

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)719/18-19

(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 10 December 2018, at 10:30 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon KWONG Chun-yu (Chairman)
Hon SHIU Ka-chun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai

Member attending : Hon SHIU Ka-fai

Public Officers : Items III to IV
attending

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Miss Leonia TAI, JP
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Item III

Mr LAM Ka-tai, JP
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)
Social Welfare Department

Ms PANG Kit-ling
Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare)
Social Welfare Department

Item IV

Ms Vivian KO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 1
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Item V

Mr Caspar TSUI, JP
Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr Alex WONG
Assistant Director (Subventions)
Social Welfare Department

Mr LAM Bing-chun
Principal Social Work Officer (Information Systems
and Technology)
Social Welfare Department

Mr NG Chi-kwong
Senior Systems Manager (Information Systems and
Technology)
Social Welfare Department

Clerk in attendance : Ms Wendy JAN
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

Staff in attendance : Ms Catherina YU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Alison HUI
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

Action

I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting
[LC Paper No. CB(2)400/18-19(01)]

Members noted that the Administration's letter dated 5 December 2018 on Medical Assessment Form for Disability Allowance had been issued since the last meeting.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)378/18-19(01) to (02)]

2. Members agreed to discuss at the next meeting scheduled for 14 January 2019 the following items:

- (a) Proposal to create a Senior Principal Executive Officer post in the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") to head the new Planning and Development Branch;
- (b) Evaluation Study of the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services; and
- (c) Review of Compassionate Rehousing.

III. Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)378/18-19(03) to (04), CB(2)413/18-19(01) to (03) and CB(2)418/18-19(01) to (03)]

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") briefed members on the Final Report of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services ("the Study") and the Government's follow-up measures. In response to the Deputy Chairman's request for the Administration's response to his letter dated 6 December 2018 on child care services (LC Paper No. CB(2)413/18-19(01)), SLW also took members through the Administration's response, which was tabled at the meeting (LC Paper No. CB(2) 427/18-19(01)).

Manning ratio for day and residential child care centres

4. Noting that the qualified child care staff to child ratio for children aged under two was 1:3 in South Korea, 1:4 in Australia and Finland and 1:5 in Singapore respectively, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung opined that the proposed manning ratio of 1:6 for day and residential child care centres ("RCCCs") for children aged under two ("enhanced manning ratio") in Hong Kong failed to catch up with that in some of the neighbouring countries. Pointing out that the enhanced manning ratio was also back to the level achieved in 1976, he considered that the Administration should aim to further enhance the manning ratio. To achieve this, the Administration should attract more qualified child care workers ("CCWs") to join the child care sector, for example, by improving their remuneration. The Chairman opined that many community groups considered the enhanced manning ratio was still too high and should be further enhanced substantially.

5. SLW responded that the number of qualified CCWs required would be increased by one-third if the existing manning ratio was enhanced from 1:8 to 1:6. The number of qualified CCWs required would be doubled if the manning ratio was further enhanced to 1:4. In view of the stringent manpower situation of CCWs, the Administration would not be able to achieve the manning ratio of 1:4 in the coming few years. That said, the Administration would review the manning ratio from time to time.

6. Mr POON Siu-ping was concerned whether the Administration would achieve the enhanced manning ratio within 2019-2020. SLW responded that it would be a challenge for the Administration because service providers had difficulty in recruiting sufficient qualified CCWs.

The Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") had allocated additional resources to child care services in the 2018-2019 financial year and would continue to do so in the 2019-2020 financial year. It was hoped that a great demand for CCWs would trigger more manpower supply for the child care sector.

7. In response to the Chairman's enquiry on whether the enhanced manning ratio applied to both day child care centres ("CCCs") and RCCCs, Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare) said that in 2018-2019, the manning ratio for RCCCs had been enhanced to a level comparable to the enhanced manning ratio generally. The Administration would keep in view the development and review the manning ratio as necessary. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that users of RCCCs were children who could not be adequately cared for by their families because of various reasons such as family crisis, and around 40% of them had special needs. The manning ratio for RCCCs should therefore be lower than that for day CCCs. The Chairman requested the Administration to take note of the special needs of residents of RCCCs.

Planning ratio for child care centre places for children aged below three

8. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that it was estimated that around 30 000 aided CCC places would be required according to the planning ratio proposed by the Study for CCC places for children aged below three (i.e. 103 aided CCC places per 20 000 general population) ("proposed planning ratio"). He enquired about the Administration's plan for implementing the proposed planning ratio. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan expressed concern about whether the proposed planning ratio was feasible too.

9. SLW responded that the proposed planning ratio would be incorporated into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPSG") in 2019-2020. In the course of planning, relevant bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") were expected to reserve suitable premises for operating CCCs according to the planning ratio. Given that it might require 10 years or more to meet the proposed planning ratio, the Administration would continue to look for suitable sites for operating CCCs in the meantime. In addition, the Administration would launch a new phase of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses which would include CCCs as one of the types of social welfare services. In response to Dr Fernando CHEUNG's enquiry about the timetable for meeting the proposed planning ratio, SLW said that the provision of additional CCC places hinged on the availability of suitable sites and the construction time of CCCs which were somewhat beyond the Administration's control. The Administration was unable to provide a

timetable for achieving the proposed planning ratio at this stage.

10. Pointing out that the population size of children aged zero to six varied from districts to districts and Yuen Long District had the largest number of children within this age group, Mr POON Siu-ping asked about the basis for determining the proposed planning ratio and the supply of child care services for various districts in future. Dr CHENG Chung-tai enquired whether the proposed planning ratio was a minimum standard which would be reviewed according to the changes in service demand in various districts. He also asked whether a mechanism would be put in place to implement the planning ratio too.

11. SLW responded that in proposing the planning ratio, the Consultant Team of the Study had taken into account the existing demand for and supply of child care services. The proposed planning ratio, which would be incorporated into HKPSG, would be the only planning standard for CCC places for children aged below three. During the planning process, the Planning Department would adopt a macro perspective instead of taking into account the demography of individual districts. Given that the demand for child care services would be affected by factors such as changes in the number of families with domestic helpers or grandparents who could help looking after the children and changes in the number of small children, etc., the planning ratio would need to be reviewed periodically.

12. Concurring with the Study's observation that the positioning of child care services should be an integration of care and development, Dr Fernando CHEUNG opined that provision of child care services should be professionalized and regularized. However, the Administration lacked clear planning and target for enhancing child care services. He was of the view that the Administration should draw up a holistic and scientific plan for long-term development specifying how the Administration would achieve the proposed planning ratio, how long whole-day ("LWD") CCCs could satisfy the child care needs of families with both parents working and what was the future plan on the provision of such CCCs. The Administration should also list out the types of child care services to be provided, whether such services would be provided occasionally or regularly, whether professionals should be engaged in delivering the services, the estimated service demand and a concrete timetable for meeting such demand.

13. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that the Administration should draw up a timetable for implementing the recommendations made in the Final Report. SLW responded that it was the Administration's target to

implement the Study's short-term recommendations as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)378/18-19(03)) from 2019-2020 onwards and the long-term recommendations in later time as appropriate.

Enhancing the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

14. Mr Michael TIEN considered it most ideal for after-school care service to be provided at schools but schools had great reservations as it involved extra administrative work, liaison with social workers and extension of opening hours of schools. To alleviate the shortage of child care services, he took the view that the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project ("NSCCP") should be enhanced. To this end, the Administration should raise the eligible age of the target beneficiaries of NSCCP to 12, increase the incentive payment for home-based child carers ("HCCs") to a level comparable to the statutory minimum wage ("SMW") and cover their round-trip transport cost incurred in picking up the children after school and count the time they spent on transportation towards their hours of work. To enhance the service quality of HCCs, the Administration should standardize the training programmes for HCCs under either Level 1 or Level 2 of the Qualifications Framework. In addition, eligible service users should be fully subsidized or provided with fee remission as appropriate.

15. SLW responded that NSCCP sought to provide more flexible forms of day care services for small children to meet the needs of parents at the neighbourhood level. HCCs provided service as volunteers so as to promote the spirit of mutual help in the community. If HCCs became full-time employees, issues in relation to monitoring, regulation, training, employees' compensation insurance, etc., had to be addressed. Any exploration, in case considered appropriate, and implementation of the proposal would need time as relevant statutory requirements needed to be considered. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about whether the incentive payment for HCCs would be reviewed, SLW said that the review would take place in 2019-2020. Service providers would be consulted on the level of incentive payment.

16. The Deputy Chairman enquired whether the Administration would increase the incentive payment for HCCs of mutual help child care centres ("MHCCCs") and NSCCP to the same level of SMW as suggested by the Study. SLW responded that if the incentive payment for HCCs was raised to the SMW level, it would give an impression that HCCs were employees rather than volunteers. The Deputy Chairman opined that providing SMW for HCCs and raising the incentive payment to the SMW level were

separate issues. Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services) said that during the Administration's meeting with HCCs in May 2018, HCCs agreed that they should continue to provide the NSCCP services as volunteers. As service users were required to pay for the NSCCP services, increasing the incentive payment for HCCs might pose heavier financial burden to service users. The Administration should take this into account in considering the rate of increase of the incentive payment.

Re-engineering of mutual help child care centres

17. Dr CHENG Chung-tai said that in view of the severe inadequacy of child care services, the Administration should optimize child care services which were readily available. Noting that the average utilization rate of MHCCCs was only 8%, he asked about the concrete measures the Administration would take to enable these centres to better meet the child care needs in the community.

18. The Deputy Chairman remarked that some operators of MHCCCs had no idea on how to calculate the utilization rate of MHCCCs. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Administration should study the reasons for low utilization of MHCCCs. In re-engineering MHCCCs to provide after-school care service for children aged between three and six, the Administration should provide adequate support for MHCCCs for meeting the service needs and consider the affordability of service users. In this connection, he enquired about the Administration's support for MHCCCs in providing after-school care service for pre-primary school children.

19. SLW responded that as there was an overlap in the functions of MHCCCs and NSCCP, and NSCCP was more flexible in meeting the needs of parents who had to work long or irregular hours, the utilization rate of MHCCCs had dropped since the implementation of NSCCP. Given that MHCCCs sought to meet occasional child care service needs of parents, their services might not be used regularly. As a result, use of public resources might not be optimized. Since MHCCCs were not large enough for operating standalone CCCs, the Administration would consider converting them to provide after-school care service for children aged three to under six. SWD would discuss the details with the operators of MHCCCs and re-engineer the existing MHCCCs from 2019-2020 onwards by phases.

20. Given that low-income families could not afford to arrange interest classes provided in the private market for their children, Dr CHENG Chung-tai asked whether MHCCCs would provide such classes. SLW

responded that MHCCCs upon re-engineering might consider providing similar services in the future.

21. The Chairman said that he had worked in one of the MHCCCs before and suggested the Administration to capitalize on the experience of volunteers who had worked in MHCCCs and upgrade the facilities of MHCCCs with a view to boosting the utilization rate.

Provision of long-whole day child care services

22. Mr POON Siu-ping said that according to a survey on child care services conducted by the Federation of Hong Kong and Kowloon Labour Unions, many working mothers were in need of child care services. Mr POON and Dr Fernando CHEUNG were of the view that operating hours of child care services should be extended to address the needs of parents who worked long hours. SLW responded that the view that the provision of LWD child care services should be increased to cater for the needs of parents who worked long hours was recognized. It was the Administration's target to provide more LWD child care services in the long run and the Administration would continue to look for suitable sites for such provision.

Monitoring and assessment of child care services

23. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan took the view that quality indicators for monitoring and assessment of child care services should be set to facilitate the use of a care and development framework in child care services. In this connection, she asked how the Administration would take forward the Study's recommendation of developing a set of quality checklist with reference to international experience to evaluate child care services. SLW responded that as the manning ratio and standards of LWD child care services provided by non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") were clearly stipulated, their service quality should not be a concern. Monitoring of LWD child care services provided in the private market might be an issue for future consideration but the Administration had not yet planned to do so. The Administration would follow up the Study's recommendation on monitoring and assessment of child care services provided by NGOs.

Allocation of additional resources for child care services

24. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan expressed concern that the additional operating costs arising from the proposed enhancement of child care services would put extra financial burden on service providers. Noting that the Study had

recommended that the Government should increase resources allocation for child care services, she sought information on additional resources to be allocated to such services. SLW responded that the Administration would increase the level of subsidy for CCC services which comprised full funding for the cost of the enhanced portion of the manning ratios for CCWs as well as additional subsidy with a view to helping mitigate the financial burden of service users. The Administration would also explore fee remission for users and would discuss with service providers on the feasibility of reducing service fees. Information on expenditures to be allocated for child care services would be announced in the 2019-2020 Budget.

Subsidy for users of child care services

25. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he was given to understand that the Administration was considering subsidizing users of after-school child care service in the form of service vouchers. Given that there were special specifications for child care service facilities and after-school child care service was not available in the private market, the child care sector considered the service voucher approach not feasible. The sector took the view that Administration should increase the provision of LWD child care services in order to meet the demand.

26. SLW clarified that he had mentioned in a radio programme that the Administration would explore the provision of child care service vouchers for children aged above six. The Administration did not consider it suitable to provide vouchers for child care services for children aged below six and had no plan to consider such mode of subsidy for service users within this age group at this stage. The Administration was, however, exploring fee remission for service users within this age group.

27. Dr CHENG Chung-tai sought the reasons why service users of aided standalone CCCs/aided CCCs attached to kindergartens ("KGs") ("CCCs-cum-KGs") were required to pay monthly fees amounted to an average of about 80% of the service operation costs. He asked whether the Administration would consider providing full fee remission for these service users. SLW responded that the level of subsidy for such services had been increased from 5% in the past to about 20% presently. The Administration aimed to further increase the level of subsidy to about 40% and service users could apply for partial or full fee remission. The Administration considered that raising the level of subsidy to about 40% would help alleviate the financial burden of service users.

28. The Chairman enquired whether the Study had made recommendation on the level of reduction in the monthly fees paid by service users of aided standalone CCCs and CCCs-cum-KGs. He also asked about the timetable for increasing the level of subsidy to 40%. SLW responded that the Study had not suggested a level of reduction in the monthly fees. The Administration needed to look into the amount involved in raising the level of subsidy and aimed to increase the level of subsidy in 2019-2020.

29. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the median service fee currently paid by service users of CCCs-cum-KGs was around \$5,500, which was expensive for parents in general. If the level of subsidy was raised to 40%, the service fee would be around \$4,000 which was still high. Pointing out that parents were now paying about 17.3% of school fees for KGs, he called on the Administration to consider increasing the level of subsidy for CCCs-cum-KGs to 80% so as to rationalize the subsidy policy for child care services.

Motion

30. Mr Michael TIEN moved the following motion:

"鑒於有不少市民及團體均反映，鄰里支援幼兒照顧計劃("照顧計劃")服務不足，以及社區保姆質素參差，本委員會促請政府積極研究，增撥資源予非政府機構，以(1)提高照顧計劃受助者年齡至 12 歲；(2)要求社區保姆報讀相關政府資助課程；及(3)協助非政府機構積極推廣照顧計劃，讓當區家長能在就近的地方尋找到合適的保姆照顧小孩。"

(Translation)

"Given that many members of the public and deputations have reflected that services provided under the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project ("NSCCP") are insufficient and that home-based child carers vary in quality, this Panel urges the Government to proactively explore allocating additional resources to non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") to (1) raise the eligible age of the target beneficiaries of NSCCP to 12; (2) require home-based child carers to enroll in related publicly-funded programmes; and (3) assist NGOs in actively promoting NSCCP, so that parents can find suitable carers in the vicinity to take care of their children."

31. The Chairman put the motion to vote. As the majority of members present voted for the motion, he declared that the motion was carried.

Special meeting

32. Referring to the letter dated 7 December 2018 from Dr Fernando CHEUNG (LC Paper No. CB(2)418/18-19(01)) and the submission dated 6 December 2018 from Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children (LC Paper No. CB(2)413/18-19(02)) requesting the Panel to receive public views on the Study, the Chairman suggested that a special meeting should be held on 19 January 2019 for the purpose. Members agreed.

IV. Proposal for enhancing the secretariat support for the Commission on Children

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)378/18-19(05) and CB(2)413/18-19(04)]

33. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the Administration's proposal to create one directorate post at the rank of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) in LWB on a permanent basis with effect from 1 April 2019, to head a dedicated policy team for providing secretariat support to the newly established Commission on Children ("the Commission"), providing policy inputs on cross-bureau and cross-department child-related policies and measures, and coordinating relevant B/Ds in taking relevant follow-up actions on issues discussed by the Commission, so as to support the work of the Commission and take forward its agenda. In response to the Deputy Chairman's request for the Administration's response to his letter dated 6 December 2018 on enhancing the secretariat support for the Commission (LC Paper No. CB(2)413/18-19(04)), SLW also gave a brief account of the Administration's response, which was tabled at the meeting (LC Paper No. CB(2)427/18-19(01)).

Secretariat support for the Commission on Children

34. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that he had no strong view about the Administration's staffing proposal. Pointing out that the Children's Commissioners in some overseas jurisdictions were non-civil servants, he was of the view that the Administration should consider engaging a non-civil servant who had legal, child development or social work background and was enthusiastic about children affairs to head the policy team. As the Commission might focus on different areas at various stages of its work, the term of office of each appointee should be, say, three to six years, so as to allow the flexibility of engaging various persons with

different expertise and experience during various time periods. Sharing a similar view, the Deputy Chairman said that the Administration should consider appointing non-civil servants to work in the policy team.

35. SLW responded that four Working Groups, namely the Working Group on Research and Public Engagement, the Working Group on Promotion of Children's Rights and Development, Education and Publicity, the Working Group on Children with Special Needs, and the Working Group on Children Protection, would be set up under the Commission. Given the breadth, diversity and complexity of the coverage of children issues which would involve various B/Ds, the dedicated policy team needed to be led by a generalist directorate administrative officer ("AO") with rich experience in policy formulation, implementation and management, so as to effectively coordinate relevant B/Ds in taking forward the Commission's recommendations and implementing relevant follow-up actions .

36. SLW further said that many non-official members of the Commission were representatives of children concern groups and many of them were devoted to promotion of children's rights. He believed that members of the Commission would manifest their expertise and passion in their participation in the work of the Commission.

37. Mr POON Siu-ping indicated his support for the staffing proposal. He asked whether there would be any changes to the duties of Principal Assistant Secretary (Welfare)1 ("PAS(W)1") after the policy team had been set up. He also enquired about the impact on the work of the Working Groups of the Commission and alternative manpower arrangements in case of a delay in the creation of the new post, or if the staffing proposal was not approved by the Establishment Subcommittee ("ESC") or the Finance Committee ("FC"). SLW responded that the secretariat work of the Commission was temporarily supported by PAS(W)1 on top of her existing portfolios. PAS(W)1 and the supporting staff concerned were already working overtime to support the work of the Commission, which was highly undesirable. In the event that the new post could not be created, it would be very difficult for LWB to meet the aspiration of the Commission and that of the public. That said, LWB would continue to arrange existing staff to absorb the relevant work and endeavour to get the work done. However, the progress of the work would be affected substantially.

Accountability for child-related issues

38. Noting that the policy team would be headed by a directorate AO and supported by 10 non-directorate staff, Dr CHENG Chung-tai expressed concern about the accountability of the policy team and enquired about how check and balance on the policy team's work could be maintained. SLW responded that policy formulation and administrative work of the Government was always subject to the monitoring by the legislature. As the policy team would be set up under LWB, SLW would oversee and be held accountable for its work.

39. Given that a number of B/Ds were involved in the implementation of policies in relation to children but the policy team was formed under LWB, Dr CHENG Chung-tai expressed concern about the coordination among B/Ds in carrying out relevant work. SLW responded that policy issues might first be discussed by the relevant Working Groups and their recommendations would be referred to the Commission, with the Chief Secretary for Administration ("CS") as the Chairperson, for consideration. CS would instruct relevant B/Ds to take forward the policy initiatives, if necessary. In response to Dr CHENG Chung-tai's enquiry about whether CS or LWB would be responsible for handling child-related problems, SLW said that the Administration would follow up the matters as appropriate.

40. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about whether the Administration would update the Panel on the work of the Commission, SLW said that the Administration was willing to do so.

Setting up of an independent statutory Commission on Children

41. Dr Fernando CHEUNG took the view that the Commission should play the role of monitoring the implementation of children policies and the Government's work in relation to child protection and children's rights. Opining that the Commission should fulfill the obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, he had expected the Commission to be an independent statutory body. Noting with regret that the current term Government would not confer the Commission with statutory power, he said that the Administration should, as requested by some members of the Commission, start the preparatory work for making the Commission a statutory body.

42. Dr Fernando CHEUNG further said that under the existing "Government-led" structure of the Commission, the directions for children policies as well as the scope of work of the Commission would be dictated

by the Government, rendering non-official members of the Commission unable to play an influential role in this regard. He wondered how non-official members of the Commission could assume a leading role in the work of the Commission and doubted whether the creation of the new post would enable the Commission to achieve its terms of reference.

43. SLW responded that many children concern groups had expressed their concerns about the interests and rights of children and he believed that the society had the capability to urge the Government to address child-related issues. As such, it would not be necessary to make the Commission a statutory body. He added that the Working Groups of the Commission would be supported by the policy team and the convenors of the Working Groups were non-official members. The policy team would provide, inter alia, inputs in the formulation of child-related policies and measures for seeking advice from the Commission. The Administration considered that such arrangements would be more effective in driving the implementation of child-related initiatives when compared with setting up an independent Commission. Dr Fernando CHEUNG took the view that, in addition to the existing ex-officio vice-chairperson, the Administration should consider appointing another non-official vice-chairperson to the Commission so as to better balance the roles of non-official and ex-officio members of the Commission. SLW said that the Government had not considered this question but noted Dr CHEUNG's view.

Conclusion

44. The Chairman concluded that members supported in principle the submission of the staffing proposal to ESC for consideration.

V. Redevelopment of the Client Information System and the Service Performance Management Information System of the Social Welfare Department [LC Paper No. CB(2)378/18-19(06)]

45. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedures regarding personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed. He reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

46. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("USLW") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to redevelop the Client Information System ("CIS") and the Service Performance Management Information System ("SPMIS") of SWD.

Suggestions on effective use of the information systems

47. While supporting the redevelopment of CIS and SPMIS, Dr Fernando CHEUNG remarked that these two existing systems lacked transparency and could not generate useful management reports to help evaluate service effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Referring to a case where a child had received residential child care services from 12 different service units in 17 years, Dr CHEUNG opined that CIS should be enhanced to generate management reports to facilitate early identification of similar cases with a view to providing the most appropriate support services.

48. Dr Fernando CHEUNG further cited a case where a child was killed by an ex-mentally ill person who was living alone after his mother had been admitted to a residential care home for the elderly. He hoped that the proposed new CIS could facilitate early identification of the sudden changes of the conditions of at-risk families through data exchange among B/Ds, with a view to preventing occurrence of similar unfortunate incidents. He also suggested that the data collected from the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services should be made use of for identifying the service utilization pattern of elderly persons and analysing the performance of public elderly service, and that the management reports generated by the two systems should be made available to the public without disclosing the personal data of service users.

49. USLW responded that the technologies adopted at the time of development of the existing CIS and SPMIS were outdated. For example, all referrals and applications for services from other B/Ds, government related organizations and NGOs were currently received through post, fax or email and then manually input into the existing CIS. Moreover, the existing CIS had limited capacity to further interface or integrate with other SWD systems. As such, SWD needed to redevelop CIS and SPMIS to address these problems. The proposed new systems, i.e. CIS-II and SPMIS-II, would facilitate data exchange with concerned B/Ds and organizations. SPMIS-II would provide senior management of SWD and NGOs with comprehensive service performance information about subvented and subsidized services, including alerts on underperformed service areas, thereby facilitating them to take prompt remedial action when situation warranted.

Cost-effectiveness of redeveloping the information systems

50. The Deputy Chairman welcomed the redevelopment of CIS and SPMIS which had been used for years, but questioned the

cost-effectiveness of spending about \$460 million on implementing the redevelopment having regard to the realizable savings per annum for CIS and SPMIS were only around \$21 million and \$61,000 respectively. The Chairman raised similar question and was concerned about the high non-recurrent staff cost of about \$93 million of the project team. The Deputy Chairman added that in redeveloping the two systems, the Administration should take into account three major factors, namely cost-effectiveness, improvement on work efficiency and enhancement of service quality.

51. Noting that the redevelopment of the systems would generate notional savings by reducing paper consumption, the Chairman considered that such savings would only be minimal in recovering the non-recurrent expenditure arising from the implementation of redeveloping the systems and asked whether there would be room for further substantial cost savings arising from the redevelopment.

52. USLW stressed that apart from pursuing cost savings, the Administration would also consider the needs for service enhancements in redeveloping the existing systems. The modular design of the new systems would support efficient deployment of system enhancements to cater for changing operational requirements as well as new service and policy initiatives. USLW further explained to members the anticipated benefits of the proposed redevelopment of the two systems, such as the adoption of cloud computing technology in CIS-II for further system expansion to cater for new functionalities and data exchange with other systems, the increase in the end-user computing systems incorporated in CIS from 24 to 27, the increase in the number of users of SPMIS from 42 to around 400 SWD staff and 12 000 NGO users as well as the increase in the number of records processed through SPMIS from around 480 000 to around 3 million per annum.

53. As regards the annual savings to be generated, USLW clarified that the realizable savings per annum for CIS and SPMIS mentioned in paragraph 50 above were only the maintenance costs of the two existing systems, and that the proposed redevelopment of CIS and SPMIS would actually generate annual total savings of about \$62 million from 2024-2025 onwards and about \$4.7 million from 2023-2024 onwards respectively, the details of which were set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)378/18-19(06)).

54. In response to the Chairman's concerns about the expenditure of the proposed redevelopment of the two systems, USLW used SPMIS as an example to explain that the recurrent expenditure for SPMIS-II would be

around \$13 million per annum, representing only 0.09% of the total amount of subvention provided by the Administration for subvented services in 2017-2018 which was \$14.2 billion.

55. At the request of Dr Fernando CHEUNG and the Chairman, USLW undertook to provide the following information before the Administration submitted the relevant funding proposal to FC: (a) the interfaces of CIS and SPMIS; (b) data captured by CIS and SPMIS respectively; and (c) benefits to be achieved by the redevelopment of CIS and SPMIS.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)534/18-19(01) on 3 January 2019.)

Consultations on the redevelopment of the information systems

56. Dr Fernando CHEUNG enquired whether the Administration had consulted the social welfare sector on the redevelopment of the two systems, and whether the redeveloped systems would be further enhanced in the light of the latest views from the sector. USLW responded that while CIS was used for recording and consolidating information of service users, SPMIS was used for collating and consolidating the performance management information of subvented NGOs and service units of SWD. The Administration had consulted the social welfare sector on the redevelopment of SPMIS, and was conducting a comprehensive review of how to optimize the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System. The Administration would take into consideration enhancement suggestions to improve service performance monitoring and transparency of SPMIS arising from the review.

Conclusion

57. The Chairman concluded that members supported in principle the submission of the funding proposal to FC for consideration.

VI. Any other business

58. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:53 pm.