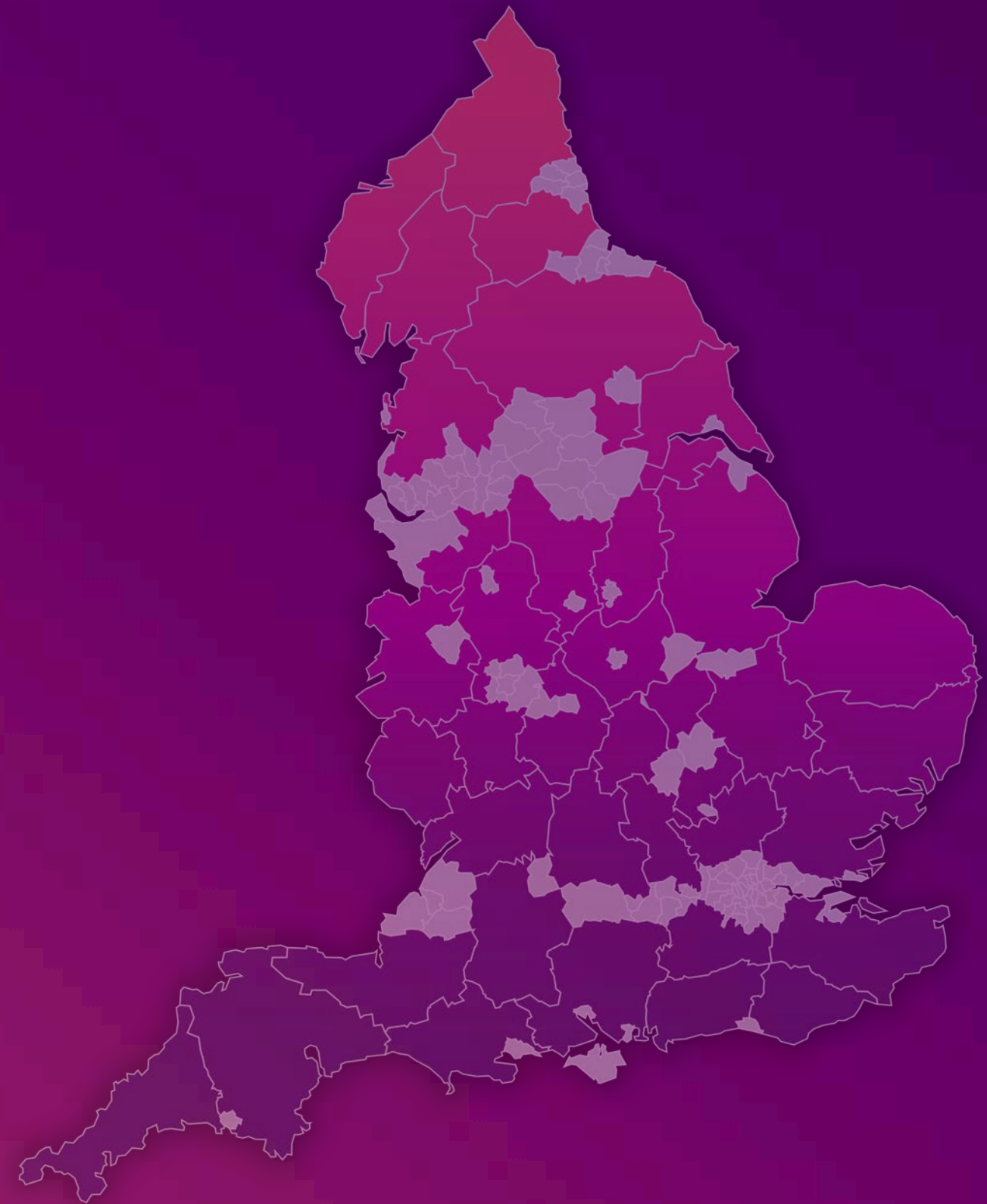


CCCN

THE VOICE OF COUNTIES

A guide to CCCN



1

WHO CCN ARE AND AND WHAT WE DO

*We are the dedicated **national representative body for our 39 member councils**, articulating the priorities and policy issues that matter most to them.*

Our Network

The County Councils Network (CCN) represents **39 county and unitary councils** across England.

We are a **councillor-led, cross-party organisation** that works on behalf of our member councils and their communities to ensure they have a **strong voice with national government**.

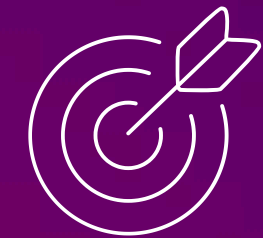
We provide their **gateway to Whitehall and Parliament**, and speak on their behalf in the national media. We provide a platform for our councils to **share common challenges and best practice**, while representing their **unique interests** within the LGA.

We strive to help deliver **positive change** for our member councils and the residents they serve.



Our Vision

To ensure CCN is an influential and respected network, advocating innovative policy solutions on the challenges facing local government and the wider public sector.



Our Aim

To ensure counties have the powers and resources to meet the needs and aspirations of their residents on issues of particular importance to our councils and their communities.

Our Network

CCN is the **only national voice** for the county and larger unitary authorities in England.

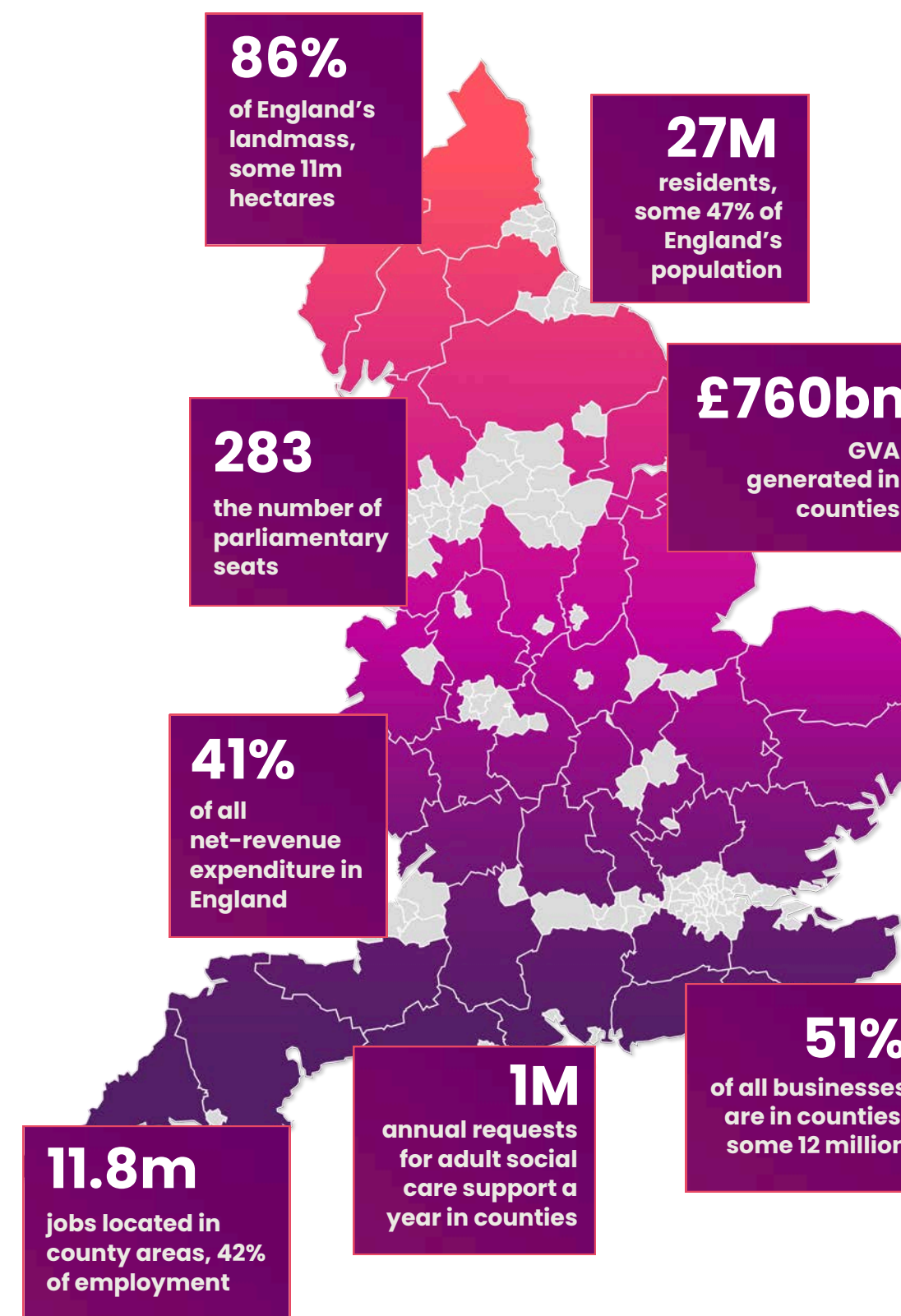
Whilst recognising that a strong and unified voice for local government is important, **county and rural areas have different challenges and opportunities.**

Counties are distinct and historic places, containing large rural and coastal communities, but also major towns and cities that are distinct from urban metropolitan areas.

We provide the **only significant counterbalance** to the organisations representing the interests of councils in London and metropolitan areas.

What makes CCN the natural home for county and unitary authorities and what binds our network together, is not only the services our councils provide, **but the uniqueness of the places our councillors represent.**

Our network represents more than a type or function of local government – we represent both county and unitary authorities that share common characteristics, challenges and opportunities across unique geographies, regardless of local authority structures, size and political composition.



Our Network



There will always be a need for a national special interest group that represents councils in county areas; bringing together non-metropolitan local authorities with common and shared characteristics to powerfully advocate on their behalf and influence government policy.



The **only dedicated special interest group** for non-metropolitan councils

A distinct and established national profile, with common and shared characteristics to powerfully advocate and influence government policy.

An organisational infrastructure and policy expertise to influence policy on the major agendas facing upper-tier councils.

Strong cross-party governance arrangements, underpinned by new ways of working and modernised constitution.

Almost half of our members are already unitary councils, and every non-urban unitary council created over the last three decades have joined CCN.

What we do

The CCN aims to articulate the challenges and opportunities of its member councils, alongside their priorities, to the government and other key organisations. This is primarily done through **original and impactful research** alongside a **strong media and public affairs activity**, and in **meetings with ministers, MPs, peers, senior government officials**, and other key individuals.

Delivering for your local area

From our engagement with member councils, we have a unique understanding of the challenges facing your areas. Our concerted campaigning has helped deliver hundreds of millions in extra funding for members.

In the last year alone, our advocacy helped secure billions in financial support for our councils through SEND deficit write-off.

Helping shape government policy

Through our research and evidence, CCN has led the policy agenda on a host of issues for county and unitary councils.

Over the last year alone we delivered 16 research reports and consultation responses, helping to deliver major reforms to the SEND system while defending the interests of our members on planning reform, devolution and funding reform.

Making your voice heard on the national stage

As a national advocacy body, CCN has a strong media and public affairs profile that makes our members voice heard in Whitehall and across the country.

In the last year alone we have met with 40 MPs, various ministers and senior civil servants across multiple departments, while delivering over 4,500 media hits, including 960 national stories.

Member Support

National Policy Advocacy

CCN act as the collective voice of its members in Whitehall, Parliament and across the wider local government sector. We will deliver:

- Representation of members' interests on major reforms including local government finance, social care, SEND, planning, devolution and transport.
- Responses to consultations and legislation.
- Engagement with ministers, senior civil servants and MPs.
- On-the-day responses and sustained campaigning to influence national decisions.

Media and Profile Raising

CCN ensure county areas are visible and influential in national debates, enhancing the profile of members nationally by:

- Securing national media coverage for major reports and campaigns.
- Providing consistent messaging in response to policy announcements and fiscal events.
- Producing branded materials and video content to amplify members' voices.

Research and Evidence

CCN commission and produce original, high-profile and impactful research to strengthen its advocacy and support councils locally. This will include:

- Independent reports and consultancy projects.
- Internal data modelling and financial analysis.
- Collaborative projects with member councils.

Member Support and Intelligence Sharing

CCN provide practical support to member councils through:

- Dedicated senior officer groups and spokesperson networks.
- Policy briefings and technical updates.
- Regular meetings with leaders, chief executives and cabinet members.
- Sharing intelligence from Whitehall and across the sector and facilitating best practice exchange between councils.
- Supporting councils individually by advising on key reform programmes.
- Hosting events and webinars, alongside the nationally significant CCN Annual Conference.

2

HOW WE ARE GOVERNED

CCN is a **cross-party member-led organisation**, with elected councillors at the heart of driving the organisation's advocacy.

Our Governance

CCN is a **special interest group** of the Local Government Association (LGA). However, we have **separate governance structures** and are funded through our own member subscriptions.

The network operates on a cross-party basis, with positions allocated to our governance structures on the basis of **political proportionality of the elected councillors of our councils**.

Six county councils have had local elections this May. Alongside this, CCN will need to incorporate North Lincolnshire Council and Leicestershire County Council as newly, and re-joined, members into our political balance. **This means CCN's political balance will be updated during May using the Rallings and Thrasher model.**

Following this process, the leadership of CCN will be reconstituted again later this year. **New members of CCN Executive and CCN council will be appointed leading up to the CCN Annual General Meeting in September 2026.**



The network has **three layers of governance**

Management Committee:

Comprising the CCN Chair and Vice-Chairs from each of the political groups

CCN Executive:

Consists of Management Committee members and group-appointed Executive Members

CCN Council:

A much larger body of around 150 councillors, nominated by each member council

Our Committees

The current members of CCN Executive can be found [here](#).

Management Committee

The elected body comprising the CCN Chair and Vice-Chairs from each of the political groups. The group with the largest political representation nominates the Chair.

The formal role of Management Committee is to propose the Annual Budget at the Council meeting in March, alongside the audited accounts for approval by Council at the AGM in September. Given the cross-party nature of the network, it also provides an important forum which brings together the leaders of each political group.

Executive Committee

Executive consists of Management Committee members and group-appointed Executive Members. The overall balance of membership is politically proportionate, in line with the total political balance of CCN authorities, with Group Leaders nominating Spokespersons to lead on policy portfolios.

The primary function of Executive is to propose the Work Programme and Business Plan for consideration by CCN Council in March, and to support the wider leadership, decision making, policy development and advocacy of the network.

CCN Council

CCN Council is the third part of our governance structure. A much larger body of around 150 councillors, each member council nominates up to four elected members to serve on the CCN Council. Top-up places are used to ensure political proportionality.

CCN Council meets four times a year to approve the Annual Budget, Business Plan and Audited Accounts. Members of CCN Council have the opportunity to attend meetings and engage with high-profile speakers, including government ministers.

How to engage

A core part of CCN business is to ensure that our councils hear from policy makers in Westminster to help shape national policy.

We facilitate a variety of meetings, events and host an annual conference for councillors to debate and discuss particular issues and hear from expert speakers and ministers.

The CCN team is always on hand to answer policy queries and provide our member councils with expert advice on developments nationally, while supporting a wide range of policy-specific dedicated officer networks.

Contact the team by using the details below.

How to engage with CCN

- **Visit our website and social media:** The CCN website contains all of CCN's research, publications, press releases and general information. Our main two social network sites are LinkedIn and X.
- **Sign up to our newsletter:** Our regular newsletter contains the latest updates and research, straight to your inbox. Sign up [here](#).
- **Attend our conference and events:** Our annual conference takes place every November, and CCN organises several networking events and policy webinars a year.

Our Team



Simon Edwards

Chief Executive

simon.edwards@local.gov.uk

07920507820

Simon is the Chief Executive of CCN, responsible for leadership of the organisation, business management and all aspects of CCN's membership.



James Maker

Director of Policy & Communications

james-maker2@local.gov.uk

07815534071

James is responsible for the delivery of CCN's full portfolio of policy and research, including finance and local government reorganisation. He also oversees CCN's communications and media relations.



Ian Burbidge

Senior Media & Communications Officer

ian.burbidge@local.gov.uk

07595425375

Ian is responsible for CCNs communications, marketing, and public affairs support. In his role, Ian leads both external and internal communications.



Hannah Chard

Events & Partnerships Officer

hannah.chard@local.gov.uk

07984552608

Hannah is responsible for managing CCNs Strategic Partners and Conference partners. She also leads on the planning and organisation of CCN's events, including CCN Conference.



Peter French

Senior Policy Advisor

peter.french@local.gov.uk

07912786044

Peter leads on the CCN's place-based policy and research. His remit includes leading work on housing, planning, climate change, transport and infrastructure.



Jonathan Rallings

Senior Policy Advisor

jonathan.rallings@local.gov.uk

07834160710

Jon leads the CCN's work on children's areas of the network's policy and research, overseeing our work across children's social care, education and SEND.



James Holden

Senior Corporate & Public Affairs Officers

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07841699963

James leads on CCN's on the network's public affairs engagement work, including liaison with parliamentarians, special advisors, and senior officials; and coordinates agendas and papers for CCN's Council.



Chloe Reeves

Senior Policy Advisor

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07706628701

Chloe leads on CCN's work on adult social care and health, including health integration and the Independent Commission on Social Care.



Alun Hughes

Senior Policy Advisor

alun.hughes@local.gov.uk

07776420587

Alun leads the CCN's policy and research on economic growth, devolution and supports CCN work on local government reorganisation.

3

OUR ADVOCACY & PRIORITIES

*For 2026/27, CCN will adopt a new campaign narrative **Stronger Counties, Stronger Communities**, underpinned by our revised set of strategic priorities and associated work-streams.*

S↑**TRONGER**
COUNTIES
S↑**TRONGER**
COMMUNITIES

Our Approach

The network works on a cross-party basis, articulating the priorities and issues facing our member councils as agreed in a yearly work programme, alongside day-to-day advocacy in responding to announcements, policies, and consultations. **There are five principles underpinning our approach to advocacy and policy development:**

Selective

Focusing on the key policy areas that are most important to members and have a unique county angle.

Pragmatic

Measured campaigning, strongly defending and raising concerns of members while maintaining good relationships and access to ministers.

Evidence-based

Increasing the portfolio of policy development and research undertaken by the organisation.

Politically Driven

Recognising the political dynamics of our membership and Whitehall, while maintaining a cross-party approach in a more plural and complex political landscape.

Adaptative

Proactively responding to developments to continuously adapt our work programme in response to national developments.

Our Advocacy

CCN prioritises our national advocacy above all other CCN related activity, recognising the need to balance detailed engagement on active policy implementation and support for member councils, while continuing to produce sector-leading research.

The network works on a cross-party basis, **articulating the priorities and issues facing our member councils as agreed in a yearly work programme.**

The network's **Business Plan & Work Programme 2026/27** was agreed in March this year.

Below, we provide an overview of the key themes of our Business Plan & Work Programme, including the key activity and actions across our priorities.



Download the full Business Plan here, and get in touch with the team to discuss our work in more detail.

Campaigns



↑ STRONGER
COUNTRIES
↑ STRONGER
COMMUNITIES

This campaign narrative will seek to articulate that county and non-metropolitan unitary councils sit at the heart of England's largest places. They serve counties that are home to half of England's population, power the national economy, grow our food, protect our environment, and connect cities, towns, and rural communities.

CCN
THE VOICE OF COUNTIES

↑ STRONGER
COUNTRIES
↑ STRONGER
COMMUNITIES

The role of our member councils and the places they represent has never been more critical — or more constrained.

The pressures facing our communities are rising within a challenging financial environment.

But county and non-metropolitan unitary councils are working collaboratively in leading the response to national priorities.

CCN will not be asking for special treatment for our member councils. What we are asking is for a fair deal for our areas to ensure that we are equally treated alongside more urban parts of local government.

Campaigns



↑ STRONGER
COUNTIES
↑ STRONGER
COMMUNITIES

National government must deliver reforms that reflect the unique places our councils represent and serve – ones that recognise the scale, complexity, and value of county areas, and gives local leaders the tools to deliver. By doing so, and working in partnership with national government, we can make Stronger Counties and deliver Stronger Communities.



We are the backbone of local government in England

Our councils need to plan for the long term, work across large and diverse geographies, and deliver services that require scale, stability, and local insight.



We are pragmatic, efficient, and delivery-focused

Our councils innovate because they must. They prevent problems upstream, invest early, and focus relentlessly on outcomes.



We are closest to the realities facing communities

From market towns to villages, coastal areas to growth corridors, our councils understand what different places need – and why one-size-fits-all policy does not work.

Strategic Priorities



**STRONGER
COUNTIES
STRONGER
COMMUNITIES**

*CCN has closely examined the national policy landscape and building on engagement to date with new administrations, the CCN's cross-party Executive, and political groups, **CCN has reviewed our priorities and work-streams, expanding our strategic priorities from five to six to reflect the range of lower-tier services delivered by unitary councils.***

Strategic Priority	Objective	Workstreams
Local Government Finance	Ensuring our members are financially secure through sustainable funding, service reform and efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Funding • Efficiency & Improvement • Reorganisation
Adult Social Care & Health	Securing practicable reform through the Casey Commission, a sustainable workforce, and preventative neighbourhood and public health services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Social Care • Workforce • Neighbourhood & Public Health
Children's Services & Education	Achieving a brighter future for young people through preventative children's services, resetting the SEND system and reforming home to school transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Social Care • Special Educational Needs & Disabilities • Education & Home to School Transport
Housing, Planning & Infrastructure	Creating thriving communities through a locally led planning system, preventing homelessness and investing in infrastructure and local roads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local & Strategic Planning • Infrastructure • Housing & Homelessness
Devolution, Growth & Transport	Growing county economies through fair investment, greater devolution and sustainable transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Growth • Devolution • Transport & Roads
Communities, Waste & Environment	Supporting our communities and protecting our environment through delivering essential everyday services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Services • Environment • Leisure and Recreation

POLICY ESSENTIALS

Building on this Guide to CCN, our updated series of **Policy Essentials** aims to give county and unitary councillors a short and concise overview of the most important policy issues facing their councils. This includes an overview of the key service responsibilities of councils; why it is a national advocacy priority for CCN; key developments in the national policy landscape; and CCN's key policy positions and advocacy priorities.

**DOWNLOAD
HERE**



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**STRONGER
COUNTIES
STRONGER
COMMUNITIES**

**POLICY
ESSENTIALS:**
PLANNING AND
INFRASTRUCTURE



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**STRONGER
COUNTIES
STRONGER
COMMUNITIES**

**POLICY
ESSENTIALS:**
NEIGHBOURHOOD
HEALTH



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COUNTIES
STRONGER
COMMUNITIES**

**POLICY
ESSENTIALS:**
HOME TO SCHOOL
TRANSPORT



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COUNTIES
STRONGER
COMMUNITIES**

**POLICY
ESSENTIALS:**
FINANCE

