

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

Arrangements for the Counting of Votes for the 2008 Legislative Council Election

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the arrangements being planned by the Electoral Affairs Commission ("EAC") for the counting of votes for the 2008 Legislative Council ("LegCo") Election to be held in September 2008.

Vote Counting Arrangements

2. Since 2003, polling-cum-counting arrangement has been adopted for the counting of votes for District Council ("DC") elections and by-elections, and LegCo election and by-election for geographical constituencies ("GCs"). This includes the recent 2007 DC Election and the 2007 LegCo By-election for the Hong Kong Island GC held on 18 November and 2 December 2007 respectively. In view of the generally successful experience, we plan to adopt the same arrangement for the counting of GC votes for the 2008 LegCo Election.

3. Under the polling-cum-counting arrangement for GC votes, a polling station will be converted into a counting station immediately after the close of the poll. Candidates and their agents may witness the

conversion process. They and the public may observe the count inside the counting station. The Presiding Officer (“PRO”) of the polling station assumes the role of counting supervisor. He/she will be assisted by the polling staff, who will take up the role of counting staff. Upon completion of the count, the PRO will inform candidates or their agents of the counting results for the counting station. The candidates/agents may request a recount for that station. If there is no request for a recount, the PRO will report the counting results to the Returning Officer of the GC concerned through the Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”). The results will be combined with those from counting stations for the same GC. When counting is completed for all the counting stations in the same GC, the Returning Officer will inform the candidates or their agents of the overall counting results. The candidates or their agents may request a recount for all the stations concerned. If there is no request for a recount, the Returning Officer will formally announce the election results.

4. The major advantage of decentralised counting lies in its efficiency. There is no need to transport the ballot boxes from the polling stations to a central counting station. Counting of votes can commence shortly after the close of poll and can be conducted simultaneously at all polling stations. The risks involved in transporting ballot papers can also be avoided.

5. As for the votes of functional constituencies (“FC”), we have all along been adopting central counting arrangement. For certain FCs, as only a small number of votes will be cast at individual polling stations, it is necessary to mix the ballot papers from different polling stations before they

are counted in order to preserve the secrecy of vote. As such, central counting arrangement is the only viable option.

Views Sought

6. Members are invited to express their views on the counting arrangements proposed above for the 2008 LegCo Election.

Registration and Electoral Office

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