

## Digest of Meeting

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<b>Title:</b>	Councillors' Forum
<b>Date and time:</b>	Thursday 16 May 2013, 12.30pm
<b>Venue:</b>	The Westminster Suite, Local Government House

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### Item

#### Welcome and Introductions

Cllr David Sparks, LGA Vice-Chair, welcomed members to the Forum meeting and introduced Bobby Duffy, Ipsos MORI, and Professor Colin Rallings, University of Plymouth. Both Bobby and Colin presented their research into electoral generational change and the meaning of the election results from the local elections on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013 respectively. The Chairman, Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell, joined and took over proceedings during the presentations.

#### 1 Voting Past, Present and Future

Bobby Duffy introduced his 'Generations' research by giving an overall context to the project. He explained how the research analysis focusses on re-examining a number of surveys to look at patterns, not in age group but, in generational cohorts. The aim is to establish what are more important to political voting patterns.

The 4 generations under analysis are the pre-war generation (born pre-1945), the baby boomers (1945-1965), generation X (1966-1979) and generation Y (1980-2000).

Bobby highlighted how the opinions in favour of the government's welfare spending have declined over the last decade. But he then showed that although there is a decline in support across the board generations have previously and continued to be different in their levels of support. Younger groups, such as generation X and Y, are less open to income redistribution when compared to the pre-war and baby boomer generations.

Another stark illustration was seen in the overall measures of pride in the creation of the welfare state. Whereas 70 per cent of the pre-war generation see it as their proudest achievement less than 30 per cent of generation Y (born 1980-2000) agreed. Bobby demonstrated a similar picture with party politics. Illustrating that although allegiance to one party is declining across the board, still 60 per cent of the pre-war generation see themselves as supporting one party compared to less than 30 per cent of generation Y.

Bobby then compared this English party loyalty to other European countries. The presentation research unveiled Sweden as possessing a very strong party allegiance across all generations with over 65 per cent of all generations saying they felt closer to a particular party; with the difference between the oldest and youngest generations being small, circa. 10 per cent. Interestingly, Bobby showed how Ireland demonstrated a similarly strong correlation between generations voting for one party but in the opposite direction. As although all generations were closely together in their allegiance, their party faithfulness had taken a collective dip since 2008.

Finally, Bobby's presented how this generational difference affects voting patterns. He highlighted a specific spike in the percentage of pre-war generation who would be undecided were there to be a general election tomorrow. He then considered the graph that showed how the older generations felt a considerably stronger duty to vote than the younger generations. Concluding that there is a lot to play for in winning the elder generations' vote.

Professor Colin Rallings then presented how the generational themes highlighted in Bobby's presentation had translated in the ballot box at the local elections on the 2nd May 2013.

First, he highlighted that the seat changes had been in line with forecasts prior to the elections, with the exception of the UKIP vote. But, he explained the unforeseen results came in the national equivalents, as despite Conservatives obtaining 10 per cent more councillors, they only narrowly held onto their LGA majority.

Colin went onto to explain UKIP's success. He stated that UKIP's vote share is increasingly but the context of the elections being in county and unitary authorities is important. This is because many counties where Conservatives and Lib Dems traditionally finish first and second the real alternative for voters' protest vote is only UKIP as many would not vote Labour. Furthermore, only 32 per cent voted in these elections, as they were the first elections not to clash with other major elections since 1993. With this in mind, next year, when the local elections are held in London and metropolitan authorities which are largely not good locations for Independents, UKIP are forecast not to be as significant. Equally time will tell how UKIP councillors behave in local authorities as the BNP lost support due to their councillor's behaviour once they had gained seats.

Joe Simpson concluded the presentations by updating members about Individual Electoral Registration. He told those present that the Cabinet's Parliamentary Research Unit do see it being achievable. Therefore members should be prepared for the issues stemming from this.

The Chairman then opened up the floor for discussion and the following issues were raised and addressed in turn:

- Future for Independent councillors
- Why generation Y are so disengaged
- UKIP's geographic spread

The Chairman thanked the contributors for their presentations.

## **2 Chairman's Update**

Members noted and accepted the Chairman's report.

## **3 LGA Board and Panel Chairs' Reports**

Members noted the written and oral updates from each of the LGA's Board Chairs.

**Next meeting:** Thursday 13 June 2013, 12:30pm, The Westminster Suite, Local Government House