

: Under Unitary state system, how local government system works in UK?

Q2 Local Government System in UK

Local government is the lowest tier of the government in which all local affairs of governance are managed by the elected individuals from that locality.

UK's local government system is divided into single tier system and two-tier system. Single-tier system comprises of metropolitan boroughs and London boroughs unitary authorities and two-tier system comprises of country councils and district councils. All these entities are responsible for specific portfolios such as education, healthcare, transport etc.

1- Structure of Local Government System in UK

The local government system in UK is divided into single tier councils and two-tier councils. Among single-tier councils in whole UK, 682 unitary authorities are in England, 32 unitary authorities are in Scotland, 22 are

in Wales and 11 are in Northern Ireland; there are 36 metropolitan boroughs in England and 32 London boroughs. There are 21 country councils and 164 district councils in UK.

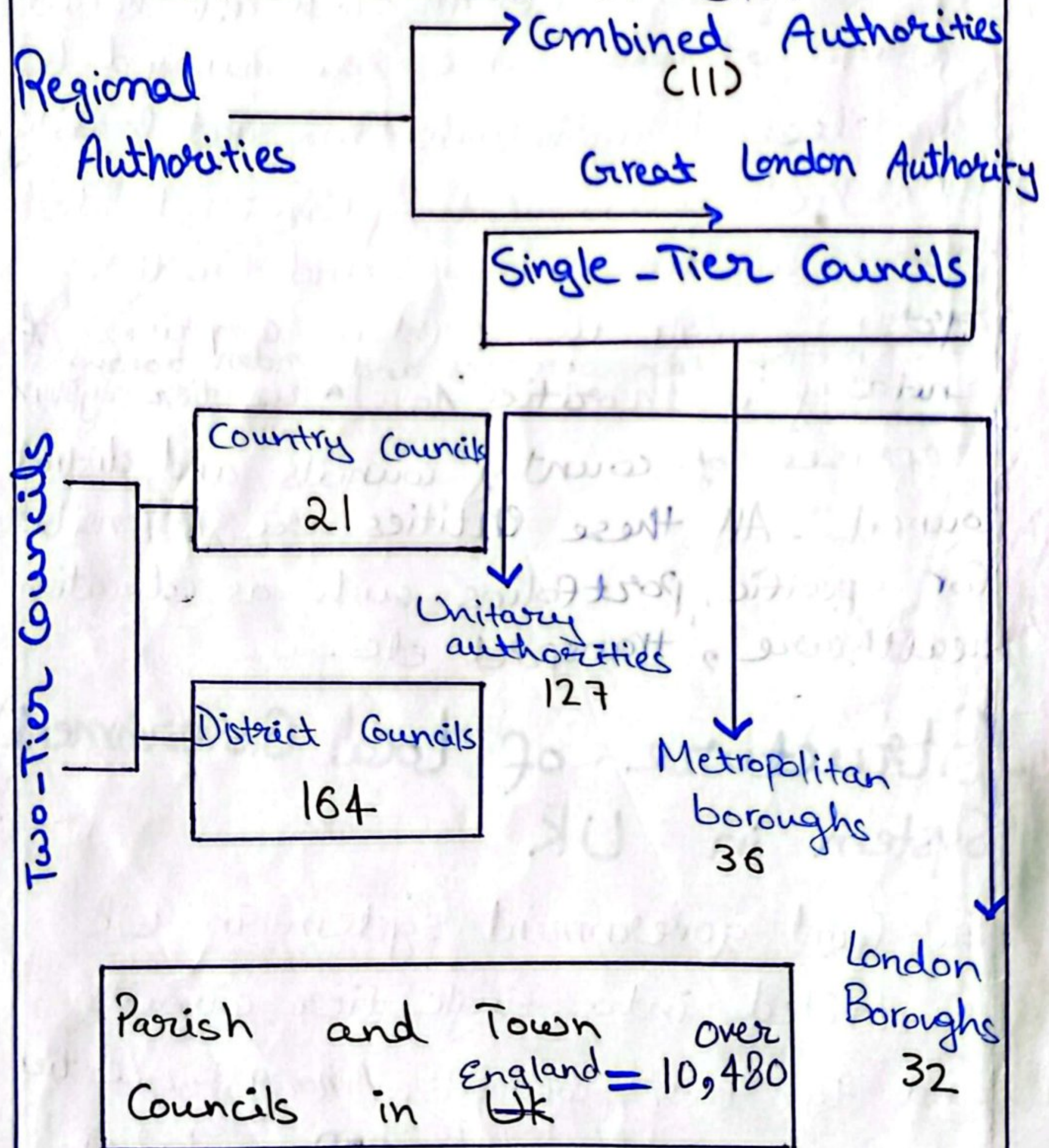


Fig:- Structure of Local Government System in UK

2. Division of Local Government System in UK

i. Single-Tier System

“A local government system in which all local government functions are performed by single governing body.”

Example : Bristol city council, Cornwall council.

a. Unitary Authorities

They are defined as : Single tier local authorities in which only single governing body performs all local government functions, replacing two-tier system.

b. Metropolitan boroughs

“They are urban local authorities found in large city regions primarily in metropolitan countries like Great Manchester.”

3. Functions of Single Tier System

i. Administering education Services

Leicester City Council (a unitary authority) manages over 100 schools in Leicester.

ii. Ensuring Waste Management and environmental services

Example: Sheffield city council (a metropolitan borough) works in coordination with renowned company "Veolia" for waste disposal and energy recovery facilities (The Guardian, Environmental Services in UK, Aug 2025).

iii. Providing Social Care Services

Example: Bristol City Council provides an integrated adult social care services including support for an independent living through community outreach programs.

iv. Managing Housing and Homelessness

Example:

Great Manchester city council (a metropolitan borough) operates the "Rough Sleeping Strategy" for managing citizens sleeping on streets (Metro, Efforts for Housing Justice, Feb 2025)

v. Monitoring Land Use Planning

Example:

Plymouth city council (a unitary authority) has recently approved large scale urban regeneration projects through its Joint Local

Plan focusing on sustainable housing
(The Times, Sustainable Housing and
Plymouth City Council, Dec 2023).

ii. Two-Tier System

It is defined as:

“Local government system in UK which involves two distinct levels of local authorities and are found in parts of England.”

a. Country Councils (Upper Tier)

Country Councils are upper tier local authorities responsible for providing strategic services in non-metropolitan countries (shires) in England.

Functions of Country Councils

i. Managing Public Health

Example :-

Surrey Country Council launched “Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025 to 2050” for addressing inequalities in health outcomes.

ii. Managing Transport

Example: Oxfordshire County Council launched "Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2024 to 2040" for promoting sustainable transportation (The Daily Telegraph, Sustainable Transport promoted by County Councils, Jan 2024).

iii. Implementing Trading Standards

Example: Kent County Council regularly conducts inspections for seizing products that violate trading standards. In 2023 it seized 2,63,955 cigarettes from retailers (Bloomberg, Efficient functioning of County Councils, Oct 2025).

iv. Providing Youth Services

For instance, Hampshire County Council encourages a network called "Hampshire Youth Voice" for integrating youth perspectives into policy making while funding youth shelters.

v. Providing Rescue Services

Example: Warwickshire County Council runs "Warwickshire Fire and Rescue services" and provided assistance during

2024 storms across Midlands (BBC, Rescue Services of Warwickshire Country Council, Dec 2024).

b. District Councils (Lower Tier)

District councils are lower tier local authorities responsible for providing localized services in non-metropolitan countries in England. Examples: Cherwell district council.

Functions of District Councils (city councils or borough councils)

i- Implementing Business Regulations

For example: East Lindsey District Council implements food safety and hygiene measures in restaurants, cafes and mobile food vans across Lincolnshire.

ii- Managing Local Taxation

For example: North Oxfordshire district council is responsible for setting tax bands and collecting council taxes.

iii- Managing Leisure and Recreation

For instance, Chichester district council manages several leisure centres in West Sussex which offer fitness clubs, and

and sports development programs.

iv. Promoting Tourism

Example: East Lindsey District Council actively promotes coastal tourism in towns by supporting holiday park development programs (London Times, Tourism in Towns of UK, July 2025).

Conclusion

Local government system of UK is divided into single-tier and two-tier system. These two tiers are responsible for specific portfolios. Single tier system is responsible for education, waste management, social care; two-tier ^{system} is responsible for health, taxation, leisure and recreation.