EDUCATION BUREAU KOWLOON TONG EDUCATION SERVICES CENTRE

Executive Summary

1.   The Education Bureau Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre (KTESC) is located on top of a public transport interchange at 19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon and adjacent to the Mass Transit Railway Kowloon Tong Station. It has a total net operational floor area (NOFA) of 13,900 square metres (m^2). The KTESC commenced operation in early 2006. The project expenditure was $487 million.

2.   The KTESC provides the following facilities:

(a)   educational facilities, namely the Central Resources Centre (CRC), Special Education Resource Centre (SERC), Hong Kong Teachers' Centre (HKTC) and Young Achievers' Gallery (YAG);

(b)   12 communal facilities, namely one lecture theatre, one mini-lecture theatre, one multi-purpose hall and nine function rooms; and

(c)   office accommodation for some 550 staff of the Education Bureau (EDB).

The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review on the KTESC.

Realisation of expected benefits of KTESC

3.   ***Changes in accommodations.***   According to the Government's Accommodation Regulations, the user bureau/department (B/D) of a Specialist/Departmental Building has to prepare a Schedule of Accommodation (SoA) and seek the Property Vetting Committee's (PVC) approval. After the approval of SoA, if the NOFA of any individual item varies by more than 10% from the approved NOFA or the total NOFA varies by more than 5% from the approved

area, the user B/D should re-submit the SoA to the PVC for further approval. Audit compared the NOFA of the accommodations of the KTESC as at 31 October 2014 with the latest approved SoA in January 2004. Audit noted that for some accommodations, there were variations exceeding 10%. Audit also noted that some existing accommodations (e.g. Applied Learning Section) were not included in the January 2004 approved SoA (paras. 2.4 to 2.6).

4. ***Utilisation of educational facilities.*** Educational facilities accounted for 11% of the KTESC's total NOFA of 13,900 m^2 (para. 2.8). Audit found that:

  (a) ***CRC.*** The EDB used the reading recorded by an automatic patron counter of the entrance gate to calculate the number of visitors. The daily average number of visitors reported for 2014 was 266. Audit conducted a five-day on-site survey in January 2015 and noted that the number of visitors included passers-by who entered the CRC solely on the way of visiting the multi-purpose hall adjacent to the CRC. The daily number of visitors who used the CRC services during Audit's five-day survey ranged from 97 to 253 whereas the daily number of visitors calculated by the CRC ranged from 297 to 950 (paras. 2.15 to 2.19);

  (b) ***SERC.*** Similar to the CRC, the EDB also used a gate counter to collect the number of visitors. The reported daily average number of visitors in 2014 was 119. Audit's five-day survey noted that the number of visitors was five or below on each of the five days (average 3.8 visitors per day) (paras. 2.22 to 2.24);

  (c) ***HKTC.*** The EDB did not collect information on the number of visitors to the HKTC. Audit's five-day survey noted that the number of visitors was on the low side. During the survey, there were 15 visitors or less on weekdays and 22 visitors on Saturday (average 11.2 visitors per day) (para. 2.26); and

  (d) ***YAG.*** The daily average number of visitors to the YAG was low, ranging from 15 to 28 for the years 2009 to 2014 (up to 31 October) (para. 2.28).

Executive Summary

5.   ***Utilisation of communal facilities.***   Communal facilities accounted for 12% of the KTESC's total NOFA. In response to the Government Property Agency (GPA)'s survey on utilisation of training venues, in August 2012, the EDB informed the GPA that the average utilisation rate of the 12 communal facilities (see para. 2(b)) was 37% for the period from July 2011 to June 2012. In June 2013, the EDB informed the GPA that the low utilisation was attributed to: (a) high wastage rate (booked sessions subsequently unused) of 60%; and (b) late/no release of unused sessions, of which some 26% were released less than 7 days before the session dates, and 13% had not been released at all. In November 2013, the EDB informed the GPA of its improvement actions taken, including: (i) if the user did not respond to email issued (one month prior to the event date) by the Administration and Management Office (AMO) requesting confirmation of booking within 5 working days, the AMO would cancel the booking; and (ii) opening up the evening session of the lecture theatre, mini-lecture theatre and multi-purpose hall for booking by other B/Ds three months in advance (paras. 2.30, 2.32 to 2.35). Audit, however, found that:

(a)   the average utilisation rate of the communal facilities for the period from November 2013 to October 2014 had only been marginally improved to 39% (para. 2.36);

(b)   the problems of "booked sessions unused" and "late/no release of unused sessions" still persisted. Of the 4,981 booked but unused sessions during the period from November 2013 to October 2014: (i) for 1,812 (36%) sessions, the users did not turn up; and (ii) for 3,169 (64%) cancelled sessions, 1,050 (33% of the 3,169) were only cancelled and released for rebooking 7 days or less prior to the event dates (para. 2.37); and

(c)   the response to the opening up of the facilities for booking by other B/Ds was not encouraging. Up to 31 December 2014, the lecture theatre (the only facility that had been booked by other B/Ds) was only used for eight sessions (para. 2.38(b)).

Operational issues of KTESC

6.   *Services of the CRC.* Audit found that:

   (a)   *Borrowing of library resources.* During the period from April 2011 to September 2014: (i) 85% of some 28,000 resource items available for borrowing had not been borrowed by members; and (ii) less than 10% of members had used the borrowing services (paras. 3.5 and 3.6); and

   (b)   *Usage of resources at the CRC.* There was scope for enhancing the usage of some in-house services (e.g. in-house reading of books and printed journals and access to electronic resources) (para. 3.8).

7.   *Borrowing service of the SERC.* As at 30 September 2014, the SERC had a collection of some 2,600 books and 4,497 members. According to the EDB's records, there were 11,472 borrowing records (on average 480 each month) for the two-year period from October 2012 to September 2014. During this two-year period, except only one day, each and every day when the SERC was open, there were some members who came to borrow books. The daily average number of borrowers was about 10 (paras. 3.12 to 3.14). However,

   (a)   during a five-day Audit survey conducted in January 2015, Audit observed that no member had borrowed any item from the SERC. Only on one of the five days, one member visited the SERC and returned one book (para. 3.15); and

   (b)   Audit selected 15 books during the five-day survey and noted that the numbers of borrowing as indicated by the due dates on the books were much less than those shown in the SERC's borrowing records (para. 3.17).

This matter has been referred to the EDB management for investigation (para. 3.16).

Way forward

8.   The EDB has not conducted a post-implementation review (PIR) to assess the effectiveness of the KTESC project in achieving its planned objectives and expected benefits (para. 4.5).

Audit recommendations

9.   **Audit recommendations are made in PART 4 of this Audit Report. Only the key ones are highlighted in this Executive Summary. Audit has** *recommended* **that the Secretary for Education should:**

Realisation of expected benefits of KTESC

(a)   **for changes to the accommodations at the KTESC after the PVC's approval in January 2004, seek approval from the PVC in accordance with Accommodation Regulation 312 and Annex IV (Part One) of the Accommodation Regulations;**

(b)   **take measures to ensure that in future changes to accommodations are properly approved by the PVC;**

(c)   **improve the accuracy of the methods for recording the number of visitors to the CRC and the SERC, with a view to more accurately reflecting their utilisation;**

(d)   **take effective action to improve the utilisation of the educational facilities (i.e. the CRC, SERC, HKTC and YAG);**

(e)   **take effective action to improve the utilisation of communal facilities;**

Operational issues of KTESC

(f)   **take effective action to further promote the services of the CRC and the SERC;**

(g)   **investigate the discrepancies between the borrowing activities as observed by Audit and the borrowing records in the computer system of the SERC;**

(h)   **ensure that the borrowing statistics of the CRC and the SERC accurately reflect their actual borrowing activities;**

Way forward

(i)   **work out a strategy for the effective use of the KTESC and closely monitor the implementation of the strategy; and**

(j)   **conduct a PIR of the KTESC project, taking into account the audit findings in this Audit Report.**

Response from the Government

10.   The Secretary for Education agrees with the audit recommendations.