

**For discussion on
16 October 2017**

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

2018 Voter Registration Campaign

Purpose

This paper introduces the publicity plan and main features of the 2018 Voter Registration (“VR”) Campaign and seeks Members’ views on them.

Timetable for 2018 VR and Publication of Registers

2. Under current legislation, Hong Kong permanent residents who have reached 18 years of age, hold an identity document and ordinarily reside in Hong Kong are eligible to be registered as electors. For the 2018 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 2018 so that their registration particulars may be included in the final registers (“FR”) to be published in July 2018, and they may vote in elections conducted thereafter. There is no need for existing electors whose names have been recorded in the current 2017 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”) so that the updated particulars may be reflected in the FR to be published in July 2018.

3. The Government conducted a public consultation on enhancement of the VR system between 26 November 2015 and 8 January 2016, and published the Consultation Report on Enhancement of VR System (“Consultation Report”) on 21 January 2016. The recommendations include introducing the requirement of submitting address proof by electors. Members were subsequently consulted on the recommendations at the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs held on 19 April 2017. Members were generally in support of the implementation of the arrangement for existing electors to produce address proof upon changing their registered residential addresses, and advancing the statutory deadline for change of registration

particulars by 30 days to allow sufficient time for processing the relevant applications. The Government will introduce amendments to the relevant subsidiary legislation under the Electoral Affairs Commission Ordinance (Cap. 541) at the end of October this year, so as to provide that electors are required to submit address proof when submitting applications for change of registration particulars involving change of registered address, and to advance the statutory deadlines for change of registration particulars to 2 April (for non-District Council election year) and 2 June (for District Council election year)¹. It is expected that the legislative amendments will be completed by the end of this year and the new measures are planned for implementation from 1 February 2018 onwards. Publicity activities will be launched in the coming 2018 VR Campaign to promote the address proof requirement and the new statutory deadlines for change of registration particulars.

4. Except for the above-mentioned change, the other VR deadlines will remain unchanged. The 2018 provisional registers (“PR”) and omissions list (“OL”) will be published by 1 June 2018 for public inspection. During the period of public inspection from 1 June to 25 June 2018, 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 2018. The statutory deadlines for the 2018 VR cycle are set out at **Annex**.

5. In the 2018 VR cycle, the REO will continue to implement checking measures and carry out statutory inquiry process so as to maintain the integrity of the system as well 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).

¹ In other words, the statutory deadline for change of particulars in the 2018 VR cycle would be 2 April 2018.

Main Features of the 2018 VR Campaign

Objectives

6. The overall objectives of the 2018 VR Campaign are –
- (a) to remind electors about the implementation of new measure of submitting address proof when applying for change of registered residential address from 1 February 2018 onwards and the statutory deadline of 2 April 2018 for reporting change of registration particulars by existing electors;
 - (b) to call upon eligible persons of all age groups to register as electors, and that the statutory deadline for new registrations will be 2 May 2018;
 - (c) to stress the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration especially the principal residential address provided by applicants in the VR form;
 - (d) to remind registered electors to fulfil their civic responsibility to take the initiative to notify the REO of any change in their registration particulars before the newly revised statutory deadline and to submit address proof for change of registered residential addresses;
 - (e) to promote the use of the OVIES (www.voterinfo.gov.hk) and the REO's hotline (28911001) for electors to verify their registration status and check their registration particulars;
 - (f) to encourage 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
 - (g) to remind electors to respond to the REO's inquiry letters before the statutory deadline (i.e. 2 May 2018) so as to ensure that they will not lose their registration status and voting right inadvertently.

With appropriate publicity measures, we wish to raise the awareness of

eligible persons of the VR arrangements, to enhance electors' awareness of the importance of timely updating of their registration particulars especially residential address information, and to remind electors the requirement of submitting address proof when applying for change of registered residential addresses. These promotion efforts aim at boosting registration rate and enhancing the accuracy of registration particulars in the registers.

Timing

7. The 2018 VR Campaign appealing for new registration and reminding electors to update their registration particulars will run from January 2018 to the statutory deadline for new registration (i.e. 2 May 2018). Thereafter, upon the publication of the PR and OL on or before 1 June 2018, the following round of publicity will begin simultaneously and continue until 25 June 2018 (i.e. up to the end of public inspection period in the 2018 VR cycle) to remind electors to verify their registration status and 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 2018) so as to reinstate their registration status, failing which the electors will not be included in the FR to be issued in July 2018. The entire publicity campaign will last for about five months.

Publicity measures

8. We shall adopt a multi-pronged approach to appeal to eligible persons to register as electors, to remind electors to update their registration particulars with the REO and to submit address proof for change of registered residential addresses, as well as to publicise the other VR messages set out in paragraph 6 above. Extensive publicity will be sustained throughout the campaign to arouse public awareness of the messages. The publicity efforts for this year's VR Campaign will include –

- (a) broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest on television, radio and internet platforms appealing for new registration, and reminding electors to notify the REO of any change of residential addresses and to provide address proof ;
- (b) placing advertisements or disseminating messages in newspapers, popular websites and mobile applications, including GovHK and GovHK Notifications to encourage new

registration and timely updating of registration particulars by electors;

- (c) displaying posters in higher education 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 and provide address proof, or to register as electors;
- (e) displaying posters at the advertising light boxes of bus stops and in MTR stations over the territory as well as in the compartments of MTR trains, 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.

We have been using new media channels in recent years for more extensive and efficient dissemination of information to the public, with a view to enhancing the publicity efforts and the effectiveness of the publicity measures.

9. In the 2017 FR, there are about 3.8 million geographical constituencies electors, representing a registration rate of 79.5%. Both the total number of electors and the registration rate have reached a record high. The registration rate of eligible young people aged between 18 and 30 is 69.2%. 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 and websites such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram 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, seeking their assistance including the student unions to distribute application forms to students and to encourage them to register as electors; 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.

Since young people will continue to be a target group in the VR campaign, sustained and focused efforts will be made to encourage more young people to register as electors in the coming VR cycles.

Estimated Expenditure

10. Publicity expenses on the 2018 VR Campaign are estimated to be about \$8.5 million. Financial provision has been reserved by the REO to meet such requirement.

Views Sought

11. Members are invited to comment on the publicity plan of the 2018 VR Campaign as set out in this paper.

**Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Registration and Electoral Office
October 2017**

Statutory Deadlines for the 2018 Voter Registration (VR) Cycle²

Major Events for VR	Statutory Deadlines for the 2018 VR Cycle (Non-District Council Election Year)
Existing electors to apply for change of registration particulars ³	2 April
The public to submit VR applications for new registration or existing electors to submit applications for de-registration	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 The Government will introduce amendments to the relevant subsidiary legislation under the Electoral Affairs Commission Ordinance (Cap. 541) to advance the statutory deadlines for change of registration particulars to 2 April (for non-District Council election year) and 2 June (for District Council election year). After going through the negative vetting procedure at the Legislative Council, the statutory deadline for change of registration particulars in the 2018 VR cycle would be advanced from the original deadline of 2 May 2018 to 2 April 2018.