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Panel on Financial Affairs

Meeting on 4 May 2009

**Background Brief on
Computer equipment and services for the 2011 Population Census**

Purpose

This paper sets out the background of the Administration's proposal for acquisition of the computer equipment and services for the 2011 Population Census (11C). It also summarizes Members' views and concerns related to the plan for 11C during past discussions.

Background

2. In line with the established practice, population censuses have been conducted at 10-year intervals since 1961, and by-censuses are carried out in the middle of the intercensal period. The aim of conducting population censuses/by-censuses is to obtain up-to-date benchmark information on the socio-economic characteristics of the population and on its geographical distribution. The next population census will be conducted by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) in 2011.

Sampling scheme

3. According to the Administration, all population censuses conducted since 1981 comprised a complete enumeration of all persons on their basic characteristics such as age and sex and a large sample on the detailed characteristics of households and persons. 11C will adopt the same approach. Following international practice, there will be two types of questionnaires: the "short form" for the simple enumeration and the "long form" for the detailed enumeration. After extensive research and in the light of the proven experience of conducting the 2006 Population By-census (06BC), the sampling fraction of the "long form" in 11C would be reduced from one-seventh in the 2001 Population Census (01C) to one-tenth of the population. This will help reduce resources requirements and achieve cost effectiveness given the projection of a 15% increase in the number of households between 2001 and 2011.

Data collection approach

4. The Administration has proposed adapting a multi-modal data collection approach in 11C, introducing electronic means, postal returns and conventional face-to-face interviews. The data collection period will last for 45 days (from 19 June to 2 August 2011) with the first stage allowing self-enumeration by the households through postal returns or the Internet. Data collection through face-to-face interviews will be undertaken in the second stage which will fall on the school summer holidays. This will avoid disruption to schools, facilitate recruitment of temporary field workers, and provide a reasonable time buffer to ensure completion of the census operation even in bad weather in the summer period. A reasonably long data collection period can also provide respondents with extra options and convenience through the optimal use of the new data collection systems.

Data topics

5. Taking into account various factors and views received from the consultations with government bureaux/departments, prominent organizations, relevant faculties/departments in academic institutions, the Administration has proposed a total of 41 data topics. Further desktop research and question development will be carried out with a view to extending the data coverage and enhancing data quality.

Proposed computer system

6. To facilitate the planning and conduct of 11C, the Administration has conducted a feasibility study to examine the technical requirements, financial and resources implications of the required system. An in-house Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) study was also conducted to explore opportunities to streamline the whole process and identify improvement opportunities.

7. The feasibility cum BPR study proposes to re-use the computer systems developed for 06BC to the extent possible, and at the same time recognizes that redevelopment/upgrading of 06BC systems would be required to meet the changing requirements of 11C (such as the adoption of the new multi-modal data collection approach and the need to survey the entire population in 11C), and to provide increased functionalities to ensure smooth operation of 11C (in terms of better data quality control, more effective handling of public enquiries and field work management as well as integration among various sub-systems). The feasibility cum BPR study therefore recommends that a new 11C computer system should be established using a combination approach involving enhancement of two sub-systems of 06BC, re-development of its another 14 sub-systems, and development of two new sub-systems. This combination approach ensures that the most cost-effective solution is adopted.

8. According to the Administration's information paper provided to the Panel on Financial Affairs (FA Panel) (LC Paper No. 1184/08-09(01)), the implementation of the proposal will incur a non-recurrent cost of \$85.273 million over a five-year period from 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 for the acquisition of computer hardware, software and related services. The maintenance cost during the project period has been included in the non-recurrent cost of the project and that beyond the project period will be absorbed by C&SD.

Major views and concerns expressed by Members

9. The Administration briefed the FA Panel on the plan for 11C at the meeting on 5 January 2009. Members expressed the following concerns:

(a) Sampling scheme

- impact of the reduction of the sampling fraction of long forms from one-seventh of the population in 01C to one-tenth in 11C, and whether reference had been made to the sampling practices in population censuses conducted by other places.

(b) Data collection approach

- reliability of data collected through electronic means as compared with those collected through face-to-face interviews, and whether other convenient and cost-effective modes of data collection (e.g. telephone interview) would be considered.

(c) Means to collect data on certain topics

- (i) For Hong Kong residents who resided/stayed mostly in places outside Hong Kong (e.g. registered electors residing/staying mostly in places outside Hong Kong, elderly Hong Kong residents staying in the Mainland and residents working and raising their families in the Mainland), information could be collected through their family members residing in Hong Kong.
- (ii) For the underprivileged (e.g. people living in poverty, new arrivals, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities and people with disabilities), reference should be made to the good international practices in the data collection for sensitive topics.

10. During the special Finance Committee (FC) meeting to examine the Estimates of Expenditure for 2009-2010, a member expressed concern about the plan for 11C, including the studies and consultations conducted, the mode of data collection, and arrangements to facilitate and assist the ethnic minorities in participating in the census.

Latest position

11. The Administration has provided an information paper on the computer equipment and services for 11C in April 2009 (LC Paper No. 1184/08-09(01)). The Administration is invited to brief the FA Panel on the funding proposal at the meeting on 4 May 2009 before seeking FC's approval.

Relevant papers

12. A list of relevant papers is at **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
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Computer equipment and services for the 2011 Population Census

List of relevant papers

Committee	Paper	LC Paper No.
Meeting of the Panel on Financial Affairs (the FA Panel) on 5 January 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Administration's paper on the plan for the 2011 Population Census http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fa/papers/fa0105cb1-487-4-e.pdf ✧ Powerpoint presentation on the plan for the 2011 Population Census http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/chinese/panels/fa/papers/fa0105cb1-527-1-ec.pdf ✧ Minutes of meeting (paragraphs 26 to 41) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fa/minutes/fa20090105.pdf 	<p>CB(1)487/08-09(04)</p> <p>CB(1)527/08-09(01)</p> <p>CB(1)857/08-09</p>
Finance Committee (Special Meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Written question raised by the Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Reply serial no. : FSTB(FS)033) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/fc/fc/w_q/fstb-fs-e.pdf 	
FA Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Administration's information paper on computer equipment and services for the 2011 Population Census http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/fa/papers/facb1-1184-1-e.pdf 	CB(1)1184/08-09(01)