**SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE (STV) FACTSHEET**

This factsheet explains how the STV system works

1. Scotland’s Councils have a total of 355 wards, each of which has between 1 and 5 members. Members are elected using an **STV** system. The key features of this method are explained below.

2. Each Ward’s quota is calculated by dividing the number of valid ballot papers (total votes cast minus any rejected papers) by one more than the number of vacancies, plus one. An example is detailed below:

* Number of seats to be filled = 3
* Total number of ballot papers = 2,931
* Number of rejected ballot papers = 43, therefore
* The number of valid ballot papers = 2,888, and the quota is:
* Quota = (2,888/(3+1))+1 = 723

3. If a candidate reaches or exceeds the electoral quota they are elected. The value of the surplus votes for elected Candidates is then transferred to the next valid Candidate in order of preference on each individual ballot paper.

4. In the example above, say Candidate A received a total of 998 first preference votes. The quota was just 723 votes so there would be an excess of 275 surplus votes. These need to be passed on to the candidate that the voter chose next in order of preference, but at a lower transfer value. All 998 ballot papers for Candidate A are examined for a second preference and where these exist the votes are transferred to that candidate. The 275 surplus votes are given a transfer value to make them worth only the equivalent of the excess. The transfer value is therefore 275 divided by 998 = 0.27555. All of the votes are transferred to the second preference candidate at a value of 0.27555 for each paper. That way we are only transferring the value of the surplus.

5. If the voter marked only a preference for Candidate A then the ballot paper is non‑transferable. In all subsequent stages of the count the total number of votes will always be 2,888 (shown to 5 decimal places) which will be either allocated to candidates who are elected, the continuing candidates or treated as non-transferable.

6. If no other candidate has attained the quota, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be excluded and their votes either transferred to continuing candidates or added to the non-transferable total. These votes are transferred out at their current value i.e. they could be first preference votes counting as 1.00000 or transferred at a lower value from another candidate or candidates’ surplus.

7. This process is repeated until another candidate reaches the quota, or until the number of candidates still in the contest equals the number vacancies remaining. Therefore, a candidate elected at the final stage may have fewer or more votes than the quota.

8. Where there is only one vacancy to be filled, i.e. in most by‑elections, there cannot be surplus votes to transfer. Where no-one reaches the quota, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be excluded and their votes either transferred to continuing candidates or added to the non-transferable total. These votes will always have a transfer value of one.