

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

Venue for Central Counting Station for the 2008 Legislative Council Election

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the venue for setting up the central counting station ("CCS") for the 2008 Legislative Council ("LegCo") Election.

Background

2. At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Constitutional Affairs on 17 December 2007, we consulted Members on the vote counting arrangements for the 2008 LegCo Election. Members generally agreed that polling-cum-counting arrangement should be adopted for counting the geographical constituency ("GC") votes, while central counting arrangement should be adopted for the functional constituency ("FC") votes. As such, a venue has to be determined for setting up the CCS for counting the FC votes and for announcing the results of GC and FC elections.

Possible Venues for Central Counting Station

3. The 2008 LegCo Election is scheduled for September 2008. As September is one of the busiest periods for conventions and exhibitions in Hong Kong, the most popular venues are often fully

booked by long-term event organisers years in advance. As such, the availability of suitable venues for setting up the CCS is very limited. Even though the Registration and Electoral Office has already started to identify suitable venues since early 2006, only two venues can be secured for the relevant period. They are the AsiaWorld-Expo (“AWE”) in Chek Lap Kok and the Hongkong International Trade & Exhibition Centre (“HITEC”) in Kowloon Bay.

The AsiaWorld-Expo

4. The key strength of the AWE lies in its spacious physical layout. Different sections of the CCS can be housed within the same hall, with a large capacity for accommodating candidates, agents and the public who wish to observe the count. The large number of unloading bays as well as the ample circulation and marshalling area at the AWE also facilitate smooth and orderly reception of FC ballot boxes from the polling stations.

5. However, the AWE’s relative remoteness makes it a less attractive location for setting up the CCS. As ballot boxes containing FC votes will be transported to the CCS from polling stations all over the territory after the close of the poll, the accessibility of the CCS is one of the major factors affecting the efficiency of the counting process. Adverse weather conditions, which are not uncommon in September, may add to the challenge of transporting ballot boxes to such a distant location. Besides, some candidates, their agents and members of the public may find it inconvenient to travel to and from the AWE to observe the count,

especially after midnight when public transportation would cease operation.

The Hongkong International Trade & Exhibition Centre

6. As for the HITEC, its key strength lies in its relatively accessible location, which is vital for the transportation of ballot boxes, and would also facilitate the access of candidates, their agents and members of the public. Nevertheless, the HITEC has its limitations as a venue for the CCS. Due to the physical layout of the HITEC and the limited space available on each floor, different sections of the CCS have to be located among different floors and halls. This may pose some challenges to the operation and control. Moreover, the queuing up area for vehicles at the HITEC is relatively small. This requires close monitoring for handling the heavy traffic of vehicles transporting ballot boxes from polling stations.

7. More floor space is reserved on this occasion than in 2004. Thus, we will have more room to conduct our operations and to accommodate candidates, their supporters, the media and the public.

Recommendation

8. On balance, we consider that the HITEC has a comparative advantage over the AWE in serving as the venue for CCS for the 2008 LegCo Election. The distant location of AWE may pose difficult challenges to the operation of the CCS and the access of

candidates, agents and the public, after public transportation ceases operation after midnight. This will be particularly difficult if there is inclement weather. On the other hand, though the physical layout of the HITEC may pose some challenges in terms of operation and control, we can work out a detailed plan in advance to minimise the impact of these limitations on the operation of the CCS.

Advice Sought

9. Members are invited to express views on the proposed venue for the CCS for the 2008 LegCo Election.

Registration and Electoral Office

January 2008