

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

**Practical Arrangements for the 2011
Election Committee Subsector Elections**

PURPOSE

This paper sets out the key electoral arrangements proposed by the Electoral Affairs Commission (“EAC”) for the 2011 Election Committee (“EC”) subsector elections to be held on 11 December 2011.

BACKGROUND

2. The EAC is a statutory and independent body responsible for the conduct and supervision of elections. The EAC, supported by the Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”), is making preparations for various electoral arrangements for the 2011 EC subsector elections. Polling will be conducted in about 110 polling stations across the territory. Counting will be centralised and will take place at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Some of the key practical arrangements relating to polling stations, ballot papers, counting of votes, joint promotional letter and publicity are set out in the following paragraphs.

PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS

Nomination Period and Candidates’ Briefing

3. As the EC subsector elections will be held only about one month after the DC election in 2011, there will be separate nomination periods for the non-DCs subsectors and DCs subsectors. The tentative nomination period for the non-DCs subsectors is from 8 to 15 November 2011 while the one for the DCs subsectors is from 18 to 24 November 2011, following gazettal of the election result of the DC Election to be held on 6 November 2011. Individual briefing sessions are scheduled to be held for the candidates of the non-DCs subsectors on 18 and 19 November 2011 and for the candidates of the DCs subsectors on 28 November 2011 respectively.

Number and Allocation of Polling Stations

4. In the 2006 EC subsector elections, having regard to the geographical distribution of voters, 110 polling stations were identified and set up across the territory to facilitate casting of votes. Voters were allocated polling stations according to their residential addresses as registered in the relevant Final Registers. Furthermore, there was a one-stop arrangement to enable a voter of a subsector who was also an authorized representative of a corporate voter of another subsector to cast both votes at the same polling station. The REO considers that the same arrangement should continue to be adopted and roughly the same number of polling stations should be set up in the 2011 EC subsector elections. We estimate that by close of this year's voter registration exercise on 16 July 2011, there will be about 240 000 registered voters for EC subsector elections and, approximately, about 2 100 voters will be assigned to each polling station on average.

5. Registered voters who are imprisoned or remanded under the custody of the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") will be arranged to cast votes at the dedicated polling stations ("DPSs") to be set up at the penal institutions of the CSD. Depending on the actual number of such voters on the polling day, a maximum of 22 DPSs will be set up at these penal institutions. For registered voters who are remanded or detained on the polling day by law enforcement agencies other than CSD, such as the Police, Independent Commission Against Corruption, Customs and Excise Department, about two to three DPSs at police stations are planned to be set up for them to cast their votes.

Counting of Ballot Papers

6. Given the large numbers of seats and candidates for EC subsector elections, REO will conduct the count of votes with the aid of Optical Mark Recognition ("OMR") machines, in line with the practice in previous EC subsector elections in 1998, 2000 and 2006.

Design of Ballot Papers

7. Of the 38 EC subsectors, members for 35 subsectors (involving a total of 1 044 seats including ten "Special Member" seats¹) are to be returned by elections. The number of seats allocated to individual subsectors ranges from

¹ The number of members of the EC will be increased from 800 to 1,200 starting from February 2012 when the new term of the EC commences. Ten of the 400 new seats will be allocated to the subsector of Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members in anticipation of the increase of LegCo seats from 60 to 70 starting with the fifth term of the LegCo. Pending commencement of the fifth term of the LegCo in October 2012, ten "Special Member" seats would be created temporarily, of which four will be allocated to Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference subsector, two to Heung Yee Kuk subsector, two to Hong Kong and Kowloon District Councils ("DCs") subsector and two to New Territories DCs subsector.

16 to 62. Owing to the increase in the number of seats across the board, it is expected that more candidates will contest in the different subsectors. In this regard, the design of ballot papers, which must conform to the form as prescribed in the relevant EAC electoral regulation, must also be able to accommodate a sizeable number of candidates.

8. In addition, to ensure accuracy in the voting and counting process, the ballot papers need to be single-sided, to carry some required technical features and to each contain no more than one sheet. The OMR machines can normally process ballot papers up to the length of 22 inches. The design of a ballot paper in such length can accommodate about 140 candidates and, subject to further system tests, the length of the ballot paper can be extended to 26 inches to accommodate up to 168 candidates at the maximum. In case the number of candidates for any subsector exceeds the maximum number, REO will have to resort to manual counting, which unavoidably will require more time to complete. To cater for this possibility, a suitable number of counting staff will need to be made available and specially trained for the manual counting work.

Reduction of Paper Consumption on Election-related Materials

9. For environmental protection reasons, we will continue to adopt various measures to reduce the paper consumption on election-related materials including:

- (a) providing address labels of electors (except those who have provided REO with their email addresses) to candidates only upon request;
- (b) encouraging electors to register their e-mail addresses with the REO through GovHK and candidates to send their EAs to electors through e-mail;
- (c) maintaining the space allocated to each candidate on the introductory leaflet at one-fourth of an A4 page as in 2006 EC subsector elections; and
- (d) using recycled paper or paper made from wood-pulp derived from sustainable forest to print electoral documents as far as practicable.

Furthermore, all electoral documents such as candidates' introductory leaflets, poll cards and envelopes will be printed with environmentally friendly ink.

Joint Promotional Letter

10. To enable candidates to jointly promote themselves at the same election and as a further step to reduce paper consumption on election-related materials, candidates standing for election in the same EC subsector will be allowed to send joint promotional letters free of postage to each voter of the relevant subsector, as provided for in the Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2011 which was passed by the LegCo on 6 July 2011. Under this new arrangement, the letter sent by a candidate who is validly nominated at a subsector election may contain information on any other candidate(s) of the **same** subsector who is also validly nominated at that election.

Publicity

11. A publicity campaign will be held for the purpose of encouraging nomination of candidates and voter turnout as well as publicising the proper procedures in vote casting for the 2011 EC subsector elections. The messages will be promulgated through TV and radio Announcements in the Public Interests (APIs), posters, advertisements in newspapers and MTR as well as appeal letters to voters. The Independent Commission Against Corruption will also produce booklets and leaflets to promote clean elections. Furthermore, to enable voters to familiarise themselves with the voting procedures, mock polling stations will be set up.

Other Related Measures

12. Other key measures, which the EAC will put in place to ensure the smooth conduct of the 2011 EC subsector elections, are set out below.

- (a) Compilation of voter turnout statistics : The Statistical Information Centre will be set up at REO's Caroline Hill Road Office to collect and consolidate voter turnout statistics via fax machines. The voter turnout figures will be made available to the public through press releases and the dedicated website for the 2011 ECSS Elections on an hourly basis.
- (b) Counting arrangement : To cater for the possibility of a long-drawn-out counting process and, also, the need for recount, we shall make available a second shift of counting staff to cater for extended counting hours.

- (c) Organisation and set-up of the Central Command Centre : The Central Command Centre set up at REO's Caroline Hill Road Office on the polling day and Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre after the close of the poll will be supervised by the Chief Electoral Officer of the REO. All units of the Centre will be accommodated in the same place to facilitate communication and coordination.
- (d) Staff recruitment : About 3 500 civil servants from various Government Bureaux / Departments will be recruited and trained to carry out polling and vote counting duties on the polling day.
- (e) Staff training : Briefing sessions on the polling procedures and arrangements will be arranged for all polling staff. Hands-on practice of counting duties will also provided for counting staff who are deployed to work at the Central Counting Station.
- (f) Design and number of ballot boxes : The ballot boxes will be carefully and thoroughly tested to ensure that they are operationally fit for holding the ballot papers to be used in the elections. There will also be adequate provision of ballot boxes to cater for unexpected situations.
- (g) Contingency planning : While every effort will be made to ensure that each and every polling station is adequately equipped and well provisioned for polling work, five emergency depots will be set up to enable quick replenishment of supplies to polling stations in the case of unforeseen circumstances. Each emergency depot will be equipped with vehicles for urgent deployment if the need arises. We will draw up a comprehensive contingency plan to deal with various kinds of incidents on the polling day.

ADVICE SOUGHT

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

Registration and Electoral Office
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