

CHAPTER 6

ON THE POLLING DAY

Section 1 – Central Support

6.1 In line with the practice for past elections and by-elections, a Central Co-ordination Centre (“CCC”) manned by REO staff was set up at the REO office in Guardian House in Wan Chai on the polling day to oversee the electoral arrangements for the purpose of providing a wide range of enquiry, complaint and support services to electors, candidates/agents, ROs/PROs and members of the public. The CCC was moved to HKCEC after the close of the poll. An SIC was also set up in Guardian House to collate the relevant statistical information such as the hourly voter turnout rates, counting results and the number and types of complaints received by the various complaint-handling parties etc for public information through the media on a regular basis. Both centres operated throughout the poll and the count.

6.2 The set up of the CCC included a Command Desk, five Helpdesks, a Media Enquiry Support Desk, an Enquiry Hotline and a Complaints Centre (“CC”). The Command Desk, headed by the CEO, was to oversee the overall conduct of the poll. Helpdesk 1 was responsible for handling enquiries relating to re-deployment of polling staff, report of absentees and the contents of the operational manual for polling stations. Helpdesk 2 dealt with enquiries on setting up or delivery of polling equipment, completion of forms, and provision of Civil Aid Service (“CAS”). Helpdesk 3 was responsible for enquiries on transport arrangement and request of emergency support. Helpdesk 4 was responsible for enquiries on arrangement of exit poll while Helpdesk 5 dealt with enquiries on arrangements of unloading of ballot boxes.

The Media Enquiry Support Desk handled press enquiries and disseminated information to the media at regular intervals. The Enquiry Hotline dealt with enquiries from members of the public and provided support to the polling staff relating to the information on voter registration or entitlement to vote.

6.3 The CC was set up at the REO office in Harbour Centre to receive and process election-related complaints lodged with the EAC direct from the public by phone, by fax or through e-mail, and cases referred to the EAC by other complaint-handling parties. It was manned by staff of the Complaints Unit of the EAC Secretariat and operated throughout the polling hours from 7:30 am to 10:30 pm. Details of the complaints handled are set out in Chapter 13.

6.4 Apart from control at the central level, District Liaison Officers, who were staff of the 18 District Offices, were appointed at the district level to carry out liaison work between the PROs of polling stations and the respective ROs as well as the CCC. District Office staff were also appointed as polling staff to station at the 18 District Offices to deal with removal of EAs and other election-related complaints.

6.5 In addition to the above, separate working areas were provided for the EAC and staff of the Constitutional Affairs Bureau (“CAB”), ROs, D of J, Information Services Department (“ISD”), Hong Kong Police Force, CAS, Auxiliary Medical Service (“AMS”) and REO at the central counting station at the HKCEC, to facilitate the performance of their respective roles in the conduct of the elections.

6.6 The Police and the CAS rendered assistance in maintaining law and order in the NCZs, NSZs and inside the polling stations and central counting station.

Section 2 – The Poll

6.7 On the polling day, 110 polling stations were operated. The poll started at 7:30 am and ended at 10:30 pm.

6.8 Generally, the poll went on smoothly throughout the voting period and no serious problem was encountered. The turnout rate of electors was encouraging. A total of 56,142 electors turned up to cast their votes, which represented 27.43% of the total electorate of 204,646 for the contested subsectors/sub-subsector. The overall voter turnout rate was considerably higher than the corresponding rates of 19.49% and 14.95% in the EC Subsector Elections and By-elections held in 2000 and 2005 respectively. A breakdown of the turnout rate by subsector/sub-subsector is shown in **Appendix VII**.

Section 3 – The Count

6.9 The counting of votes for the 22 contested subsectors and one contested sub-subsector was held at the central counting station located in the New Annex of the HKCEC. The Chief RO was responsible for the overall supervision of the central counting station. There were 23 counting zones. Each of them was for a contested subsectors/sub-subsector, and was supervised by the respective ROs.

6.10 After the close of poll at 10:30 pm, all ballot boxes were delivered to the central counting station by the PRO of each polling station under the escort of police officers and also candidates/agents who wished to do so. The first ballot box at the central counting station was opened by the relevant RO and the ballot papers were poured out by the SCA, the EAC Chairman and Members at about 12:45 am on 11 December 2006. Arrangements were then

made to sort the ballot papers by individual subsector/sub-subsector, verify the ballot paper account, deliver the sorted ballot papers to the counting zones of the relevant subsectors/sub-subsector, and conduct initial screening manually to separate ballot papers to be scanned by OMR machines and ballot papers to be processed manually. Actual counting of votes (except for those screened out for manual processing) was conducted by the OMR machines. This was carried out in the presence of the candidates and agents at the central counting station.

6.11 Of the 56,142 ballot papers cast, 179 ballot papers were clearly invalid (178 were unmarked and one was endorsed with the word “UNUSED”) and therefore not counted pursuant to sections 74A(b) and 77 of the EAC (EP) (EC) Reg. In addition, another 920 ballot papers were identified by the ROs as questionable. In the presence of the candidates and their agents, the ROs concerned, with the assistance of the AROs(Legal), examined carefully the questionable ballot papers to determine their validity. In the end, 335 questionable ballot papers were determined as invalid by the ROs (94 were with writing or a mark by which the elector could possibly be identified; 194 were not marked in accordance with section 56 of the EAC (EP) (EC) Reg (ie by shading the ovals opposite the names of the candidates of the elector’s choice or by voting for no more than the prescribed number of seats in the relevant subsector) and 47 were void for uncertainty). The remaining 585 questionable ballot papers were determined as valid and were counted. An analysis of the ballot papers not counted is shown in **Appendix VIII**.

Section 4 – The Results

6.12 The time for declaration of counting results for individual subsectors/sub-subsector varied. The counting result for the first subsector (ie

the Hong Kong and Kowloon DCs subsector) was announced shortly after 7:30 am on 11 December 2006 (the day following the polling day). The count of the last subsector (ie the Chinese Medicine subsector) was completed by 10:25 am. All the counting results were announced before 12:00 noon on 11 December 2006. The entire counting process (from opening of the first ballot box up to the announcement of all the results) took about 11 hours 15 minutes to complete. The election results of the 22 contested subsectors and one contested sub-subsector were published in the Gazette on 14 December 2006 and are now reproduced at **Appendix IX** for easy reference.

Section 5 – EAC Visits

6.13 As in previous elections, the Chairman and two Members of the EAC paid visits to some polling stations to observe what was happening on the spot. Each of them had his individual itinerary throughout the day. They covered a total of 20 polling stations. They met at the polling stations at Leighton Hill Community Hall and Hong Kong Park Sports Centre at 9:45 am and 3:45 pm respectively to brief the press on the latest progress of the poll. They also encouraged electors to cast their votes. They assembled again in the evening at the central counting station to pour the ballot papers from the first ballot box with the SCA, and then met the media to sum up the polling process. After the close of count, the EAC met the media again to conclude the elections as a whole.