

NEWS

Quango chief calls for greater councillor role

Planning Resource - 07 July 2006

Local councillors should have a direct role in managing neighbourhood services to revive declining communities, according to the chief of English Partnerships.

John Callcutt told *PlanningResource.co.uk* that there is "great potential" to drive democracy down to a community level by integrating political representation with community management.

He said that local councillors, as democratically-elected representatives of their communities, should automatically be given a role in neighbourhood management.

Callcutt said: "We have a real democratic deficit at a local level in this country. People complain about apathy - it's not that people are apathetic, its that people don't feel their vote will make a difference."

He suggested that Community Land Trusts - a form of community ownership where the land is owned jointly by the residents but cannot be sold - could be used to cement political representation and neighbourhood management, with the local councillor automatically becoming director of the trust.

"Then if people are asking: 'Why aren't the bins collected? Why aren't the streets clean? Why is my school rubbish?' the person responsible knows he had better get on to it otherwise he will lose his job," he said.

Callcutt said he wants to bring the issue further up the political agenda, although the changes would not necessarily require the Government to introduce new structures.