

Single Transferrable Voting (STV) System

The Single Transferable Vote is a logical system of election designed to attain its objectives with economy, efficiency and certainty. It ensures that as far as possible, every vote has a positive part in helping to elect some candidate, that no voting power is wasted and that no voter has a greater influence on the result than any other.

This is achieved by giving each elector ONE vote, irrespective of the number of vacancies to be filled, and making that vote transferable. Voting papers are completed by placing the candidates into a preferred order using the figure '1', '2', '3', etc. The figure '1' represents the vote and is mandatory. The rest are contingency markings and optional but important as they can influence the final result. For that reason the elector is recommended to express preferences until he/she is unable to differentiate between any remaining candidates.

When votes are counted, the Returning Officer works to a quota. This is the number of votes a candidate requires to be certain of election and is calculated to a simple arithmetical formula.

Any candidate elected with more votes than needed (i.e. above the quota) has surplus votes transferred to the remaining candidates – again using a set formula. Votes of any candidates excluded from the count through insufficient support are also transferred. In both cases the contingency markings come into play, and thereby avoids votes being wasted as would be the case in the first-past-the-post election.

It is important to remember that under no circumstances can a later preference count against an earlier preference and that failure to record preferences can limit the elector's influence on the election result.

If you would like further information, please view a short video produced by Electoral Reform Services which explains how STV voting works – www.ersvotes.com/mft2017