

Under the Unitary State System, how does the local government system work in the UK?

Introduction

The idea of local government is aimed at the key principle of democracy where the power of states are devolved at the grass root level ensuring wider participation of the public in the political and administrative structure of a state. The UK has a dedicated system of local governments that are responsible for a range of public services.

Education, housing, sanitation, planning, parks, and recreation are the community services that local governments are generally responsible for providing in the UK.

What is Local Government?

Local government is the lowest tier of a government in which local affairs of the government are managed by the individuals elected from that locality. European Charter on Self-Government defines local governments as under:

"Local self-government denotes the right and the ability of local authorities, which

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within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under the responsibility and in the interests of the local population".

The local government ensures decentralization of power, effective public service delivery and political participation at the grass root level.

Local Governments System In UK

The UK is a confederation that comprises three countries England, Scotland, Wales, and the province of Northern Ireland governed by a unitary system. Local governments throughout the UK are responsible for a range of community services such as environmental matters, education, health, sanitation, housing, parks and recreation. However they have a minimal legislative power.

There are two systems of local governments in the UK

Single-Tier Local Governments System

Two-Tier Local Governments System

In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

they operate in a single-tier way while

in most parts of England, two-tier local

governments are present. There are a total of 333 local authorities in England made up of different types such as county councils, district councils, unitary authorities, metropolitan districts, and London boroughs.

Single Tier Local Government System

Single-tier local government is practiced in all four parts of the UK. It has three types: Unitary authority, London Boroughs, and Metropolitan districts. In all these, single management is responsible for all the administrative functions of the area.

Unitary Authority

The unitary authority is the single-tier local government that can be city councils, borough councils, county councils, or district councils. Unitary authority provides all the public services facilities in their areas. They are mostly present in cities, urban areas and, larger towns.

London Boroughs

London Boroughs provide all the public

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services in their areas such as social care, education, housing, transport, planning, recreation, environmental health, waste collection, and waste disposal. There are a total of 32 London Boroughs. In addition, the Greater London Authority (GLA) established in 2000 CE provides a London-wide government, including special responsibility for policing, fire, strategic planning, and public transport.

Metropolitan Districts and Councils

Metropolitan districts are unitary authorities responsible for nearly all services in their areas. However, certain services such as fire and civil defense, police, waste disposal, local tax collection, and passenger transport are provided through joint authorities.

Metropolitan districts can also be called metropolitan district councils, metropolitan borough councils, or metropolitan city councils. Metropolitan district councils are 36 in total that together cover large urban areas such as the conurbations of Great Manchester, Merseyside, West Midlands Tyne

and Wear, West Yorkshire, and South Yorkshire.

Two-Tier Local Government System

A two-tier local government system is practiced in most parts of England. In a two-tier local government system, the responsibilities of local services are divided in the following parts.

County Councils

The highest tier of local governments in England is called Administrative counties. A county is made up of several districts. County councils cover the entire country and provide services such as education, social services, libraries, main roads, trading centers, public transport, and other local functions.

District Councils

In England and Northern Ireland, the next tier of local government is known as District Council. If the district has the status of city, it is called a city council. Similarly, if a city has a status of borough, it is called borough council. District councils are the only level of

local government present in Northern Ireland, and in Scotland and Wales, this is the only tier that has a broad range of authority. Districts councils provide local services such as rubbish collection, granting housing and planning permission.

Parish or Town Councils

Parish or Town councils are the lowest tiers of local government with very limited discretionary powers. They are present in some parts England encompassing a village or small town but not in London. They are responsible for providing maintenance, recreational and environmental facilities. In Wales, the same role is played by the community council whereas Northern Ireland has no such counterpart at the lowest level. In Scotland, community councils are present but they are just voluntary bodies.

Police and Crime Commissioners

In England there are 38 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and four in Wales.

Every four years Police and Crime

commissioners are directly elected. PCCs have the authority to assume responsibility for fire and rescue services in their jurisdiction.

Related Ministries and Funding of Local Governments

The following ministries are involved in the local government system of the UK.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for England.

Local Government and Communities Directorate in the Government of Scotland.

Department of Environment in Northern Ireland Assembly.

Local governments are independently elected and they enjoy considerable autonomy in their functioning, however, the central government also has broad legal powers to intervene in the running of local authority. In England, the relevant ministry can intervene under section 15(6) of Local Government Act 1999. There are different sources of finance for local authorities such as central government grants, business rate revenues, council tax.



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and local fees. Among them council tax and business rates make up the largest portion of the income of local authorities.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, each part of the UK has a different mode of local government. More than one million individuals work in local government in UK, delivering more than 800 different services to the local communities through a variety of various sorts of authority. Local government system in the UK has made the UK an ideal state for managing state affairs with maximum public access for its citizens.