



UK

## SUMMARY

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (known as 'the UK') is a union of three countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and the province of Northern Ireland. There is no written constitution but there are local government acts for each. There are also acts pertaining to the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which have single-tier principal local government. England has no devolved government and there are two-tier authorities, made up of counties and districts (or boroughs), and single-tier councils known as unitary authorities. The lower tiers of local government in England are known as civic parishes; in Scotland and Wales there are community councils which are overseen by local government but are not a tier of local government; while in Northern Ireland the system changed in 2015, reducing the existing 26 district councils to 11 unitary councils. The ministries with responsibility for local government are: the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in England; the Local Government and Communities Directorate in the Scottish Government; the Department of Local Government and Local Government Business in the Welsh Government; and the Department of the Environment within the Northern Ireland Assembly. At the latest local elections in 2017 28.4% of councillors were women. In 2016/17 local government expenditure was 22.7% of total government expenditure. Over half of local government revenue comes via transfers from central government and a further quarter comes from a property-based local council tax. Responsibility for various functions is split in the two-tier system between county and district, while unitary authorities have sole responsibility for implementing all local government functions. Parishes and community councils may manage community facilities such as village halls, war memorials, cemeteries, leisure facilities and playgrounds.

## 1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (known as 'the UK') is a union of three countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and the province of Northern Ireland.<sup>50.1a</sup> It has a central bicameral parliament based in the capital London and comprises the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The former, known also as the lower house, has 650 members elected using the first-past-the-post system and each representing an individual constituency for a fixed term of five years. The members of the House of Lords, or upper house, are appointed. There is no fixed number of members for the House of Lords, which currently has 753 active members, the majority of whom are life peers appointed by the monarch on the advice of the prime minister. The House of Lords includes 26 senior bishops of the Church of England and 92 members elected by the Lords to represent hereditary peers. Following the 2017 national election, 32.0% of MPs and 25.7% of members of the house of lords were women.<sup>50.1b</sup> The head of state is HM Queen Elizabeth II, who appoints the head of government, the prime minister, who is usually the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons, and has the power to appoint a cabinet from members of either house. There are devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but not England.

## 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 2.1 Constitutional provisions

The UK does not have a written constitution, and therefore no constitutional provision for local government.<sup>50.2a</sup>

### 2.2 Main legislative texts

#### 2.2.1 England

- Local Government Acts 1972, 1992, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2010
- Greater London Authority Acts 1999, 2007
- Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Act 2003
- Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009
- Localism Act 2011
- Local Government Finance Act 2012
- Care Act 2014
- Infrastructure Act 2015
- Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016<sup>50.2b</sup>

#### 2.2.2 Wales

- Local Government (Wales) Act 1994
- Government of Wales Acts 1998, 2006
- Localism Act 2011
- The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011
- Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013<sup>50.2c</sup>
- Wales Act 2017



## KEY FACTS

### POPULATION (2016 estimate):

65,648,100

### AREA (UN 2006):

242,900 sq km

### CAPITAL:

London

### CURRENCY:

pound sterling (GBP)

### HEAD OF STATE:

HM Queen Elizabeth II

### HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:

Prime Minister Theresa May

### FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

constitutional monarchy

### PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:

bicameral

### STATE STRUCTURE:

unitary

### LANGUAGES:

English and Welsh (official); Scottish Gaelic, Cornish, Irish, Scots and Ulster Scots (recognised)

### NATIONAL ELECTIONS:

last: June 2017, turnout: 68.7%; next: 2022

### WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2017):

MPs 32.0%, Lords 25.7%

### LOCAL ELECTIONS:

**England:** last and next: various, turnout: na;  
**Wales:** last: May 2017, turnout: na, next: May 2018;  
**Scotland:** last: May 2017, turnout: 46.9%, next: May 2022;  
**Northern Ireland:** last: 2014, turnout: 51.3%, next: May 2019

### WOMEN COUNCILLORS: (2017)

28.4%

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2016/17:

22.7%



### 2.2.3 Scotland

- Local Government (Scotland) Acts 1973, 1994, 2003
- Scotland Act 1998
- Scottish Local Government (Elections) Act 2002
- Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004<sup>50.2c</sup>

### 2.2.4 Northern Ireland

- Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972
- Northern Ireland Acts 2000 and 2006
- Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 2005
- Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
- Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014<sup>50.2d</sup>

### 2.3 Proposed legislative changes

No legislative changes are proposed.

### 2.4 National urban policy

The UK does not have an explicit national urban policy, but since 2011 it has been actively engaged in decentralising urban policy through its City Deals for English cities and for some cities in the devolved administrations.

## 3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 3.1 Local government within the state

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have a unitary, single-tier system of local government. England has a mixed system of either single-tier local

government in the form of unitary authorities, London boroughs and metropolitan district councils; or two-tier local government with county councils as the upper tier and district or borough councils as the lower tier. In England, Wales and Scotland there are also smaller units of local representation, known as parishes in England and community councils in Wales and Scotland. However, these are not uniform and do not cover the whole population.

### 3.2 Ministerial oversight

The government departments with primary policy responsibility for local government are: the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government<sup>50.3k</sup> (MHCLG) for England; the Local Government and Communities Directorate<sup>50.3l</sup> in the Scottish Government; the Department for Local Government and Local Government Business<sup>50.4m</sup> within the Welsh Government; and the Department of the Environment<sup>50.3n</sup> within the Northern Ireland Assembly. The ministers with local government portfolios are responsible for local government legislation and the monitoring of policy implementation. Within this framework, local authorities are independently elected, autonomous bodies largely independent of central government. Central government does not have the power to intervene in their day-to-day affairs except where specific provision has been made in an Act (see below).

In England, the relevant minister has powers of intervention under the Local Government Act 1999 'where there are serious failures in the delivery of certain local services'. In extreme cases the minister may direct a local authority to take action, including the transfer of responsibilities to another authority or third party. A similar range of powers is also available via their nation-specific Acts to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish ministers responsible for local government.

### 3.3 Council types

In England, areas outside London either have a single-tier unitary authority, or a two-tier system comprising a larger county authority and smaller district or borough councils. London has 32 borough councils and the City of London Corporation, as well as a further strategic authority, the Greater London Authority. In Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, there are single-tier unitary authorities.

#### 3.3.1 Devolved national government:

The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can be considered the uppermost level of regional self-governance, even though they are not referred to as local governments. The first ministers of Scotland and Wales are nominated by their parliament and assembly respectively and appoint their own cabinets.

Table 50.1a Distribution of councils and population

| Region                  | Parliament/assembly (members) | County councils | Districts  | Unitary authorities | Total local authorities | Parish/community councils | Total councillors (all levels) | Population (2011 Census) | Population 2016 est. | % rural 2011 |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| North East              | 0                             | 1               | 5          | 1                   | 12                      | na                        | na                             | na                       | na                   | 18.4         |
| North West              | 0                             | 4               | 33         | 6                   | 41                      | na                        | na                             | na                       | na                   | 10.6         |
| Yorkshire and Humber    | 0                             | 3               | 16         | 5                   | 22                      | na                        | na                             | na                       | na                   | 17.5         |
| East Midlands           | 0                             | 5               | 36         | 4                   | 35                      | na                        | na                             | na                       | na                   | 26.7         |
| West Midlands           | 0                             | 4               | 19         | 4                   | 33                      | na                        | na                             | na                       | na                   | 15.1         |
| East                    | 0                             | 5               | 41         | 6                   | 52                      | na                        | na                             | na                       | na                   | 28.9         |
| London                  | 0                             |                 |            | 32                  | 32                      | na                        | 1,851                          | na                       | na                   | 0.2          |
| South East              | 0                             | 6               | 51         | 11                  | 74                      | na                        | na                             | na                       | na                   | 10.4         |
| South West              | 0                             | 5               | 28         | 10                  | 40                      | na                        | na                             | na                       | na                   | 31.6         |
| <b>England</b>          | <b>0</b>                      | <b>33</b>       | <b>201</b> | <b>87</b>           | <b>351</b>              | <b>-9,000</b>             | <b>18,100</b>                  | <b>53,012,456</b>        | <b>na</b>            | <b>17.7</b>  |
| <b>Northern Ireland</b> | <b>(108) 1</b>                | <b>-</b>        | <b>-</b>   | <b>11</b>           | <b>11</b>               | <b>-</b>                  | <b>462</b>                     | <b>1,810,863</b>         | <b>na</b>            | <b>-34.0</b> |
| <b>Scotland</b>         | <b>(129) 1</b>                | <b>-</b>        | <b>-</b>   | <b>32</b>           | <b>32</b>               | <b>-1,200</b>             | <b>1,227</b>                   | <b>5,295,403</b>         | <b>na</b>            | <b>17.7</b>  |
| <b>Wales</b>            | <b>(60) 1</b>                 | <b>-</b>        | <b>-</b>   | <b>22</b>           | <b>22</b>               | <b>735</b>                | <b>1,264</b>                   | <b>3,063,456</b>         | <b>na</b>            | <b>32.8</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>3</b>                      | <b>33</b>       | <b>201</b> | <b>145</b>          | <b>416</b>              | <b>-10,930</b>            | <b>21,053</b>                  | <b>63,181,775</b>        | <b>65,648,100</b>    | <b>20.4</b>  |

a) excluding City of London Corporation b) excluding Isles of Scilly c) not including assembly/parliament members.

Sources: 2011 Census<sup>50.3a</sup> compiled by CLGF from communication with the LGA and NILGA, the Governments of Scotland & Wales & references 50.3d-j



In the Northern Ireland Assembly, the first minister and deputy first minister and ten further ministers are nominated by the political parties of the Northern Ireland Assembly in accordance with their relative numerical representation. The posts of departmental ministers are allocated to parties based on the d'Hondt system, by reference to the number of seats each party has in the assembly. England does not have an exclusive legislature and is governed directly by the UK parliament in London.

**3.3.2 Regional governance:** In England there are nine combined authorities, of which six have directly elected mayors, plus the Greater London Authority. Those combined authorities (CAs) with directly elected mayors are: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA, Greater Manchester CA, Liverpool City Region CA, Tees Valley CA, West Midlands CA, and the West of England CA; and those without directly elected mayors are the North East CA, West Yorkshire CA and Sheffield City Region CA which is due to hold a mayoral election in 2018. The Greater London Authority is a regional strategic body headed by the directly elected Mayor of London, with an elected assembly, and is responsible for matters such as transport, culture, planning and development.

**3.3.3 The county and district/borough:** council system is two-tiered and exists in some parts of England. Counties are either metropolitan, ie including a large city such as Leeds or Birmingham, or non-metropolitan. There are currently 33 county councils. The number of lower-tier councils within the county area varies depending on the size, geography and specific requirements of the area. Responsibilities for the county-wide area are shared between county councils and the lower tiers, known as district or borough councils. County councils lead on county-wide policy and strategy, but implementation of some services is shared between the two. District/borough councils have limited policy responsibility within their localised functions and manage a discrete set of services. Councillors are directly elected and serve a term of four years.

**3.3.4 Unitary, metropolitan and London borough councils:** operate within a unitary structure in all four countries of the UK, and have the combined areas of responsibility of the county and district councils. In 2007, 16 English county councils and their lower tiers, wishing to better align their service provision and share back-office functions, made a bid to become unitary authorities as part of a structural review of council demarcations.

Not all bids were successful but nine new county-wide unitary authorities were created in 2009. There are additionally 33 London boroughs, including the City of London, and these are not subordinate to the Greater London Authority.

**3.3.5 Parishes and community councils:** are the lowest tier of local government in England, Wales and Scotland; however there are no equivalent bodies in Northern Ireland. Within the local government system, there are over 10,000 civic parishes in England (these should be distinguished from ecclesiastical parishes). Civic parishes cover only approximately one-third of the population of England and there are currently no parishes in London. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, however, does allow for the establishment of parish councils in London. As a sphere of local government they are elected bodies with limited discretionary powers and rights. No part of England is obliged to have a parish council. The Local Government Act 1972 requires a parish meeting to take place in all parishes. A parish meeting is a distinct legal entity from a parish council. It must hold two meetings per year, one of which must take place between 1 March and 1 June. A parish with a population of over 300 may choose to constitute a separate parish council, but it is under no obligation to do so. Where a parish council exists, the parish meeting must take place once a year between 1 March and 1 June; and the parish council must meet, separately, at least once per year (Local Government Act 1972, sections 9-19). In Wales, there are 735 community councils which play an administrative role and, as in England, they do not cover the whole of the Welsh population. In Scotland community councils are the lowest tier of statutory representation. Their primary purpose is to ascertain the views of the community and express them to the local authority and other public bodies. Many community councils also involve themselves in a wide range of other activities including fundraising, organising community events, undertaking environmental and education projects and much more.

There are over 1,200 community councils in Scotland, all of which are composed of elected volunteers from the community. Community councils were created by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The Act required local authorities to introduce community council schemes for their area and outlined various arrangements for them including elections, meetings, boundaries and finance. Local authorities have statutory oversight of community councils and, in consultation with their community

councils, the freedom to tailor schemes to the particular circumstances of their area. Community councils receive local authority funding for administrative costs, the level of which is at the discretion of the local authority. Community councils can also obtain grants from other sources for specific initiatives. Local authorities and other bodies consult with community councils on issues affecting the community. These issues depend to a large extent on what is important to each community. However, local authorities are required to consult community councils on planning applications as well as new premises licence applications or applications to substantially change the use of premises. Many also choose to involve community councils in the community planning process.

## 4. ELECTIONS

### 4.1 Recent local elections<sup>50,4a</sup>

**4.1.1 England:** Local elections usually take place within a four-year cycle. There are various models which councils use within the four-year cycle. Some elect by thirds, which means a third of the councillors are elected in three out of the four years, and no election occurs in the fourth year. Some councils elect by halves where half of councillors are elected every two years. Other local authorities, such as the London boroughs, elect all of their councillors every four years. The turnout for all local elections held in England in 2017 was less than 29%.

**4.1.2 Wales:** The last local council elections for all 22 Welsh authorities were held in 2017; turnout was unavailable. The next local council elections will be held in 2020.

**4.1.3 Scotland:** In Scotland the last council elections for all 32 authorities were held in 2017, with a turnout of 46.9%. The next elections will take place in 2022.

**4.1.4 Northern Ireland:** The last local government elections in Northern Ireland were held in 2014, with a turnout of 51.3%. Councillors were elected to the 11 new councils, which operated in shadow form until the reformed system came into operation on 1 April 2015. The next elections are due in 2019.

### 4.2 Voting system

At present all councillors are elected for four years in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and five years in Scotland, all using the first-past-the-post system, except in multi-member constituencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland where election is by single transferable vote. Registered voters must be over 18 years, except in Scotland where franchise has been extended to 16 year olds; a resident of the local authority and a citizen of the UK, the European Union or a Commonwealth country.



### 4.3 Elected representatives

Councillors are elected for four years to represent their constituent wards at district or borough level, and divisions at county level. The number of councillors per ward or division is: England: one or two per county council, three for metropolitan districts, and one to three for all other authorities, depending on the population; Wales: one to five councillors per ward or division; Scotland: three or four councillors per ward or division for unitary authorities; and in Northern Ireland: five to seven councillors per ward or division. Any person who is 18 and is eligible to vote may stand for election. Local authorities in England can adopt one of three systems: a directly elected executive mayor and cabinet; a leader and cabinet; or alternative arrangements which are only available to small shire authorities in two-tier areas. The electorate is consulted on which option it wishes to adopt. Any model involving a directly elected mayor must be approved in a binding referendum. The position is similar in Wales, except 'alternative arrangements' are no longer an option. A non-statutory approach has been adopted in Scotland resulting in councils adopting one of three forms: streamlined committee structures, cabinet-style executives or locally-devolved structures. In England the Localism Act enables councils to choose whether or not they wish to return to a committee system of governance. It also allows certain councils to hold referenda on whether they wish to have a directly elected mayor as leader of the council.

### 4.4 Women's representation

In the 2014-17 election period, 28.4% (1,511/5,328) of councillors were women, down from approximately 31% in 2007-11. In the 2017 local council elections in England, 28.6% (681/2,385) of elected councillors were women. This includes 28.6% (511/1,787) county councillors, 28.2% (153/543) unitary authority councillors and 30.9% (17/55) metropolitan councillors. Whilst in Wales in the 2017 local elections, 28.6% (359/1,254) of councillors were women. Following the most recent local elections in Northern Ireland in 2014, 25.1% of councillors were women. The council with the highest proportion of women councillors was Belfast City Council with 31.7% (19/60). In 2010, 31% of local authority councillors in England were women. The proportion of female councillors was greatest in London boroughs (36.4%) and metropolitan districts (32.8%), and lowest in shire counties (24.6%)<sup>504c</sup>. In Scotland, the percentage of female councillors elected in 2012 was 23.9%, and of the 32 council leaders in Scotland three are female. After elections in 2012, women held 28% of the council seats in Wales and 5% of council leaders were women. In Northern Ireland in 2014, 25% (116) of councillors and 36.4% (4/11) of mayors were women.

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 5.1 Legal requirement

The Local Government Act 1999 requires councils in England and Wales to carry out consultation with residents for the continuous improvement of service provision. Local authorities are required to give public notice of all planning applications and residents are invited to comment on planning proposals. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 requires that local authorities demonstrate open consultation arrangements and a responsive ongoing dialogue with their communities. Additionally, in England and Wales the Localism Act gives residents the power to instigate local referenda on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases. Voluntary and community groups will also have the right to challenge local authorities over their services. The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) requires councils to undertake community planning to strengthen community engagement.

### 5.2 Implementation

Councils throughout the UK are experimenting with ways to enhance citizen participation in the democratic decision-making process. In England and Wales, councils have consulted their citizens during the preparation of their annual budgets using a range of techniques including travelling roadshows, referenda, citizen panels and/or business consultation.

### 5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

The Local E-government Programme is a partnership between councils in England and Wales and the MHCLG which has brought about major changes in the quality and accessibility of services. The range of online services now available includes submitting a planning application, renewing library books, calculating benefit entitlements, checking your council tax balance, reporting anti-social behaviour and applying for a school place. Many councils are also using various online tools and solutions to help them engage better with residents and local businesses including: online participatory budget exercises; online consultations; online blogs, articles and news items; use of social media channels to seek out views and issues; and use of social media to promote events to engage residence and drive up voter registration. In 2012, the Scottish Government, in partnership with the public sector in Scotland, which includes local government, published a vision document entitled 'Scotland's Digital Future: Delivery of Public Services'. This sets out its ambitions for digital public services in Scotland and is supported by the local government ICT strategy as outlined in the document 'Delivering Better Services for

Communities'. To date there is no similar initiative in Northern Ireland.

## 6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

National local government associations exist as voluntary membership organisations in each of the four countries of the UK. The Local Government Association (LGA) covers all local authorities in England and Wales, the latter through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), which is a constituent part of the LGA but retains full autonomy in dealing with Welsh affairs. In Scotland, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) represents 28 of the 32 Scottish local authorities; the remaining four councils are now represented by the Scottish Local Government Partnership (SLGP). The Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) represents local councils in Northern Ireland, while London Councils represents the 32 London boroughs and the City of London. Among lower-level councils, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) represents over 80% of the community, parish and town councils in England and Wales, providing specialist advice and dealing with national issues. There are also 52 affiliated county associations providing more general support. In Wales most town and community councils are members of One Voice Wales.

## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

In England a 'Central-Local Partnership' was established in 1997 between central government and the LGA, aiming to 'strengthen and sustain local elected government in England'. The partnership agreement establishes working arrangements and commits both partners to consulting one another on issues of common concern. Wales has established a statutory Partnership Council comprising the Welsh Government and local government representatives. In Scotland, the Scottish Government and COSLA work in partnership around shared policy priorities and outcomes. NILGA has been given recognition from the Northern Ireland Assembly.

## 8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

Financial supervision, including the examination of local authority procurement practices, is coordinated by the following authorities: the Accounts Commission for Scotland; the Wales Audit Office; and the Local Government Auditor in Northern Ireland. In England, the system is different. The UK government has reduced the extent of monitoring and inspection for councils in England. Until 31 March 2015 the Audit Commission was responsible for the monitoring and inspection of councils in England. Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 it was closed in order to empower



Table 50.1b Women councillors elected in the last three election periods UK 2007-2017

| Election  | 2007-11 |       | 2012-15 |       | 2014-17 |       |
|---|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|   | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| All Councillors in the UK                             | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>All female councillors in the UK</b>               | na      | -31   | na      | na    | 1,511   | 28.4  |
| All male councillors in the UK                        | na      | na    | na      | na    | 3,817   | 71.6  |
| <b>Total councillors in the UK</b>                    | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 | 5,328   | 100.0 |
| Total councillors in England*                         | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female councillors in England</b>                  | 5,545   | 30.6  | 5,748   | 31.7  | 681     | 28.6  |
| Male councillors in England                           | 12,584  | 69.4  | 12,363  | 68.3  | 1,704   | 71.4  |
| <b>Total councillors in England*</b>                  | 18,129  | 100.0 | 18,111  | 100.0 | 2,385   | 100.0 |
| Councillors in Wales*                                 | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female councillors in Wales</b>                    | na      | na    | na      | -28   | 359     | 28.6  |
| Male councillors in Wales                             | na      | na    | na      | -72   | 895     | 71.4  |
| <b>Total councillors in Wales*</b>                    | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 | 1,254   | 100.0 |
| Councillors in Scotland                               | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female councillors in Scotland</b>                 | na      | 21.8  | -297    | 24.3  | 355     | 28.9  |
| Male councillors in Scotland                          | na      | 78.2  | -923    | 75.7  | 872     | 71.1  |
| <b>Total councillors in Scotland</b>                  | 1,222   | 100.0 | 1,223   | 100.0 | 1,227   | 100.0 |
| Councillors in Northern Ireland                       | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female councillors in Northern Ireland</b>         | na      | na    | na      | na    | 116     | 25.1  |
| Male councillors in Northern Ireland                  | na      | na    | na      | na    | 346     | 74.1  |
| <b>Total councillors in Northern Ireland</b>          | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 | 462     | 100.0 |
| All mayors/council leaders in the UK                  | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female mayors/council leaders in the UK</b>        | na      | na    | na      | na    | na      | -17   |
| Male mayors/council leaders in the UK                 | na      | na    | na      | na    | na      | -87   |
| <b>Total mayors/council leaders in the UK</b>         | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 |
| Mayors/council leaders in England                     | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female mayors/council leaders in England</b>       | na      | na    | na      | na    | na      | na    |
| Male mayors/council leaders in England                | na      | na    | na      | na    | na      | na    |
| <b>Total mayors/council leaders in England</b>        | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 |
| Mayors/council leaders in Wales                       | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female mayors/council leaders in Wales</b>         | na      | na    | na      | -5    | 4       | 18.1  |
| Male mayors/council leaders in Wales                  | na      | na    | na      | -95   | 18      | 81.8  |
| <b>Total mayors/council leaders in Wales</b>          | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 | 22      | 100.0 |
| Council leaders in Scotland                           | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female council leaders in Scotland</b>             | 4       | 6.3   | 6       | 18.2  | 7       | 20.6  |
| Male council leaders in Scotland                      | 60      | 93.8  | 27      | 81.8  | 27      | 79.4  |
| <b>Total council leaders in Scotland</b>              | 64      | 100.0 | 33      | 100.0 | **34    | 100.0 |
| Mayors/ council leaders in Northern Ireland           | #       | %     | #       | %     | #       | %     |
| <b>Female mayors/council leaders Northern Ireland</b> | na      | na    | na      | na    | na      | na    |
| Male mayors/council leaders Northern Ireland          | na      | na    | na      | na    | na      | na    |
| <b>Total mayors/council leaders Northern Ireland</b>  | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 | na      | 100.0 |

Source: Compiled by CLGF from communication with the Govts of Wales and Scotland, the LGA and NILGA and the Fawcett Society/LGIU 2016

\* For England and Wales, the figures are the number of councillors elected that year (2017) \*\*two councils in Scotland have 2 co-leaders



councils to appoint their own auditors and for local government to be primarily accountable for its performance to its electorate. The LGA has set up a new independent company to oversee a number of key transitional responsibilities, as well as managing contracts with private sector audit firms for the external audits of councils until 2017. Where a service user feels s/he has suffered from local government maladministration, s/he may seek an administrative review of the relevant decisions through one of the following bodies: the Local Government Ombudsman in England and Northern Ireland; the Public Service Ombudsman of Wales; or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Further the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland considers complaints about councillors. The Commissioner can report the outcome of an investigation to the Standards Commission for Scotland which can apply sanctions.

**9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES**

**9.1 Local government expenditure**

Over the last five years, local government expenditure has steadily declined as a proportion of total government expenditure from a high of 23.5% in 2012/13 to 22.7% in 2016/17.

**9.2 Locally raised revenue**

Local authorities in England and Wales set council tax rates but central government can cap increases it considers excessive. For England, central government can set a threshold for

‘excessive’ increases, which, if breached, would trigger a local referendum to validate any increase. Although the same power to cap excessive expenditure exists in Scotland, local authorities there have not been subject to specific spending limits, and voluntarily agreed with the Scottish Government to freeze council tax rates over the period 2008 to 2016. The district councils, unitary authorities, metropolitan districts and London boroughs collect taxes including the taxes set by county councils, parish councils, police authorities and fire authorities. In Northern Ireland there is no council tax, but instead a system of rates which is property-based. Community councils in Scotland receive local authority funding for running costs only; they can however obtain grants for specific initiatives.

**9.3 Transfers**

The national non-domestic rate (called the uniform poundage rate in Scotland) is a tax for businesses set centrally. In Scotland, the rate income is pooled centrally for redistribution on the basis of where the income is generated. In 2013 a new system of business rate retention began in England. Instead of the business rates collected by councils being pooled and distributed by government through a formula grant, councils now have the right to keep half of the business rates collected in their area (‘the local share’), whilst the other half (‘the central share’) is redistributed to councils in the form of a revenue support grant (RSG). The local tax-base growth is retained within local government.

The new system provides incentives to councils to grow their local economies, but at the same time it has resulted in greater risk and uncertainty. In Northern Ireland there are two business rates: the regional rate set by the Northern Ireland Assembly, and the district rate set by each of the 11 councils. The RSG is a grant distributed by central government to local authorities each year to provide financial support to carry out their functions. The RSG is unconditional and may be used for any purpose within the competence of the authority. Hypothecated or specific grants are also made to enable local authorities to fulfil central government policy objectives. From 2017/18 five areas - Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, West Midlands, West of England and Cornwall are piloting 100% business rates retention.

**9.4 Loans**

Councils have the power to borrow funds and in 2015 the LGA created a municipal bonds agency (the Local Capital Finance Company) to reduce long-term capital costs for councils by introducing competition and diversity in the marketplace and giving councils more control over the interest rates they pay. Councils in England currently source 75% of their borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), leaving them vulnerable to interest rates set to deliver the government’s public borrowing plans.

**Table 50.2a Summary of consolidated local government income and expenditure for 2015/16**

| Income GB£m                                | England        | Wales        | Scotland      | Northern Ireland* | Total          | Expenditure GB£m  | England        | Wales        | Scotland      | Northern Ireland* | Total          |
|--|----------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|---|----------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <b>Centre-local transfers</b>              |                |              |               |                   |                | <b>Service expenditure</b>                              |                |              |               |                   |                |
| Police grant                               | 7,423          | 222          | -             | -                 | 7,805          | Central services  | 12,239         | 306          | 686           | 79                | 13,641         |
| Specific grants and general revenue grants | 49,668         | 6,305        | 9,948         | 56                | 73,439         | Education   | 38,494         | 2,576        | 4,946         | -                 | 47,681         |
|  |                |              |               |                   |                | Highways and transport                                  | 7,394          | 271          | 622           | -                 | 7,576          |
| <b>Locally raised revenue</b>              |                |              |               |                   |                | Social care/social services                             | 29,165         | 1,667        | 4,044         | -                 | 32,418         |
| Council tax <sup>b</sup>                   | 24,734         | 1,323        | 2,055         | 532               | 27,063         | Housing   | 2,937          | 1,152        | 3,058         | -                 | 6,578          |
| Retained income from:                      |                |              |               |                   |                | Public health   | 3,336          | -            | -             | 38                | 2,706          |
| Business rates                             | 11,855         | -            | -             | -                 | 10,719         | Culture, environment, economic development and planning | 13,023         | 686          | 1,932         | 552               | 16,091         |
| Sales, fees and charges                    | 11,666         | -            | 2,423         | 152               | 14,248         | Police, fire and rescue                                 | 14,040         | 825          | -             | -                 | 14,920         |
| Other locally-raised revenue               | 18,757         | -            | 2,807         | -                 | 19,744         | Other   | 427            | 361          | 47            | 80                | 3,498          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                               | <b>124,103</b> | <b>7,850</b> | <b>17,233</b> | <b>740</b>        | <b>153,017</b> | <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>                                | <b>121,055</b> | <b>7,844</b> | <b>15,335</b> | <b>749</b>        | <b>145,109</b> |

\* Northern Ireland 2014/15 Source: Compiled by CLGF from communications with the Governments of Wales and Scotland, the LGA and NILGA



### 9.5 Local authority staff

Local authorities determine their own staffing structure and accordingly employees are recruited, managed and dismissed at the discretion of the local authority. The head official is normally the chief executive. There are a few statutory roles, including a named officer responsible for the proper administration of the council's financial affairs, known as the S151 officer (S95 in Scotland), who is usually but not necessarily the chief financial officer or director of finance. This individual has the power in exceptional cases to immediately suspend all business of the council if s/he suspects serious financial misconduct. All local authority members of staff have the opportunity to join public sector employment unions and a national local government pension scheme.

## 10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

### 10.1 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility

The services a council provides vary according to the type of council it is and its location in the UK. Single-tier or unitary authorities, including metropolitan councils and London boroughs, are responsible for the provision of all local government functions within their area. They have responsibility for fire and civil defence, waste disposal, local economic development, and transport, especially within cities; and these are often provided through joint authorities. In two-tier local authorities, responsibilities are split between the county councils and the district or borough councils. County councils in England are responsible for managing statutory services and strategic-level functions. The main statutory services are social services for vulnerable and elderly adults and for children in the care of the state ('looked-after children'), fostering, adoption and schools. Other statutory services include the management of waste, the maintenance of roads, public health, environmental management and emergency and disaster planning. More strategic services such as local economic development (LED) and community development or wellbeing are considered discretionary services.

District or borough councils, the lower-tier councils of the county system in England, provide many local services and have responsibility for some distinct areas outside the remit of the county such as housing, cemeteries and crematoria and the electoral register. They also deliver services that are managed and determined by the county council: for example, they collect waste and the county manages it, they collect taxes at a level determined by the county, and they work to develop businesses within the framework of an LED policy set by the county council. Local authorities in Northern Ireland are responsible for a restricted number of services: street cleaning; refuse collection and disposal; recreational, social and cultural facilities; promotion of economic development; tourism development; and burial grounds and crematoria. They also have a number of regulatory functions. Parishes and community councils across England, Wales and Northern Ireland manage community facilities such as village halls, war memorials, cemeteries, leisure facilities and playgrounds. The Scottish government's National Performance Framework provides a single framework to which all public services in Scotland are aligned. The entire public sector, including all 32 local authorities, is working in partnership to deliver 16 'national outcomes', which will improve the quality of life and wellbeing for all of Scotland in terms of economic, social and environmental factors. Single Outcome Agreements between the Scottish government and local authorities, working as part of a community planning partnership, set out how each will work at a local level towards delivering the national outcomes.

### 10.1.1 Recent developments in delivery of services in England

**10.1.1.1 Community Budgets:** is a programme allowing public services, business and the voluntary sector to work together to develop new responses to local challenges. Beginning with the citizen experience, the budgets are designed to look at the whole system rather than discrete services; and, rooted in evidence, they demand new models of investment to set up and sustain the most effective intervention.

**10.1.1.2 Devolution deals:** are agreements between central government, local government and other partners on the new arrangements that will be made in an area to deliver better public services and encourage growth. Before a deal is agreed, a council or group of councils will negotiate with government on what they need to deliver better local outcomes, as well as what governance arrangements would be appropriate, such as a combined authority and directly elected mayor. Once these proposals are agreed, they are signed by the partners to the agreement and each individual council will then ratify the agreement. A number of devolution deals have been agreed across the country covering metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, and many further proposals have been put forward.<sup>10a</sup>

**10.1.1.3 Alternative statutory governance frameworks:** In recent years councils in England have increasingly been working together to find more efficient ways to deliver public services, save money and promote economic growth. This has been given extra momentum by the recent austerity measures and cuts in funding to local authorities. Joint working approaches seek to provide economies of scale, simplify funding streams and enable councils to plan and deliver services for a workable geography. The four main governance frameworks are: joint committees (JCs) of two or more councils, which are relatively quick to set up but have no legal status and are therefore restricted in what they can do; combined authorities (CAs), are legal bodies set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries; economic prosperity boards (EPBs), which are subject to the same conditions as CAs, but cannot take on transport functions; and, directly elected mayors with powers across more than one council.

**10.1.1.4 Police and crime commissioners:** Elections for police and crime commissioners (PCCs) take place every four years with the first in November 2012, then 2016 when the turnout was 27.3%, up from 15.1%. Their mandate is to: represent and engage with the public; set local policing priorities; agree a local strategic plan; hold the local chief constable to account; set the local police budget and tax rate; and appoint, the chief constable. Elections were held in all police force areas in England and Wales, except in London, where the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime has taken on the powers of a PCC. PCCs are also held to account by a police and crime panel composed of locally elected councillors and independent members.

**Table 50.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2012-17**

|  | 2012-13<br>(GB£m) | 2013-14<br>(GB£m) | 2014-15<br>(GB£m) | 2015-16<br>(GB£m) | 2016-17<br>(GB£m) |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Total government expenditure   | 731,993           | 736,886           | 751,988           | 753,916           | 770,576           |
| Total local government expenditure   | 171,901           | 172,502           | 173,170           | 173,464           | 174,703           |
| <b>Local government expenditure as a % of total government expenditure</b> | <b>23.5%</b>      | <b>23.4%</b>      | <b>23.0%</b>      | <b>23.0%</b>      | <b>22.7%</b>      |

Source: Compiled by CLGF from table 7.1 and table 1.1 of the UK Treasury Public Expenditure, Statistical Report 2017<sup>50,9</sup>



### 10.1.2 Recent developments in delivery of services in Northern Ireland

Recent reforms have seen key services such as planning, urban regeneration, local economic development and local tourism regrouped to promote local development, and this will be reinforced by a more responsive and participatory community planning process. Local councils have a strengthened role in ensuring the local investment climate fits the needs of new business and supports the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises.

### 10.2 ICT use in service delivery

A National ICT Category Management Programme<sup>50.10b</sup> (NICTMP) was launched in 2012 aimed at supporting councils to procure the technology systems and tools they need more cost-effectively, to enable them to deliver local public services that provide value for money.

### 10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee March 2017 report on SDGs in the UK<sup>50.10b</sup> laments that 'despite adopting the Sustainable Development Goals and committing itself to working "tirelessly for the full implementation of [the Goals] by 2030", the Government has shown little interest in, or enthusiasm for, implementing the Goals in the UK' (page 25). The report recommends that the government needs to clearly define the responsibilities of local government for contributing to the SDGs. Clarifying the position of local authorities would enable them to develop a level of 'ownership' over their sustainable development programmes. The report noted the benefits of metropolitan mayors playing a greater role in the development agenda for their area, highlighting the success Bristol's mayor has had in environmental policies" (p.36-37).

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- 50.3i Open Council Data UK <http://opencouncildata.co.uk>
- 50.3j County councils [www.localgovernmentexecutive.co.uk/councils](http://www.localgovernmentexecutive.co.uk/councils)
- 50.3k Department of Communities and Local Government, England and Wales [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)
- 50.3l Director General Communities, Scotland [www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/local-government](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/local-government)
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- 50.3n Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland [www.nidirect.gov.uk/department-of-the-environment](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/department-of-the-environment)
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Annex 50a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in the UK

| Services                                 | Delivering authority |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             | Remarks   |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
|  | Central government   | Devolved administrations | Unitary authorities | Upper tier (counties) | Lower tier (districts/boroughs) | Parishes/community councils |   |
| <b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>            |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Police                                   | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Fire protection                          |                      | ■                        | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Civil protection                         | ■                    | ■                        | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Criminal justice                         | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             | Devolved in Scotland  |
| Civil status register                    | ■                    |                          | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             | District England only   |
| Statistical office                       | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Electoral register                       |                      |                          | ■                   |                       | ■                               |                             |   |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>                         |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)    |                      |                          | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| Primary                                  |                      |                          | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| Secondary                                |                      |                          | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| Vocational and technical                 |                      | ■                        |                     | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| Higher education                         |                      | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Adult education                          |                      | ■                        |                     | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| <b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>                    |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Family welfare services                  |                      |                          | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| Welfare homes                            |                      |                          | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| Social security                          | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             | Partly devolved in Scotland   |
| <b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>                     |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Primary care                             | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Hospitals                                | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             | Local delivery<br>England only  |
| Health protection                        |                      | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| <b>HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING</b>         |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Housing                                  |                      | ■                        | ■                   |                       | ■                               |                             |   |
| Town planning                            |                      | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     | ■                               |                             | District England only<br>County England only  |
| Regional planning                        |                      | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| <b>TRANSPORT</b>                         |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Roads                                    |                      | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| Transport                                | ■                    | ■                        | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Urban roads                              |                      |                          | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Urban rail                               | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Ports                                    | ■                    | ■                        | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Airports                                 | ■                    |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| <b>ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION</b> |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Water and sanitation                     | ■                    | ■                        |                     | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| Refuse collection and disposal           |                      |                          | ■                   | ■                     | ■                               |                             |   |
| Cemeteries and crematoria                |                      |                          | ■                   |                       | ■                               | ■                           | In two-tier areas, districts are responsible for waste collection and counties for disposal |
| Slaughterhouses                          |                      |                          | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Environmental protection                 |                      | ■                        | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Consumer protection                      | ■                    | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     |                                 |                             |   |
| <b>CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS</b>       |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Theatres and concerts                    |                      | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     | ■                               |                             |   |
| Museums and libraries                    |                      | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     | ■                               | ■                           | Libraries responsibility of counties  |
| Parks and open spaces                    |                      |                          | ■                   | ■                     | ■                               | ■                           |   |
| Sports and leisure facilities            |                      |                          | ■                   | ■                     | ■                               | ■                           |   |
| Religious facilities                     |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| <b>UTILITIES</b>                         |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Gas services                             | ■                    |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| District heating                         |                      |                          | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Water supply                             | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Electricity                              | ■                    |                          | ■                   |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| <b>ECONOMIC</b>                          |                      |                          |                     |                       |                                 |                             |   |
| Agriculture, forests and fisheries       | ■                    | ■                        |                     |                       | ■                               |                             |   |
| Local economic development/promotion     | ■                    | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     | ■                               |                             |   |
| Trade and industry                       | ■                    | ■                        | ■                   | ■                     | ■                               |                             |   |
| Tourism                                  | ■                    | ■                        | ■                   |                       | ■                               |                             |   |

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service

