Minutes of the 36th Meeting of the Joint Committee on Information Technology (JCIT) for the Social Welfare Sector held on 16 March 2023

Present :

Miss Charmaine LEE, JP	(Chairperson)
Ms Wong Yin-yee	
Miss Chan Chong-lai	
Ms Lui Ka-wing	
Mr Jason Pun	
Mr Jeff Fong	
Ms Chan Siu-lai	
Mr Cheng Siu-hong, Raymond	
Dr Danny Chow	
Miss Chow Tsz-ki	
Ms Chu Lai-ying, Ada	
Mr Lai Kwan-ho, Raymond	
Ms Lam Shook-fun, Maria	
Mr Lee Kwok-kee, Kelvin	
Mr Leung Kin-man, Michael, MH	
Mr Ma Kam-wah, Timothy, MH, JP	
Mr Philip Wong	
Mr Wu Tak-fai	(Secretary)

In attendance :

Mr Jeffrey Fung
Ms Loletta Lo
Ms Chan Nga-yin, Hellas

Absent with apology: Mr Tang Man-chun

Welcome Remarks

1. The Chairperson welcomed Mr Jason Pun from the Office of Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) and Mr Lai Kwan-ho, Raymond, the new representative of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, who attended the meeting for the first time.

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting

2.   The Chairperson said that the draft minutes of the last meeting had been sent to Members on 1 August 2022.   The minutes were confirmed without amendment.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Last Meeting

Paragraph 11 (c) - to conduct a survey to ascertain the needs and readiness of NGOs for joining a Security Risk Assessment and Audit (SRAA) exercise

3.   SWD shared with Members the progress of the "Survey on IT Security in the Social Welfare Sector" which aims at understanding the current practice of individual NGOs on IT security aspect and assessing the needs and readiness of NGOs for conducting SRAA for their IT systems.   A questionnaire was sent to 169 NGOs operating subvented services on 8 December 2022.   Up to end of February 2023, 116 returns were received (69%).   SWD would continue to appeal for NGOs' support to return the questionnaire so that the findings could more accurately reflect the welfare sector's needs and readiness. Information collected would serve as reference for devising the way forward to further facilitate NGOs to enhance their IT security.   Findings would be reported at the next JCIT meeting.

Agenda Item 3:   Progress of the Information Technology Projects Supported by the Social Welfare Development Fund - Paper JC 1/2023

4.   SWD reported the progress of the implementation of IT projects supported by the Social Welfare Development Fund (SWDF), as detailed in Paper JC 1/2023 with highlights as follows –

(a) SWDF was implemented in three phases starting from 2010-11, with a total amount of $310.5M allocated to 703 IT projects, among which 33 were withdrawn after funding allocation.   All the 670 IT projects had been completed.

(b) With reference to the overall evaluation reports (OERs) of the IT projects in the three phases, the most significant benefits of the developed IT

systems were "improving work efficiency" and "improving service delivery", which accounted for 80% and 44% on average respectively. The benefit of "saving manpower and other resources", though less mentioned in Phase 1 and 2, had risen to 68% in Phase 3, which indicated that NGOs had started to harvest the cost-benefit of IT adoption in their operation.

(c) Regarding the reported difficulties, "compromising user requirements / workflows" and "manpower related issues" were the two major concerns in Phases 1 and 2.   In Phase 3, "tendering and vendor related issues" became the most dominant difficulty apart from "impact of COVID-19 related issues".   Nonetheless, NGOs had strived to overcome the difficulties and managed to complete the projects.

(d) As at end February 2023, there were eight outstanding OERs.   SWD would follow up with the concerned NGOs to ensure their submission of outstanding OERs within three months after project completion.   Further details would be reported in the next JCIT meeting.

5.   The Chairperson expressed appreciation for NGOs' efforts in IT adoption and development by making good use of the SWDF.   In response to the request for continuation of funding resources, she said SWD would explore ways to support NGO's IT development subject to the availability of resources.

6.   Members recognised the significant contributions of SWDF in facilitating IT development in the welfare sector, and shared their views as summarised below –

(a)   While NGOs were receptive and ready to adopt IT in their daily operation, additional resources were required to develop new IT applications as well as maintenance and enhancement of existing IT systems.   Members would like to know existing grants such as the Lump Sum Grant (LSG), LSG Reserve and Block Grant (BG) of Lotteries Fund might be used to cover IT development and/or related expenses.   Some Members suggested making use of funding sources available from other funding bodies or government bureaux / departments (B/Ds), such as the Innovation & Technology Fund if applicable, for IT initiatives / projects to drive the social welfare business operation.   SWD responded that NGOs could, in accordance with the existing established mechanism and

procedures, deploy LSG / LSG Reserve for meeting the expenses of development of new IT projects and/or on-going maintenance of existing IT systems.   Nevertheless, NGOs should ensure that such expenses would not affect the provision of subvented services, and cost apportionment should be appropriately applied if the relevant project costs cut across funding and service agreement (FSA) services and non-FSA services.   If an intended spending of LSG / LSG Reserve exceeded $500,000 on the capital expenditure of IT projects, NGOs should obtain their Board's endorsement with justifications documented and seek SWD's advice before embarking on the projects.

(b)   A Member opined that the existing resource allocation should not be reduced even though there were manpower / other cost savings arising from IT adoption.   SWD responded that while NGOs had, upon receiving funding support from SWDF and LF, started to enjoy the cost-benefit of IT adoption, the amount of allocation had not been reduced due to such savings; NGOs were however encouraged to make good use of the savings for on-going maintenance of existing IT systems as well as development of new systems.   Another Member suggested that if there was further funding support in future, consideration should be given to allowing joint funding applications by NGOs for developing common applications.

(c)   Capacity building on IT would be essential not only for social work professionals but also for top management so as to equip them to deploy resources to drive their businesses by using IT.   For effective tech-talent building, it was necessary to identify the needs of different groups / levels of NGO staff and provide them with appropriate types of IT training. SWD agreed that capacity building was important for NGO staff of different ranks to promote IT adoption and development in the welfare sector.   To facilitate capacity building, various free-of-charge IT training courses or reference materials offered by different IT institutes, such as OGCIO, Hong Kong Productivity Council and Vocational Training Centre, were made available on the NGO IT Information Portal, which was newly set up by SWD in May 2022, for access and self-learning by different levels of staff in the welfare sector.

(d)   Some Members opined that short video sharing would be more attractive and effective to show case studies and illustrate how the adoption of

technology could enhance service delivery and operation. Training / knowledge sharing in the form of short videos, which were easily accessible, could also facilitate the build-up of tech-talent in the welfare sector.

(e) Some Members pointed out that small NGOs were not familiar with IT project management, especially in preparing tender and vendor management. A Member shared that the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (HKJCCT) had funded a project providing free IT consultancy services and project management support to needy NGOs. A member suggested that a core-team of available expertise might be set up to assist needy NGOs in their IT development.

(f) Members considered it beneficial to establish a platform for communication of IT project implementation among NGOs, and between IT developers and NGOs, which would enhance knowledge transfer/experience sharing, mutual understanding and opportunities for collaboration.

(g) In line with the Government's promotion of Smart City, Members noted that open data would be the trend in various sectors and suggested that SWD could make use of available datasets of welfare services to illustrate the usefulness of open data in facilitating service planning. A member informed that a HKJCCT-funded project "OpenUp", with machine learning of artificial intelligence (AI) to provide real-time data analysis for counsellor's reference, had facilitated effective service provision. Some Members shared that a common standard for data definition and data structure was a pre-condition for using open data, and suggested that it might be easier to start from small-scale and less complicated services.

7. Mr Jason Pun of OGCIO briefed Members on the open data portal of OGCIO (DATA.GOV.HK), which contained data from government B/Ds and also public/private organisations. While data analysis powered by AI could unlock data-driven insights, he advised that the welfare sector could make reference to the "Ethical Artificial Intelligence Framework" published by OGCIO, which was accessible from OGCIO website, and the "Guidance on the Ethical Development and use of AI" published by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data. The information had been uploaded onto the NGO IT Information Portal. He also stressed the importance of SRAA for

protecting the data, resources and operation of NGOs. To enhance knowledge / awareness of cyber security, staff of the welfare sector could visit the Cybersec Training Hub which was managed by the Hong Kong Internet Registration Corporation Limited (HKIRC) to provide a free training platform to enhance cyber security.

8.   The Chairperson thanked Members for their suggestions on promoting NGOs' IT development.   She agreed that SWDF had brought about a mindset change in IT adoption in the welfare sector and general receptiveness towards using IT in service operation.   Capacity building in NGOs, sharing of case stories and experiences in project management, and cross-sector sharing would be helpful to promote IT development.   As regards the open data, data analytic aspects without encroaching on sensitive data could be considered as the first step.

Agenda Item 4: Progress of the Implementation of Action Plan for the Recommendations of the Review of the Information Technology Strategy for the Social Welfare Sector in Hong Kong - Paper JC 2/2023

9.   SWD briefed Members on the progress of implementation of the action plan, as detailed in Paper JC 2/2023, with major progress of work summarised as follows –

(a) The NGO IT Information Portal, set up in May 2022 under the webpart "NGO Corner" on the SWD Homepage, provided a one-stop platform to share useful IT information and materials.   Taking on Members' suggestions to enrich the Portal, various useful information, such as different IT training courses, IT events / seminars information, websites on IT security, open source application and cloud services had been made available on the Portal.   Up to end of February 2023, the number of visit to the Portal had exceeded 7 700.

(b) To promote e-services / IT adoption, SWD launched five online systems from June to November 2022 for use by the welfare sector.   So far, NGOs adapted smoothly in using these systems with positive feedback.   All these newly developed IT systems had greatly enhanced the operation of various service units in the sector, and had induced significant mindset

changes of NGO operators in adoption of e-services.

(c) SWD set up the Experience Sharing Platform for NGOs (the Platform) with objectives to share good practices and experience in implementation of IT projects, promote e-service, enhance collaboration among NGOs, and induce mindset change, etc. The first sharing session was successfully conducted on 6 September 2022 with around 170 participants from 90 NGOs, mostly in middle or senior management, with positive feedbacks received. To expand its positive impact, SWD would continue to make good use of the Platform to facilitate further IT development in the welfare sector. The second sharing session, with topics tailor-made to address the needs and concerns of NGOs, was planned to be held in late May / June 2023.

10. The Chairperson expressed gratitude for the support of Mr Timothy Ma and Ms Maria Lam who were the moderators, as well as Ms Ada Chu and Dr Danny Chow who were the guest speakers of the first sharing session.

11. Members' views on the progress of work were summarised as follows –

(a) Members appreciated SWD's effort in enriching the contents of the NGO IT Information Portal. In view that useful IT information and materials could be obtained via the one-stop Portal, further promotion work with support from Members, in particular those with rich experience in this aspect, could be arranged such that NGOs could make good use of it.

(b) Regarding the e-services for use by the welfare sector, Members appreciated the good preparation and support from SWD in facilitating NGOs' use of the new IT systems. Some Members suggested that the aggregated data collected under these systems could be considered for sharing as open data in the welfare sector or across sectors.

(c) The first sharing session under the Platform was a good start for sharing valuable experiences in IT project implementation among NGOs. Regarding the topics for the future sessions, apart from projects / experience to be shared by NGOs, consideration could be given to inviting IT professionals in the commercial sector to introduce latest IT resources and solutions. SWD agreed to explore different speakers from relevant sectors to conduct the sharing sessions in the future and consider different

       presentation format to build a more constructive and interesting sharing platform for NGOs to meet their needs.

12.   <u>The Chairperson</u> thanked Members for their opinions and suggestions, and assured them that SWD would continue to take forward the action plan and report progress in subsequent meetings.

13.   <u>The Chairperson</u> expressed gratitude to <u>Mr Michael Leung</u> who would retire from JCIT upon completion of his six-year tenure by end of April 2023, for his contributions to JCIT.

Agenda Item 5: Any other business

14.   There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm.

Agenda Item 6: Date of Next Meeting

15.   The date of the next meeting would be fixed in due course.

Social Welfare Department
April 2023