

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting Progress Report on Transformation of the IT Easy Link Services

Introduction

This paper updates Members on the progress of the transformation of the IT Easy Link Services (the Services).

Background

2. In June 2002, we launched the Services in collaboration with the Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS) as a pilot project. Every year, we review the effectiveness of the scheme and explore the best way to integrate the Services into the broader range of services offered by the social service sector and the private sector.

3. Members of the Panel were briefed on 8 April 2005 on the proposed transformation of the Services. In summary, taking into account the utilisation statistics of the Services, the overall improvement in IT literacy in the community and views of industry support organisations and other relevant stakeholders, the HKCS proposed to transform the mode of operation of the Services to better fill the service gap in the community by way of –

- (a) setting up an SME IT Support Centre;
- (b) seeking sponsorship from and partnership with the private sector to continue providing service to the general community; and
- (c) exploring cooperative opportunities to further expand the Services to cover disadvantaged groups through non-government organisations (NGOs) and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS).

4. In order to plan and execute a smooth and amenable transition of the general community services, the HKCS further proposed a 9-month period starting from July 2005 to transform the Services and finalise the detailed arrangements with the potential sponsors and users. With the transformation, the HKCS expected the Services to become self-supporting and self-financing from April 2006 that could cater for the needs of the underprivileged and the general public.

Latest Position of the Transition and Transformation

5. The HKCS has solicited the support and sponsorship from the OGCIO and the private sector to operate the Services during the 9-month transitional period from July 2005 to March 2006.

6. The HKCS originally anticipated that the IT Easy Link for Businesses project (part of the Services) would end on 30 June 2005 upon the opening of the SME IT Support Centre. However, the application by HKCS for the SME Development Fund to setting up the SME IT Support Centre was not successful and the HKCS has combined the Services for Businesses with that for the community since 1 July 2005.

7. In order to achieve the optimum deployment of resources, the hotline service hours of the Services have been reduced to office hours (i.e. Mondays - Fridays : 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Saturdays : 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.). For enquiries outside the service hours, users are advised to make enquires via fax, email or leave voice messages with the Hotline for the helpdesk to answer as soon as possible. In addition, users are encouraged to look up the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) theme page of the IT Easy Link web site or subscribe to receive the new electronic bulletin IT News Express for answers to general problems that they may encounter in using basic IT applications.

8. During the initial transitional period, there were enquiries and a few complaints about the reduced hours of services. The Service Centre has fine-tuned its operation and the situation has improved. To better manage user expectations, the Centre will publish more information on its website.

9. The HKCS is working on the transformation plan and will finalise the details of the subscription based services by December 2005 with a view to transforming the Services into self-supporting and self-financing mode from April 2006.

10. Members are invited to note the status of transition and transformation of the Services.

**Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau
October 2005**