

District Councils Network Annual Report to LGA Leadership Board

SIG Name:	District Councils' Network
Lead Member:	Cllr Neil Clarke, Leader, Rushcliffe Borough Council
Lead Officer:	Sandra Dinneen, Chief Executive, South Norfolk Council

Email:	dcn@local.gov.uk
Address:	3 rd Floor, LG House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ
Telephone:	0207 664 3048
Website:	www.districtcouncils.info

Membership

[Please note that only those authorities within membership of the LGA are permitted to be join LGA Special Interest Groups. The latest LGA membership information is available at <http://www.local.gov.uk/membership>]

Aim

The aim of the District Councils' Network is to be the national voice of District Councils, working with our authorities, partners and government to deliver national growth and prosperity and services at a scale that make sense to local communities.

The DCN strives to support the development of innovative and collaborative solutions for people and places. We do this through:

- Collaboration and Networking
- Influencing national policy
- Commissioning evidence based research and developing new ways of working with our member organisations and partners
- Using our connections to our communities to give real-life, real-time perspectives

The DCN has four priority areas:

- Driving national growth and prosperity - making sure Districts are best placed and incentivised to drive national productivity through business and housing growth
- Devolution and public sector reform - Putting Districts at the heart of devolution and the transformation of public sector delivery, delivering those services that matter to residents the most.
- Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities - ensuring Districts have a key role in the integration of health and social care and delivering preventative services.
- Resourcing a new local government sector- Transforming local government finance to support local decision making, enhanced self-sufficiency and freedoms, flexibilities to generate new income streams, and providing incentives for growth.

Key Activities / Outcomes of work undertaken

In the last year the DCN has grown in strength and influence, highlighting the vital social and economic contribution that district councils make at local level to the nation's prosperity. We could not have achieved this without the support of all of our 201 district council members who make up the DCN. Highlights for the DCN for the past year include:

Research:

King's Fund Report identifies District Councils as the 'sleeping giants' of public health and social care- We published a timely and warmly-welcomed report commissioned from renowned health think-tank **The King's Fund** exploring the role of districts in driving both public health and health and social care integration. As a result of the report, the DCN is establishing a Taskforce with organisational leaders from the health and social care sector, to implement the key recommendations. You can [click here](#) to view the report and the infographics summary can be found [here](#).

Inlogov Report 'Building better collaboration' published- We published a [research paper](#) from local government experts at the University of Birmingham's INLOGOV centre on new ways of working to highlight effective collaborative working at a district level and outline the leading role that District Councils should play in devolution.

Influencing National Policy:

Local Plans Expert Group The DCN has been commended for its work on simplifying local plans by the Local Plans Expert Group, which has taken on many of the network's recommendations and whose [findings](#) were published in March.

The DCN takes a pro-active role in influencing national policy to ensure that District Councils can continue to deliver national growth and prosperity and services at a scale that make sense to local communities. We have...

Provided formal evidence to;

- Commons Select Committee on Business Rates
- Commons Select Committee on Housing
- LGA Housing Commission
- The APPG on Decentralisation and Devolution
- CIL Panel

Provided responses to key Government Consultations including:

- New Homes Bonus reforms
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Business Rates appeals procedures
- Electoral Fraud
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Apprenticeships
- Sunday Trading

Worked with government ministers and civil servants on issues including:

- Removing negative RSG
- Additional freedoms to increase council tax by 2% or £5 for all districts
- Planning reform
- Business rates reform and retention

- New Homes Bonus
- Changes to Local Land Charge Functions
- Fees and Charges

Our service to our Members:

The DCN has increased its regular communications and hosted a number of events for our members including:

- Monthly newsletters for our Members
- New policy briefings
- Four National Assembly Conferences (with speakers including Communities Secretary Greg Clark, Northern Powerhouse Minister James Wharton and Shadow ministers)
- Regular DCN Member Board Meetings for our regional Member Leads
- Regular DCN Chief Executive Group Meeting for our regional Chief Executive Leads
- Regular Twitter/Facebook updates

Staff Development Programme

We have again this year delivered our Staff Development Programme for 60 ambitious district council officers at the start of their local government careers. The four national conferences help equip participants with the knowledge and skills they need in order to seize opportunities in an evolving local government landscape. We will be launching the next cohort of the DCN Staff Development Programme over the next couple of months.

The DCN's work programme for 2016/17 can be found by following this link:
<http://districtcouncils.info/files/2016/04/DCN-Work-Programme-2016-17.docx>

Please return to: memberservices@local.gov.uk by 13 May at the latest.

Any queries, please contact marion.stribling@local.gov.uk / 0207 664 3040.