

ITEM FOR ESTABLISHMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

HEAD 170 – SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT Subhead 000 Operational expenses

Members are invited to recommend to Finance Committee (FC) the redeployment of the following permanent post in the Social Welfare Department to work on formulating and implementing information technology policies, guidelines and long-term strategies to support delivery of social welfare services with immediate effect upon approval by the FC –

1 Principal Social Work Officer
(D1) (\$115,050 - \$125,800)

PROBLEM

There is a need to provide dedicated directorate support in the Social Welfare Department (SWD) on a permanent basis for formulating and implementing information technology (IT) policies, guidelines and long-term strategies to support the delivery of social welfare services.

PROPOSAL

2. We propose to redeploy permanently one vacant Principal Social Work Officer (PSWO) (D1) post in SWD, to be designated as Principal Social Work Officer (Information Systems and Technology) (P(IST)) for heading and providing directorate steer to the Information Systems and Technology Branch (ISTB) in SWD with immediate effect upon approval by the Finance Committee (FC).

/JUSTIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION

3. SWD relies heavily on its own information technology infrastructure (ITI) and application systems of various scales to bring about improvements in service provision, operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness. To this end, ISTB has been playing a pivotal role in the formulation and implementation of departmental IT policies and strategies to achieve service objectives, as well as overseeing the IT development in SWD with a staff size of around 5 600. It also assists in promoting the use of IT for corporate administration and service delivery in the social welfare sector which comprises over 170 subvented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in close partnership with SWD for the provision of social welfare services. ISTB is currently headed by P(IST) which is a supernumerary PSWO post created on 14 October 2005 by holding against one vacant permanent PSWO post in the Department.

Lapse of supernumerary P(IST) post

4. The supernumerary P(IST) post was created on a time-limited basis to oversee the enhancement and maintenance of the Technical Infrastructure project after its launch in early 2005, as well as the development and implementation of the Client Information System (CIS) project. The supernumerary post has been reviewed and approved for re-creation annually since 2006 to meet different operational requirements.

5. In 2012, SWD commissioned a consultant to conduct a review of the Departmental Information Technology Plan (DITP). Among all other matters, the long-term need to retain the PSWO post in ISTB was examined critically. Taking into account the growing scale of IT development and the complexity of IT systems within SWD and in the social welfare sector, the consultant recommended that ISTB should continue to be headed by a directorate staff on an on-going basis to sustain the provision of high-level steer for formulation and implementation of policies, strategies, guidelines and initiatives on IT in SWD and the social welfare sector in support of the delivery of social welfare services.

6. The supernumerary P(IST) post will lapse on 14 October 2014 or until such time that the permanent redeployment proposal be approved by the Legislative Council (LegCo) FC, whichever is earlier.

/Need

Need to retain the post of P(IST)*Formulation of IT policies and strategies*

7. The use of advanced IT is crucial to the delivery of public service, particularly for SWD which provides multifarious services to meet the basic needs of the public. In accordance with the guidelines promulgated by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, ISTB is obliged to regularly review and update the IT development in the Department, and formulate corresponding IT policies and strategies so as to accommodate new service requirements arising from changes in welfare service policies and government-wide IT strategies, as well as rising public expectations about the use of advanced technology in service delivery. The P(IST) post pitched at D1 level is essential to providing high-level steer to ISTB on a long-term basis to review and formulate IT plans to guide IT-related resource planning and programme management.

Major on-going IT activities

(a) IT development in SWD

(i) Management and upgrading of ITI

8. The ITI provides a communication backbone for SWD to deploy department-wide information systems. It allows the integration of IT systems and provides a common office environment for word processing, spreadsheet, email, etc. for about 5 600 users at 238 SWD offices. To ensure the provision of a reliable ITI in support of the daily operation of SWD, ISTB is responsible for the proper and timely maintenance of the high-value facilities, including data centres, network, file servers, personal computers, email system, security system and system management facilities, etc. As the current ITI was set up in 2005, SWD plans to establish the next generation ITI involving a non-recurrent cost of about \$176 million over a period of four years from 2014-15 to 2017-18 to keep pace with the latest technological advancement and to pave way for the implementation of the new IT projects under the DITP. Given the scale, cost and impact of the ITI, there is a need for a permanent directorate officer at D1 level to steer SWD's ITI development from wider perspectives and in securing cooperation from counterparts throughout the planning, development, operation and maintenance stages.

(ii) Development and administration of application systems

9. Infrastructure aside, SWD has applied IT widely in corporate administration and service delivery. Currently, there are over 50 application

/systems

systems in use. ISTB is responsible for overseeing the administration and enhancement of these application systems which have individual sophisticated designs and a great number of users. For instance, CIS, a client-focused, workflow-driven and automated case management system, is used by 2 700 staff members at over 140 offices for the provision of service to some 76 000 clients receiving social welfare services (excluding those receiving social security services). On-going enhancement of CIS is required to leverage new technologies for the implementation of new policy initiatives as well as the improvement of system efficiency and effectiveness.

10. ISTB is also responsible for the on-going development of new application systems to cater for the changing business needs of SWD and to implement government-wide IT policy and initiatives. For the coming three years, six new application systems have been identified for development and implementation. These application systems include revamping the SWD's Intranet, establishment of the centralised data repository for department-wide information management, implementation of e-communication platform with a view to enhancing SWD's interaction with subvented and subsidised welfare service providers, etc. Since all the new IT projects and system enhancements carry far-reaching implications on the departmental ITI, system security as well as service improvement, the steer at directorate level is essential to the development and administration of these systems, particularly for ensuring their proper and stable functioning for a large number of users in different office locations.

(b) IT development in social welfare sector

11. To advise on and oversee the IT development in the welfare sector, SWD has set up the Joint Committee on IT for the Social Welfare Sector (JCIT) since 2001 under the chairmanship of the Director of Social Welfare with members from the social welfare and IT sectors. JCIT is responsible for formulating the IT strategy to identify the direction and development of IT for the social welfare sector. In view of rapid advancement of IT, on-going review for the IT strategy is required to catch up with the latest progress of IT development. In April 2013, a review of the IT strategy was completed with a total of 13 recommendations formulated for the IT development in the social welfare sector in the coming five years. These recommendations aim at enhancing IT capacity for NGOs, providing more flexibility in funding IT projects, enhancing data security and web accessibility, as well as sharing of resources and experiences among NGOs in IT development and management. P(IST) is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the concerned IT strategy and steering the formulation of facilitating measures.

12. The \$1 billion Social Welfare Development Fund (SWDF) was launched in January 2010 using the Lotteries Fund to provide NGOs with financial resources to develop, among others, IT projects to enhance agency administration and service delivery. ISTB is responsible for vetting the funding applications in respect of IT projects and monitoring implementation of the approved applications until their completion. Up till April 2014, NGOs have made use of SWDF in the development or enhancement of over 400 IT projects involving a total sum of about \$150 million. P(IST)'s steer and administration of each and every approved IT project is required, in particular the handling of special requests/concerns raised by the NGOs during project implementation, to safeguard the proper use of public money.

(c) Management of the IT Office

13. P(IST) is underpinned by a Chief Social Work Officer and a Senior Systems Manager who oversee the Business Section and Technology Management Section respectively. These two functional sections are manned by a mix of about 60 social work, IT and clerical grade staff.

14. In view of the wide scope and growing complexity of IT development within SWD and in the social welfare sector, the high-value ITI and mission-critical application systems with read-across implications involved, as well as the operational experience required in overseeing various major IT initiatives, SWD considers that a PSWO post with extensive experience in the delivery of social welfare services and thorough understanding of the needs of the welfare sector is vital to the smooth operation of ISTB and the provision of quality service to the public in the long run. With IT being a strategic enabler for achieving SWD's service vision and corporate mission, P(IST)'s steer at the directorate level on a long-term basis is required for setting appropriate directions from wider perspectives and maintaining effective communication with the stakeholders internally and externally so as to guide the various tasks as described in paragraphs 7 to 13 above.

Proposed organisation structure

15. The PSWO post, if redeployed permanently, will continue to be accountable to the Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration). The job description of the proposed P(IST) post is at Enclosure 1. The existing and proposed organisation chart of SWD at the directorate level is at Enclosure 2.

Encl. 1

Encl. 2

/ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

16. SWD has critically examined the feasibility of identifying an existing branch head of the Headquarters to absorb the duties of the proposed P(IST). However, given the rapid expansion in different service areas of social welfare, all existing branch heads are already fully committed to their responsibilities relating to elderly services, family and child welfare services, rehabilitation and medical social services, youth and correctional services, social security and subvention matters. Such an alternative is, therefore, considered not feasible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. The proposal is cost-neutral to the Government in terms of additional notional annual salary at mid-point as follows –

	Post	Notional Annual Salary Cost at Mid-point (\$)	No. of Post
	P(IST)	1,465,200	1
<i>Less</i>	District Social Welfare Officer (Yau Tsim Mong) ^{Note}	1,465,200	1
	Total	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

The full annual average staff costs, including salaries and on-cost, of a PSWO post is \$2,017,000. There will be no net increase upon the proposed redeployment of the PSWO post from Yau Tsim Mong District Social Welfare Office to ISTB. The proposal will also not give rise to any increase in non-directorate supporting staff.

/PUBLIC

^{Note} The planning and provision of social welfare services are delivered through the District Social Welfare Offices (DSWOs) of SWD, each headed by a PSWO (D1). SWD has over the past years implemented a number of efficiency saving measures. These changes have necessitated a review of district structure with reference to the social and demographic characteristics, demands for social welfare services of each district and scope of control, including the number of service units under the supervision of each DSWO. The review recommended, among others, that the Yau Tsim Mong DSWO be merged with Kowloon City DSWO to form a new Kowloon City/Yau Tsim Mong DSWO. This proposal was implemented in October 2005. As a result of the review, there are presently 11 DSWOs over the territory. Upon the above merger, one PSWO (D1) post was released and is currently being held against for the creation of one supernumerary PSWO (D1) post in ISTB.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

18. We consulted the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services on 14 April 2014 on the above proposal. In general, Members supported the redeployment of one P(IST) post on a long-term basis to head and provide directorate steer to ISTB.

ESTABLISHMENT CHANGES

19. The establishment changes in SWD for the past two years are as follows –

Establishment (Note)	Number of posts			
	Existing (as at 1 May 2014)	As at 1 April 2014	As at 1 April 2013	As at 1 April 2012
A*	25 [#]	25	25	25
B	677	677	675	669
C	4 913	4 913	4 771	4 657
Total	5 615	5 615	5 471	5 351

Note:

A - ranks in the directorate pay scale or equivalent

B - non-directorate ranks, the maximum pay point of which is above MPS Point 33 or equivalent

C - non-directorate ranks, the maximum pay point of which is at or below MPS Point 33 or equivalent

* Excluding supernumerary posts created under delegated authority

As at 1 May 2014, there was no unfilled directorate post in SWD.

CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU COMMENTS

20. The Civil Service Bureau supports the proposed redeployment. The grading and ranking of the proposed permanent PSWO post are considered appropriate having regard to the level and scope of the responsibilities required.

ADVICE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DIRECTORATE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

21. The Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service has advised that the grading proposed for the permanent directorate post would be appropriate if the post was to be created.

**Proposed Job Description for
Principal Social Work Officer (Information Systems and Technology)**

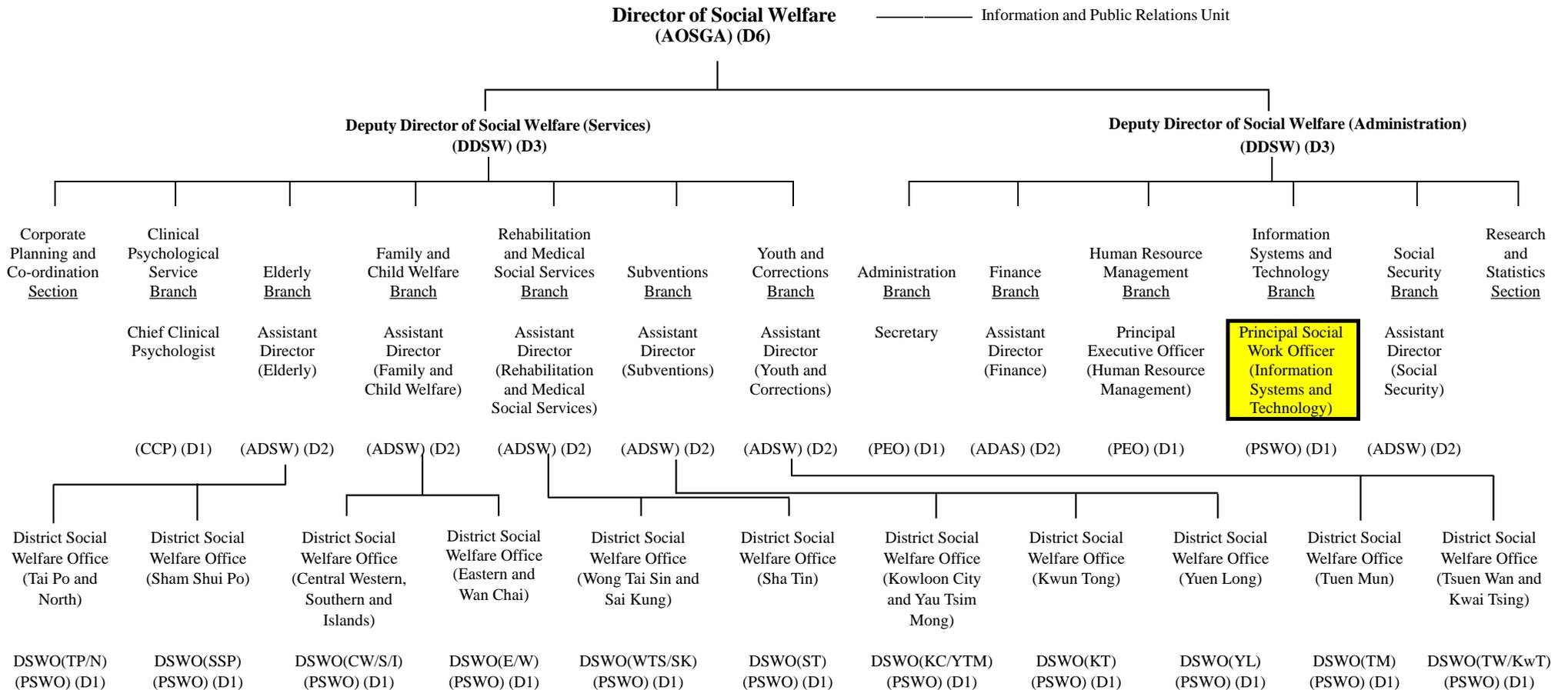
Rank : Principal Social Work Officer (D1)

Responsible to : Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)

Main Duties and Responsibilities –

- (1) To assist in formulating information technology (IT) policy, guidelines and long-term IT strategy in the Department and promoting the use of IT in the social welfare sector.
- (2) To steer and oversee the development, implementation, management and redevelopment of IT infrastructure and all application systems in the Department.
- (3) To assist in monitoring the implementation of IT strategy in the social welfare sector and support the work of the Joint Committee on IT for the Social Welfare Sector chaired by the Director of Social Welfare.
- (4) To assist in the operation of the IT Steering Committee of the Department.
- (5) To manage and control the IT budget of the Department.
- (6) To review the IT training needs of staff in the Department and to formulate necessary training plans and support.
- (7) To oversee the operation of the Information Systems and Technology Branch.

Existing and Proposed Directorate Structure of Social Welfare Department



Legend:

- ADAS - Assistant Director of Accounting Services
- ADSW - Assistant Director of Social Welfare
- AOSGA - Administrative Officer Staff Grade A
- DDSW - Deputy Director of Social Welfare
- DSWO - District Social Welfare Officer
- PEO - Principal Executive Officer
- PSWO - Principal Social Work Officer



Supernumerary post to lapse on 14 October 2014/proposed redeployment of permanent post