

## **Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs**

### **Practical Arrangements for the 2006 Election Committee Subsector Elections**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper sets out the key electoral arrangements proposed by the Electoral Affairs Commission (“EAC”) for the Election Committee (“EC”) subsector elections to be held in December 2006.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. The EAC is a statutory and independent body responsible for the conduct and supervision of elections. The Commission, supported by the Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”), is making preparations for various electoral arrangements for the EC subsector elections. The elections will be held in December 2006. Polling will be conducted in about 100 polling stations across Hong Kong. Counting will be centralised and is planned to take place in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Some of the practical arrangements relating to the polling and the counting of votes are set out in the following paragraphs.

#### **DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS**

##### **Number and allocation of polling stations**

3. In the 2000 EC subsector elections, there were 100 polling stations across the territory, and voters were allocated polling stations according to their residential address. It was a one-stop arrangement in that a voter of a subsector who was also an authorized representative of a corporate voter of another subsector could vote at the same polling station. The EAC considers that a similar arrangement and a similar number of polling stations should be set up to cater for voters of the 2006 EC subsector elections. There are now about 200 000 registered voters for EC subsector elections. This year’s voter registration exercise is still going on (the deadline for registration is 16 May 2006). On the basis that there will be

about 200 000 or more registered voters, about 2 000 or more voters will be assigned to each polling station on average. For comparison, for the 2003 District Council election and the 2004 Legislative Council (“LegCo”) election, each polling station was assigned about 6 000 to 7 000 electors on average. For districts which cover a larger geographical area, more polling stations will be set up to facilitate the voters.

### **Counting of ballot papers**

4. Given the large numbers of seats and candidates for EC subsector elections, it has been the practice for the REO to use an Optical Mark Recognition (“OMR”) system to facilitate the counting of votes. The REO did so in the previous EC subsector elections in 1998 and 2000, and the EAC proposes to continue the practice for the coming elections.

### **Design of ballot papers**

5. Of the 38 EC subsectors, members for 35 subsectors (involving a total of 664 seats) are returned by elections. The number of seats ranges from 11 to 41 for different subsectors. It can be expected that for EC subsectors with more seats, there could be more candidates contesting in each subsector. The ballot paper used must be able to accommodate a sizeable number of candidates.

6. The ballot paper will already be very congested because it has to contain both the Chinese and English names of possibly several dozens of candidates, including their candidate numbers. At the same time, for the ballot paper to be read by the OMR machines, it will need to be specially designed. There are also limitations on its length (slightly longer than the length of A4 paper at most), width (about the width of A4 paper) and layout. To facilitate voters, the font size of words to be printed on the ballot paper will also need to be large enough to be clearly legible. For ease of operation, each ballot paper should contain no more than one sheet.

7. Given the above considerations, the ballot paper design being considered by the EAC can accommodate up to about 90 candidates. In case the number of candidates for any subsector exceeds this number, the ballot paper will be longer than that which is “readable” by the OMR machines. REO will have to resort to manual counting for such ballot papers, which will take more time. To cater for this possibility, an adequate

number of counting staff will be provided for the manual counting work.

### **Other related measures**

8. Other key measures, which the EAC will put in place to ensure the smooth conduct of the 2006 EC subsector elections, are set out below.

- (a) Compilation of voter turnout statistics : Presiding Officers of polling stations will use facsimile machines to report hourly voter turnout statistics to the Central Command Centre, where raw data will be input into a central computer for compilation.
- (b) Counting arrangement : Centralised counting will continue. There will be two separate teams of counting staff to avoid staff fatigue.
- (c) Organisation and set-up of the Central Command Centre : The Central Command Centre on the polling day will be supervised by the Chief Electoral Officer of the REO, and all units of the Centre will be accommodated in the same place to facilitate communication and coordination.
- (d) Staff training : Training on contingency planning and crisis management will be provided for core REO staff to equip them with the necessary skill in handling unexpected situations.
- (e) Design and number of ballot boxes : The ballot boxes will be carefully and thoroughly tested by various means, including trial use using dummy papers which are of the same size and thickness as genuine ones, after the actual design of the ballot papers has been firmed up. There will also be an adequate number of ballot boxes, including extra provisions to cater for unexpected situations.
- (f) Emergency depots and transportation : There will be five emergency depots to cover different parts of the territory and to ensure quick replenishment of supplies where necessary. Each emergency depot and each individual polling stations will be equipped with vehicles for urgent deployment in case of emergencies.

## **Advice Sought**

9. Members are invited to express views on the proposals set out in this paper.

Registration and Electoral Office  
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