**Making a difference**

18-year-old Tom Bletsoe is the youngest councillor in the UK. On 10th February 2011 he won 41% of the votes in a local by-election, and was elected to serve the town council of St Ives, near Cambridge.

A lot of people were surprised when Tom decided to stand for election, as he was still studying for his A-level exams at school. Some people thought he was too young, but he won with a large majority. He got a lot of support from his friends, family and teachers, although many of his friends couldn’t vote for him. They weren’t 18, so they weren’t old enough to vote!

In the past, you weren’t allowed to be a candidate for a local council election unless you were 21, but the age has lowered in 2006 to let people stand for election as soon as they are 18. It varies slightly in different countries of the UK, but in England, town council elections are usually held every four years. The town council is responsible for local services, including street lighting, litter collection and local facilities. Tom won a by-election, which is a special election that takes place when a member of the council resigns or dies.

Tom was an independent candidate, so he isn’t connected to a political party. His two-month election campaign focused on issues that are important to him. He said that if he won, he would improve facilities for teenagers and provide more activities for them, and that he would involve more young people in the future of the town. He also wants to improve public transport, and make the town a nicer place to live in.

Tom believes that everyone, young or old, should be allowed to participate in politics. He recognises that he has less experience than most councillors, but believes that his age can also be an advantage. He says he will bring enthusiasm, energy and creativity to the council, and of course, he has a very good understanding of the needs of young people!

**Answer the questions**

Why was Tom Bletsoe an unusual candidate for the local election?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Why didn’t Tom get lots of votes from his friends

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How did the change in the law in 2006 affect Tom?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is a by-election?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How long did Tom campaign for, and what issues did he emphasize?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How can Tom’s age be useful for the council?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the following questions**

At what age are you allowed to stand for election in Spain?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How often are there local elections?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What services are local councils responsible for?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to serve on your local council? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What services could be improve in your area?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If you could stand for election to your local council, what would your campaign focus on?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Find the words in the text**

Concejal (1st paragraph)

Cerca de (1st paragraph)

Presentarse como candidato (2nd paragraph)

Apoyo (2nd paragraph)

Ligeramente (3rd paragraph)

Basura (3rd paragraph)

Write a letter to the council of your town sharing some ideas about how to improve the town and its facilities.

Dimitir (3rd paragraph)

Centrarse (4th paragraph)

Problemas (4th paragraph)

Mejorar (4th paragraph)

Ofrecer (4th paragraph)

Ventaja (5th paragraph)