



### District Councils' Network Local Enterprise Partnerships Survey November 2011

It has been 12 months since the announcement of Local Enterprise Partnerships, during October 2011 the DCN surveyed its members on their experience so far. The survey received 69 responses out of 182 member councils. This is almost a 38% response rate.

The responses covered 26 out of the 38 recognised LEP's and one emerging LEP. There are 12 LEP's that do not include districts areas; this summary does not cover the experience of these 12 LEPs.

LEP's have been established at varying speeds over the last 12 months. During the process of establishing the LEP only 3 councils felt that had not been engaged in the process at all. All 3 council's now feel they are partly or fully engaged. 38 of the respondent felt they had had partial engagement and 28 had been fully engaged.

Now the LEP's are established the number of councils feeling fully engaged as dropped to 22, partial engagement has risen to 40 and 7 feel they have no engagement in the LEP at all. These are a completely different seven to the three that felt they had no engagement in the establishment of their local LEP.

Most of the LEP's have at least 1 district place on the main board with some having as many as 5. It is crucial to the success of a LEP to have a district perspective, this is due to the districts position as the local planning authority, their role in economic growth and their local knowledge. However we should recognise that it is not practical or essential for every district within a LEP area to have a direct representative.

The survey clearly show's that districts across the country are positively engaged in LEP activity, though there are areas where districts are completely excluded from the local LEP. It is this exclusion that raises concerns for the future success of these LEP's. Most notably engagement of districts is weak from the Coast to Capital and Hertfordshire LEP's and almost non existent from the Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire LEP.

As well as variances across the country there appears to be different levels of engagement across some LEP's with some districts being involved in the LEP and other's not. This could be because of proximity to focal economic points, local networks and relationships, or political differences.

One council stated that *'Excellent engagement. Treats each district council the same as Birmingham City Council. We provide the sub if the usual N Worcs rep can't attend'* but other comments reflect the lack of input *'Districts expected to buy in but not given a voice'*

The survey has shown that some county colleagues need to understand the role of district in economic growth, but that generally there is an attempt to engage with districts. It is also clear that districts need further support in engaging with their LEPs and working together to ensure each other is engaged.