

19 October 2012

## **Localism Hands Power to Older Generations**

The nationwide age profile of local councillors making planning decisions is increasing more rapidly than thought according to latest research from the Intergenerational Foundation ([www.if.org.uk](http://www.if.org.uk)).

IF's report, entitled *'How the Localism Act Hands Power to Older Generations'*, reveals that councillors are now on average 14 years older than the typical UK adult and the proportion of councillors over 65 has doubled in number over the last 12 years.

Whilst under-35s (32% of the adult population in England and Wales) make up fewer than 5% of councillors and under-25s make up just 1 in 200 parish councillors, people over 65 years account for 20% of the population but make up 40% of councillors.

Surveys have shown that nationally over-65s show twice the level of opposition towards new housing developments than 18—34 year olds suggesting that older local councillors are also more likely to oppose new building than their younger community members.

The report also reveals that local councillors over the age of 65 live in properties that are about 20% more valuable than the average surrounding postcode area.

"Our research demonstrates that local councillors are becoming increasingly unrepresentative of young people and their needs," comments Angus Hanton, co-founder of the Intergenerational Foundation. "Age, wealth and attitudes seem to be conspiring to lock younger generations out of the planning decision-making process. IF fears that the 81,000 new homes that the government says are needed will be vetoed locally."

"There is a danger that we are giving older homeowners a block vote against the new housing this country desperately needs. Our planning system must respond to the housing needs of younger people, not just empower older anti-development voices," comments Duncan Stott of housing campaign group, Priced Out.

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The report recommends quotas for under-30s local/parish councillors, and the removal of structural barriers that prevent young people from becoming councillors (see note to editors).

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**Note to Editors:**

- IF came to national prominence in 2011 when the charity called for better use of our existing housing stock and called on government to encourage greater downsizing of older generations in order to free up large properties so young families could flourish.
- IF looked at how the transfer of power from unelected officials and central government will affect planning issues on a local level.
- Age, wealth and gender profiles obtained by using the Electoral Register; original research by the Intergenerational Foundation, 2012.
- Data about attitudes to planning by age from Housing Module, British Social Survey 2011, National Centre for Social Research.
- 25% of 55—64 year olds and 20% of 65—74 year olds questioned had formally opposed a planning application to build housing in their local area, compared with only 8% of respondents aged 25—34, Public Attitudes to Housing, 2010, National Housing and Planning Unit, 2010.
- Factors that prevent young people from becoming councillors:
  - First-pass-the-post system encourages voting for “safe” rather than younger/riskier candidates
  - Local residency requirements require owning or renting for at least 12 months
  - Four year terms and fears over by-election expense for resignation/relocation
  - Age profile of local election voters see [http://www.if.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/IF\\_Democratic\\_Deficit\\_final.pdf](http://www.if.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/IF_Democratic_Deficit_final.pdf)
  - Lack of time and money
  - Structure of local government

Angus Hanton, Co-founder is available for interview.

Please contact [liz@if.org.uk](mailto:liz@if.org.uk) or phone **07971 228823** to arrange an interview.