

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)583/15-16
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ITB/1

Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Minutes of meeting
on Monday, 14 December 2015, at 2:00 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP (Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yea, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Claudia MO
Hon NG Leung-sing, SBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Hon SIN Chung-kai, SBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Members absent** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP

Member attending : Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP

Public officers attending : Agenda item III

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau

Miss Susie HO, JP
Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Creative Industries)

Mr Joe WONG, JP
Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Creative Industries)

Mr Ivanhoe CHANG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Creative Industries) B

Office of the Communications Authority

Miss Eliza LEE, JP
Director-General of Communications

Mr Chaucer LEUNG
Deputy Director-General (Telecommunications)

Mr Sanda CHEUK
Assistant Director (Regulatory)

Mr Sidney TSAN
Principal Regulatory Affairs Manager (Regulatory 22)

Clerk in attendance : Mr Daniel SIN
Chief Council Secretary (4)3

Staff in attendance : Ms Anki NG
Council Secretary (4)3

Miss Mandy LAM
Legislative Assistant (4)3

Action

I. Information papers issued since the last meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(4)276/15-16(01) -- Administration's written response dated 25 November 2015 on Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 710 Computerization Subhead A007GX (Block Allocation) – New administrative computer systems

LC Paper No. CB(4)319/15-16(01) -- Administration's written response dated 7 December 2015 on review of certain licence conditions in carrier licences issued under the Telecommunications Ordinance (Cap. 106))

Members noted that the above papers had been issued for the Panel's information.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper No. CB(4)314/15-16(01) -- List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(4)314/15-16(02) -- List of follow-up actions

LC Paper No. CB(4)357/15-16(01) -- Letter from Hon Charles Peter MOK dated 10 December 2015 on issues relating to the analogue spectrum to be vacated by Asia Television Limited after expiry of its domestic free television programme service licence (Chinese version only)

Regular meeting on 11 January 2016

2. Members noted that the next regular Panel meeting would be held on Monday, 11 January 2016 at 2:30 pm to discuss the following items:

- (a) Issues relating to the policy on digital audio broadcasting; and
- (b) Progress report on the work of Hong Kong Design Centre.

(Post-meeting note: At the request of the Administration and with the concurrence of the Chairman, the item "Procurement of additional production equipment and system for further developing the existing digital terrestrial television service of Radio Television Hong Kong" was subsequently included in the agenda for the next meeting, and item 2(b) was changed to "Progress report and funding proposal on the work of Hong Kong Design Centre.)

Issues relating to the operational and handover arrangements of Asia Television Limited after expiry of its domestic free television programme service licence

3. Mr Charles Peter MOK and Ms Claudia MO expressed concern about issues relating to the operational and handover arrangements of Asia Television Limited after expiry of its domestic free television programme service licence in April 2016. They suggested and members agreed that the Administration should brief the Panel on such issues before April 2016.

(Post-meeting note: With the concurrence of the Chairman, the item would be discussed at the regular Panel meeting to be held on 16 February 2016.)

III. Better utilization of the eight-digit numbering plan

- (LC Paper No. CB(4)314/15-16(03) -- Administration's paper on consultation on more efficient utilization of the eight-digit numbering plan
- LC Paper No. CB(4)332/15-16(01) -- Administration's paper on public consultation on more efficient utilization of the eight-digit numbering plan (power-point presentation materials))
(tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued via e-mail on 14 December 2015)

Presentation by the Administration

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Principal Regulatory Affairs Manager (Regulatory 22) briefed members on the consultation paper on more efficient utilization of the eight-digit numbering plan ("the Consultation Paper") by giving a power-point presentation. Details of the briefing and presentation were set out in the papers provided by the Administration (LC Papers Nos. CB(4)314/15-16(03) and CB(4)332/15-16(01)).

Discussion

Mobile paging numbers

5. Mr WONG Yuk-man expressed concern about the impact of the proposed measures on existing paging subscribers, including those deployed in mission critical systems such as hospital paging systems. Director-General of Communications ("DG of C") clarified that with a view to improving the utilization efficiency of numbers in the "7X" level, the Communications Authority ("CA") proposed that those active paging numbers in blocks with fewer active users should be relocated to blocks with more active users, so that most of the number blocks in the "7(1-9)X" level could be vacated for re-allocation. While the "7(4-9)X" levels would be reserved for longer digit migration should there be such a need in the future, vacated numbers in the "7(1-3)X" levels would be re-allocated for mobile services.

6. DG of C added that as of July 2015, 38 120 active paging numbers were in use and they were scattered over a total of 348 blocks of 10 000 numbers in the "7X" level (save for "70X"). The ratio of the amount of paging numbers in use to the total amount of allocated paging numbers was as low as 1.1%. In

2020, it was estimated that there would be about 20 000 active paging subscribers. If the proposed relocation commenced in 2020, 65% of these active paging subscribers, i.e. 13 000 might be affected in that they would have to change their paging numbers. Out of the five proposed measures to be implemented, CA was of the preliminary view that Measure 1 (i.e. relocating some of the existing numbers for paging services), if adopted, should be implemented the last when all the available number resources made available by other measures were about to be used up, such that its impact on the paging subscribers and the general public would be kept to a minimum.

7. Mr Charles Peter MOK enquired about the possibility of relocating specific telephone numbers for call-forwarding paging numbers so as to implement Measure 1 at an early timeframe. Deputy Director-General (Telecommunications) ("DDG") advised that if Measure 1 was implemented at the current stage, about 25 000 (i.e. 65% of 38 120) active paging numbers would be affected as compared to 13 000 in 2020. As the number of pager users was decreasing every year, fewer users would be affected as time passed. In addition, the two licensees providing paging services were consulted and they were prepared to enhance their systems for supporting the dual access capability so that calls to either the old paging number or the new paging number would be properly connected within a certain period after the relocation exercise. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok agreed with the approach of the CA and urged it to carefully consider the views and comments of the industry in response to the consultation.

8. Mr YIU Si-wing enquired about the reasons for the availability of 3.2 million subscriber numbers after the completion of the relocation of paging numbers mentioned in the Consultation Paper. DG of C advised that number blocks in the "7(4-9)X" levels would be reserved for the possible migration to a longer digit numbering plan in which the prefix "7" might be used as the leading digit for mobile numbers in the future.

9. Noting that there was not much promotional activity for the consultation, Mr Charles Peter MOK enquired about possible extension of the consultation period. DG of C advised that through an advisory committee set up under the Office of the Communications Authority ("OFCA"), the industry had been invited to discuss the matter and express their concerns before CA formulated the proposed measures in the Consultation Paper. CA would take heed of the views of the industry collected in this consultation exercise and continue to liaise with them with regard to the implementation of the proposed measures and the timetable.

New mobile telephone services

10. Noting that the lifespan of the 8-digit numbering plan could be extended to September 2028 when all the measures proposed in the Consultation Paper were implemented, Mr SIN Chung-kai enquired whether new services such as "single-card-multiple-numbers service" would shorten the proposed lifespan of the 8-digit numbering plan. He also enquired whether there would be adjustments to the annual number fee charged for each subscriber number allocated to network operators to prevent them from hoarding unused mobile numbers.

11. DDG advised that only one Hong Kong mobile number was assigned to one "single-card-multiple-numbers service" as the other numbers contained in the card were numbers assigned by other jurisdictions. Visitors to Hong Kong such as those from the Mainland might use this service and be assigned a Hong Kong mobile number but this should not have substantially affected the lifespan of the 8-digit numbering plan. DG of C further advised that an annual number fee of HK\$3 was charged for each subscriber number allocated to network operators regardless of whether the subscriber number had been assigned to end user or not. The number fee had encouraged operators to return about seven million unused numbers to CA in the past few years.

12. Mr SIN Chung-kai requested the CA to note the increasing cross-border demand on the use of Hong Kong mobile numbers. DG of C advised that as of July 2015, there were over 16.7 million subscribers of mobile services, representing a mobile penetration rate at 228.8%, the second highest in the world. CA would closely monitor the market situation and the effectiveness of the new measures (as and when they were adopted) in maximizing the use of the existing 8-digit numbering plan, and would keep in view the technological advancement and consider in due course the longer term development of the numbering plan in Hong Kong for meeting the future number demand.

Prepaid mobile telephone cards

13. Mr YIU Si-wing expressed concern about measures taken by CA to ensure that mobile network operators ("MNOs") return the numbers to CA on expiry of the prepaid mobile telephone cards. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen shared a similar concern. DG of C advised that the percentage of mobile services subscribers using prepaid mobile telephone cards was about 52%. Expiry dates of the cards were generally printed on the package covers, and MNOs normally kept the numbers for about three to six months before re-distributing them to another prepaid telephone card in order to reduce the possibility of people calling previous users after the expiry of the cards. There were different types of prepaid mobile telephone cards to cater for different consumer needs. Instead

of mandating the time period for use of the recycled numbers, it would be better to allow flexibility for the industry as in the current practice to enable operators to meet the different needs of card users more effectively.

Special Number Blocks

14. In response to Ms Claudia MO's enquiry about Special Number Blocks with leading digit "8", DG of C advised that numbers with leading digit "8" were used for different services, including freephone numbers, personal number service and mobile services. Moreover, numbers in the "88X" level were reserved for future migration to a longer digit numbering plan. At present, freephone numbers subscribed by international organizations or companies for the provision of international customer services or enquiry hotlines occupied the "80X" level, while numbers in the "8(1-3)X" levels were used for personal number service, which provided users with an individual 8-digit personal number with which they might forward incoming calls to any other numbers that could reach them. Numbers in the "8(4-7)X" and "89X" levels (excluding the "852X" level which was reserved to avoid confusion with Hong Kong's country code) were allocated for mobile services. Among these numbers, a total of 0.6 million numbers were reserved as Special Numbers.

Numbers for fixed services and management costs for implementing measures

15. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired about possible vacation of numbers for fixed services. She also enquired about the additional operating and management costs for implementing all the measures proposed in the Consultation Paper. DG of C advised that about 90% of the numbers for fixed services had been allocated but the monthly number consumption rate was low when compared to that of mobile numbers. OFCA would implement the proposed measures with its existing resources. The measures proposed in the Consultation Paper were devised through more efficient utilization of the existing 8-digit numbering plan with an aim to keeping the social and economic costs on the community as well as the inconvenience to the general public to a minimum.

IV. Any other business

16. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 2:53 pm.