

CENTRAL-LOCAL CONCORDAT

12 December 2007

This agreement, made between Her Majesty's Government and the Local Government Association, establishes a framework of principles for how central and local government work together to serve the public. Central government departments and councils commit to uphold these principles¹. This meets a commitment in the *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, published in July 2007. These principles reflect the way in which the relationship between central and local government is managed currently. The Government is committed to constitutional reform and will work with the LGA to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of local government are reflected in proposals as they are developed.

- 1.** Local areas face significant challenges, from globalisation and social and demographic change. Our citizens rightly place increasing demands on public services, based on their rising expectations and ambitions. To meet these challenges and aspirations, communities need strategic leadership and public services must continually improve in quality and efficiency and must treat everyone fairly. We believe it is the responsibility of elected politicians and appointed officials in central and in local government to ensure that local places and public services rise to this challenge, for all citizens, in every part of the country, so that everyone can enjoy a better quality of life.
- 2.** Parliament passed the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act in 2007. This, alongside other policies set out in *Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper*, marks a moment of significant and lasting change. Together, they set a new baseline for relations between central and local government. We will work to develop the relationship further from that foundation.
- 3.** Central and local government both derive their legitimacy from Parliament and the electoral mandate granted to them by individual citizens who look to central and local government to take the lead in ensuring better places and better services.

¹ The LGA represents councils in England and Wales. The UK Government will, as far as appropriate, have regard to these principles in relation to the responsibilities which Welsh local authorities have in non-devolved areas. Relations between the Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh local government are governed by the Local Government Partnership Scheme, as set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006.

4. This means that central and local government are partners in delivering improved services and in strengthening our democracy. In particular, we share objectives to:

- create and sustain thriving communities, where people want to live, work, bring up their families and retire; where they can reach services; and with access to decent homes at a price they can afford;
- tackle anti-social behaviour and crime and promote good health;
- improve outcomes for children, young people and families;
- anticipate the needs and aspirations of an ageing society through preventative measures that encourage greater independence and well-being for older citizens;
- nurture business and enterprise, increasing skills and employment and creating wealth and rising prosperity, shared by all;
- protect and enhance the environment, tackle climate change and pollution;
- support a thriving third sector of local voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises;
- promote a pluralist, healthy democracy with tolerance, decency and respect at its heart, without space for political or religious extremism; and
- promote high standards of conduct in public life.

In delivering these objectives, there should be a presumption that powers are best exercised at the lowest effective and practical level.

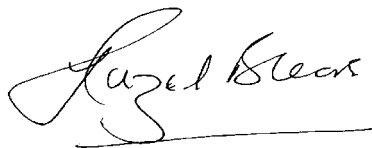
5. Central government has the responsibility and democratic mandate to act in accordance with the national interest. Acting through Parliament, it has the over-riding interest in matters such as the national economic interest, public service improvement and standards of delivery, and taxation.

6. Councils have responsibilities for service performance but also for the prosperity and well-being of all citizens in their area and the overall cohesion of the community. They have a general power to promote community well-being and a responsibility to do all they can to secure the social, economic and environmental well-being of their areas. The LGA and central government will work together to encourage all councils to make effective use of the well-being power and to conduct a growing share of the business of government.

7. In this relationship, there are reciprocal rights and responsibilities.

8. Central government has the **right** to set national policies, including minimum standards of services, to work with local areas to support them and, as a last resort, to intervene to avoid significant underperformance. It proposes to Parliament the legislation within which local government works.
9. Central government has the **responsibility** to consult and collaborate with councils in exercising these rights. It undertakes to progressively remove obstacles which prevent councils from pursuing their role, including reducing the burden of appraisal and approval regimes, the ring-fencing of funds for specific purposes and the volume of guidance it issues.
10. Councils have the **right** to address the priorities of their communities as expressed through local elections and to lead the delivery of public services in their area and shape its future without unnecessary direction or control.
11. Councils have the **responsibility** to provide leadership that is accountable, visible and responsive to their communities and to work in partnership with the local statutory, business and third sectors, and collectively to drive continuing improvement.
12. Both partners have the **responsibility** to use taxpayers' money well and devolve power, and to engage and empower communities and individual citizens – at national level and at local level – in debate and decision making and in shaping and delivering services.
13. Central and local government will also work together to deliver the Public Service Agreements set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07) and the new Performance Framework set out in the White Paper and 2007 Act, through around 200 national indicators and a commitment to agree no more than 35 targets in any one area (plus statutory educational attainment and early years targets).
14. Central to these new arrangements will be the negotiation of new style Local Area Agreements between local partners and between them and Government, as the key means of agreeing, delivering and monitoring the outcomes for each area which are delivered by local government on its own or in partnership with others. We accept that this objective will require major changes in behaviour and practice from central government departments, their agencies, government offices, councils and local partners. We share a commitment to leading the effective implementation of the necessary changes.

- 15.** Central and local government share a commitment to delivering services that represent value for money; to ensuring that public services, including new obligations imposed on councils, are properly funded; and that local taxation is guided by principles of transparency, clarity, and accountability. We will work together to provide greater clarity and transparency to local people on the levels of public funding going into local areas, and work towards giving councils greater flexibility in their funding, to facilitate the wide degree of autonomy referred to in the European Charter of Local Self-Government².
- 16.** We will work together to develop a new relationship between local businesses and councils; to increase local democratic accountability of key public services, in particular the police and health services; and to explore options for reforming the adult care and support system. We share a commitment to working with the third sector, upholding the principles in the Compact.
- 17.** The partners to this agreement will come together regularly in a renewed Central-Local Partnership. One of the roles of that partnership will be to monitor the operation of this agreement, and to revise it for the future as necessary.



Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP
Secretary of State for
Communities and Local Government



Cllr Sir Simon Milton
Chairman
The Local Government Association

12 December 2007

² European Charter of Local Self-Government, Council of Europe, 1988, Preamble: "Asserting that this entails the existence of local authorities endowed with democratically constituted decision-making bodies and possessing a wide degree of autonomy with regard to their responsibilities, the ways and means by which those responsibilities are exercised and the resources required for their fulfilment."