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本函檔號 OUR REF.: (4) to REO HQGR/6-20/2 R Pt. 3

來函檔號 YOUR REF.:

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13 April 2018

Clerk to the Establishment Subcommittee
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Mr Keith WONG)

Dear Mr WONG,

**Re: Permanent Post of Principal Executive Officer in the
Registration and Electoral Office**

In response to the letter from Hon AU Nok-hin to the Legislative Council Secretariat on 26 March 2018 requesting the Government to provide for reference further information on the proposed creation of one permanent post of Principal Executive Officer (PEO) in the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) (EC(2017-18)16), our reply is as follows:

(I) Duties and Responsibilities of the Elections Division and the Regularisation Plan

Based on the existing organisation of the Elections Division as shown on the REO website (see attachment), would the Bureau please provide the following information:

- (1) What are the main duties and responsibilities of the Administration Division to be put under the purview of the PEO in the new establishment?**
- (2) The Special Duties Team will be put under whose purview in the new establishment? What are its main duties and responsibilities?**
- (3) What are the duties and responsibilities of the PEO and his/her immediate supervisor (i.e., the Chief Electoral**

Officer) respectively in the new establishment?

- (4) According to Enclosure 4 to EC (2017-18)16, the Bureau plans to convert the time-limited posts of Deputy Chief Electoral Officer under Elections Divisions 1 and 2 as permanent posts. Would the Bureau please provide the relevant details and justifications for the conversion?**
- (5) Does the Bureau have any plan to regularise Elections Divisions 3 and 4? If yes, what are the details? Will this Subcommittee be consulted?**

The Administration Division will be put under the purview of the permanent post of PEO to be created in the proposed establishment. The main duties and responsibilities of the Administration Division include human resource management, finance and accounting, establishment and manpower, general administration, stores and procurement, etc.

The Special Duties Team was set up on 1 June 2017 to help conduct a review on the various electoral arrangements of the 2015-2017 election cycle; to recommend appropriate improvement measures for various electoral arrangements in the next election cycle commencing 2019; and to co-ordinate the manpower requirement of the Elections Division in the next election cycle commencing 2019. The Special Duties Team was disbanded on 1 April 2018, and its work has been taken up by various teams under the Elections Division. Under the proposed establishment, in addition to Elections Divisions 1 to 3, the Elections Division 4 has been set up with effect from 1 April 2018 to assist in the preparation of the various elections to be conducted within the 2019-2022 election cycle. The main duties and responsibilities of Elections Divisions 1 to 4 are set out in **Annex**.

Besides, the main duties and responsibilities of the Chief Electoral Officer include heading and overseeing the REO in the provision of executive support to the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) and the conduct of voter registration and public elections as well as the demarcation of constituency boundaries; reviewing overall electoral and voter registration arrangements; and planning and arranging resources for the EAC to discharge its functions, etc. As regards the proposed job

description of the PEO post, it is set out in Enclosure 2 to EC(2017-18)16.

The Task Force on the Computer Theft Incident of the Registration and Electoral Office (the Task Force) set up by the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau had put forth a number of recommendations on REO's permanent establishment in its report published on 13 June 2017. These recommendations include, among other things, the retention of certain core members in the Election Divisions in non-election years, so as to consolidate experience from the previous election cycle and introduce improvement measures, and to provide administrative support to the proposed permanent post of PEO. The REO has implemented the recommendations of the Task Force, and has converted the time-limited posts of Deputy Chief Electoral Officers 1 and 2 under Elections Divisions 1 and 2 as permanent posts with effect from 1 April 2018. The REO currently has no plan to convert the two time-limited posts of Deputy Chief Electoral Officer under Elections Divisions 3 and 4 to permanent posts. However, regular reviews will be conducted on REO's establishment to ensure that the prevailing operational needs can be met.

(II) Preservation of institutional memory

- (1) It is stated in paragraph 7 of EC (2017-18)16 that the current practice “has rendered the preservation of institutional memory at the senior level of the REO gravely ineffective”. Would the Bureau please supplement on the existing ways and means of preserving institutional memory by the REO? Please also specify the inefficiencies of the current practice;**
- (2) Has the Bureau developed for the new establishment any specific value-for-money indicators with respect to the “preservation of institutional memory”? If yes, what are the details? If not, why not?**

As stated in the report published by the Task Force, there are some inadequacies in the establishment aspect of the REO, including the maintenance of only a baseline permanent establishment outside the election cycle; and the practice of creating a supernumerary Principal

Electoral Officer post and time-limited non-directorate posts as well as engaging Non-Civil Service Contract (NCSC) staff during the election cycle to significantly increase its staff establishment to cope with the increased workload arising from the preparatory work in relation to the conduct of elections. Such an arrangement often does not leave much capacity for REO staff to familiarise themselves with and review past practices, and inevitably undermines the ability of REO staff to spot potential inadequacies in previous practices, and implement improvement measures and rectifications to these practices based on accumulated experience. In view of the above observations, the Task Force recommended the conversion of the Principal Electoral Officer post and the essential posts of some core members in the Elections Division as permanent posts so that a proper hierarchy within the REO could be maintained at all times. Having a permanent ‘second-in-charge’ post through the creation of the permanent Principal Electoral Officer post will also enable the PEO, who has gained first-hand experience in the last election cycle, to assist the Chief Electoral Officer to review the preparation and conduct of public elections after an election cycle, so that relevant improvement measures may be introduced in the next election cycle. Furthermore, it would allow the posting periods of the Chief Electoral Officer and Principal Electoral Officer to stagger, thereby helping to preserve “institutional memory” in between election cycles. The REO has stated in its Controlling Officer’s Report specific, measurable, achievable and service-related targets and indicators for the measurement of its performance.

(III) Checking of Particulars of Electors

- (1) Further to the information paper (Ref: ESC92/17-18(02)) submitted by the Government, would the Bureau please provide the target number of electors to be checked in the next election cycle?**

In the light of public concern over the accuracy of residential addresses recorded in the register of electors in recent years, the REO has implemented various checking measures since the 2012 voter registration (VR) cycle, including the conduct of cross-matching exercise with other government departments on the registered particulars of electors as well as inquiry process to improve the accuracy and completeness of VR records. The checking measures include follow-up inquiries on

undelivered poll cards arising from elections; cross-matching of the residential addresses of electors with the Housing Department (HD), the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) and the Home Affairs Department (HAD); checks on residential addresses with multiple electors or multiple surnames of electors; random sample checks on registered and newly registered electors; checks on addresses with incomplete information or suspected non-residential addresses; and checks on addresses situated at buildings already demolished or vacant buildings to be demolished. The REO's cross-matching exercise with other government departments on checking electors' registered addresses includes regular updating of particulars, and checking with the HD, HKHS and HAD in election years regarding electors with registered addresses in public housing units and electors of the Rural Representative Election. After implementing or following up with the checking measures, if the REO has reasonable grounds to suspect that registered residential addresses might not be the only or principal residence of certain electors, it will issue inquiry letters to the electors concerned to request confirmation or updating of the registered addresses. Upon the completion of the statutory inquiry process, electors failing to respond will be removed from the final register. The number of electors to be covered by REO's checking measures is estimated to be around 1.6 million in the 2019 and 2020 VR cycles (involving the election years) respectively.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

(Ms Bertha LEE)
for Chief Electoral Officer

c.c. Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, Chairman of the Establishment
Subcommittee of the Legislative Council
Hon CHAN Kin-por, Chairman of the Finance Committee of the
Legislative Council
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
Director of Home Affairs

Main Duties and Responsibilities of Elections Divisions 1 to 4

Elections Division 1

- Identifying suitable venues as polling and counting stations for elections;
- Making logistic arrangements for setting up polling and counting stations;
- Allocating electors to respective polling stations;
- Planning the electoral arrangements for imprisoned, remanded and detained electors to vote;
- Recruiting electoral staff to perform polling and counting duties for elections; and
- Planning and organising training activities for electoral staff.

Elections Division 2

- Providing executive support to Nominations Advisory Committees and Returning Officers;
- Assisting the Returning Officers in the processing of nomination of candidates;
- Preparing electoral forms;
- Arranging for gazettal of the nomination period, appointment of Returning Officers and nomination results;
- Processing returns on election expenses and donations and applications for financial assistance;
- Preparing poll cards, introduction to candidates and related electoral documents;

- Arranging free postage for election advertisements by candidates; and
- Co-ordinating and handling of administrative matters for the Elections Division.

Elections Division 3

- Co-ordinating the design, production, checking and distribution of ballot papers and electoral documents for elections;
- Setting up and operating the Central Command Centre and Statistical Information Centre;
- Arranging election briefing for Returning Officers and candidates;
- Providing logistics support to Elections Division, including booking of venues, printing services, transportation, etc.; and
- Processing the application of exit poll and related matters.

Elections Division 4

- Formulating the central counting procedures applicable to elections;
- Procuring materials necessary for the Central Counting Station (CCS);
- Providing training for electoral staff deployed to the CCS;
- Designing, developing, testing and implementing various computer systems, including the Ballot Box Tracking System, the Counting Staff Registration System, etc.;
- Co-ordinating the transport arrangements for the delivery of functional constituency ballot papers to the CCS as well as the transport services for the various emergency depots on the polling day of elections; and

- Co-ordinating the conduct of review on the effectiveness of electoral arrangements among the various sub-divisions under the Elections Division, with a view to introducing improvement measures for future elections.

* The above is the division of duties among the four Elections Divisions during the election cycle. Outside the election cycle, the duties under Elections Divisions 3 and 4 will be taken up by the permanent Elections Divisions 1 and 2.