

District Councils (Amendment) Bill 2023 gazetted today

The District Councils (Amendment) Bill 2023 was published in the Gazette today (May 30).

The Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government has announced the proposals on improving district governance to enhance the efficacy of district governance on May 2, 2023. To implement the proposed reform of the District Councils (DCs) in the proposals, the SAR Government will amend the relevant legislation.

The Bill covers six primary legislation and 15 subsidiary legislation and provides for nine key matters, including: (1) functions of DCs; (2) designation of District Officers (DOs) as DC Chairmen, and the relevant powers of DC Chairmen; (3) composition of DCs; (4) the appointment procedures of appointed DC members; (5) the registration procedures of DC ex officio members; (6) the establishment of the District Council Eligibility Review Committee; (7) scenarios where DC members are disqualified; (8) the election methods of DC members to be returned by election and the relevant electoral arrangements; and (9) the performance monitoring mechanism for DC members.

A Government spokesman said, "In order to put an end to the chaos of the sixth-term DCs and restore DCs to the right track, there are necessity and urgency to reform DCs. The purpose of the legislative amendment exercise is to enhance the functions of DCs and reform their composition, so that DCs can return to the positioning under Article 97 of the Basic Law, which are advisory and service bodies that are not organs of political power to be consulted by the Hong Kong SAR Government on district administration and other affairs. The proposals strictly adhere to the three guiding principles for improving district governance, namely: (1) according top priority to national security; (2) fully implementing the principle of 'patriots administering Hong Kong'; and (3) fully practising executive-led governance."

The Government spokesman continued, "Reforming DCs is an integral part of improving district governance. By restoring DCs to their positioning under the Basic Law, the principle of 'patriots administering Hong Kong' will be fully implemented institutionally. After the Bill commences operation, DCs can once again carry out their service and advisory functions, and co-operate with the SAR Government to implement district work. Efficacy of district governance will be enhanced, thereby achieving good governance and giving citizens greater sense of well-being."

The Government spokesman added that the Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council (LegCo) for first reading and second reading tomorrow (May 31). The Government will fully complement the work of the LegCo in scrutinising the Bill to strive for its early passage so as to kick-start the extensive preparatory work for the election with a view to forming the new

term of DCs on January 1, 2024, to serve the public.