Can you be too young to be a Tory?

Conservative councillor Simon Morrall believes young people are disenfranchised because of the current, and past governments. But from councillor Morrall’s perspective what can the conservatives do to become popular again. I interviewed him to gain some insight.

Simon Morrall is a local councillor for frankly great park and has been since the 3rd of May 2018, he won over labour by 115 votes. I started the interview with him asking why he thought so many young people were disenfranchised with the current conservative government with the tense and divisive political climate we are currently in.

Simon explained how he ran an “authentic campaign”, about “young, disenfranchised people” and Is what Simon said he represents because of his own upbringing as a working-class person.

“I see lot of kids in south west Birmingham getting involved in crime and that don’t feel connected to the outside world. I wanted to connect to those kinds of people”

I asked about the 2017 snap election and how in a poll the BBC found that 68% of students said that they would be backing labour. I wanted to know what labour were doing right amongst the student community that the conservatives weren’t. an example of this is how Jeremy Corbyn originally said he would scrap fees for students studying at university. These policies are always going to entice younger people but how true were the statements made and is there anything the conservatives can do in order to regain the youth vote.

Simon responded to this saying “one of the big divides of this generation stems back to tony Blair pushing for everyone to go to university, and now there is a divide of people that have gone to university and those who haven’t. Simon went on to say, “according to the higher educations statistics authority,40% of people that go to university will end up working in the public sector”.

As a student myself this is a worrying statistic, as before university the promise was higher paid jobs and a better chance in life. It’s becoming seemingly apparent that going to university might not necessarily be right for everyone and in nearly half of students, it wont actually help you gain much in life overall. Simon added that nearly a third of graduates will go on to work in nonprofessional roles. I can see how this not only is disenfranchising for students themselves, but how not going to university can stand you in just as good stead for life as a lot of people that go.

In the interview I asked if Simon felt as a conservative in 2018, if he sees any growing stigma towards being a tory. Especially amongst the younger generation, and how as a councillor he would like to attempt to change it.

He responded, “a lot of young people find conservatism is the new county culture, and in the new digital age it should be easier than ever to start a business when in fact it isn’t. the party itself is still telling people university is the way forward when it isn’t always the case. As a party we still aren’t encouraging enough young people to go out and start businesses”

This is promising to hear as a conservative councillor themselves being able to acknowledge that the party isn’t doing enough for young people in regard to starting their own businesses and following alternative paths other than university. Yes, university is a good thing in most cases and for a lot of jobs such as becoming a doctor or a scientist you do need a degree, however young people should be aware of other options after college and the government should be supporting these alternative options.

I followed the theme of university throughout the interview and used the telegraphs statistics that found 8 out of 10 lecturers across UK universities, including humanities arts and social sciences are left wing. I wanted to know what a conservative who wants young people to be successful and follow their own path thought of this and if lecturers are having too much influence over students’ political opinions and potentially making them less open minded to new challenging ideas.

Simon responded saying he isn’t surprised that they are left wing and how it’s affecting “political correctness and the new culture of safe spaces”, which is allowing students to stay away from ideas that they believe could be offensive or that they disagree with on the whole.

I asked Simon what he would present as a new policy in order to ignite passion in a younger generation of voters, and who would be best to lead the party forward. The popularity of Jacob Rees-Mogg has been on the rise recently so I presented this idea as a potential candidate, knowing that even though he is controversial, people like how honest he is and doesn’t read from a political script. Simon had this to say.

“I don’t think Jacob Rees-Mogg would be a good leader, he would alienate too many people. Boris Johnson has good PR skills and had won over young people to the extent that he was London’s mayor twice. But is he good as a leader? Fundamentally the person leading the ideal conservative party should have a strong belief in capitalism and sell the benefits of capitalism to the people of the country.”

My final question brought the interview back round to Simon’s local ward, I asked what people in his ward ask for the most, want to see change and how he finds the role. He responded with a fairly surprising answer to say the least. “believe it or not, domestically its trees, people need them to be cut back and its links to trees. Due to less light. There have been a lot of burglaries in the area. We are also trying to get the role of crime commissioner to be brought under the mayor, so that the police can be run much more efficiently”

I was somewhat pleased to hear that regardless of all the political issues currently and disagreements going on between the two major parties, the one thing local people care about the most currently is getting trees cut back. It’s a reminder that even the things that seem the smallest in life have a big effect to some people and its important that politically whoever is in a position of power, they cover the needs of all the people, no matter how small they seem.