

CHAPTER 6

ON THE POLLING DAY OF THE ELECTION COMMITTEE SUBSECTOR ELECTIONS

Section 1 – Central Support

6.1 In line with the practice for past elections and by-elections, a CCC manned by REO staff was set up at the REO office in Caroline Hill Road on the polling day to oversee the electoral arrangements for the purpose of providing a wide range of services to voters, candidates/agents, ROs/PROs and members of the public. Except for the Hotline services which continued to operate at the REO Office at Guardian House, all other relevant sections of the REO and bureaux/departments concerned were accommodated in the CCC to facilitate communication and coordination. The CCC was put under direct supervision of the CEO who was deputised by the Principal Electoral Officer (“PEO”). The CCC was moved to HKCEC after the close of the poll. An SIC was also set up at the REO Office in Caroline Hill Road 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, seven Helpdesks, a Media Service Support Desk and an Enquiry Hotline. The Command Desk was to oversee the overall conduct of the poll. Helpdesk 1 was responsible for handling enquiries relating to re-deployment of electoral staff, report of absentees, polling procedures, completion of polling forms and the contents of the operational manual for OPSs. Helpdesk 2 dealt with enquiries on setting

up or delivery of polling equipment and provision of Civil Aid Service (“CAS”) for OPSs. Helpdesk 3 took care of enquiries on the contents of the Operational Manual, polling arrangement and arrangement of polling equipment for DPSs. Helpdesk 4 was responsible for answering enquiries concerning the transport arrangement for OPSs and DPSs. Helpdesk 5 was responsible for handling specific enquiries on the transport arrangement for CCC. As to enquiries relating to exit polls particulars of candidates printed on ballot papers, they were handled by Helpdesk 6 and Helpdesk 7 respectively. The Media Service 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.

Section 2 – Complaints Centre

6.3 The Complaints Centre (“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 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 to carry out liaison work at the district level 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 and Mainland Affairs Bureau (“CMAB”), ROs, DoJ, 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 the law and order in the NCZs, NSZs and inside the OPSs and central counting station. The Police officers and CSD officers were also stationed at the DPSs at the police stations and the penal institutions of the CSD respectively to provide support to the PROs.

Section 3 – The Poll

6.7 On the polling day, 110 OPSs were operated. The poll started at 7:30 am and ended at 10:30 pm. In addition, a total of 11 DPSs were set up for registered voters imprisoned or remanded under the custody of the CSD and registered voters who were remanded or detained by the LEAs other than the CSD to cast their votes. Polling hours started at 7:30 am and ended at 10:30 pm except for the DPSs set up at the penal institutions of the CSD, the poll of which was conducted from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm owing to security reasons.

6.8 Generally, the poll went on smoothly throughout the polling day. The turnout rate of voters was encouraging. A total of 65,565 voters turned up to cast their votes, which represented 27.60% of the total electorate of 237,548 for the contested subsectors. The overall voter turnout rate was comparable to and slightly higher than the rate of 27.43% in the 2006 ECSS Elections. A

breakdown of the turnout rate by subsector is shown in **Appendix VII**.

Section 4 – The Count

6.9 The counting of votes for the 24 contested subsectors was held at the central counting station located at the Halls B, C, D and E on Level 3 of the HKCEC. The Chief RO was responsible for the overall supervision of the central counting station. There were 38 counting zones and each of them was supervised by the respective ROs.

6.10 After the close of poll at 10:30 pm (4:00 pm for DPSs at the penal institutions of the CSD), all ballot boxes were delivered to the central counting station by the PRO of each OPS and DPS 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 an RO and the ballot boxes were emptied by the EAC Chairman and Members, and SCMA at about 12:15 am on 12 December 2011. Arrangements were then made to sort the ballot papers by individual subsector, verify the ballot paper account, deliver the sorted ballot papers to the counting zones of the relevant subsectors, 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 their agents at the central counting station.

6.11 Of the 65,565 ballot papers cast, 408 ballot papers were unmarked and, therefore, were clearly invalid and must not be counted pursuant to sections 74A(b) and 77 of the EAC (EP) (EC) Reg. In addition, another 1,181 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, 514 questionable ballot papers were determined as invalid by the ROs and were not counted (137 were with writing or a mark by which the voter could possibly be identified; 3 were substantially mutilated; 247 were not marked in the manner as stipulated in section 56 of the EAC (EP) (EC) Reg (i.e. by shading the ovals opposite the names of the candidates of the voter's choice or by voting for no more than the prescribed number of seats in the relevant subsector) and 127 were void for uncertainty). The remaining 667 questionable ballot papers were determined as valid and were counted. An analysis of the ballot papers not counted is shown in **Appendix VIII**.

Section 5 – The Results

6.12 After the initial announcement of the counting results at the Questionable Ballot Paper table, a candidate from the Engineering subsector requested a re-count. The RO concerned allowed the request and the ballot papers of the Engineering subsector were accordingly re-counted with the OMR machines. The results of the re-count tallied with that of the first count and were accepted by the candidate. In addition, the ROs of the Heung Yee Kuk and Hong Kong and Kowloon DCs subsectors had to draw lots to determine the election results of two pairs of candidates, each receiving the same number of votes after the counts. Consequently, for the Heung Yee Kuk subsector, one candidate was elected as an EC Special Member and the other was defeated. Regarding Hong Kong and Kowloon DCs subsectors, one candidate was elected as an EC member and the other as an EC Special Member.

6.13 The time for declaration of counting results for individual subsectors varied. The counting result for the first subsector (i.e. the Hotel subsector) was

announced at around 6:45 am on 12 December 2011 (the day following the polling day). The count of the last subsector (i.e. the Social Welfare subsector) was completed by 10:45 am. All the counting results were announced before 1:03 pm on 12 December 2011. The entire counting process (from opening of the first ballot box up to the announcement of all the results) took about 12 hours 48 minutes to complete. The election results of the 24 contested subsectors were published in the Gazette on 15 December 2011 and are now reproduced at **Appendix IX** for easy reference.

Section 6 – EAC Visits

6.14 On the polling day, the Chairman and two Members of the EAC paid visits to some polling stations to observe what was happening on the spot and closely monitored the progress of the poll. Each of them had his individual itinerary throughout the day. They covered a total of 20 OPSs in all 18 districts and four DPSs at the Tung Tau Correctional Institution, Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre, Stanley Prison and the Cheung Sha Wan Police Station. They met at the polling stations at the Sai Ying Pun Community Complex Community Hall and the Siu Sai Wan Community Hall at 10:45 am and 5:45 pm respectively to provide election statistics and answer questions from the media. They assembled again in the evening at the central counting station to open and empty the first ballot box with SCMA, and then met the media to brief them on the completion of the poll and the overall voter turnout. After the close of count at about 1:30 pm on 12 December 2011, the EAC met the media again to conclude the elections as a whole. The EAC considered that both the poll and the count of the election was very smooth and that the election was organised and concluded in an open, fair and honest manner.

