

SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2017

SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE (STV) FACTSHEET

This factsheet explains how the STV system works

1. Scotland's councils have a total of 354 wards, each of which has either 3 or 4 members. Members are elected using the **STV** system. The key features of this method are explained below.

2. Each ward will be allocated an **electoral quota**. If a candidate attains the electoral quota they are elected. The 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. For example:

- Number of places to be filled - 3
- Total number of ballot papers - 2,931
- Number of rejected ballot papers - 43, therefore
- The number of valid ballot papers is 2,888, and the quota is:
- $Quota = (2,888 / (3 + 1)) + 1 = 722 + 1 = 723$

3. If a candidate gets more votes than the quota at any stage, then they are elected. Any **surplus** votes that they have will be 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. All 998 votes are redistributed but we give them a **transfer value** to make those 998 worth just 275. The transfer value is 275 divided by 998 = 0.27555.

5. All of the votes for Candidate A are examined for a **second preference** and are transferred to that candidate at a value of just 0.27555 for each paper. That way we are only transferring the value of the surplus. 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 indeed, more votes than the quota.