Scottish Parliament Elections 2016
The Voting System

Scottish Parliament elections will take place on 5 May 2016.

It is important that as many people as possible vote so that the Scottish Parliament and Government will reflect the views of people in Scotland. Polling stations will be open between 7am and 10pm.

NB: *If you are prevented from voting by a medical emergency you may apply to the local Electoral Registration Office for a proxy vote at any time until 5pm on polling day. Contact details are available from the phone book, or by typing your postcode into the relevant page of the Electoral Commission website.*

Why vote?

Most every-day matters that affect people in Scotland are decided by the Scottish Parliament. These include:

- Education
- Health
- Social Services
- Housing
- Sport and the arts
- Environment

- Some aspects of taxation
- Economic development
- Local government
- Police and Fire services
- Law (criminal and civil courts)
- Equal Opportunities implementation

Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) represent people living in the area for which they were elected. As well as passing new laws they can raise awareness of local issues by proposing or supporting Motions that highlight particular initiatives or areas of concern, asking the Scottish Government questions, and helping individual people to get answers from organisations such as local councils, housing associations, and health boards.

MEMO+ Scottish Parliament Elections 2016: The Voting System
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)   April 2016

1

The Voting System

The election for the Scottish Parliament uses a system called the **Additional Member System**. This means that the majority of MSPs are elected to represent individual constituencies, and additional members are then elected to make the overall distribution of seats correspond more closely to the proportion of votes cast for each party.

Scotland is divided into 73 constituencies and 8 regions. Voters receive two ballot papers – one for the constituency they live in, and one for the region, and have one vote on each ballot paper.

Each of the constituencies elects an MSP using the 'first past the post' system; the candidate who receives the most votes wins the seat even if he or she receives fewer than half the total number of votes cast. Candidates for constituency seats may represent a political party or may stand as Independents.

The constituencies are grouped together to form the 8 regions each of which elects 7 MSPs using the **Additional Member System**. Voters are asked to chose from a list of political parties, and there may also be one or more independent candidates. The Additional Member System enables independent candidates and small parties that receive a significant proportion of the vote to gain seats in the Scottish Parliament even if they do not receive enough votes to win by 'first past the post'.

The Ballot Papers

1) The ballot paper to vote for your **constituency MSP** will be purple, and will list the names of all candidates standing in your local area, and which, if any, political party they belong to.

Vote by writing <u>one</u> **X** on the paper, beside the name of the <u>one</u> candidate that you want to support.

2) The ballot paper to vote for your **regional MSP** will be orange, and will list the names of all political parties and independent candidates standing in your region. Although it does not list the names of individual candidates on each party list, they are listed on an accompanying sheet.

Vote by writing <u>one</u> **X** on the paper, beside the name of the <u>one</u> party or independent candidate that you want to support.

<u>Note:</u> *You do not have to vote for the same political party in both Constituency and Region, but you may do so if you wish.*

MEMO+ Scottish Parliament Elections 2016: The Voting System
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)   April 2016

2

How are the Votes Counted?

Votes for constituency MSPs are counted first, and in each constituency the person who received the most votes is elected.

The formula for working out Regional seats is complex. The principle is that in each region the proportion of seats won by each party or independent candidate (including seats won in the constituency ballot) should correspond approximately to the proportion of votes they receive in the regional ballot. So, for example, a party that receives just under half of the regional votes would win 3 of the 7 available regional seats, and a party that receives just under a third of the regional votes would win 2 of the seats.

The way this is worked out is best illustrated by an example:

> *Region X is made up of 8 constituencies grouped together and 4 parties have put up candidates for election.*
>
> > *Party A has won 4 constituency seats,*
> > *Party B has won 3 constituency seats,*
> > *Party C has won 1 constituency seat, and*
> > *Party D has not won any constituency seats.*

- ***To find the winner of the first regional seat:***
  In order to work out the average number of votes per seat that each Party would have if they won the first regional seat, the number of votes they received in the regional ballot is divided by the number of seats they have already won plus 1. So:

  > *The number of regional votes for Party A is divided by 5*
  > *The number of regional votes for Party B is divided by 4*
  > *The number of regional votes for Party C is divided by 2*
  > *The number of regional votes for Party D is divided by 1*

  The higher the result of that calculation, the more votes a party or independent candidate needed to win each seat. So, in order to try to even out that number, the party or independent candidate with the highest average wins the first regional seat.

- ***To find the winner of the second to seventh regional seats:***
  The above calculation is repeated using the new distribution of seats (i.e. including the regional seats that have already been won). So, if the first Regional seat was won by Party D, the first three sums remain the same, but the fourth becomes

  > *The number of regional votes for Party D is divided by 2*

  The Party that now has the highest number of votes per seat wins the next seat, and the calculation is then repeated again, each time adding in the seat that has just been won. This process continues until all theregional seats have been allocated.

- *Each political party fills the Regional seats it has won with its candidates, in the order in which they appeared on the party list published before the election.*

A list of all constituency and regional candidates is available *here*.

Election Results

Scottish Parliament ballot papers can be opened and the count can begin immediately after polling stations close at 10pm, but some Returning Officers may choose to delay starting the count until the following day, so it is not certain how early the results will be announced.

MEMO+ Scottish Parliament Elections 2016: The Voting System
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)   April 2016

3

Useful Links

- **The Scottish Parliament**
  http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/index.aspx

- **BBC Guide to candidates standing in each constituency and region**
  http://www.bbc.com/news/politics/scotland-constituencies

- **Electoral Commission Voting Guide**
  http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/197193/May_Election-2016_leaflet-6pp_SCOTTISH_Final_WEB.PDF

- **About my vote**
  http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/upcoming-elections-and-referendums/scottish-parliament

- **Video: Why vote in the Scottish Parliament election**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DWBDJ788Do

- **Video: How to vote in the Scottish Parliament election**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYmtDPDvpfE&nohtml5=False

- **Video: Sign Language Scottish Parliament 2016 election voting guide**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHunosPA2QA

Please circulate this issue of MEMO+ among your membership and encourage people to register and to vote in the elections on 5 May!

The ***Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)*** *is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438)* ***http://www.scojec.org/***

BEMIS *is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels.* ***http://www.bemis.org.uk/index.html***

The ***Scottish Government*** *is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland.* ***One Scotland*** *is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism.* ***http://www.scotlandagainstracism.com/***

MEMO+ Scottish Parliament Elections 2016: The Voting System
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)   April 2016

4