Appendix 4

1. Summary of Research for Welsh Government (See Appendix 2)

Members will see from the research in Appendix 2 that:

- There is some evidence that voters have found STV to be more complex to understand than first past the post (see paragraphs 3.26 to 3.38) :
    - An increased number of spoilt ballots since STV was adopted in Scotland in 2007 as compared to the number of spoilt ballots in the two elections before 2007. In 1999 and 2003, only 13,597 (0.59%) and 14,579 (0.77%) of ballots were rejected, respectively. This proportion almost doubled with the introduction of STV, with 36,351 (1.83%) of ballots being rejected. The researchers thought that the increased level of spoilt papers may have been reasonable bearing in mind the introduction of a new voting system and the fact that the 2007 elections coincided with the Scottish Parliamentary elections which itself included the introduction of 2 mixed member parliamentary votes on the same ballot paper. However, the higher level re of rejected ballot papers continued in 2012 when 1.71% were rejected and 1.95% were reject it in 2017. (see para 3.27-3.28 of Research);

    - In the first STV election in Scotland in 2007, the majority of ballots (59.6%) were rejected because counters were unable to ascertain voters' intentions from the marks (or absence of) on the ballot. (see research para 3.31);

    - In the Scottish 2017 election, the primary reason for ballot rejection was the presence of more than one first preference. Of the 37,492 rejected ballots in 2017, 82.2% of these were rejected because of multiple first preferences. The second largest reason was lack of a first preference (12%). This may suggest that whilst the 2017 local election was the third iteration of STV in the local elections, a lack of voter understanding remains, as the rejection rate is still significantly higher (see para 3.29 pf Research);

    - A similar increased in spoilt papers was also found in New Zealand where there was a 0.7% to 1% increase (see para 3.30 of Research)

    - In the Scottish 2017 election, there was a positive correlation between the number of candidates presented on the ballot of the rate of ballot rejection. In other words, the more candidates' voters have to choose from, the greater the likelihood that a ballot will be rejected. Among ballots with four candidates the average rejection rate was 1.25% and this rate increases to 2.62% among those ballot papers that present ten candidates or more (see para 3.29 pf Research) ;

    - In 2008 the electoral form STC declared the introduction of STV in Scotland and Northern Ireland to have been successful;

- Following the 2007 elections in Scotland, 84% of respondents to a survey claimed that the new STV ballot was “not very” or “not at all difficult” (see para 3.33 of Research) ;

- The Scottish local elections demonstrates that voter understanding was weaker in deprived areas. Taking the proportion of rejected ballots as a measure of voter understanding of the new process showed that council wards experiencing greater levels of economic deprivation reported a significantly higher proportion of rejected ballots. This was not an issue in New Zealand and Estonia (see paras 3.34 – 3.36 of Research);

- The Research made 3 recommendations to deal with voter and stakeholder understanding namely (1) significant effort should go into educating *candidates* and *parties,* usually by the Electoral Commission. (2) Returning Officers in deprived areas should be provided with more resources to address misunderstanding in those areas; and (3) voter educational material should focus on how to fill in ballots and avoid discussion of transfers.(see para 5.1 of Research) ;

- The physical task of counting ballots under the STV system can be more arduous and labour-intensive than that of the FPTP system. Scotland, New Zealand and Malta used electronic counting methods to count ballots. E-counting would be the best start for a new system but this has been ruled out by WG as being too expensive (see para 3.88 and 3.39 of Research) ;

- Whilst electronic counting is deemed desirable because of its capability to deal with a more complex counting process and reduce the chance of error, it is worth noting that electronic counting does not erase risk and there are also potential issues that may arise from digitising the process (see para 3.43 of research);

- Multi member wards may lead to longer ballot papers, and candidate ordering on the ballot can be an issue if candidates are listed alphabetically rather than using a system which randomises the order which may be expensive (see para 3.55 -3.57 of research);

- There is a financial cost associated with training and employing staff for manual counts (see para 3.74 of research) ;

- A manual STV count will take at least 2 days. A general election in Ireland took 3-4 days to process (paras 3.77-3.80 of Research)