

Welcome
to the
District Councils' Network

Dear Member,

Following the 2019 local elections, I am delighted to share details of the newly appointed DCN Member Board and portfolio holders with you. I also wanted to take this opportunity to welcome all our new members and give some further information about the District Councils' Network and what we do for you.

As a network of all the 191 district councils within the Local Government Association (LGA), we provide a distinct and strong voice for districts. Through meetings in Parliament, hosting national events and producing evidential research, the DCN continues to demonstrate the tremendous value districts deliver, day in day out, right across the country.

The coming year is fraught with challenges, both nationally and locally, and the district role in delivering better lives and stronger economies has never been more important. In the run up to our annual conference in February 2020, we will be running a campaign #DistrictsDo, to shine a light on the excellent activity throughout our membership, showcasing your impact to government and beyond¹.

Our relationship with Parliament continues to be crucial to our lobbying successes. The DCN vice-chairs, portfolio holders and myself have met with over 25 Ministers and MPs in the last year to ensure the voice of our members is heard throughout Whitehall. However, we are heard loudest when our efforts nationally are combined with our members' support locally through your engagement with MPs. I hope that the guide provided within this pack will support all members to continue to strengthen our parliamentary relationships.

You can read about the DCN portfolio areas of policy focus as part of this document, but if there are any specific issues that you feel the DCN needs to address, please share your suggestions by emailing DCN@local.gov.uk or by calling 0207 664 3050.

I look forward to working with you all over the coming year to champion all that districts do to shape great places where our communities can thrive.



Councillor John Fuller
Chairman, District Councils' Network

Welcome

Who we are

The District Councils' Network (DCN) is a cross-party member led network of 191 district councils. We are a Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association (LGA), and provide a single voice for district councils within the LGA.

We lobby central government, the political parties and other stakeholders directly on behalf of our members, as well as commissioning research, providing support, and sharing best practice. The DCN support our members 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

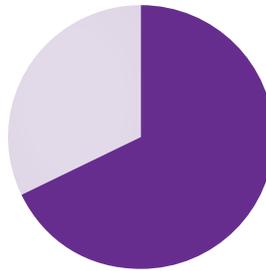
Our Narrative and Portfolio areas:



District councils in England deliver **86 out of 137** essential local government services...



...to cover 22 million people – **40% of the population...**



...and cover **68% of the country** by area.

District councils have a proven track record of building better lives and stronger economies in the areas that they serve. Districts protect and enhance quality of life by safeguarding our environment, promoting public health and leisure, whilst creating attractive places to live, raise families and build a stronger economy. By tackling homelessness and promoting wellbeing, district councils ensure that no one gets left behind by addressing the complex needs of today whilst attempting to prevent the social problems of tomorrow.

The member board appoint a portfolio holder for each of the areas below who lead the activity of the workstream and are the media spokesperson.



1. Stronger Economies

Districts are integral to the UK's future prosperity as the Planning, Housing and Growth Authorities, growing the national economy, one local economy at a time.

DCN focuses its lobbying efforts on the following policy areas: Housing and Planning, Economic Development, Industrial Strategy and High Streets

Portfolio lead: Cllr Mark Crane, Leader, Selby District Council



2. Better Lives

Districts ensure that no one gets left behind by tackling the complex needs of today whilst preventing the social challenges of tomorrow. We act at a scale where it is possible to solve problems rather than simply manage caseloads.

DCN focuses its lobbying efforts on the following policy areas: Disabled Facilities Grants, Tackling homelessness, Selective Licensing

Portfolio lead: Cllr Giles Archibald, Leader, South Lakeland District Council



3. Enhancing Quality of Life

Districts play a crucial role as local leaders who are on the side of residents. Our priorities are shaped by our understanding of and engagement with local communities. Districts protect and enhance quality of life by safeguarding our environment, promoting public health and leisure and creating attractive places to live, work and raise families.

DCN focuses its lobbying efforts on the following policy areas: Place shaping, community leadership, environmental health, health and leisure and open spaces

Portfolio Lead: Cllr Dan Humphreys, Leader, Worthing Borough Councils



4. Sustainable Finance and Workforce

Districts must work within a financial framework that incentivises and rewards local growth, whilst supporting those areas in greatest need.

DCN focuses its lobbying efforts on the following policy areas: Local government finance, business rates, fair funding, incentives for growth (NHB, HIF), council tax

Portfolio Lead: Cllr Sharon Taylor, Leader, Stevenage Borough Council

Our Leadership

The DCN comprises of a cross party executive Member Board of 21 representatives led by the Chairman, **Cllr John Fuller**, Leader of South Norfolk Council. The Executive board is calculated in accordance with the Local Government Association's Political and Regional template and the largest represented political group holds the chair.

Executive Member Board



Cllr John Fuller OBE
South Norfolk Council
Chairman



Cllr Tom Beattie
Corby Borough Council
Vice – Chairman



Cllr Sara Bedford
Three Rivers District Council
Vice – Chairman



Cllr Jason Zadrozny
Ashfield District Council
Vice – Chairman

Conservative

Cllr Daniel Humphreys
Worthing Borough Council

Cllr Isobel Darby
Chiltern District Council

Cllr John Mallinson
Carlisle City Council

Cllr Judy Pearce
South Hams District Council

Cllr Mark Crane
Selby District Council

Cllr Peter Fleming
Sevenoaks District Council

Cllr Marc Bayliss
Worcester City Council

Cllr Phil King
Harborough District Council

Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen
Breckland Council

Labour

Cllr Doiana Cornell
Stroud District Council

Cllr John Clarke
Gedling Borough Council

Cllr Sharon Taylor
Stevenage Borough Council

Liberal Democrat

Cllr Bridget Smith
South Cambridgeshire
District Council

Cllr Giles Archibald
South Lakeland
District Council

Cllr Joe Harris
Cotswold District Council

Independent

Cllr Ben Ingham
East Devon District council

Cllr Zoe Nicholson
Lewes District Council

Chief Executive Board

Our Chief Executive Board is appointed on a two year cycle and is led by an appointed Chair, this is currently **Bill Cullen**, Chief Executive of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. Representatives are chosen on a regional basis and meet once every two months. You can see the current board details below:

Adrian Pritchard

Colchester Borough Council
East of England

Andy O'Brien

East Staffordshire Borough Council
West Midlands

Arthur Charvonia

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
East of England

Bev Smith

North West Leicestershire District Council
East Midlands

Bill Cullen

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Chair

Daryl Phillips

Hart District Council
South East

David Hughes

Gravesham Borough Council
South East

Graham Soulsby

Kettering Borough Council
East Midlands

Ian Fytche

North Kesteven District Council
East Midlands

Ian Miller

Wyre Forest District Council
West Midlands

Janet Waggott

Selby District Council
Yorkshire & Humberside

Jon McGinty

Gloucester City Council
South West

Lawrence Conway

South Lakeland District Council
North West

Marshal Scott

Ribble Valley Borough Council
North West

Nigel Lynn

Arun District Council
South East

Paul Shevlin

Craven District Council
Yorkshire & Humberside

Rob Bridge

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
East of England

Robert Mitchell

Charnwood Borough Council
East Midlands

Stuart Brown

Mendip District Council
South West

Trevor Holden

Broadland and South Norfolk Councils
East of England

Yvonne Rees

Cherwell District Council
South East

DCN activity

Working with you, DCN has helped deliver a range of wins for the sector last year in the following areas.

Lobbying

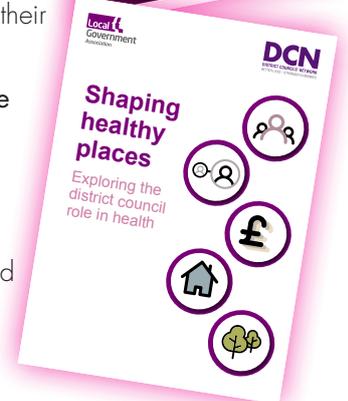
DCN have increased our parliamentary engagement and have met with ministers, MP's, officials and other key stakeholders to help influence national policy. Outlined below are some examples of our key wins over the last 12 months:

- the removal of negative RSG for 2019-20 with an average saving of £380,000 per affected district
- no further increase in the new homes bonus baseline
- lifting of HRA cap
- introduction of 20% flexibility to increase planning fees
- seeing the withdrawal of proposals for funding for short term supported housing to be delivered to County councils
- seeing additional monies for DFG being transferred directly to district councils
- greater recognition of district role in prevention and establishing closer partnerships with PHE and NHS England
- engaged with parliamentarians through the APPG for district councils on LEPs, housing and finance
- successfully called for High Street Funding to be available only to districts in district/county tier areas
- secured a proportion of the Brexit grant for district councils who were due to receive nothing.

Publications

The DCN conducts research on your behalf to help share learning throughout our membership and lobby government. On our website you will find our recent publications, these are:

- **Transformation in Localities Toolkit** – in conjunction with Grant Thornton UK LLP, this report helps districts to achieve collaborative transformation.
- **Delivering the District Difference** – a joint report with the APPG for district councils on the future of local government finance
- **Tackling Homelessness** – our report on homelessness and rough sleeping based on the results of our survey of members following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2018)
- **Shaping Healthy Places; exploring the district council role in health** – our joint report with the LGA using case studies from a number of districts who have improved the health of their local areas.
- **Districts building for the future: The impact of the removal of the HRA cap** – our report with the LGiU celebrated the proactive nature of districts following the removal of the HRA cap and recommended some additional flexibilities to unlock house building power further.



Communications and Media

We have two newsletters for our membership, these are released after our Member Board meetings and Chief Executive Group meetings (approx. bi-monthly) to give an update on activity and ask for feedback from the membership.



You can also find the DCN on twitter at @Districtcouncil. In the lead up to our conference, we will be launching our **#DistrictsDo** campaign. We are looking for good practice/success stories from your council and will be featuring at least one council every week in the run up to our conference in February. Please do remember to tag us and our hashtag in your posts, it helps us identify good news examples and promote your authority.

Our website can be found at: <https://districtcouncils.info/>. You can find the latest news, consultation responses and updates for the membership. We are also starting to feature some more detailed good practise examples on our website. This project is due to launch in the autumn so please let the DCN team if you have stories we could feature.

Dates for your diary

DCN Annual conference

This year our conference will be on the **6-7th February 2020 at Chesford Grange in Kenilworth**. Last year saw our third DCN annual conference, a sell-out event, welcoming over 100 districts to join us in celebrating "Districts Delivering the Difference". The event was attended by high-profile speakers including the Secretary of state, Chief Secretary, Shadow Ministers and industry experts.

Booking will open shortly for our conference, further details will be emailed to all Chief Executives and Leaders, please contact the team at DCN@local.gov.uk if you have any queries in the meantime.

DCN Assembly Events

The DCN have three Assembly events during the year, the next is the DCN Autumn Assembly held on 14 November at 18 Smith Square London SW1P 3HZ. This event will focus on the district role in driving growth and we have invited the new Secretary of state, Robert Jenrick MP, to give an address. For details on the programme and how to book please visit our website.

The Spring Assembly will be held in May and we have a Summer Assembly drinks reception as part of the LGA conference in July.

All Party Parliamentary Group for District Councils

Since 2016, the DCN has overseen the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for District Councils, a cross-party group of MPs and Peers that work to promote policies to support districts deliver for their communities. We encourage all members to attend or send representatives to these meetings and invite their local MP along. The next timetabled meetings are as follows and you will receive and invitation directly from the office of Mark Pawsey MP, the chair of the APPG.

- Afternoon of Wednesday 20th November
- Afternoon of Wednesday 15th January

Lobbying your local MP

We encourage all our members to be in regular contact with their local MP. MPs have significant pressures on their time, focus and priorities (locally and in Westminster), so it is essential that they receive updates from their local council leaders about local and national issues.

Tips for engaging your local MP:

- **Build a positive relationship:** Even if you represent different parties, you are both working for the same community.
- **Seek a regular timeline for meetings, such as an hour every month:** This will bring consistency and an expectation from the council and the MP to work collaboratively for the local area. These meetings can be scheduled through the MP's constituency diary manager.
- **Make specific asks:** MPs can help in lots of different ways and expect to be advised in the best actions they can take. These activities can cover:
 - Make representations to Ministers – by letter and in person
 - Asking questions in the House of Commons, or through Written Questions
 - Attending meetings of the APPG
 - Participating in relevant debates in Parliament
 - Convening meetings on your behalf with Ministers e.g. if you have a specific issue on housing, health or the high street, your local MP can help to arrange a meeting with a Government Minister to discuss these issues.

How does DCN help you to engage with your local MP?

Events convened in Parliament by DCN and the APPG for District Councils are great opportunities to engage with your local MP. For all these events, we will provide members with template email invitations that you can use to write to your MP to request that they join you.

We also occasionally distribute briefing papers and policy positions that we encourage members to pass on to local MPs, or raise in their regular meetings. We are happy to help to provide any further information you may require to help prepare for your meetings.

Help us to influence government

The DCN will be working to get a fairer financial deal for districts in the coming year. Our calls to the Government will be stronger if they are reinforced, in public and in private, by MPs that represent a district area. To secure high levels of advocacy we will be seeking to work with members and send you information to share with your local MPs.



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