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Panel on Welfare Services

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 8 December 2008**

Development of the Computerised Social Security System

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the development of the Computerised Social Security System (CSSS) in the Social Welfare Department (SWD), and gives an account of past discussions by Members on the subject.

Background

2. To facilitate the effective use of information technology (IT) in the delivery of welfare services, SWD with the assistance of the then Information Technology Services Department and consultants, had completed an Information Systems Strategy Study (ISSS) in July 1997. The study aimed to assess the long-term IT potential and quantify the IT requirements of SWD having regard to its business and operational strategies, and to recommend a departmental IT strategic plan. In parallel with ISSS, a feasibility study was conducted to examine the development of a new CSSS to replace the Social Security Payment System (SSPS). SSPS was a payment system put into operation in 1994 and was considered inadequate to meet SWD's operational and management information needs.

3. Consequent upon the completion of ISSS, the consultants had recommended seven application systems for further development, including CSSS. The Administration accorded top priority to implement CSSS as Phase I of the Information Systems Strategy for SWD.

4. The Finance Committee (FC) approved a commitment of \$224.741 million to implement CCCS under Phase I of an Information Systems Strategy of SWD on 28 November 1997. FC further approved on 7 May 1999 \$12 million

for the refurbishment of Social Security Field Units (SSFUs) and fitting-out of the Central Casefile Depository of SWD in support of the process re-engineering required for implementation of CSSS.

Past discussions

5. At its meeting on 26 November 1997, the Panel on Welfare Services (the Panel) was consulted on the Administration's plan to seek the approval of FC for implementing CSSS. Members were advised that the feasibility study on CSSS concluded that, apart from providing the social security payment functions, CSSS should be capable of –

- (a) allowing on-line input of data and case details, and providing easy, prompt and user-friendly retrieval of information;
- (b) providing ready management information to facilitate policy analysis and reviews;
- (c) enabling changes in policy, management and operations of the social security schemes to be effected with minimum lead time and development efforts; and
- (d) interfacing with other new computerised information systems in SWD.

With the above functions, the new CSSS would enable SSFUs of SWD to attend to more customers at any one time. All the 33 SSFUs would be connected through a communication network linking up about 1 262 workstations.

6. Members did not raise objection to the proposed development of CSSS. However, some members expressed concern about the cost-benefit of the new system, the manpower resources for the system, and the time for system development. Similar concerns were raised when the funding proposal was considered by FC on 28 November 1997.

7. The Administration advised that the new CSSS would greatly reduce the waiting time of clients for attendance by counter staff and for processing of applications. It envisaged that the investigation, assessment and authorization of 90% of the straight-forward applications (e.g. Old Age Allowance) with all supporting documents available would be completed on the same day. In addition, waiting time for payment to Traffic Victims Assistance and Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation cases would also be reduced. As CSSS also supported the use of portable computers and printers, this would eliminate the need for field staff to return to the main offices for checking

computer records and making reference to old case files. Members were also advised that the new CSSS system would have a life span of at least five years. It would take three years for system development because of the large volume of work involved.

8. In respect of the concern on the manpower resources for the system, the Administration explained that additional staff would be required for the administration, user help-desk function and user-training of CSSS as well as for the setting up of the Central Casefile Depository to maintain all paper case files to be transferred from social security service units. On the other hand, staff and cost savings would be generated from an anticipated reduction of staff in administering the social security schemes. The staff concerned would be absorbed within SWD or other government departments.

9. The Panel was updated on the progress of the CSSS development on 10 January 2000. Members were advised that after an open tender exercise, the Administration had appointed a main project contractor in October 1998 to undertake programme and technical management, system analysis and design, and implementation of CSSS. Two other contractors were also appointed to provide personal computer software training and an image retrieval system. Furthermore, a Project Steering Committee and an Implementation Group had been set up in SWD to take ownership of the project and to monitor the progress of the system development respectively. Training courses for SWD staff and user acceptance tests had been/would be conducted. Members were further advised that the CSSS development was on schedule and within budget. CSSS was targeted to go live on 3 October 2000. Manual data conversion would be conducted immediately after the CSSS live-run and last up to end of March 2001.

Latest development

10. The Administration will brief the Panel on a funding proposal to replace the existing CSSS on 8 December 2008.

Relevant papers

11. A list of relevant papers is in the **Appendix** for members' reference. The papers are available on the Council's website at <http://www.legco.gov.hk>.

Relevant Papers/Documents

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Papers</u>
Finance Committee	28 November 1997	Administration's paper [FCR(97-98)67] Minutes of meeting [PLC Paper No. FC 76]
	7 May 1999	Administration's paper [FCR(1999-2000)8]
Panel on Welfare Services	26 November 1997	Administration's paper [PLC Paper No. CB(2)647(04)] Minutes of meeting [PLC Paper No. CB(2)1021]
	10 January 2000	Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)766/99-00(04)] Minutes of meeting [LC Paper No. CB(2)1586/99-00]