

CHAPTER 6

ON THE POLLING DAY OF THE ELECTION COMMITTEE SUBSECTOR ORDINARY ELECTIONS

Section 1 – Command Centre and Support

6.1 The REO set up the CCC at its office in the KITEC on the polling day to oversee electoral arrangements, so as to ensure that the elections could be held smoothly. The REO and the relevant sections of the government bureaux/departments concerned operated in the CCC to facilitate communication and co-ordination for swift response to various election-related matters on the polling day.

6.2 The CCC comprised 1 Command Desk, 8 Helpdesks and 1 group of Enquiry Hotlines:

- (a) the Command Desk was tasked with overseeing the overall conduct of the poll, and giving directions to the electoral staff who encountered unexpected incidents or problems;
- (b) the Helpdesks handled enquiries about electoral matters made by the polling staff; and
- (c) the Enquiry Hotlines dealt with enquiries about the poll from the public and LEAs and provided assistance to visually-impaired voters in apprehending the contents of the Introduction to Candidates.

6.3 The CCC was equipped with an Incident Logging System for parties concerned to share information and keep track of major incidents.

6.4 At the district level, District Liaison Officers from respective District Offices were responsible for liaison work among individual polling stations, the ROs concerned and the CCC. Staff of District Offices were also appointed as electoral staff at District Offices for arranging the removal of unauthorised EAs and handling of other election-related complaints.

6.5 In addition, the REO provided separate working areas for the EAC, CMAB, ROs, DoJ, ISD, Police, Fire Services Department (“FSD”) and Auxiliary Medical Service (“AMS”) in the Media Centre inside the CCS at the HKCEC to facilitate the performance of their respective roles in the conduct of the elections.

6.6 The Police and the Civil Aid Service (“CAS”) rendered assistance in maintaining order in the OPSs (including relevant NCZs and NSZs). Police officers were also stationed at the DPS at the police station to provide support to the PRO.

Statistical Information Centre

6.7 One SIC was set up at each of the CCC and the CCS. The former was responsible for collecting and consolidating various electoral statistics (including voter turnout, complaint figures, etc.) provided by polling stations, and disseminating important messages to all polling stations. The consolidated voter turnout and voter turnout rate were made available to the public on an hourly basis through government press releases and the dedicated election website. The latter was responsible for checking and disseminating counting results collected from the CCS. In general, the collection, compilation and dissemination of the hourly

statistics of voter turnout rate, complaint figures and the counting results were smooth on the polling day.

6.8 A total of 48 telephone lines and 33 fax lines were set up for the SIC at the CCC and a total of 140 telephone lines and 36 fax lines were set up for the Helpdesks at the CCC to collect hourly statistics of voter turnout rate and complaint figures and handle enquiries from polling stations.

Section 2 – The Complaints Centre

6.9 A Complaints Centre (“CC”) was set up at the REO’s office in the Harbour Centre to handle complaints from the public.

6.10 Complainants could lodge complaints by telephone, fax or email. The CC was manned by staff of the EAC Secretariat and operated throughout the polling hours. Details of the work of the CC and the complaints received on the polling day and during the complaints-handling period are set out in **Chapter 13**.

Section 3 – The Poll

6.11 On the polling day, a total of 5 OPSs were set up at the HKCEC in Wan Chai, Kowloon Park Sports Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui, Tuen Mun Town Hall, Sha Tin Town Hall and Princess Alexandra Community Centre in Tsuen Wan. All polling stations were accessible to voters with mobility difficulty or using wheelchairs. Apart from the OPSs, the REO set up one DPS in the Cheung Sha Wan Police Station for voters imprisoned or held in custody by LEAs other than the CSD, if any, to cast their votes on the polling day. In addition, the REO had planned to set up DPSs at penal institutions of the CSD for voters imprisoned or held in custody by the CSD to cast their votes, but eventually no such DPS was required to be set up because there was no voter in the penal institutions of the

CSD on the polling day. Polling hours of the OPSs and the DPS at the police station were the same, i.e. from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. Special queuing arrangements were adopted for the first time in accordance with the law. Two queues were set up at each polling station: one special queue for voters in need including persons aged 70 or above, pregnant women and persons who were not able to queue for a long time or had difficulty in queuing because of illness, injury, disability or dependence on mobility aids; and the other queue for other voters. To enhance efficiency and shorten the overall waiting time, PROs would deploy the ballot paper issuing desk flexibly. For example, when there was no one in the special queue, the special ballot paper issuing desk would be used to issue ballot papers to other voters through the EPR System. Nevertheless, there were still long queues at the OPSs in the morning on the polling day. The Chairman of the EAC later appealed to voters that it was not necessary to rush for voting in the morning as the poll would last until 6:00 pm. At noon of the polling day, the long queues started to dissipate.

6.12 On the voter turnout, a total of 4 389 voters cast their votes, which represented 89.77% of the 4 889 registered voters of contested subsectors. The turnout rate was higher than that of 46.53% in the 2016 ECSS Ordinary Elections. A breakdown of the turnout rate by subsector is shown at **Appendix VII**.

6.13 The EAC has reviewed the relevant arrangements and made recommendations regarding the long queues at polling stations in the morning on the polling day. Please refer to Chapter 14 (Item G) and also the “Investigation Report on the Long Queues at Polling Stations and the Prolonged Time Taken in Counting Votes in the 2021 Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections” published by the EAC on 22 October 2021 for details.

Section 4 – The Count

6.14 The counting of votes for the 13 contested subsectors was conducted centrally at the CCS located at the HKCEC. One of the ROs was designated as the Chief RO to supervise the overall operation of the CCS. There were 13 counting zones and each of them was supervised by the respective RO.

6.15 After the close of poll at 6:00 pm, each OPS and DPS assigned one DPRO or APRO to be specially responsible for preparation, packing and delivery of electoral documents before handing them over to the PRO for thorough examination and verification. Afterwards, all ballot boxes and electoral documents were delivered to the CCS by the PRO under the escort of police officers, and candidates/agents were allowed to accompany the delivery as arranged by the PRO. The first ballot box was opened by the RO at the CCS at 9:04 pm on 19 September 2021, and was emptied by the Chairman and Members of the EAC and the SCMA. According to the established procedures, after the counting staff sorted the ballot papers by subsectors, they would visually screen whether the ballot papers were readable by OMR machines. During the process, they would also screen out the clearly invalid and questionable ballot papers. Votes on ballot papers readable by OMR machines would be counted by the OMR machines in batches. The ROs should determine questionable ballot papers in the presence of the candidates/agents. Votes recorded on ballot papers ruled valid by the ROs would be inputted manually into the counting system.

6.16 Of the 4 389 ballot papers cast, 48 ballot papers were unmarked and 31 ballot papers were marked for a number of candidates exceeding the number of EC members to be elected by the subsector concerned. Therefore, these ballot papers were clearly invalid and not to be counted pursuant to sections 74A(b), 77(1)(f) and (ga)(i) of the EAC (EP) (EC) Reg. Besides, 62 ballot papers were identified by the ROs as questionable. The ROs of the respective

subsectors with the assistance of the AROs (Legal), examined carefully the questionable ballot papers to determine their validity in the presence of the candidates and their agents. In the end, 34 questionable ballot papers were determined as invalid by the ROs and the votes recorded on them were not counted, including 19 ballot papers with writing or a mark by which the voter could possibly be identified and 15 ballot papers not marked in the manner as stipulated in section 56 of the EAC (EP) (EC) Reg¹². The remaining 28 questionable ballot papers were determined as valid and were processed manually and counted as the relevant candidates' valid votes. An analysis of the ballot papers not counted is shown at **Appendix VIII**.

6.17 The time taken to complete the entire counting process (from the opening of the first ballot box up to the announcement of all election results) was about 10 hours 56 minutes, which was beyond reasonable expectations. The EAC has reviewed the relevant arrangements and made recommendations in this regard. Please refer to Chapter 14 (Item H) and also the "Investigation Report on the Long Queues at Polling Stations and the Prolonged Time Taken in Counting Votes in the 2021 Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections" published by the EAC on 22 October 2021 for details.

Section 5 – The Results

6.18 The counting of votes for individual subsectors completed one after another. The election result for the first subsector (i.e. the Architectural, Surveying, Planning and Landscape subsector) was announced at around 3:02 am on 20 September 2021 (the day following the polling day) while that for the last subsector (i.e. the Representatives of members of Area Committees, District Fight

¹² In accordance with section 56 of the EAC (EP) (EC) Reg, a voter voting at a subsector ordinary election must mark the ballot paper by filling in black the ovals against the names of the candidates of his or her choice. A voter may vote for as many candidates as the number of EC members to be elected by the subsector concerned.

Crime Committees, and District Fire Safety Committees of the New Territories subsector) was announced at around 7:50 am on the same day. All election results were announced before 8:00 am on 20 September 2021 and uploaded onto the dedicated election website. The election results of the 13 contested subsectors were published in the Gazette on 23 September 2021 and reproduced at **Appendix IX** for easy reference.

Section 6 – EAC Visits

6.19 On the polling day, the Chairman and two Members of the EAC visited the polling stations in different districts and proceeded to the CCC to closely monitor the progress and situation of the poll. Moreover, they met the media together at the MC in the HKCEC at around 11:30 am to provide electoral statistics and answer questions from the media.

6.20 The Chairman and Members of the EAC monitored the opening of the first ballot box at the CCS and then emptied it with the SCMA. The EAC then met the media to provide the overall voter turnout and answer questions from the media. After completion of all counting work, the EAC met the media again to conclude the elections. The EAC considered that the elections were held and completed in a fair, open and honest manner. Nevertheless, the long queues at the OPSs and the prolonged time taken in counting votes were beyond reasonable expectations. As such, the EAC conducted a comprehensive review on the queuing and counting arrangements. The relevant conclusions and recommendations are set out in the “Investigation Report on the Long Queues at Polling Stations and the Prolonged Time Taken in Counting Votes in the 2021 Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections” published by the EAC on 22 October 2021.

