

## **Address to Council 2 February 2015: Greg Holyoke - 16 year olds and voting.**

There are roughly 1.5 million 16 and 17 year olds living in the uk today. That's 1.5 million people who can work, earn money and pay taxes to their government, who can have sex, get married and move into their own property. Yet this 1.5 million don't have a say in the policy and government who controls/regulates these laws affecting them.

Surely if you are moving into your own home you want to have a say about rent caps or taxation. It also seems strange to me that if you get a job, you still won't have a vote to give you a say about the wage you're payed or what proportion of that wage goes in tax. There are young gay couples who may be under 18 but still want to get married, yet had no say as to whether they were limited by civil partnerships or not, who is it to deny them that right. There are so many things that affect change at 16, yet we are unable to affect what they are and how they change for us, whether it be about anything from joining the army or choosing a doctor, about relationships or apprenticeships or even buying a pet.

But that's only part of it: as someone who has been out on many political campaigns, nationally, locally and even internationally, it's very hard not to notice the rapid and inexorable decline in turnout. People just don't care about voting as much as they did, they seem resigned to believe that all parties are the same and more than that, their voice is not wanted or needed in our democracy today. If we can show, even just as a local council that we are supporting giving more people a voice, letting more people have a say in the agenda and politics of our country, it would be a sign to counteract the pessimist everyone of us will have heard when out on the doorstep or at a hustings. Giving more people the vote in scotland helped one of the highest turnouts in recent history, in no way am I purporting that giving 16 year olds the vote was the sole reason for that, but it certainly counted. We could see the huge media coverage it was given and the strong and passionate views from young people who were proud to be a coveted part of such a huge decision.

That passion can be heard in the corridors of schools throughout the country, just because it's harder to air them doesn't mean we lack opinions. But were we to get the vote I think you would be hard pressed to disagree that even more people would be even more interested in a wider range of topics. And countless pieces of research show that if you start voting from the beginning, you are far more likely to consistently vote in elections after, which can only be a positive democratic effect.

I know many of you are already in support of this motion, and that nationally parties like the labour party have pledged support to this. But to those of you who don't, who still have reservations I can only say I am 16, I watch the news, I take an interest in politics and have even been out on political rallies and campaigns. I am not the only one, so many my age have just as strong and formed opinions, many more so than a lot of 18 year olds. Yet we cannot truly show them. Also we have been in an education system overhauled during the past 5 years, yet even as a student we've had no say in our education. Hopefully you can see why that seems wrong to many of us and in combination with everything else why votes at 16 is the viable way forward.

This page is intentionally left blank