

**For discussion on
23 February 2017**

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

2017 Voter Registration Campaign

Purpose

This paper introduces and seeks Members' views on the publicity plan and main features of the 2017 Voter Registration ("VR") Campaign.

Timetable for 2017 VR and Publication of Registers

2. For the 2017 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 2017 so that their registration particulars can be included in the final registers ("FR") to be published in July 2017, and that they can vote in elections conducted thereafter. There is no need for existing electors whose names have been recorded in the current FR to register again. However, if there is any change in their registration particulars such as their residential addresses, they should notify the Registration and Electoral Office ("REO") on or before 2 May 2017 so that the updated particulars can be reflected in the FR to be published in July 2017.

3. In the 2017 VR cycle, the REO will continue to implement checking measures and carry out statutory inquiry process so as to enhance the accuracy and completeness of registration particulars. Apart from sending inquiry letters by post, the REO will use 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. 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).

4. The 2017 provisional registers (“PR”) and omissions list (“OL”) will be published by 1 June 2017 for public inspection. During the period of public inspection from 1 June to 25 June 2017, the public may lodge claims or objections against the entries on the PR and the OL. Any claims and objections received will be determined by a Revising Officer and, taking into account the rulings of the Revising Officer, the REO will publish the FR on or before 25 July 2017. The statutory deadlines for the 2017 VR cycle are set out at **Annex**.

Main Features of the 2017 VR Campaign

Objectives

5. The overall objectives for the 2017 VR Campaign are to:
- (a) call upon eligible persons of all age groups to register as electors;
 - (b) stress the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration especially the principal residential address provided by applicants in the VR form; and
 - (c) remind registered electors to fulfil their civic responsibility to take the initiative to notify the REO of any change in their registration particulars.

With appropriate publicity measures, we wish to raise the awareness of eligible persons of the VR arrangements and enhance electors’ awareness of the importance of timely updating of their registration particulars especially address information. These promotion efforts aim at boosting registration rate and enhancing the accuracy of registration particulars in the registers.

6. Apart from the above general messages, having regard to the experience in the 2015 and 2016 VR cycles in election years and public concern on the accuracy of residential addresses recorded in the electoral registers, we shall continue to strengthen the publicity efforts during the 2017 VR Campaign in the following areas:

- (a) promoting the use of the OVIES and the REO's hotline (2891 1001) for electors to verify their registration status and check their registration particulars;
- (b) encouraging registered electors and persons who would like to register as electors to provide or update their telephone numbers to the REO so as to enable the REO to contact them in case of need and provide or update e-mail addresses for receiving electoral messages for the sake of protecting the environment; and
- (c) reminding electors to respond to the REO's inquiry letters before the statutory deadline (i.e. 2 May 2017) so as to ensure that they will not lose their registration status and voting right inadvertently.

7. Besides, in response to concerns on (i) registration under the District Council (Second) Functional Constituency ("DC (second) FC") and (ii) receipt of hard copies of election advertisements ("EAs") by post by electors who have already provided e-mail addresses to the REO raised during the 2016 Legislative Council General Election, and to follow up the corresponding recommendations stated in the 'Report on the 2016 Legislative Council General Election' published by the Electoral Affairs Commission in January 2017, the REO plans to revise the form for Application for Voter Registration (Geographical Constituencies)/District Council (Second) Functional Constituency/Report on Change of Particulars (Form REO-1) to improve the clarity of information in the form for persons wishing to be registered in the DC (second) FC and remind them that the DC (second) FC is actually the same as the commonly-called "Super District Council" FC. This will enhance applicants' understanding when filling in the form and alert them that they will give up the right to vote in the DC (second) FC if they choose not to be so registered. In addition, the REO will make clear to applicant/electors that, by agreeing with providing their e-mail addresses to candidates in the form, candidates will be informed that they have chosen to receive EAs by e-mail and REO will encourage the candidates to use e-mail instead of postal delivery for sending such information to them. We shall also strengthen the publicity on the registration procedures for the DC (second) FC when launching the VR drive from 2017 onwards to enhance public understanding of that functional constituency.

Timing

8. The 2017 VR Campaign appealing for new registration will run from early March 2017 to the statutory registration deadline of 2 May 2017 for about seven to eight weeks. Thereafter, publicity will continue until 25 June 2017 (i.e. the end of public inspection period in the 2017 VR cycle) to remind electors to check their registration particulars via OVIES or the REO's hotline. We shall also appeal to electors on the OL to respond to the REO's reminding letters (to be issued in late May 2017) so as to reinstate their registration status, failing which the electors will not be included in the FR to be issued in July 2017.

Publicity measures

9. We shall adopt a multi-pronged approach under which a variety of activities will be organised to appeal to eligible persons to register as electors, remind electors to update their registration particulars with the REO and promote the other VR messages set out in paragraphs 5 to 7 above. Extensive publicity will be sustained throughout the campaign to arouse public awareness of the messages. The publicity efforts for the coming exercise will include –

- (a) broadcasting of Announcements in the Public Interest on television, radio and the internet appealing for new registration, drawing the attention of the public that they are also registered in the DC (second) FC when applying for registration in the geographical constituencies ("GC") by using the same VR application form and reminding registered electors to notify the REO of any change of residential addresses and to provide or update their telephone numbers and email addresses;
- (b) placing advertisements in newspapers, popular websites and mobile applications to encourage new registration and timely updating of registered particulars by electors;
- (c) displaying posters in universities, tertiary institutions and secondary schools to appeal to students who have reached the age of 18 to register as electors;
- (d) issuing appeal letters to households which have moved into newly developed private residential buildings and public housing estates to remind them to update their addresses or register as electors;

- (e) displaying posters at the advertising light boxes of bus stops and in MTR stations over the territory and displaying posters and distributing VR application forms at district offices, public housing estate management offices, government departments and social services institutions; and
- (f) distributing leaflets prepared by the Independent Commission Against Corruption to remind the public of the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration as electors, and disseminate the message that any person who knowingly or recklessly gives false or misleading information for VR will commit an offence regardless of whether the person concerned has voted at an election or not.

10. In the 2016 FR, there are about 3.78 million GC electors, representing a registration rate of 78.9%. 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 68.2%. To encourage more young people to register, we shall carry out the following activities:

- (a) in addition to traditional publicity channels, the REO will continue to make use of the social media like Facebook, as well as YouTube and Yahoo to disseminate VR messages to the general public, including young people;
- (b) registration counters will continue to be set up at the five Registration of Persons Offices under the Immigration Department 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 their students; and
- (d) the REO will continue to appeal to senior secondary students to register as electors when they turn 18 through the annual school visiting programme.

11. The REO will continue to strengthen publicity efforts to encourage the public to register as electors and to update their registration particulars timely. The Administration will regularly review the publicity work and adjust the efforts in the light of outcome and public feedback.

Estimated Expenditure

12. The budget for the 2017 VR Campaign is about \$6 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 2017-18.

Views Sought

13. Members are invited to comment on the 2017 VR Campaign as set out in this paper.

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Registration and Electoral Office
February 2017

Statutory Deadlines for the 2017 Voter Registration (VR) Cycle¹

Major Events for VR	Statutory Deadline for the 2017 VR Cycle (Non-District Council Election Year)
The public to submit VR applications for new registration, existing electors to submit applications for de-registration or apply for change of registration particulars	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

¹ The statutory deadlines for the VR cycle means that the relevant action has to be made on or before the relevant date as listed.