

### **3) The Electoral System and the Opportunity to Change that System**

Wellington City Council currently elects its members under the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system. Under this system electors rank candidates in their order of preference. The number of votes needed for a candidate to be elected (called the quota) depends on the number of positions to be filled and the number of valid votes cast. The election of candidates to fill all vacancies is achieved first by the counting of first preferences, then by a transfer of a proportion of votes received by any candidate where the number of votes for that candidate is in excess of the quota, and then by the exclusion of the lowest polling candidates and the transfer of these votes in accordance with the voters' second preferences.

Under the Local Electoral Act 2001 a Council can resolve to change the electoral system it uses to elect its members or can conduct a binding poll on the question. Alternatively, 5% of electors can initiate the holding of a poll by signing a petition demanding that a poll be held. If a poll of electors is held to determine the electoral system to be used, the system that is chosen cannot be changed for at least the next two triennial general elections, i.e. if a poll has been held on the issue a council cannot change its electoral system for one election and then change back to the previous system for the next election.

The Wellington City Council resolved to hold a poll of electors on this issue in November 2002. The result of the poll was in favour of changing the electoral system from the First Past the Post (FPP) to the STV voting method. The 2004 and 2007 local authority elections in Wellington City were therefore held under the STV system. The Council now has the option of choosing between STV and FPP for the triennial elections in 2010. If Council chooses to revert back to the FPP electoral system there is a process (set out in the Local Electoral Act 2001) it is required to follow.

(Local Government KnowHow: Governance; Local Electoral Act 2001; Local Electoral Regulations 2001; LGA 2002)