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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Meeting on 8 April 2024

Background brief on the establishment of the Digital Policy Office

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Administration's establishment of the Digital Policy Office. It also gives a brief account of the major views and concerns expressed by Members during discussions of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting ("the Panel") and the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to the Development of Smart City ("the Subcommittee") on relevant issues in recent years.

Background

Establishment of the Digital Policy Office

2.   In the Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Development Blueprint promulgated in end-2022, the Administration has emphasized "promoting digital economy development and developing Hong Kong into a smart city" as a major direction for the development of innovation and technology in Hong Kong.   It is stated in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address ("the Policy Address") that the Government will "press ahead with the digitalization of government services, using artificial intelligence ("AI") and opening up more government data to accelerate development of digital economy."   In addition, the development of digital government will be advanced by pursuing digital policies and adopting a data-driven approach.

3.   It is also mentioned in the Policy Address that the Government seeks to set up the Digital Policy Office by merging the existing Office of the

Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") and the Efficiency Office.   Led by the Commissioner for Digital Policy, the new office will be responsible for formulating policies on digital government, data governance and information technology ("IT").   It will consolidate resources, promote the opening up of data and application of digital technology by government departments and various sectors, so as to roll out more digital government services that could bring convenience and facilitation to the public and businesses.   It is estimated that the relevant procedures for establishing the new office will be completed in the first half of 2024 at the earliest.

Measures for promoting digital government

4.   To enhance management efficiency of the Government and optimize city management by leveraging technology, the Government released in 2020 the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong 2.0 with a number of initiatives under six smart areas, including:

(a)   Promoting digital government services: various departments will expedite the provision of digital government services, with a view to enabling online submission of application, payment and collection of documents for all licences, services involving application and approval and forms by mid-2024;

(b)   Wider application of "iAM Smart": the Government plans to fully adopt "iAM Smart" for provision of one-stop digital government services for the public by end-2025 to realize "single portal for online government services", thereby enabling citizens to gain access to a range of information related to daily lives.   Consideration is given to providing a "one-tap login" function, allowing citizens to directly use their "iAM Smart" accounts to access some commonly-used government services.   Also, the Government seeks to develop a business version of the "iAM Smart" platform to improve and streamline the authentication of business identities.   The Administration and the Guangdong Provincial Government are conducting tests on the interface between the digital infrastructure of Guangdong and Hong Kong, which will enable Hong Kong residents to use "iAM Smart" when registering on the "Unified Identity Authentication Platform of Guangdong Province" to access the government services of Guangdong Province;

(c) Developing the Consented Data Exchange Gateway ("CDEG"): the authorities intend to link up CDEG with the Commercial Data Interchange of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority by end-2024, which will enable members of the public to opt for the pilot data interchange arrangement and facilitate verification of the identity of customers by financial institutions. The Administration will consult the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data for advice on the design and detailed implementation arrangements of CDEG to ensure the compliance of relevant personal privacy protection requirements;

(d) Facilitation of data interchange: OGCIO launched the Next Generation Government Cloud in September 2020, which enhances the efficiency of interchange and sharing of data among bureaux/departments ("B/Ds"), apart from expediting the development of e-Government services through fast provision of IT resources;

(e) Application of advanced technologies: the Government will leverage advanced IT, such as big data analytics, AI, blockchain and geospatial analytics technologies, to enhance public services by optimizing over 100 digital government initiatives by end-2025;

(f) Enabling sharing of geospatial data: the Common Spatial Data Infrastructure portal is a one-stop platform with a map-based digital infrastructure for opening and sharing spatial data, covering different aspects such as buildings, population, transport; and

(g) e-Government Audit programme ("EGA"): to expedite the digital transformation of public services, OGCIO has embarked on an EGA for all B/Ds to provide recommendations on improving their IT systems and services. The relevant work was completed in end-2023.

Measures for facilitating data flow

Policy Statement on Facilitating Data Flow and Safeguarding Data Security in Hong Kong

5. In December 2023, the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau

("ITIB") and OGCIO published the Policy Statement on Facilitating Data Flow and Safeguarding Data Security in Hong Kong ("the Policy Statement") to set out the Government's management principles and strategies on data flow and data security.

6.   Through the Policy Statement, the Government will formulate rules relating to usage and safety to protect its IT systems and data security.   It will also review the content in existing laws concerning the collection, use, processing, protection and sharing of data and explore feasible measures to tackle pain points in specific areas, thereby breaking data silos and removing barriers to data sharing.   The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau will respectively study amendments to the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) and explore further enhancement of the Copyright Ordinance (Cap. 528), with the objectives of strengthening protection for personal data and AI technology development.

"Memorandum of Understanding on Facilitating Cross-boundary Data Flow Within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area"

7.   Insofar as promoting cross-boundary data flow is concerned, ITIB and the Cyberspace Administration of China ("CAC") entered into the "Memorandum of Understanding on Facilitating Cross-boundary Data Flow Within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" ("MoU") in June 2023, which aims to streamline compliance arrangements for the flow of personal data from the Mainland to Hong Kong under an "early and pilot implementation" approach in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("GBA"), thereby promoting the integration of the GBA economy and development.   Under the framework set out in the MoU, ITIB and CAC jointly announced on 13 December 2023 the facilitation measure of "Standard Contract for the Cross-boundary Flow of Personal Information Within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Mainland, Hong Kong)", allowing the personal information processors and the recipients to enter into a standard contract on a voluntary basis using a standardized template, which binds both contractual parties on their responsibilities and obligations in respect of the cross-boundary flow of personal information, with a view to facilitating and streamlining the compliance arrangements on cross-boundary flow of personal information in the GBA Mainland cities to Hong Kong.

8.   To further strengthen the regulation of cybersecurity, the Administration will study the formulation of Practice Guides on Data Centre Security, while stepping up support for the Partnership Programme for Cyber

Security Information Sharing to encourage the sharing of cybersecurity information and experience of incident responses in different sectors. Efforts will also be made to promote industry collaboration on providing free website security detection services for small and medium-sized enterprises ("SMEs").

Previous discussions

9.   At the Panel meetings on 13 February, 20 March, 13 November and 12 December 2023 and the Subcommittee meetings on 31 January and 25 April 2023, the Administration briefed Members on matters relating to the establishment of Digital Policy Office and promoting digital government. The major views and concerns expressed by Members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Commissioner for Digital Policy

10.   Members raised enquiries as to whether the Commissioner for Digital Policy had sufficient power to steer the relevant interdepartmental coordination efforts, and whether the Judiciary would be included in the work of promoting data sharing.   The Administration responded that with the support of various departments, it was believed that the Commissioner would be able to undertake the coordination work efficiently.   In promoting data sharing among B/Ds, better synergistic effect would be achieved through the Digital Policy Office, and relevant advice would be provided to government departments and the Judiciary.

Promoting e-Government services

11.   On the work of taking forward e-Government services, Members took the view that the Administration should help various departments and public organizations expeditiously roll out large-scale e-service systems and perform relevant tests in a holistic manner.   The Administration advised that it was necessary for different departments to arrange independent contractors to carry out testing prior to the launch of large-scale e-service systems.   The Government would formulate the relevant guidelines and departments would be requested to intensify their testing efforts, while the Digital Policy Office would assume the coordinating role.

"iAM Smart" platform

12.   Members enquired how the Administration would encourage more

government departments as well as public and private organizations to adopt "iAM Smart" to provide their online services. The Administration advised that OGCIO was in the process of launching a sandbox programme in collaboration with Cyberport, which enabled public and private organizations to conduct Proof-of-Concept tests through the sandbox programme.

13. On the issue of application programming interface, Members suggested that more personalized services should be included in the "iAM Smart" platform, such as making available a repository feature, and that reference should be taken from the design of Mainland mobile applications ("apps") by incorporating information into the apps. The Administration indicated that it would enhance the interface design of "iAM Smart" and consider to add a repository feature to provide more personalized services. The Administration would also update the design of "iAM Smart" to allow the public to gain access to a series of information related to daily lives without the need to register for a user account.

14. In view of the wide-ranging personal services provided by "iAM Smart", Members considered that the Administration should perform user identity authentication through stringent processes while introducing an additional two-factor authentication feature. Some other Members commented that the registration process should be simplified to facilitate more registrations for "iAM Smart" accounts by members of the public. The Administration advised that enhanced identity verification process would be adopted for first-time registrations and the number of self-registration kiosks would be substantially increased to make it easier for members of the public to register for "iAM Smart" accounts.

15. Questions were raised as to whether the Administration would allow data exchange in the digital infrastructure of Guangdong and Hong Kong through CDEG. The Administration said that tests were being conducted with the Mainland government on the interface between the digital infrastructure of Guangdong and Hong Kong, etc., and the relevant services were expected to be launched as soon as possible. This would enable Hong Kong residents to use "iAM Smart" to authenticate themselves when registering and using the government services of Guangdong Province. There were suggestions that apart from upgrading "iAM Smart" to enable Hong Kong residents to connect with Mainland government services, efforts should also be made to allow Mainland residents to perform identity authentication via the upgraded "iAM Smart" platform for accessing the government services in Hong Kong. The Administration replied that discussions with the Government Services and Data Management Bureau of

Guangdong Province on the arrangements of the "cross-boundary government services" initiative were underway.

Facilitating data flow

16.   Members enquired about the Administration's measures to promote data sharing across the industry; whether a data centre would be set up in the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation Zone in the future; and whether efforts would be made to further facilitate and strengthen the flow of sensitive data within GBA under the framework of "One Country, Two Systems".   The Administration advised that the Policy Statement jointly published by ITIB and OGCIO set out the Government's management principles and strategies on data flow and data security, with a view to optimizing the data governance system from various perspectives.   To boost the smart city development and take forward the specific planning for the Lok Ma Chau Loop, the Government strived to promote the flow of people, goods, capital and information while striking a balance between data flow and data security.

17.   Members asked how the Administration would tackle the lack of connectivity among the service platforms of various government departments.   The Administration explained that OGCIO was now implementing a CDEG which enabled members of the public to authorize the exchange of their personal data among relevant systems of government departments.   The initiative would help address the lack of connectivity in respect of system data among departments.   Departmental IT systems would be updated to enable mutual exchange of data among various departments in a standardized manner.   Members suggested that the Administration should set up a unified platform and establish a central databank to achieve genuine data interchange.

18.   Members suggested that the Administration should draw reference from the Data Security Law and Personal Information Protection Law enacted by the Mainland as well as Singapore's Digital Government Blueprint to achieve the goal of data sharing among departments.   The Administration said that it was open-minded as to whether there was a need for enacting laws to regulate matters such as data collection and usage, and relevant legislation would be amended at an appropriate juncture to facilitate the development of e-Government services. (see paragraph 6 above for the relevant progress)

19.   Members enquired how the Administration would ensure the protection of the public's privacy in tandem with promoting cross-boundary

data flow. Members commented that it was necessary to address the restrictions on collecting and using personal data imposed by laws and allay public concerns on the protection of privacy. According to the Administration, the Government had all along adhered to the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486), among others, as well as other administrative measures and industry guidelines in the collection and use of data, including personal data, where appropriate. The Administration would also consult the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data to ensure that the protection of the public's personal data complied with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

Enhancing cybersecurity protection

20. Members enquired about the Administration's measures to help SMEs respond to cybersecurity risks as appropriate. There was also a suggestion that the Administration should consider collaborating with sizeable organizations or trade associations to provide assistance to the industry. The Administration remarked that the Government was supporting the industry in addressing cybersecurity risks on various fronts, for example, by stepping up the collaborative efforts with the industry, organizing publicity campaigns and training activities, enhancing the awareness and capability of the industry and the general public in safeguarding cybersecurity, formulating Practice Guides on Data Centre Security in consultation with the industry, as well as the provision of service to address cyber risks and support on information security incident responses.

Implementing the e-Government Audit programme

21. Members enquired how the Administration would implement the EGA programme. The Administration advised that consultancy firms with relevant experience would be engaged to review the IT systems and services of B/Ds, and recommendations on the enhanced solutions would be put forth. The authorities planned to deliver 100 digital government initiatives by end-2025. Members suggested that consultants should be additionally engaged to examine the legal issues concerned.

Questions raised at Council meetings

22. Members had raised questions related to the establishment of the Digital Policy Office and the development of e-Government services at Council meetings. Details of the questions and the Administration's replies are given in the hyperlinks in the **Appendix**.

Latest position

23.   At the meeting on 8 April 2024, the Administration will brief the Panel on the arrangements for setting up the Digital Policy Office by merging the existing OGCIO and the Efficiency Office.

Relevant papers

24.   A list of the relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 1 and Public Complaints Office
Legislative Council Secretariat
28 March 2024

Establishment of the Digital Policy Office

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting	13 February 2023	[Agenda](#) Item III: Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Development Blueprint [Minutes of meeting](#) [Follow-up paper](#)
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting	20 March 2023	[Agenda](#) Item III: Upgrade of "iAM Smart" to realize "single portal for online government services" [Minutes of meeting](#) [Follow-up paper](#)
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting	13 November 2023	[Agenda](#) Item III: Briefings by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development and the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism on the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address [Minutes of meeting](#)
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting	12 December 2023	[Agenda](#) Item III: Facilitating data flow and safeguarding data security [Minutes of meeting](#) [Follow-up paper](#)
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to the Development of Smart City	31 January 2023	[Agenda](#) Item I: Update on the implementation of Smart Government [Minutes of meeting](#) [Follow-up paper](#)
Subcommittee on Matters Relating to the Development of Smart City	25 April 2023	[Agenda](#) Item I: The next stage of work on smart city development [Minutes of meeting](#)

Council meeting	Paper
22 February 2023	Question 10: Measures to complement the nation's establishment of a data base system
26 April 2023	Question 9: Promoting the development of e-Government services
24 January 2024	Question 18: Development and application of artificial intelligence