

**Legislative Council  
Panel on Constitutional Affairs**

**Practical Arrangements for  
the 2016 Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections**

**PURPOSE**

The 2016 Election Committee Subsector (“ECSS”) ordinary elections will be held on 11 December 2016. This paper sets out the key electoral arrangements proposed by the Electoral Affairs Commission (“EAC”) for the elections.

**BACKGROUND**

2. The EAC is an independent statutory 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 2016 ECSS ordinary elections. The key practical arrangements relating to polling stations, deployment of electoral staff, counting of votes, public inspection of election advertisements (“EAs”), facilitation measures for voters with special needs, media centre and contingency planning are set out in the following paragraphs.

**PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS**

**Polling Date and Nomination Period**

3. In accordance with section 16(1) of the Schedule to the Chief Executive Election Ordinance (“CEEO”) (Cap. 569), the Chief Executive (“CE”) has specified 11 December 2016 as the date for holding all subsector ordinary elections to elect Members of the Election Committee (“EC”). The relevant notice was published in the Gazette on 4 March 2016.

4. Section 5 of the Electoral Affairs Commission (Electoral Procedure) (Election Committee) Regulation (“EAC(EP)(EC) Regulation”) (Cap. 541I) provides that the nomination period is to be determined by the Chief Electoral Officer (“CEO”). The same section provides that the nomination period must not be less than 7 days, and that it must end not less than 12 days before the date on which the election is to be held. Having taken into account the established practice, we plan to set 8 November to 14 November 2016 as the nomination period for the coming ordinary elections. The notice for the nomination period will be formally published in the Gazette in due course.

### **Number and Allocation of Polling Stations**

5. To facilitate voters to cast their votes, the REO plans to set up about 110 polling stations for the 2016 ECSS ordinary elections, roughly the same number of polling stations in the 2011 ECSS ordinary elections. We aim at having at least 90% of the polling stations set up at venues accessible to voters with mobility difficulties. There are about 236 000 voters registered for the EC subsectors in the 2015 Final Register. Application for voter registration in the 2016 cycle has ended on 2 May 2016 and we estimate that there will be an increase in the number of registered voters. At present, we are planning our preparatory work for the elections on the basis that there would be about 240 000 registered voters. Hence, about 2 200 voters will be assigned to each polling station on average.

6. 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 CSD. Depending on the actual number and distribution of such voters on the polling day, a maximum of 21 DPSs will be set up at these penal institutions. We also plan to set up two DPSs at police stations (one on Hong Kong Island and one in Kowloon) 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 and the Customs and Excise Department, to cast their votes.

### **Polling Hours**

7. Following the established arrangement, the polling hours of OPSs and DPSs set up at police stations for the 2016 ECSS ordinary election will run from 7:30 am to 10:30 pm. As for DPSs set up at CSD penal institutions, due to security considerations, the polling hours will be from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

## **Electoral Staff Recruitment and Training**

8. We have launched a recruitment exercise in March 2016 for electoral staff of different ranks for the 2016 ECSS ordinary elections. We plan to recruit and train about 3 800 civil servants from various government bureaux/departments for carrying out polling and counting duties on the polling day. About 2 000 of them will be arranged for manning polling stations, and another 1 800 will be arranged for the counting of votes at the Central Counting Station (“CCS”) to be set up at the AsiaWorld-Expo in Chek Lap Kok.

9. Briefing sessions on the polling procedures and arrangements will be arranged for all polling staff. Polling Management Training which includes crisis management, quality polling service, training on emotional quotient, and experience sharing will be organised for polling staff at the supervisory level. For staff deployed to compile statistical returns on the polling day, specialised training on statistical work will also be organised for them. Briefing sessions with hands-on practice on the counting procedures will be arranged for all counting staff. In particular, as the counting will be conducted with the aid of Optical Mark Recognition (“OMR”) system, a practical training session will be conducted for counting staff assigned to operate the system. Besides, staff working in CCS will need to attend an on-site rehearsal of counting duties on the day before the polling day.

## **Vote Counting Arrangements**

10. The vote counting arrangements for the 2016 ECSS ordinary elections would largely follow those adopted in the 2011 ECSS ordinary elections and votes will be counted centrally in the CCS.

11. Given the large number of seats and candidates for ECSS ordinary elections, in line with the practice in previous ECSS ordinary elections since 1998, REO has commissioned a contractor to develop a Voting Validation and Counting Automation System (“VVCAS”), whereby vote counting will be conducted in an automated mode with the aid of OMR system. To cope with the operation of the system, the design of ballot papers has to conform to some special technical requirements. The OMR system currently can process ballot papers up to the length of 26 inches, which can accommodate up to 178 candidates. In case the number of candidates for a subsector/sub-subsector exceeds 178, we will resort to a manual mode whereby votes recorded on the ballot papers will be manually input into the computer system for vote counting. In this scenario, it will unavoidably require more counting staff and longer time to complete the count. To cater for this possibility, we will ensure availability

of an adequate number of counting staff who are specially trained for the purpose.

12. To ensure the integrity and reliability of the VVCAS, we shall commission three independent quality assurance services for the system. Specifically, these services will cover (i) a quality assurance audit on the programmes employed by the VVCAS; (ii) a computer audit on the integrity of the entire automated counting process; and (iii) an IT security risk assessment and audit on the whole system. We plan to provide some basic information about the operation of the system in the dedicated election website for public information.

### **Ballot Papers and Ballot Boxes**

13. Of the 38 EC subsectors, members for 35 subsectors (involving a total of 1 034 seats) are to be returned by elections. The number of seats allocated to individual subsectors/sub-subsector ranges from 15 to 60. It is expected that there will be a large number of candidates contesting in 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 large number of candidates. The size of the ballot papers will depend on the number of candidates contesting in the subsector. REO will conduct a comprehensive check on the ballot papers to ensure that they are correctly and properly printed, and will carefully and thoroughly test the capacity of the ballot boxes to be used in the 2016 ECSS ordinary elections so as to ensure that there will be sufficient ballot boxes to cater for a 100% turnout of the registered voters.

### **Free of Postage Promotional Letters**

14. In accordance with section 38(1) of the Schedule to the CEEO (Cap. 569), a validly nominated candidate at a subsector election is entitled to send free of postage one letter addressed to each voter whose name appears in the subsector final register for the subsector for which the candidate is nominated. The purpose is to enable candidates to mail EAs to promote or advertise themselves to voters.

15. To enable candidates to jointly promote themselves at the same election, and as a further step to reduce paper consumption in election-related materials, candidates standing for election in the same EC subsector/sub-subsector may send joint promotional letters free of postage to each voter of the relevant subsector/sub-subsector in accordance with section 38(2A) of the Schedule to the CEEO (Cap. 569). Under this 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/sub-subsector who is/are also validly nominated at that election.

### **Address Labels**

16. To facilitate candidates to send out EAs by free postage, it has been an established practice of the REO to provide each candidate upon request with a set of address labels pertaining to the voters in the relevant subsector/sub-subsector except those voters who have provided REO with their email addresses for receiving EAs. Address labels will be printed and provided to the candidates normally within five working days upon receipt of the requests.

17. We will also continue the practice of providing, upon request, each validly nominated candidate with a computer disc (referred to as Candidate Mailing Label System “CMLS”) containing the mailing information of voters (including the names and addresses) extracted from the Final Register and, if provided by the voters during voter registration, the email addresses of voters. Candidates may make use of the information in the CMLS to generate address labels according to their own needs for posting of EAs or send out electronic EAs to the voters via their email addresses. We will continue to include a printed message on the paper cover of the disc to remind candidates that the personal information of voters can only be used for the purpose of electioneering activities in the 2016 ECSS ordinary elections and the computer disc must be destroyed after the elections, and draw to their attention the legal consequences of not taking heed of the reminder.

18. When requesting the address labels or the CMLS, candidates are required to sign an undertaking regarding the use of the information of voters. To further protect the privacy of individual voters, we will reinforce our advice and, in particular, remind candidates of the following:

- (a) when using emails for mass distribution of EAs to voters, candidates are required to use “b.c.c.” function or other proven means which will not reveal the email addresses of individual voters to other recipients; and
- (b) candidates should make every endeavor to prevent any disclosure of voters’ personal data to unauthorized persons, and in the event of inadvertent disclosure of voters’ personal data to third parties, to prevent any misuse of the relevant information by the third parties, including but not limited to informing the third parties that they are in

possession of voters' personal data obtained for the purpose of compiling a register of voters and requiring them to delete the relevant information immediately.

### **Submission of EAs**

19. Under the current electoral law, to comply with the public inspection requirement, candidates may deposit copies of their EAs and the relevant information/documents with ROs, or post the electronic copies of these documents onto an Internet platform maintained by the CEO (referred to as Central Platform) or an open Internet platform maintained by the candidate (referred to as Candidate's Platform) for public inspection within one working day after the publication of the EAs in the manner and time specified by the EAC. For those EAs of which posting onto the Central Platform or Candidate's Platform is not practicable (e.g. electioneering messages of interactive and spontaneous nature published through social networking and communication websites on the internet), candidates may only need to post the hyperlinks to the relevant website onto the platform in order to satisfy the public inspection requirement.

### **Introduction to Candidates**

20. Under the present arrangement, candidates are free to make use of the "Introduction to Candidates" leaflets/booklets which are published by the REO to promote their candidatures, as long as the requirements under the law and the EAC Guidelines are satisfied. Candidates who wish to make use of the leaflets/booklets must submit the content of their candidatures to be printed in the leaflets/booklets, in a format specified by the EAC, to the REO before the end of the nomination period. The REO will mail the leaflets/booklets, together with the poll card, to the voters before the polling day.

### **Facilitation Measures for Voters with Special Needs**

21. As in previous elections, REO will continue to make best endeavours to facilitate voters with special needs to exercise their right to vote. In line with the established arrangements, the following facilitation measures will be implemented in the 2016 ECSS ordinary elections -

- (a) to assist voters with mobility difficulties, we aim to have at least 90% of our polling stations set up in accessible venues. Where circumstances permit, the REO would install temporary ramps at the polling stations to facilitate wheelchair users. REO will also remind voters who have mobility difficulties or are wheelchair users, through location maps attached to poll cards and various promotion

channels, that if they have been allocated to an inaccessible polling station, they may apply to the REO at least three days before the polling day for re-allocation to an accessible polling station. The REO will also approach the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation for arrangement of Rehabuses to transport voters with mobility difficulties or wheelchair users to and from the polling stations;

- (b) to assist voters with hearing impairment, all polling stations are provided with a pictorial voting aid to assist them to understand the voting procedures. Sign language interpretation and subtitles are incorporated in all electoral related Announcements-in-the-Public-Interests (“APIs”) and, where there is a practical need, such interpretation service will also be made available at candidates’ briefing;
- (c) to assist voters with visual impairment, we shall encourage candidates to provide the typed text version of their Introduction to Candidates for uploading onto the election website ([www.elections.gov.hk](http://www.elections.gov.hk)) to facilitate voters with visual impairment to read the relevant information online using software aids. At the same time, for voters with visual impairment who have provided REO with their email addresses, we shall continue to use email to send to them the relevant polling information electronically. Upon receipt of the email, the voters would be able to read the electronic polling information with the aid of a computer. Other facilitation measures such as provision of braille templates and braille list of candidates at the polling stations will continue; and
- (d) to facilitate ethnic minority voters who do not speak English or Chinese, all polling stations will be equipped with a voting guide compiled in the seven languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Thai, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu and Punjabi) commonly used by the ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong to facilitate them to understand the voting procedures. In addition, we shall collaborate with the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (“CHEER”) to provide interpretation service in the seven ethnic minority languages, through the REO telephone hotline service, to help voters of ethnic minorities understand the voting procedures and to facilitate them to make enquiries on election-related matters before the election and on the polling day. Arrangement will also be made with CHEER for providing the interpretation service over the phone if voters of ethnic minorities make a request to the Presiding Officers for language assistance at the polling stations.

A summary list of the facilitation measures which the REO plans to put in place to serve voters with special needs is at the Annex for reference.

### **Reduction of Paper Consumption on Election-related Materials**

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

- (a) where possible, bulky materials to be provided to candidates for reference will be distributed in an electronic format;
- (b) providing printed address labels of voters (except those who have provided REO with their email addresses) to candidates only upon request;
- (c) providing candidates with the email addresses of voters, if available, for sending EAs;
- (d) appealing to voters to register their email addresses with the REO through GovHK and encouraging candidates to send their EAs by electronic means to voters who have provided their email addresses;
- (e) allowing candidates to submit electronic copies of EAs onto an open platform for public inspection;
- (f) allowing candidates and voters to submit certain electoral forms or notices through electronic means<sup>1</sup> if permitted under the existing legal provisions;
- (g) using recycled paper or paper made from wood-pulp derived from sustainable forest to print electoral-related documents as far as practicable; and
- (h) exploring possible ways to recycle waste paper left after the election.

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

---

<sup>1</sup> Electronic means include sending the relevant electoral forms by facsimile, by electronic mail (subject to the enactment of the relevant ordinance), and, by submission of electronic forms attached with digital signatures via a platform maintained by the REO (where applicable).

## **Publicity**

23. To encourage nomination of candidates, publicise election and polling arrangements, promote clean and fair election as well as voter turnout, we will organise publicity programmes to widely publicize the election through TV and radio APIs, posters, advertisement, election dedicated website and appeal letters to eligible voters. The Independent Commission Against Corruption will also publish and distribute information folders and pamphlets to promote clean election. Besides, we will set up mock polling stations to help eligible voters familiarise with the polling procedures.

## **Central Command Centre**

24. A Central Command Centre (“CCC”) will be set up each at REO’s Office in Kowloonbay International Trade and Exhibition Centre (“KITEC”) and the CCS on the polling day to oversee the conduct of the poll and vote counting, and to provide central command and helpdesk/support services.

## **Statistical Information Centre**

25. A Statistical Information Centre (“SIC”) will be set up each inside the CCC at REO’s office in KITEC and the CCS. The former is to collect and consolidate voter turnout statistics from the polling stations. The latter is to consolidate the counting results collected from the CCS. The same arrangement was made in the 2011 ECSS ordinary elections and has proved to be efficient and reliable. The voter turnout figures will be made available to the public through press releases and the dedicated website for the 2016 ECSS ordinary elections on an hourly basis after the start of polling.

## **Media Centre**

26. A Media Centre will be set up in the CCS to facilitate the dissemination of counting results to the candidates, the media and the public. In addition, there will be designated areas for use by candidates, their agents, the media and the public including the supporters of the candidates.

## **Contingency Planning**

27. Section 24 of Schedule to CEEO (Cap. 569) and Schedule 1 to EAC(EP)(EC) Regulation (Cap. 541I) provide for the postponement of ECSS ordinary elections or the adjournment of the poll or count under specified circumstances. We shall set up a Crisis Management Committee (“CMC”) to provide up-to-date information and professional advice, where necessary, to the

EAC on the handling of major incidents and, in particular, all matters concerning postponement of the election or the adjournment of the poll or count under the specified circumstances. The EAC will decide how best the situation should be handled having regard to the circumstances at the material time and the advice of the CMC. The CMC is chaired by the EAC Chairman and comprises the representatives of the relevant government bureaux/departments depending on the issues under consideration.

### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

28. Members are invited to express views on the proposed arrangements set out in this paper.

Registration and Electoral Office  
May 2016

## **Facilitation Measures for Voters with Special Needs**

### **(A) Voters with mobility difficulties**

1. As far as circumstances permit, polling stations will be set up in venues which are accessible to voters with mobility difficulties. Where feasible, temporary ramps will be set up at polling stations to facilitate these voters.
2. Telephone number of the polling station will be posted near the ramp leading to the station. If necessary, voters with mobility difficulties can contact the polling staff for assistance.
3. Through the polling station location map to be sent together with the poll card to voters, the Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”) will advise whether the allocated polling station is accessible to voters with mobility difficulties or who are wheelchair users. If voters with mobility difficulties or who are wheelchair users are allocated to inaccessible polling stations, they may apply to the REO at least three days before the polling day for re-allocation to a special polling station set up in an accessible venue.
4. Where circumstances permit, the REO will try to arrange Rehabus service to transport voters with mobility difficulties or who are wheelchair users to and from polling stations.
5. All accessible polling stations will be equipped with enlarged voting compartments with lower polling tables.

### **(B) Voters with visual impairment**

1. The election website has incorporated accessible designs. Most of the information or documents on the website are convenient for browsing by persons with visual impairment with the aid of screen reading software.
2. The REO has been encouraging candidates to provide a typed text version of their “Introduction to Candidates” for uploading onto the election website to facilitate persons with visual impairment to read the relevant information online using assistive software.

3. The REO appeals to voters with visual impairment to provide their email addresses to enable the REO to email soft copy of electoral information to them.
4. The number of the enquiry hotline (2891 1001) will be read out in radio Announcements in the Public Interest (“APIs”) and TV APIs to facilitate persons with visual impairment to obtain information relating to electoral arrangements.
5. A web accessible version of the TV APIs will be available on the election website to facilitate voters.
6. Voters with visual impairment can call a dedicated telephone line to listen to information on the “Introduction to Candidates” and other electoral information.
7. A Braille list of candidates with their numbers and names will be available at polling stations to facilitate voters with visual impairment to read the relevant information.
8. Braille templates will be available at polling stations to facilitate voters with visual impairment to mark the ballot papers themselves.
9. Voters with visual impairment may bring along their guide dogs into the polling stations.

**(C) Voters with hearing impairment**

1. Sign language interpretation and subtitles will be included in all election-related TV APIs.
2. A pictorial voting aid will be available at every polling station to assist voters with hearing impairment to understand the voting procedures. The aid will also be uploaded onto the election website for voters’ reference before the poll.

**(D) Ethnic minority voters and voters in need**

1. Electoral information in seven ethnic minority languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Nepali, Thai, Hindi, Tagalog, Urdu and Punjabi) will be available on the election website.
2. Information on the election will be broadcast in ethnic minority languages on radio.
3. Polling stations will be equipped with a Language Assistance Folder written in the aforesaid seven ethnic minority languages.
4. The REO will collaborate with the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (commonly known as “CHEER”) to provide free interpretation service in the aforesaid seven ethnic minority languages, through the REO’s dedicated telephone line, to help voters of ethnic minorities understand the voting procedures and to facilitate their making of enquiries on election-related matters before the election and on the polling day.
5. Posters on nomination period and polling day as well as electoral information in the aforesaid seven ethnic minority languages will be posted in eight support centres for the ethnic minorities.

**(E) Others**

1. If necessary, voters can seek help from the Presiding Officer to mark the ballot paper on their behalf according to their choice inside a voting compartment with a polling officer serving as a witness.