

<b>Committee:</b> Policy and Resources Committee – for decision	<b>Date:</b> 21 February 2019
<b>Subject:</b> Impact of Voting Systems on Diversity & Ballot Paper Wording	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> The Town Clerk on behalf of the Members Diversity Working Party	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Emma Cunnington, Town Clerk's	

### Summary

Following a report of the Members Diversity Working Party to the Policy and Resources Committee in December 2018, it was agreed that recommendations relating to enhancing diversity of the Court of Common Council be looked at in more detail and be subject to further decision-making by the Committee in due course.

This report sets out the current voting system used (First Past the Post), as well as information, advantages and disadvantages of two alternative options: Alternative Voting (AV) and Single Transferrable Vote (STV). It also suggests adding statistics of the committee breakdown in terms of gender and race on ballot papers to help keep diversity at the forefront of Members' minds.

It should also be noted that this issue was also considered at the last meeting of the Public Relations and Economic Development Sub Committee in the context of considering alternative voting system for the election of its four co-opted Members; and Members concluded that the First Past the Post (FPTP) system should continue to be utilised.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Consider alternative voting systems such as Alternative Voting (AV) or Single Transferrable Vote (STV) as well as the existing system of First Past the Post (FPTP) for the election of Members to City of London Corporation Committees.
- Agree that statistics of committees' breakdown in terms of gender and race on ballot papers to help keep diversity at the forefront of Members' minds.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The Policy and Resources Committee considered a report in its meeting in December 2018, setting out the recommendations on diversity proposed by the Members Diversity Working Party (MDWP).

2. The MDWP was created to “*consider and make recommendations to help promote the merits of standing for office as a Common Councilman or an Alderman to enhance the diversity of the Court of Common Council to represent better its constituency.*”
3. Following discussion at the Policy & Resources meeting in December 2018, Members concluded that each of the individual recommendations would be subject to further reports or decision-making by the Committee in due course. On this basis, Members were pleased to endorse the suite of proposals presented and support the general direction of travel.
4. This report gives more detail around one of the recommendations from MDWP, which was to review the First Past the Post voting system for committee elections to ascertain whether a change in the system used will help to improve diversity.
5. Appointments are currently decided through the use of the First Past the Post (FPTP) voting system, whereby the successful candidate is the one who receives the largest number of votes. FPTP is what is known as a plurality system, i.e. the winning candidate needs win only the largest number of votes cast but does not require an absolute majority.
6. It has been suggested by some Members that this voting method was, perhaps, not the ideal means by which to elect Members onto committees, and with it proposed that a preferential voting system might be more suitable.
7. A similar paper was discussed by the Public Relations and Economic Development Sub-Committee at its February meeting. It followed a request for consideration to be given to an alternative voting system for the election of its four co-opted Members. Following extensive discussion, the Sub-Committee agreed to maintain the status quo with the use of the FPTP system for the elections.

## **Current Position**

### First Past the Post (current system)

8. The main advantages of FPTP is that the voting process is straightforward and there is a high degree of familiarity with it, and that the count is straightforward and is undertaken relatively swiftly after the vote, requiring no specialist equipment.
9. However, a disadvantage is that where there are multiple candidates standing for a single vacancy and the vote is split, a winner can be returned who is not necessarily the preferred option of the full Committee. For example:

*There are four candidates, persons A, B, C, and D competing for one vacancy on a Committee. Persons A and B are both popular and effective individuals who are well-regarded by the full sub-committee. Meanwhile, candidate C enjoys strong support from a proportion of the Committee – around 40% - but is viewed as divisive or unsuitable by the remaining 60%. Person D does not enjoy significant support and is likely to receive few votes.*

*The majority of the Committee, who are not supportive of Person C, have their vote split by A and B, whilst all of C's supporters back him. As a result, C is returned to the dissatisfaction of the majority, despite the fact that both A and B are widely popular and the full Committee would have been content with either of them being appointed.*

## Options

10. The Policy and Resources Committee gave consideration to altering voting methods for elections to Grand Committees and Outside Bodies during 2015, focusing on Alternative Vote (AV) systems and the Single Transferable Vote system. Ultimately, it was decided to adopt AV for elections where there were multiple candidates standing for a single vacancy, but retain First Past The Post where there were multiple vacancies. The Court adopted this position in early 2016 and voting arrangements have worked well since that time. Below is a summary of the two systems explored:

### Alternative Vote (or Instant Run-off Voting)

11. The Alternative Vote system (or Instant Run-off Voting) is a method which allows for ranked or preferential voting, whereby Members rank the candidates in the order in which they would like to see them returned. The voter puts a '1' by their first choice, a '2' by their second choice, and so on, until they no longer wish to express any further preferences or run out of candidates. This process is currently employed by the Court of Common Council (see Standing Order No.10) for electing to single vacancies on committees or outside bodies. *(N.B. – where there are multiple vacancies, the Court retains the use of an FPTP system).*
12. Candidates are elected outright if they gain the support of half of those voting. However, under AV, if no candidate reaches the 50% threshold, then the candidate who received the fewest first preference votes is eliminated from the contest and their votes are redistributed according to the second (or next available) preference marked on the ballot paper. This process continues until one candidate receives 50% of the vote. The obvious advantage of this process is that the winning candidate is the consensus choice and will be the preference of the majority of those voting.
13. The AV system is widely used, including in the House of Lords (for electing Hereditary Peers), the House of Commons (for electing Select Committee Chairmen), for Australian State Government and House of Representative elections, and for the Presidential elections in Ireland and India.
14. However, it is primarily employed where there are multiple candidates for single vacancies. When there are multiple vacancies, the method becomes slightly more complicated, which is why the Policy and Resources Committee opted against its implementation in 2015.

### Single Transferable Vote (STV)

15. Single Transferrable Vote (STV) is a widely implemented electoral system currently used for national and local elections in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Australia and Malta, as well as for local elections in Scotland and New Zealand.
16. Under STV, the voting process is the same as for the AV system. The method allows for ranked or preferential voting, whereby Members number against the candidates the order in which would like to see them returned. The voters put a '1' by their first choice, a '2' by their second choice, and so on, until they no longer wish to express any further preferences or run out of candidates.
17. An example ballot paper for an STV election to fill three vacancies on a Committee is shown below:

#### **Appointment of 3 Members to the XX Committee**

Instead of using a cross, number the candidates in the order of your preference.

Put the number 1 next to the name of the candidate who is your first preference, 2 next to your second preference, 3 next to your third preference, 4 next to your fourth preference, and so on.

You can mark as many or as few preferences as you like.

<b>CANDIDATE A</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CANDIDATE B</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CANDIDATE C</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CANDIDATE D</b>	
<b>CANDIDATE E</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CANDIDATE F</b>	<b>5</b>

18. Under both AV and STV, only one round of voting is usually required. Voters rank candidates in order of preference and those candidates returned are the preferred

option of the majority. Under AV, if the number of candidates to reach the majority threshold does not equal the number of vacancies then the candidate who received the fewest first preference votes is eliminated from the contest and their votes are redistributed according to the second (or next available) preference marked on the ballot paper.

19. However, under an STV system, candidates do not necessarily require a majority of votes to be elected. Elected candidates must achieve a known share of first preference votes, or 'quota' which is determined by the size of the electorate and the number of vacancies to be filled. Surplus votes for popular candidates who have achieved over and beyond the required quota are transferred in accordance with the voter's second preference and not "wasted" – i.e. votes on certain preferred or less-preferred candidates are transferred to other candidates, which is helpful where there are multiple vacancies in ensuring that candidates favoured by the majority are returned.

20. The quota is set by a formula based on the number of votes cast and the number of vacancies. Different formulae can be used but the most common is:

$$\text{votes needed to win} = \left( \frac{\text{valid votes cast}}{\text{seats to fill} + 1} \right) + 1$$

21. The counting process under STV differs to that of the Alternative Vote system. Votes are counted as follows:

- Only first preference votes are tallied in the first instance and a candidate who has reached or exceeded the quota via first preference votes is declared elected.
- If a candidate has more first preference votes than the quota, their surplus first preference votes are transferred to other candidates, i.e. votes that would have gone to the preferred candidate go to the next preference.
- If no other candidate still meets the quota, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their votes are transferred, again according to the preference indicated.
- If the next available preference is for a candidate that has already been eliminated, then the vote is awarded to the next preference after that (i.e. third or fourth preference, and so on).
- This process repeats until either a preferred candidate is found for every vacancy or there are as many vacancies as remaining candidates.

22. The most commonly used method of transferring surplus first preference votes is by random transfer, where a number of votes corresponding to the candidate's surplus are transferred to their next choices. Counters redistribute the last ballots the elected candidate received, the first ballots the candidate received, or choose another method such as a fully random draw. Variations of the random transfer or surplus votes are currently used for some elections in Australia and the Republic of Ireland.

23. It is important to note that changing the order of the ballot papers could change the outcome of the election.

## **Ballot Paper Wording**

- 24. Members of the MDWP were of the view that many Members were often not aware of the diversity breakdown of Committees and would not always immediately consider this in relation to the composition of a Committee.
- 25. To address this, the MDWP proposed that committee election ballot papers be updated to include, for example, a footnote demonstrating a gender breakdown of the committee as it currently stands, to prompt Members to consider the make-up of the committee when voting.
- 26. It is proposed that, at this stage, it should include both sex (gender) and BAME statistics only.

## **Conclusion**

- 27. This report explains the current system for the election of the Members to Committees and sets out some alternatives for your consideration. It also suggests the addition of a breakdown of gender and race statistics to be added to ballot papers to raise awareness of the diversity of a Committee or Sub Committee to the voter.

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