those change requests were out of the project scope. Ir Li Wai-lim, William suggested HKCSS to negotiate with the contractor to reach a better solution.

9. Dr John Fung explained that there were well-defined provisions in the contract on fixing programming errors but the ways of handling new requests were not clearly specified. That would be subject to negotiation with the contractor on the efforts and cost, which might be high. Though there were work around solutions for the change requests, HKCSS would continue discussing with the contractor and concerned NGOs to work out a mutually agreed option.

10. Mr Kok Che-leung suggested HKCSS to set a project completion date and a mechanism to handle the ongoing change requests of NGOs. HKCSS would also need to distinguish whether the change requests were NGOs specific or common to all NGOs. Of those change requests, which were essential and applicable to all NGOs received during the project implementation stage and were within the project scope, SWD would consider supporting the additional cost from the unspent balance of the approved LF commitment for HKCSS. Mr Kok Che-leung also suggested HKCSS to propose a cost model for sponsoring NGOs to fund the ongoing change requests through their recurrent subscription or own resources.

Business Improvement Project (BIP)

11. At the meeting, Members deliberated a BIP proposal. After discussion, Members agreed to support the proposal based on the funding criteria for BIPs.

Third Batch of the CAP on HRM and FM for NGOs

12. Dr Law Chi-kwong and Mr Chong Chan-yau had declared their interests in the project in the light of their capacity as the Chairperson of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) of CAP and member of the IT Business

Committee of the HKCSS respectively.

13. Mr Kok Che-leung referred members to Paper JC 2/06 and highlighted the major concerns and issues. Dr John Fung reported that the cost was based on actual tendering result which might be attributed to the rising cost of manpower in the IT sector. The PSC had endorsed signing the contract with one of the vendors in view of its favourable price. The requested amount had already been adjusted after negotiation with the vendors.

14. In response to the question of Mr Chong Chan-yau, Dr John Fung answered that the total costs of CAP on the first two batches was in fact lower than the aggregated costs on individual development of HRM and FM systems by NGOs based on their original applications. Before joining CAP, NGOs should have compared the support services and considered their commitment on sponsoring the recurrent cost of CAP.

15. Dr John Fung further supplemented that HKCSS had briefed all the concerned NGOs on the tendering result and they had given written confirmation to join CAP continuously despite the increased implementation cost and the possible impact on the ongoing charges. HKCSS was fully aware of the demand for extra work on project coordination in managing different vendors. They would hold regular meetings with the software and hardware vendors and an account manager would be assigned for each NGO to ascertain user requirements and support completing the project. HKCSS would also report the progress to PSC more frequently.

16. In response to the enquiry of Mr Joseph Leung, Dr John Fung replied that the vendors would be required to seek the approval of HKCSS on their appointment of sub-contractor(s). Moreover, they would be responsible for the performance of their sub-contractor(s). Dr Fung replied to the enquiry of Ir Li Wai-lim, William that after deducting four NGOs, which had withdrawn from CAP, the number of participating NGOs of the first two batches of CAP was 28.

(Dr Law Chi-kwong, Mr John Fung and Mr Edmond Keung left the meeting at this juncture.)

17. After discussion, Members agreed to support the application of HKCSS for seeking supplementary LF grant at an amount proposed by HKCSS based on the tendering result and supported by SWD.

Sharing Session on the Use of Information Technology (IT) in the Social Welfare Sector

18. The Secretary referred Members to Paper JC 3/06 and highlighted the key points of the Sharing Session. Mr Joseph Leung proposed to invite professionals from the IT sector to attend the Sharing Session. In addition, Mr Chong Chan-yau explored whether a presentation topic on bridging digital divide could be included and Mr Fu Tsun-hung suggested to arrange demonstrations of completed IT projects on service delivery in the Sharing Session.

19. Mr Kok Che-leung agreed to explore the possibility to include a topic on bridging digital divide. He supplemented that invitation had been sent to four IT professional bodies. In view of the limitations on facilities and constraint on time, there would not be demonstrations of IT systems as in the previous sector-wide seminars.

20. The Chairperson remarked that the target participants of the Sharing Session were those personnel serving in the social welfare sector. Extension of invitation to more professionals from the IT sector was in a lower priority on this occasion. He also took the opportunity to thank Prof. Chan Wing-tai and Mr Kang Tsi-kit for their acceptance of SWD's invitation as speakers in the Sharing Session.

Any Other Business

21. Ir Li Wai-lim, William suggested to upload the presentation materials of the Sharing Session and key information of the completed BIPs in the SWD Homepage for promoting wider use of IT in the social welfare sector and fostering a learning culture among NGOs. Miss Ann Hon added that sharing BIPs was one of the conditions for funding application and supported the suggestion. The format of sharing should not be limited to briefing session or seminar, etc. Mr Kok Che-leung agreed to explore the suggested format for sharing of BIPs.

22. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm. The Chairperson informed Members that the next JCIT meeting would be held in late June or early July 2006 tentatively with a date to be fixed.