

**For discussion
on 12 December 2011**

**Legislative Council Panel on
Information Technology and Broadcasting**

**Pilot Project for
Community Involvement Broadcasting Service**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the plan of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to consult the public on the pilot project for the Community Involvement Broadcasting Services (CIBS).

Background

2. In October 2009, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau published the consultation paper on “The New Radio Television Hong Kong: Fulfilling its Mission as a Public Service Broadcaster”. The consultation paper noted that there were strong calls from some sectors of the community for opening up the airwaves for community and public access broadcasting. The consultation paper explained that hitherto, there was a lack of sufficient frequency spectrum to support low-cost reception. This, together with the fact that stand-alone community broadcasting services required substantial financial and human resources, inhibited participation by smaller community groups. The consultation paper pointed out that technological advancement, which provided impetus to the digitisation of free-to-air television and the development of Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), gave us new opportunities to provide more channels and platforms.

3. Having considered the above, the Government proposed in the consultation paper that RTHK should be tasked to devote part of its airtime and resources within the development of its digital services to provide a platform for community participation in broadcasting. As a pilot, RTHK would administer a Community Involvement Broadcasting Fund (CIBF) to encourage community organisations to bid for resources for producing television and radio programmes, and would arrange to broadcast these contents on RTHK's channels.

4. Members of the public were in general supportive of the proposals of encouraging public participation in broadcasting and welcomed the establishment of CIBF. The report of the consultation was published in April 2010 and Members were briefed on the outcome of the consultation vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1520/09-10(05). These proposals were later incorporated into the RTHK Charter published in August 2010.

Public Consultation

5. We have subsequently held several focus groups with community leaders, discussed with RTHK Programme Advisory Panel, and consulted the Board of Advisors on the framework of CIBS. We have taken into account views gathered in these discussions as well as the production capacity of RTHK in preparing the proposed CIBS set out in the draft consultation paper at the Annex.

6. We propose that, as a pilot, radio programme production should be the first testing ground given its lower technological threshold for public involvement. The recent introduction of DAB service by RTHK¹ provides an opportunity to allocate some airtime for community involvement broadcasting.

7. We would like to seek the views of the public on the following aspects of the proposed CIBS –

¹ RTHK has soft-launched its five DAB programme channels since 7 November 2011.

- (a) objectives of CIBS ;
- (b) service targets;
- (c) programme themes and production cycle;
- (d) the proportion of programme hours allocated between the Chinese Language Service and the Non-Chinese Language Service;
- (e) eligibility criteria for community involvement broadcasting (CIB) producers;
- (f) relationship between RTHK and the CIB producers;
- (g) facilitation and support to be provided by RTHK;
- (h) funding arrangement by RTHK; and
- (i) selection criteria and process.

Way Forward

8. We plan to launch a three-month public consultation before the end of 2011. We will publicise the public consultation through various channels and organise public meetings in early 2012. The consultation paper can be obtained from RTHK, our website as well as District Offices. We will also distribute the consultation paper to stakeholders including education institutions, non-government organisations and ethnic communities.

9. We will report to Members the outcome of the consultation and seek funding approval for the establishment of the CIBF in the second quarter of 2012. We plan to invite proposals for CIBS within the second half of 2012.

Advice sought

10. Members are invited to provide comments on the draft consultation paper at the **Annex**.

**Radio Television Hong Kong
December 2011**

Public Consultation Paper on

**Pilot Project for
Community Involvement Broadcasting Service**

Radio Television Hong Kong

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Chapter One

Background

1.1 In October 2009, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau published the consultation paper on “The New Radio Television Hong Kong: Fulfilling its Mission as a Public Service Broadcaster”. In Chapter 7 of the consultation paper, the Government proposed that community involvement broadcasting should be one of the new programming opportunities taken up by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK).

1.2 The consultation paper noted that there were strong calls from some sectors of the community for opening up the airwaves for community and public access broadcasting. The consultation paper explained that there was a lack of sufficient frequency spectrum to support low-cost reception; and that stand-alone community broadcasting services required substantial financial and human resources which might pose difficulties for smaller community groups to participate in broadcasting.

1.3 Having considered the above, the Government proposed that RTHK should be tasked to devote part of its airtime and resources within the development of its digital services to provide a platform for community participation in broadcasting.¹ As a pilot, RTHK would administer a Community Involvement Broadcasting Fund (CIBF) to encourage community organisations to bid for resources for producing television and radio programmes, and would arrange to broadcast these contents on RTHK’s channels.²

1.4 The report of the consultation was published in April 2010. The report concluded that members of the public were in general supportive of the proposals of encouraging public participation in

¹ Para. 7.7, “*Public Consultation Paper on the New Radio Television Hong Kong: Fulfilling its Mission as a Public Service Broadcaster*”, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, October 2009

² Para. 7.8, *ibid*

broadcasting and the establishment of CIBF.³ These proposals were later incorporated into the RTHK Charter⁴ which was published in August 2010.

1.5 We have subsequently held several focus groups with community leaders, discussed with RTHK programme advisors, and consulted the Board of Advisors on the framework of CIBS. We have taken into account views gathered in these discussions as well as the production capacity of RTHK in preparing the proposed CIBS set out in this consultation paper.

1.6 We propose that, as a pilot, radio programme production should be the first testing ground given its lower technological threshold for public involvement. With the advent of Digital Audio Broadcasting, RTHK should also be able to allocate some airtime for community radio production without affecting the services our audience currently enjoys.

1.7 In Chapter 2, we have presented our initial views and a list of issues asking for your response. We look forward to receiving views in respect of the issues raised.

³ Para. 4.19, “*Consultation report on the future operation of the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and the new RTHK Charter*”, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, April 2010

⁴ “*Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong*”,
http://rthk.hk/about/pdf/charter_eng.pdf

Chapter Two

Our Nine Questions

2.1 To be funded by the Community Involvement Broadcasting (CIBF), Community Involvement in Broadcasting Service (CIBS) will be a three-year pilot project administered by RTHK, with radio programme production as the first testing ground.

2.2 This is a new concept and it would be prudent to build up CIBS in phases so that we can adjust our capacity in tandem with public demand. We would like to hear the views from the community in the following nine important areas so that CIBS can meet the needs and expectation of our community.

Objectives of Community Involvement Broadcasting Services

2.3 Hong Kong is an open society where different forms of mainstream media thrive, providing a variety of platforms for different sectors of the community to express their views. In recent years, the Internet has developed into yet another media for exchange of views in the cyber world.

2.4 We believe that the objective of CIBS should not be confined to merely providing one more platform for the expression of opinions, but should embrace the promotion of a wider range of social gains⁵ to the community, notably –

- (a) plurality, diversity and social inclusion;

⁵ In relation to a community radio service, we define “social gain” as the achievement, in respect of individuals or groups of individuals in the community that the service is intended to serve, or in respect of other members of the public, of the following objectives – (a) the provision of sound broadcasting services to individuals who are otherwise underserved by such services, (b) the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion, (c) the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service, and (d) the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.

- (b) mutual respect, social empathy and civic mindedness;
- (c) creativity, uniqueness and talent nurturing, and
- (d) community involvement.

Question One:

What do you think about the proposed objectives for CIBS?

Service Targets of CIBS

2.5 One of the major characteristics of CIBS is that we are not just targeting the society at large as our audience but also various communities within the society who are interested in the work and fun of broadcasting. Therefore, we define service targets of CIBS as communities or groups of people who share common interests and aspirations, values and cultures, geographical vicinity and closeness, etc.

2.6 We expect the CIBS audience to be supportive of the works of the CIB producers. Some programmes might be for mainstream but we envisage the programmes under CIBS should be dedicated to a niche audience. It is understandable that some programmes could be up to professional broadcasting standards but most of them would be amateurish. However, the CIBS audience is encouraged to pay attention not just to the quality of the programmes, but also appreciate why and how these programmes are created.

Question Two:

What do you think about the proposed service targets of CIBS?

Programme Themes and Production Cycle

2.7 Within the three-year period for the pilot, we propose that there should be broadly four programme quarters each year. Each community group who has successfully bid a broadcasting slot is expected to produce a one-hour weekly programme for 13 consecutive weeks, unless otherwise agreed. “One-hour weekly” is a common programming strategy in radio broadcasting. In order to accommodate more groups to participate in community broadcasting during the three-year period, we recommend reshuffling programmes every quarter.

2.8 We propose the identification of a range of topics and keep changing them each quarter in order to encompass community groups with various interests. Our initial proposed categories include education; art and culture; social services; ethnic minorities; politics and current affairs; economy and finance; district affairs⁶; health; environment; religion and philosophy; and science and technology. Prior to each quarterly cycle, we will promulgate the selected topics for the coming quarter and invite applications from community groups for the broadcasting slots concerned.

Question Three:

What do you think about the proposed programme themes and production cycle?

Chinese and Non-Chinese Language Services

2.9 We suggest that there should be two production branches under CIBS, namely the Chinese Language Service (CLS) and the Non-Chinese Language Service (NCLS). Chinese will be the working language between RTHK and the CB producers for CLS and English for

⁶ Programmes relating to district affairs may involve broadcast of meetings/events with community interests e.g. simulcast of selected District Council meetings, community events sponsored by District Councils, etc.

NCLS. We encourage cross-cultural and multi-lingual programme proposals to promote social inclusion and cultural understanding.

2.10 While Cantonese is the most common medium used among the Chinese speaking population in Hong Kong, we foresee a more diverse language environment and needs among non-Chinese speakers. Allocation of resources between the two production branches should be weighed prudently.

Question Four:

What should be the proportion of programme hours allocated between the Chinese Language Service and the Non Chinese Language Service?

Eligibility Criteria for Community Involvement Broadcasting (CIB) Producers

2.11 The spirit of CIBS is the involvement of communities who are keen on producing programmes by themselves. We are not looking for people of technical expertise in broadcasting. We are looking for communities who have original ideas and who are keen and able to deliver their message through broadcasting.

2.12 For those communities who aspire to become CIB producers, they must be able to organise themselves and put their heads together to create a programme idea. They should have a clear objective and a well defined target audience. They should be able to work together to create a programme for broadcast eventually. Given capacity constraints, we will accord priority to applications from registered groups⁷ as a start.

⁷ Registered groups may include –

- (a) organisations registered under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32);
- (b) organisations registered under the Societies Ordinance (Cap. 151);
- (c) charitable institutions exempted from tax under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112); and
- (d) members of umbrella organisations of the above.

Question Five:

What do you think about the proposed eligibility criteria for community involvement broadcasting producers?

Relationship Between RTHK and CIB Producers

2.13 CIB producers, once their applications are accepted, will enter into an agreement with RTHK (see paragraph 2.17 below). Duties and liabilities of both parties will be clearly stipulated in the document. As a prerequisite, CIB producers must be able to produce programmes independently, with RTHK as the facilitator. RTHK will provide support to CIB producers (see paragraph 2.15 below). On the other hand, CIB producers should co-operate with RTHK in compliance with the codes of practice issued by the Broadcasting Authority (see paragraph 2.16 below). CIB producers must also be accountable to RTHK for the public funds used under the proposed CIBF (see paragraph 2.20 below).

Question Six:

What do you think about the proposed relationship between RTHK and the CIB producers?

Facilitation and Support by RTHK

2.14 We suggest that RTHK should provide the following facilitation and support to CIB producers.

Sourcing of Technical Facilities

2.15 RTHK will offer an orientation of basic technical requirements to CIB producers to ensure that their productions meet the minimum technical standard for broadcast. With the financial assistance of CIBF (see paragraph 2.19 below), successful applicants should be able to find

studios and other technical facilities they need during the production process. RTHK will, upon request by the CIB producer, offer advice on the sourcing of such facilities.

Editorial Autonomy and Compliance

2.16 According to the RTHK Charter, RTHK should ensure that all its programmes broadcast on its platforms comply with the codes of practices issued by the Broadcasting Authority (BA). As CIBS programmes will be broadcast by RTHK through its platforms, CIB producers will be required to comply with these codes of practices, and the Director of Broadcasting should have the final decision in this respect.

2.17 Community groups selected to be CIB producers will be required to enter into an agreement with RTHK on the programme purpose, content outline, production format, compliance with BA codes of practice, etc. CIB producers are expected to produce programme content as approved by the Vetting Committee (see paragraph 2.25 below). RTHK will not be involved in editorial matters unless upon the request of CIB producers or in case of non-compliance with any terms of the agreement.

2.18 RTHK will provide a mandatory orientation on codes and practice of broadcasting, relevant legal and copyright requirements and values and public purposes of public service broadcasting for all CIB producers.

Question Seven:

What do you think about the proposed facilitation and support to be provided by RTHK?

Community Involvement Broadcasting Fund

2.19 The Government has earmarked \$45 million for the establishment of CIBF for three years, and RTHK is tasked to administer

the fund. We propose that CIBF funding should be used to defray actual expenses incurred for the programme production. Specifically, we propose that –

- (a) the funding support for both technical and labour costs should be subject to a ceiling of \$15,000 per one-hour episode, and
- (b) as voluntarism is the core spirit CIBS, we consider that a standardised rate, in the form of honorarium per person with a limited quota of participants (e.g. producers, presenters, scriptwriters, researchers, etc) on each episode, should be adopted.

2.20 To ensure proper use of public funds, all CIBF recipients should co-operate with RTHK in monitoring the progress of programmes supported by the CIBF and be accountable for the usage of the disbursed funds. In particular, CIBF recipients will be required to submit budgets, enter into a funding agreement based on the approved budget, and submit audited financial statements.

Question Eight:

What do you think about the proposed funding arrangement?

Selection Criteria and Process of CIBS and CBIF

2.21 As a broadcasting service which emphasises community involvement, we suggest that CIBS should aim at identifying community groups which can contribute towards social gain with their own productions.

2.22 Given that CIBS is a completely new service to be introduced via RTHK's platform and related operational experience is lacking, we recommend that as a start proposals on recorded programmes should have priority. Proposals on live broadcast will be considered if there is an actual need in programme design and proven record of technical ability.

2.23 We recommend that programme ideas and content in line with the objectives of the CBIS should be the primary criteria in the allocation of broadcasting slot. While professional technical capability is not a must, applicants need to demonstrate commitment to produce their programme independently.

2.24 CIBS applicants who require financial assistance may submit applications under the CIBF. Successful CIBF applicants will be allocated with broadcasting slot as determined by RTHK. CIBS applicants who do not require financial assistance may submit applications to RTHK for broadcasting slot direct. All successful CIBS and CIBF applicants may seek technical assistance from RTHK as necessary (see paragraph 2.15 above).

2.25 We propose that a Vetting Committee be set up to advise the Director of Broadcasting, who will be the Controlling Officer of the CIBF, on the selection of participants, allocation of broadcasting slots and CIBF funding if applicable.

2.26 A Vetting Panel, to be drawn from members of the Vetting Committee, will be formed to consider a batch of applications for each programme quarter. Membership for the Vetting Panel will be changed every quarter. The Vetting Committee/Panels may co-opt the help of experts in assessing the applications received on an ad-hoc basis as necessary. The Vetting Committee/Panels will be tasked not only to reflect public views but to monitor the proper management of public funds in pursuing the objectives of the CIBS including the examination of the budgets proposed by the community groups.

Question Nine:

What do you think about proposed selection criteria and process?

Chapter Three

Consultation and Way Forward

3.1 All interested parties are invited to send us their views in respect of the issues covered by this public consultation exercise to the following address by **(date)** –

Address:

Fax number:

E-mail address:

3.2 The names and views of individuals and organisations who/which put forth submissions in response to this consultation document (“senders”) may be published for public viewing.

3.3 We will respect the wish of senders to remain anonymous and/or keep the views confidential in part or in whole. If the senders request anonymity in the submissions, their names will be removed when publishing their views. If the senders request confidentiality, their submissions will not be published.

3.4 If the senders do not request anonymity or confidentiality in the submissions, we will assume that the senders can be named and the views can be published in their entirety.

Radio Television Hong Kong

[Date]