Extract from Standing Decisions 2015-16 (Revised Jan 2016)

Appendix A - The Single Transferable Vote: How it works (August 2011)

As our election system in Rotary is largely based on what is known as the 'The Single Transferable Vote' system, it is most important to know how this system works. It may also be used by Districts if there are three or more nominees for District Office.

Assume that one candidate is to be selected from among five nominees for a Rotary office. The names of the five nominees (Black, Brown, Green, Grey and White) are printed in that order on a voting slip and the order of preference must be marked against the candidates of choice e.g. a '1' against the first choice, a '2' against the second choice, a '3' against the third choice and so on. NO VOTE SHOULD BE MARKED WITH A CROSS. It is useful to number every candidate on the voting slip but this is not necessary if no opinion is held about some of the candidates.

Assume that 100 valid votes are cast. The scrutineers then sort these 100 into five piles, each pile containing all the votes cast as first choice for a particular candidate. After counting, the result is as follows:

Green = 33 (i.e. 33 voting slips had a '1' against Green)
White = 27 (i.e. 27 voting slips had a '1' against White)
Grey = 15
Brown = 15
Black = 10

None has secured a majority over all the others combined, some Rotarians might urge that Green should be elected but others might not, possibly on the grounds that if Black had not stood, all their supporters may have voted for White – putting White ahead. To find out if this is the case, Black is declared defeated (eliminated) and each of Black's papers is transferred to the candidate that those voters marked as '2'. The result is as follows:

Green – 33 + 2 = 35 (2 delegates voted Black 1, Green 2)
White – 27 + 3 = 30 (3 delegates voted Black 1, White 2)
Brown – 15 + 3 = 18 (3 delegates voted Black 1, Brown 2)
Grey – 15 + 2 = 17 (2 delegates voted Black 1, Grey 2)

Grey is now eliminated and each of Grey's original 15 votes is transferred to whichever of the three remaining candidates voted as the next choice ('2'). If any of these original votes is marked '2' for Black, it will go to the third choice. The 2 votes picked up from Black will also go to the third choice. The result is as follows:

White – 30 + 8 = 38 (8 delegates voted Grey 1, White 2)
Green – 35 + 2 = 37 (2 delegates voted Grey 1, Green 2)
Brown – 18 + 6 = 24 (4 delegates voted Grey 1, Brown 2 and 2 voted Black 1, Grey 2, Brown 3)
Non-Transferable – 1 (1 delegate voted Grey 1 and no more)

There is still no absolute majority over all the others combined. Had the result of the second elimination been:

Green – 35 + 16 = 51
White – 30 + 0 = 30
Brown – 18 + 1 =19

there would have been no need to eliminate Brown and redistribute votes because Green would have had an absolute majority as, even if all Brown's 19 voters had White as their next choice, White could not overtake Green's 51 votes.

Brown is now eliminated and those votes re-allocated to either Green or White depending on the higher number of preference. The result is now as follows:

White – 38 + 13 = 51 (13 delegates put White before Green)
Green – 37 + 1 = 48 (11 delegates put Green before White)

The 1 non-transferable vote could not have altered the result but if there had been more of them, they might have done. It is unwise not to number all candidates about whom an opinion is held.

If the final result had been a tie between Green and White, whichever of them had received more votes on the first count would have been declared elected. If they were equal on the first count, the one leading on the second count would have been declared elected and so on.

If there is a tie for bottom place, the eliminated candidate is the one who was lowest on the first count (or on earliest count in which they were unequal). In the unlikely event of their tying all the way, the returning officer must draw lots.