

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

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## **Panel on Constitutional Affairs**

**Meeting on 21 July 2025**

### **Background brief on practical arrangements for the 2025 Legislative Council General Election**

#### **Purpose**

This paper summarizes the discussions held by Members on the practical arrangements for the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) general elections (“general elections”).

#### **Background**

2. The 2025 General Election is scheduled **to be held on 7 December 2025**. In accordance with the established practice, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau and the Registration and Electoral Office will normally report to the Panel on Constitutional Affairs (“the Panel”) on **the practical arrangements for a public election**, including the **polling and counting arrangements, facilitation measures for electors to cast their votes, training for polling staff**, as well as **security and contingency plans**, etc., before the election is held, and listen to the concerns and views expressed by the Panel on relevant issues.

#### **Relevant discussions held by the Panel on Constitutional Affairs and other committees**

3. The Panel appointed the Subcommittee on Improving the Practical Arrangements for Elections (“the Subcommittee”) to review the work on the existing practical arrangements for elections in a focused manner.<sup>1</sup> In respect of the arrangements for the 2025 General Election, the Panel

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<sup>1</sup> The Subcommittee was formed in February 2023 and completed its work in June 2024, with a [report](#) submitted to the Panel.

discussed at its meeting on 16 December 2024 the Administration's proposal to amend the electoral legislation. A Bills Committee was also formed to scrutinize the Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2025 ("the Bill") introduced by the Government.<sup>2</sup> The major views and concerns expressed by Members at the meetings of the Panel, the Subcommittee and the Bills Committee which scrutinized the Bill, as well as the Administration's responses, are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Facilitation measures for electors to cast their votes

#### *Polling hours and venues*

4. Some Members suggested that the Administration **should in the long run consider allowing geographical constituency ("GC") electors to choose to cast their votes at any of the polling stations in various districts** according to their needs (e.g. their itineraries or places of work), so as to provide more convenience and flexibility for electors and make polling activities simpler and more time-efficient. For the short term, the Administration should first **consider allowing electors to cast their votes at any of the polling stations in their constituencies** for their convenience. The Administration explained that as GC elections involved millions of electors, it needed to ensure that the elections were conducted in a safe and orderly manner, and prevent excessive crowds from gathering at some polling stations. Taking into account **the waiting time for electors casting votes** and **the manpower arrangements for polling staff**, the Administration considered that **it was more appropriate to allocate electors to their respective polling stations in accordance with their principal residential addresses**.

5. Some Members were of the view that polling hours in Hong Kong were too long, causing delays in vote counting and the announcement of election results, and suggested that the Administration might, based on relevant polling data, **explore whether there was room for shortening the polling hours**. The Administration indicated that the current polling hours were determined upon due consideration of various pros and cons from the perspectives of electors' right to vote and the efficiency of the election. As the polling days of elections all fell on Sundays at present, during which some electors still needed to go to work, **it might not be appropriate to further shorten the polling hours**. However, the Administration **would review the polling hours in due course** to make appropriate arrangements.

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<sup>2</sup> The Bill was passed at the Council meeting of 30 April 2025 and came into operation on the date of its publication in the Gazette, i.e. 2 May 2025.

### *Setting up Near Boundary Polling Stations*

6. Members welcomed the Administration's setting up of a total of four **Near Boundary Polling Stations ("NBPSs")**<sup>3</sup> at two schools near the Sheung Shui MTR station in the 2023 District Council Election, which provided convenience for electors who worked and lived in the Mainland to return to Hong Kong for casting their votes. Members expected the Administration to **make the same arrangements in the 2025 General Election** and suggested that the Administration might consider **setting up NBPSs in the vicinity of major immigration control points (e.g. the Shenzhen Bay Port and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port)**.

7. The Administration advised that NBPSs were set up with the aim of facilitating voting by electors in the Mainland as far as possible. When considering the locations of NBPSs, the Administration would **take into account the distances between the locations and boundary control points, as well as the availability of suitable space for use as polling stations**. Various measures to facilitate Hong Kong residents in the Mainland to return to Hong Kong for casting their votes would continue to be adopted in the General Election.

8. Some Members were of the view that in the long run, the Administration **should explore setting up polling stations in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area** to enable electors who worked and lived there to cast their votes without making a special trip back to Hong Kong. The Administration advised that **the suggestion of setting up polling stations in the Mainland involved very complex legal and actual operational issues**, and it also involved coordination with the Mainland and discussion with the Mainland authorities, which needed to be **considered with care**.

### Introduction of digitalization measures

9. Members urged the Administration to **more actively promote digitalization in voter registration, ballot paper issuance, vote casting and vote counting** in the 2025 General Election, with a view to **expediting the election workflow**. The Administration pointed out that in the five elections held after the improvement of the electoral system and the district

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<sup>3</sup> NBPSs were set up at two schools near the Sheung Shui MTR station, i.e. Hong Kong Taoist Association Tang Hin Memorial Secondary School and Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Kap Yan Directors' College. Electors who wished to vote at NBPSs had to register on the online registration system within a stipulated period before the polling day.

governance system, the Administration **had introduced a number of new arrangements for digitalization**, which included **using the Electronic Poll Register system for ballot paper issuance to significantly shorten the queuing time for electors**. The Administration intended to **further enhance its vote counting work to shorten the counting time**, so that candidates, electors or various stakeholders could be informed of election results as soon as possible. The Administration would continue to introduce more smart technologies and information technologies and increase the use of automated methods in different stages of elections. Also, reference would be drawn from the electoral arrangements in different countries or regions.

*Use of counting machines in the Legislative Council functional constituency elections for vote counting*

10. The Bill empowered the Electoral Affairs Commission to use counting machines, while retaining manual counting, in the vote counting work for the LegCo functional constituency (“FC”) elections. Members expressed concern about **the Administration’s time frame for deciding whether counting machines would be used in the upcoming FC election**. The Administration advised that the relevant work would commence immediately after the passage of the Bill, including the identification of suitable contractors to undertake the development of the system and the conduct of technical tests. After assessing the reliability and accuracy of the system and the results of the tests, it would decide whether to use counting machines in the election for vote counting. **Specific arrangements, once finalized, would be announced to the public in due course**, and consideration would be given to briefing candidates of the relevant constituencies and related persons on the operation of the vote counting work with the use of counting machines.

11. Members **agreed that the use of counting machines would significantly increase the efficiency of vote counting in FC elections, shorten the time for counting**, while in the long run **reducing labour costs and related expenses**. Some Members pointed out that the counting of votes in the 2021 Election Committee (“EC”) Subsector Elections took considerable long time due to technical problems in the operation of the counting machines, and urged the Administration to learn from the experience and **draw up a sound risk management and contingency mechanism**. **In parallel, it should conduct adequate tests to ensure the effective and reliable operation of the system**, and activate the fallback arrangements immediately in the unlikely event of problems, so as to avoid affecting the progress of vote counting.

12. The Administration pointed out that the technology of counting machines was rather mature. Building on the successful experience of using counting machines in the past EC subsector elections and LegCo EC constituency elections, and after reviewing the vote counting process for FC elections, the Administration considered that the option of using counting machines for vote counting could be introduced in FC elections. The Administration would **ensure that the system would be developed and supplied by reputable contractors**, and would **conduct rigorous testing and formulate contingency plans**, including the provision of adequate backup counting machines and resorting to manual counting where necessary. **Simulation tests** would also **be conducted** before the election to ensure that in the event of technical problems, the contingency plan could be activated swiftly so that the counting of votes could continue to be conducted without delaying the announcement of the election results.

13. According to the arrangements for enhancing the counting procedures for FCs under the Bill, upon the close of poll, ballot boxes and ballot paper accounts for FCs would be delivered from various polling stations across the territory to the central counting station (“CCS”). Upon arrival at CCS, unlike the previous practice, manual sorting of ballots papers by FC (up to 28 FCs) would no longer be necessary before using the counting machines for vote counting. In this connection, members were **concerned whether the use of counting machines could accurately count by FC the votes on the ballot papers and produce reliable results**, and whether there was a mechanism to verify that the results were correct if there was only a very small difference in the numbers of votes obtained between candidates. Members also enquired whether manual counting of votes would be used or counting machines would continue to be used in the event of any request for a re-count by candidates or related persons.

14. The Administration responded that technically, the use of counting machines for vote counting allowed for automatic counting by FC of votes obtained by each candidate without the need for manual sorting of ballot papers and could produce accurate results. This not only enhanced efficiency but also reduced the possibility of human error. For any request for a re-count, the Returning Officer (“RO”) would carefully consider whether to accede to the request in the light of the actual circumstances. Regarding how the re-count was to be conducted, as in the past, if the votes were counted using counting machines, the re-count would also be conducted in the same way using counting machines unless there was a reasonable ground for doing otherwise. RO would make a judgment based on the actual situation at the time.

### **Relevant Council Questions**

15. Questions were raised at Council meetings on issues relating to the practical arrangements for general elections. The relevant hyperlinks are in the [Appendix](#).

### **Relevant papers**

16. A list of relevant papers which are available on the LegCo website is in the [Appendix](#).

Council Business Divisions  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
16 July 2025

**Practical arrangements for the  
2025 Legislative Council General Election**

**Relevant papers**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Constitutional Affairs	20 April 2022	<a href="#">Agenda</a> item III: Electoral Affairs Commission Report on the 2021 Legislative Council General Election <a href="#">Minutes of meeting</a>
	16 December 2024	<a href="#">Agenda</a> item II: Legislative framework for the Improving Electoral Arrangements (Consolidated Amendments) Bill <a href="#">Minutes of meeting</a>
Subcommittee on Improving the Practical Arrangements for Elections	---	<a href="#">Report</a> of the Subcommittee to the Panel on Constitutional Affairs on 11 June 2024
Bills Committee on Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2025	---	<a href="#">Report</a> of the Bills Committee to the Legislative Council on 30 April 2025

<b>Council meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
17 January 2024	<a href="#">Question 3</a> : Ensuring the normal operation of government electronic systems
13 March 2024	<a href="#">Question 8</a> : Participation by Hong Kong electors on Mainland in voting in Hong Kong's elections
23 October 2024	<a href="#">Question 3</a> : Legislative Council General Election
4 June 2025	<a href="#">Question 5</a> : Publicity for National Games and National Special Olympic Games