

**For discussion on
21 December 2015**

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

2016 Voter Registration Campaign

Purpose

This paper introduces and seeks Members' views on the publicity plan of the 2016 Voter Registration ("VR") Campaign.

Background

2. The Legislative Council ("LegCo") general election and the Election Committee subsector ("ECSS") elections will be held in 2016 respectively. In line with the established practice for election years, the Government will organise a large-scale VR campaign. An inter-departmental working group, comprising representatives from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau ("CMAB"), Registration and Electoral Office ("REO"), Home Affairs Department ("HAD"), Information Services Department, Independent Commission Against Corruption ("ICAC") and Radio Television Hong Kong, has been formed to coordinate the related publicity work and work out the details of the campaign. After consultation with the Electoral Affairs Commission, we have drawn up the publicity plan for the 2016 VR Campaign.

Timetable for 2016 VR and publication of registers

3. Regarding the 2016 VR cycle, eligible persons who wish to register as electors but have yet to do so must submit their applications on or before 2 May 2016 so that their registration particulars can be included in the final registers ("FR") to be published in July 2016, and that they can vote in the elections conducted thereafter. There is no need for existing electors whose names have been recorded in the current FR issued in September 2015 to register again. However, if there is any change in registration particulars such as their residential addresses, they should notify the REO so that the updated particulars can be reflected in the FR to be published in July 2016.

4. In the 2015 VR cycle, the REO received complaints from electors who claimed that they had never submitted any application form for change of registration particulars to the REO and suspected that a third party had impersonated them and submitted such forms to the REO. Some raised concerns about the present arrangement that the statutory deadline for updating registration particulars was 24 days after the publication of the provisional registers (“PR”). This prevents the public from viewing the updated particulars of all electors in the PR. If a fraudster impersonates an elector to update the latter’s particulars after the publication of the PR, the elector will only be made aware of that after the FR is published, by which time he/she would have missed the chance of making claims and objections. In light of the public concerns, the CMAB issued the Consultation Document on Enhancement of Voter Registration System on 26 November 2015 setting out a series of proposed measures to consult the public, including advancing the deadline for change of registration particulars and aligning it with the statutory deadline for new registration. By doing so, all requests for updating registration particulars filed in that VR cycle will be reflected in the PR for public inspection. This can help prevent electors’ addresses from being amended by a third party during the public inspection stage.

5. Subject to the results of the public consultation, the Government plans to introduce amendments to the relevant subsidiary legislation under the Electoral Affairs Commission Ordinance (Cap. 541) in early 2016 so as to advance the statutory deadline for change of registration particulars to 2 May (for non-District Council election year) and 2 July (for District Council election year)¹. Therefore, when we commence the work on legislative amendments, we would also publicise the new deadline for change of particulars in the 2016 VR Campaign.

6. Except the above-mentioned change, the other VR deadlines will remain unchanged. The 2016 PR and omissions lists (“OL”) will be published on 1 June for public inspection. During the public inspection period from 1 to 25 June 2016, the public may lodge claims or objections against the entries on the PR and OL. After the Revising Officer has heard and made rulings on the claims and objections, the REO will publish the FR on or before 25 July 2016. The statutory deadlines for the 2016 VR cycle are set out at the [Annex](#).

7. In the 2016 VR cycle, the REO will continue to implement checking measures and carry out inquiry process so as to enhance the accuracy and completeness of registration particulars. Starting from January 2016, apart

¹ As such, the statutory deadline for change of particulars in the 2016 VR cycle would be 2 May 2016.

from sending inquiry letters by post, the REO will send mobile phone short message service (“SMS”) / electronic mail (if available) at the same time to remind the relevant electors to respond to the inquiry letters; and after processing the applications for change of registration particulars, the REO will, apart from sending notifications to the electors by post, alert the relevant electors via SMS / electronic mail (if available) at the same time that their registration particulars have been updated. Members of the public can verify their registration status and check their own registration particulars, including registered addresses and respective constituencies, at any time by logging into the REO’s Online Voter Information Enquiry System (“OVIES”) (www.voterinfo.gov.hk) or calling the REO’s hotline (2891 1001).

Main Features of the 2016 VR Campaign

Objectives

8. The overall objectives for the 2016 VR Campaign are to:
 - (a) promote public awareness of the 2016 LegCo general election and 2016 ECSS elections;
 - (b) call upon eligible persons (including geographical constituencies (“GC”), functional constituencies (“FC”) and ECSS) of all age groups to register as electors;
 - (c) stress the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration, especially the principal residential addresses provided by applicants in the VR form;
 - (d) remind registered electors to fulfil their civic responsibility and duly notify the REO of any change in their registration particulars;
 - (e) promote the use of the OVIES (www.voterinfo.gov.hk) and the REO’s hotline (2891 1001) for electors to verify their registration status and particulars;
 - (f) encourage registered electors and persons who would like to register as electors to provide their telephone numbers and electronic mail addresses to the REO, so as to enable the REO to contact them via various channels; and

- (g) remind electors to respond to the REO's inquiry letters before the statutory deadline (i.e., 2 May 2016); otherwise, these electors will be included in the OL and their registration status will be cancelled. As a result, they would not be able to vote in the subsequent public elections.

Timing

9. The 2016 VR Campaign would begin in early March 2016. The Government will appeal to eligible persons to register as electors and remind electors to update their registration particulars before the statutory deadline of 2 May 2016 for new registration / change of particulars (see the relevant details in paragraph 5 and the Annex), and promote the use of the OVIES and the REO's hotline. After the publication of the 2016 PR and OL on 1 June 2016 for public inspection and until 25 June 2016 (i.e., the end of the public inspection period in the 2016 VR cycle), we will remind registered electors to verify their registration status and particulars via the OVIES and the REO's hotline. At the same time, we will also appeal to electors on the OL to respond to the REO's reminding letters as soon as possible so as to reinstate their registration status, failing which the electors will not be included in the FR to be issued in July 2016 and cannot vote in the subsequent elections, including the 2016 LegCo general election, the 2016 ECSS elections and the 2017 CE election.

Activities

10. We will adopt a multi-pronged approach and organise a variety of activities to appeal to as many eligible persons to register as electors as possible, remind electors to update their registration particulars with the REO and promote the VR messages set out in paragraph 8 above. These activities will be complemented by a series of publicity measures (please see paragraph 16 for details) so as to promote the awareness of the community about VR.

11. Throughout the campaign period, we will, as in the past, set up roving registration counters at Registration of Persons Offices, government offices, higher education institutions and locations with high public patronage, and deploy Voter Registration Assistants ("VRAs") to assist the public in registering as electors or updating their registration particulars. The REO will continue to set up VR counters at venues of major recruitment examinations organised by the Civil Service Bureau to appeal to and assist the candidates (mainly young people) to register as electors. The REO will also identify suitable large-scale functions (such as exhibitions and job fairs) for setting up VR counters for distribution of registration forms and provision of registration

service.

12. We plan to reach out to people of different age groups and backgrounds through community outreach programmes as part of our efforts to encourage VR and updating of residential addresses in a timely manner, and disseminate VR messages. We will also distribute leaflets prepared by the ICAC to remind the public of the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration as electors, as well as the message that any person who knowingly or recklessly gives false or misleading information for VR to the REO will commit an offence regardless of whether the person concerned has voted at an election or not.

13. To encourage electors to update their particulars with the REO after moving home, HAD will deploy VRAs to conduct household visits to newly occupied residential buildings. We will also continue to:

- (a) write to all households in new private developments and public housing estates to remind them to report changes in addresses and appeal to people who have yet to register as electors to register early;
- (b) identify electors who have moved into new public housing estates through cross-matching of records with the Housing Department and the Hong Kong Housing Society and assist them to update their registered addresses; and
- (c) collaborate with the Immigration Department (“ImmD”) to update the registration particulars of electors based on their latest residential addresses furnished to the ImmD, where the persons concerned have given consent for such data transfer.

14. According to the 2015 FR, there are about 3.69 million GC electors, representing a registration rate of 77.3%. Both the total number of electors and the registration rate are the highest on record. The registration rate of eligible young people aged between 18 and 30 is 64.4%. To encourage more young people to register, we will carry out the following activities:

- (a) the REO will make use of the social media like Facebook and YouTube to disseminate VR messages so as to appeal to people of different age groups, including young people, to register as electors;

- (b) registration counters will be set up at the five Registration of Persons Offices under the ImmD to encourage and help members of the public register when they visit these offices to apply for or collect their adult identity cards;
- (c) VR forms and posters will be sent to higher education institutions and secondary schools and their assistance will be solicited to collect VR forms submitted by eligible students; and
- (d) VRAs will be deployed to higher education institutions to assist eligible students to register. For senior secondary students, through the annual school visiting programme, the REO will continue to appeal to students to register as electors when they turn 18.

15. Besides, the REO will send appeal letters to encourage persons/bodies eligible for registration in FC and ECSS to register. The REO will also appeal to umbrella organisations to encourage their members who are eligible to be registered in FC and ECSS to apply for registration.

Publicity measures

16. In addition to the above activities, we will launch a series of publicity measures to raise the community awareness about VR. We are working out the details of publicity measures and plan to adopt the following means:

- (a) production of Announcements in the Public Interest on VR for broadcast on television, radio, other media, government websites, residential estates and government buildings;
- (b) radio programmes;
- (c) press release and newspaper advertisements;
- (d) advertisements at MTR stations, bus shelters and other means of public transport;
- (e) printed publicity materials including leaflets, posters, banners and appeal letters;
- (f) giant publicity banners for display at external walls of government buildings;

- (g) electronic advertisements on websites and mobile applications;
- (h) promotional items such as banners, buntings and posters for display in all districts;
- (i) advertisements on websites and in journals of umbrella organisations in FC; and
- (j) hotline service for handling public enquiries related to VR.

Estimated Expenditure

17. The budget for the 2016 VR Campaign is about \$17 million including the afore-mentioned activities and related publicity measures. Provision for the campaign will be included under the REO's Head of Expenditure for 2016-17.

Views Sought

18. Members are invited to express views on the publicity plan for the 2016 VR Campaign as set out in this paper.

**Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Registration and Electoral Office
December 2015**

Statutory Deadlines for the 2016 Voter Registration (VR) Cycle²

Major Events for VR	Statutory Deadline for the 2016 VR Cycle (Non-District Council Election Year)
The public to submit new VR application, existing electors to submit applications for de-registration or apply for change of registration particulars ³	2 May
The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to publish the provisional registers and omissions lists	1 June
The public to submit claims and objections	25 June
The Revising Officer to conduct hearings and make rulings on claims and objections (including reviews of rulings)	11 July
The ERO to publish the final registers	25 July

² The statutory deadlines for the VR cycle means that the relevant action has to be made on or before the relevant date as listed.

³ Subject to the results of the public consultation on enhancement of VR system, the Government will introduce amendments to the relevant subsidiary legislation under the Electoral Affairs Commission Ordinance (Cap. 541) so as to advance the deadline for change of particulars to 2 May (for non-District Council election year) and 2 July (for District Council election year). After going through the negative vetting procedure at the Legislative Council, the statutory deadline for change of particulars in the 2016 VR cycle would be advanced from the original deadline of 25 June 2016 to 2 May 2016.