

Devolution & Local Growth

How districts can help you



District councils have the lowest average number of electors per councillor: around **2,000** compared to 3,000 for all English local authorities.

District councils are home to **34%** of England's businesses.

District areas generate **30%** of national Gross Domestic Product.

Districts are investing **£2 billion** of central government regeneration funding.

By forging a strong partnership between district councils and central government, we can:

Create the local jobs that will be at the heart of driving local economic growth and tackle economic inequality through our close links to local businesses, economic development expertise and ability to convene local partners.

Attract substantial inward investment by accelerating the planning process for major investors, creating the local labour markets needed to sustain long-term investment and spearheading local partnerships.

Tackle skills shortages and promote opportunity for young people through our relationships with local employers and colleges.

Regenerate our high streets and town centres to restore local pride and help tackle antisocial behaviour and crime through our planning powers, investment levers and detailed understanding of what makes our places work.

Bring devolution close to local communities and maximise its democratic accountability by leveraging our close knowledge of our places, harnessing our powers to improve economic and health outcomes, and ensuring that regional strategic change remains rooted in real places.

How central government can help us deliver

1. Deliver a new deal for local government

- Enshrine a presumption in favour of devolution and local discretion on service delivery and funding.
- Improve engagement on devolution plans with all parts of local government.
- Adopt a new approach of close collaboration with all parts of local government in delivering central government's policy priorities.
- Create a fiscal framework between all local councils and central government, with regular budget engagement as a key element.

2. Prioritise an active and central role for district councils in all future devolution

- Strengthen the commitment to deeper devolution in non-metropolitan areas.
- Amend legislation to guarantee a full, constituent role for district councils in all existing and new combined authorities, devolution deals and sub-national government to harness the crucial levers districts have over housing, economic development, jobs, skills, health and the environment.
- Reassess the geographic parameters for devolution and choose the right footprint for further devolution, taking into account the economic circumstances of each area – ensuring that district councils have an active, formal role whatever geography is chosen.

3. Respect the sovereignty of district councils

- Commit to ending the top-down restructuring of local government and leave local areas free to choose the structures and governance that works best for them.
- Legislate to ensure there can be no reallocation of powers between different parts of local government without the consent of the local authorities affected and local people.

4. Increase funding and powers for local growth

- Preserve and deepen the primary role for district councils in investing regeneration funding in two-tier county areas, including the final phase of the Levelling Up Fund.
- Prioritise an ambitious, multi-year successor to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and give district councils the primary responsibility for investing it in two-tier areas.
- Ensure all future regeneration funds avoid costly competitive bidding processes and reduce the restrictions and ring-fencing that apply to existing local growth funding pots.
- Extend dedicated local growth funding to district councils as local place-shapers to further our work to enhance economic growth in our local areas.