

Consultation Report on Review of Electoral Arrangements published

The Government published today (May 15) the Consultation Report on Review of Electoral Arrangements, setting out the views received during the public consultation conducted in late 2017 and the Government's recommendations on the way forward for three issues related to electoral arrangements.

"During the almost seven-week public consultation period, we have received more than 15,400 submissions. We also consulted Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) at the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Constitutional Affairs, met with the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the 18 District Councils and deputations/individuals to solicit their views during the consultation period," a Government spokesman said.

"On regulation of election advertisements (EAs) published through the Internet (including social media), overwhelming support has been received for providing an exemption in the Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Conduct) Ordinance (Cap. 554), such that a third party (i.e. individuals or groups that are neither the relevant candidates whose elections are promoted or prejudiced nor their election expense agents) incurring merely electricity and/or Internet access charges can be exempted from the criminal liability arising from incurring election expenses as a result of expression of views on the Internet that constitutes an EA."

The spokesman added, "The Government plans to implement the proposed exemption through an amendment Bill to be introduced into the LegCo within 2018."

On regulation of election surveys, the Government observes that there is yet to be a consensus in the community on the three issues raised in the Consultation Paper, including whether election surveys conducted outside the No Canvassing Zones on the polling day should be regulated, whether election surveys conducted prior to the polling day should be regulated, and whether any change should be made to the existing regulation on exit polls on the polling day. Some respondents have also raised questions on the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing any regulation. In this regard, it is proposed not to make any change to the existing regulation for the time being.

On the polling hours, among the views received during the public consultation period, views from political parties were rather diverse, while the overwhelming majority of other written submissions were not in favour of shortening the polling hours of LegCo and District Council elections. It is proposed that the present polling hours of elections should be maintained for the time being before the Government reviews other issues related to polling hours (e.g., whether alternative arrangements could be provided for electors who are unable to go to the polling stations in person on the polling day to

cast their votes), and before a consensus is reached by the community.

The Consultation Report is available on the website of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau at www.cmab.gov.hk.