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Replies to written questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2022-23

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Constitutional & Mainland Affairs

Session No. : 3

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CMAB027

(Question Serial No. 0272)

Head: (163) Registration and Electoral Office

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: Electoral Services

Controlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (WANG Man-chiu, Raymond)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Question:

With the electoral system improved as advised by the Central Government, the Election Committee Subsector (ECSS) Ordinary Elections and the Legislative Council (LegCo) General Election were held in September and December last year respectively and the Chief Executive Election for the new term will be held in May this year. Please provide this Committee with the details of:

- (a) The total expenditure for conducting the ECSS Ordinary Elections, including the staff establishment, newspaper advertisements, outdoor billboards, text messaging, mailing of leaflets, etc.;
- (b) The total expenditure for conducting the LegCo General Election, including the staff establishment, newspaper advertisements, outdoor billboards, text messaging, mailing of leaflets, etc.;
- (c) The estimated expenditure for conducting the Chief Executive Election in May this year, including the staff establishment, newspaper advertisements, outdoor billboards, text messaging, mailing of leaflets, etc.;
- (d) Out of the estimates of about \$1.2 billion of the Registration and Electoral Office for 2022-23, the provision earmarked for promoting and publicising the institutions of various levels of elections in Hong Kong pursuant to the improved electoral system.

Asked by: Hon LAM Kin-fung, Jeffrey (LegCo internal reference no.: 6)

Reply:

The Election Committee Subsector (ECSS) Ordinary Elections, the Legislative Council (LegCo) General Election and the Chief Executive (CE) Election from the preparation to the completion of all winding-up work usually straddle more than 1 financial year.

2021 ECSS Ordinary Elections

2. The actual expenditures incurred in 2019-20 and 2020-21 by the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) for the preparation of the 2021 ECSS Ordinary Elections are about \$3.4 million and \$17 million respectively. The revised estimate for 2021-22 for the preparation and conduct of the 2021 ECSS Ordinary Elections is about \$184 million, with breakdown as follows:

Estimated expenditure on the preparation and conduct of the 2021 ECSS Ordinary Elections	2021-22 (Revised estimate) \$ million
(1) Staff cost	81
(2) Publicity	2
(3) Other expenses (including the costs for hiring venues, manning polling and counting stations, transportation, postage, free mailing, printing, and rental cost of temporary offices and stores, etc.)	101
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 184

2021 LegCo General Election

3. The actual expenditure incurred in 2020-21 by the REO for the preparation of the 2021 LegCo General Election is about \$310 million. The revised estimate for 2021-22 and the provision for 2022-23 for the preparation and conduct of the 2021 LegCo General Election are about \$1,068 million and \$68 million respectively (including the provision for the preparation and conduct of the 2021 Voter Registration Campaign), with breakdown as follows:

Estimated expenditure on the preparation and conduct of the 2021 LegCo General Election	2021-22 (Revised estimate) \$ million	2022-23 (Provision) \$ million
(1) Staff cost	217	19
(2) Publicity	100	0
(3) Other expenses (including the costs for hiring venues, manning polling and counting stations, Financial Assistance Scheme, transportation, postage, free mailing, printing, and rental cost of temporary offices and stores, etc.)	751	49
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 1,068	<hr/> 68

2022 CE Election

4. The actual expenditure incurred in 2020-21 by the REO for the preparation of the 2022 CE Election is about \$1 million. The revised estimate for 2021-22 and the provision for 2022-23 for the preparation and conduct of the 2022 CE Election are about \$84 million and \$228 million respectively, with breakdown as follows:

	Estimated expenditure on the preparation and conduct of the 2022 CE Election	2021-22 (Revised estimate) \$ million	2022-23^(#) (Provision) \$ million
(1)	Staff cost	40	77
(2)	Publicity	4	0 ^(^)
(3)	Other expenses (including the costs for hiring venues, manning polling and counting stations, transportation, postage, free mailing, printing, and rental cost of temporary offices and stores, etc.)	40	151
	Total	84	228

(#) As the HKSAR Government had not yet decided to postpone the CE Election to 8 May 2022 at the time when the provision for 2022-23 was earmarked, the figures do not reflect the estimated additional expenditure required for the postponement of election (the preliminary estimate being about \$50 million). The relevant expenditure will be met by the REO through deployment of resources and use of the earmarked provision.

(^) According to the original plan, the publicity expenditure for the 2022 CE Election have been included in the estimate for 2021-22. As the HKSAR Government had not yet decided to postpone the CE Election when the above provision was earmarked, the figure does not reflect the postponement of the CE Election, and the relevant publicity expenditure will be included in the estimate for 2022-23. The estimated expenditure on the publicity for the CE Election is about \$4 million.

Promoting and Publicising the Improved Electoral System

5. To enhance public awareness of the improved electoral system, the Government has been publicising the improved electoral system through various means and channels, such as introducing the background information of the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Ordinance 2021, the improved electoral system, as well as the electoral arrangements and relevant electoral legislation on the dedicated website of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau.

6. Regarding the 2022 CE Election to be held in May this year, the REO will continue to promote through election publicity materials to drive home the message of improving the electoral system and the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”, with a view to enhancing public awareness of the improved electoral system and the importance of the system in ensuring the steadfast and successful implementation of “one country, two

systems” in Hong Kong. The 2022 CE Election, which was originally scheduled on 27 March 2022, entails a publicity expenditure of \$4 million estimated to be paid in 2021-22. As the HKSAR Government had not yet decided to postpone the CE Election to 8 May 2022 at the time when the provision for 2022-23 was earmarked, the publicity expenditure was not reflected in the earmarked provision. The relevant expenditure will be met by the REO through deployment of resources and use of the earmarked provision.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CMAB028

(Question Serial No. 0206)

Head: (163) Registration and Electoral Office

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: Electoral Services

Controlling Officer: Chief Electoral Officer (WANG Man-chiu, Raymond)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Question:

Improving the electoral system entails institutional and legislative initiatives to fully implement the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”. One of the main duties under this Programme is to ensure that the 2021 Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections, the 2021 Legislative Council General Election and the 2022 Chief Executive Election are conducted openly, fairly and honestly according to the improved electoral system. In this connection, please inform this Committee of the following:

1. The revised financial provision for 2021-22 is 38.6% lower than the original estimate. What are the reasons?
2. The Executive Council has agreed to invoke the Emergency Regulations Ordinance to postpone the sixth-term Chief Executive Election to 8 May this year. The financial provision of this Programme for 2022-23 is \$1,205.3 million. How much of it is to deal with the work relating to the Chief Executive Election? What are the respective details for staffing, publicity and other expenses?
3. Is there any assessment on the awareness of the improved electoral system in the community, especially among the youths? What specific measures are planned to help the general public obtain a correct understanding of the significance of the system?

Asked by: Hon LIAO Cheung-kong, Martin (LegCo internal reference no.: 7)

Reply:

The revised estimate of the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) for 2021-22 is \$962 million (38.6%) lower than its original estimate. This is mainly due to the changes in electoral arrangements after the improvement of the electoral system which mainly include: (a) the reconstitution of the Election Committee after the improvement of the electoral system has brought about a change in the composition and registration eligibility of the subsectors. Following the reduction of registered subsector voters from the original number of around 258 000 to about 8 000 at present, the number of polling stations for the

2021 Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections has dropped drastically from the estimated 190 to 5; and (b) certain expenditures in relation to the 2021 Legislative Council General Election have been reduced because of improvement of the electoral system. For example, the abolition of the District Council (Second) functional constituency has resulted in a significant decrease in both the expenditure on, for instance, the postage of election mails and the number of counting staff at the central counting station. In addition, since tablets were made available for use by the Census and Statistics Department, there was no need to rent the tablets from contractors. Therefore, the expenditure incurred for the implementation of the electronic poll register system was also less than the original estimate. Overall speaking, the revision in financial provision does not have any implication on the conduct or preparation of the elections concerned.

2. Regarding the Chief Executive (CE) Election, the whole process from preparation to completion of all follow-up work usually straddles more than 1 financial year. The preparatory work for the 2022 CE Election commenced in 2020-21. The actual expenditure incurred in 2020-21 and the revised estimate for 2021-22 for the preparation of the 2022 CE Election are about \$1 million and \$84 million respectively. A provision of about \$228 million is earmarked in 2022-23 for the REO to prepare and conduct the 2022 CE Election. The breakdown of the provision is as follows:

Estimated expenditure on the preparation and conduct of the 2022 CE Election	2022-23^(#) \$ million
(1) Staff cost	77
(2) Publicity	0 ^(^)
(3) Other expenses (including the costs for hiring venues, manning polling and counting stations, transportation, postage, free mailing, printing, and rental of temporary offices and stores, etc.)	151
Total	228

(#) As the HKSAR Government had not yet decided to postpone the CE Election to 8 May 2022 at the time when the provision for 2022-23 was earmarked, the figures do not reflect the estimated additional expenditure required for the postponement of election (the preliminary estimate being about \$50 million). The relevant expenditure will be met by the REO through the deployment of resources and use of the earmarked provision.

(^) According to the original plan, the publicity expenses for the 2022 CE Election have been included in the estimate for 2021-22. As the HKSAR Government had not yet decided to postpone the CE Election when the above provision was earmarked, the figure does not reflect the postponement of the CE Election, and the relevant publicity expenses will be included in the estimate for 2022-23. The estimated expenditure on the publicity for the CE Election is about \$4 million.

3. To enhance public awareness of the improved electoral system, the Government has been publicising the improved electoral system through various means and channels, such as introducing the background information of the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Ordinance 2021, the improved electoral system, as well as the electoral

arrangements and relevant electoral legislation on the dedicated website of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau.

4. Regarding the 2022 CE Election to be held in May this year, the REO will continue to promote through election publicity materials to drive home the message of improving the electoral system and the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”, with a view to enhancing public awareness of the improved electoral system and the importance of the system in ensuring the steadfast and successful implementation of “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong.

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