



# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024





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*Our Annual Report is interactive; click on content items and inserts for more information, or where you see the cursor*



# A Note from Our Chair

## Report from the Chairperson of GAPTC's Executive Committee



Dear Members,

I am pleased to present the annual report from the Executive Committee for the past year. This year has been marked by significant changes and challenges involving the governance role of the committee and its functioning.

I was voted Chair of the Executive Committee at the meeting of the Executive in September following the 2023 July AGM. Over the year, GAPTC faced an unprecedented staff turnover. This presented the Executive Committee with three key tasks:

- recruiting a new CEO
- supporting the CEO in expanding and settling the team
- ensuring uninterrupted service delivery to our members.

As a result of the work of the Executive GAPTC had a new team recruited enabling the organisation to deliver on the third task as well as delivering some new services. As part of the process to maintain continuity the Strategic Support Officer was offered changes to her employment contract to enable her to work remotely.

In November the new CEO, Chris Haine, and myself attended the Star Council Awards ceremony hosted by the National Association

at the House of Lords, where GAPTC was shortlisted for the Best County Association of the Year Award. We received a framed certificate recognising the work which has been done in developing networking among councils in Gloucestershire. This recognition underscores the impactful work we do in sharing best practices and initiating important conversations through our monthly networking sessions. The event also enabled GAPTC to be showcased nationally.

To drill down into our planning for the future GAPTC held an Executive Away Day focusing on three primary topics: the Governance of the organisation, Revenue generation, and the Professionalism of the sector. The summarised outcomes were:

### **Governance:**

- Explored the implications of GAPTC becoming a company Ltd by guarantee.
- Conduct a constitutional review.
- Update banking signatories along with signatures with respect to investments.

### **Professionalism:**

- Highlighted the need to generate awareness for the Local Council Award Scheme and improve signposting on the

new website.

- Discussed the effectiveness of the Civility 7 Respect Pledge and explored the possibility of creating smaller council hubs to facilitate more effective communication with members.

#### **Revenue:**

- Explored new training courses and reviewed the pricing structure of existing courses.
- Researched models for principal authority funding and considered alternate memberships.
- Identified risks to GAPTC revenue and discussed additional revenue-generating services.

Furthermore, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Richard Page as Executive Deputy Chair and NALC representative for

the organisation. Despite some changes in the composition of the Executive, we have retained a majority of members from the previous year.

I would like to extend our gratitude to Julie Shirley for her work during the organisation's transition period and to Ruth Waller for her ongoing support to members with legal queries.

Looking ahead, we are optimistic about the opportunities the coming year holds. With a dedicated team and a renewed focus on our objectives, we are confident in our ability to continue serving our members and advancing the interests of local councils across the county.

Best regards,

Alan Porter

**Chairperson, GAPTC Executive Committee**

**Additionally**, we conducted a survey among Executive members at the Away Day to gather insights into the challenges and achievements of their councils. Here are the summarised responses:

1. Greatest challenge currently facing councils: Financial shortfall, councillor retention, website management, service disruption due to employment matters.
2. Biggest hurdle overcome: Engaging councillors in training, raising council profile, justifying precept.
3. Council's greatest achievement: Achieving LCAS, community engagement initiatives, infrastructure projects.
4. Areas councils excel: Community engagement, internal controls, planning responses.
5. Most important roles of the GAPTC EC: Membership retention, leadership, training, governance.
6. Areas for greater EC involvement: Greater understanding of day-to-day activities, networking, strategy.





# Transition, Change & GROWTH

## CEO's Annual Report

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Dear Members,

It has clearly been a year of significant change and transition for GAPTC, marked by the departure of key staff members, including our former CEO, Alison Robinson, and Deputy CEO, Dawn Laird. I wish them both well and place on record our appreciation for their dedicated service to GAPTC.

These departures created a period of stretched resources, which Kerrin Wilkinson

(Cocks) admirably led, supported by temporary assistance from Locum Clerks Julie Shirley and Ruth Waller. I extend a big thank you to all involved for their hard work in maintaining services and delivery during this transition.

Upon my arrival in November GAPTC entered a new phase of momentum and renewal. I bring extensive experience and a fresh



perspective to the organisation, having previously served as Chief Welfare Officer in a key government department.

GAPTC then underwent a fundamental review of its needs, resulting in the restructuring of our new staff team. We now have a dynamic team comprising myself as CEO, Comms/ Strategy Officer (Kerrin Wilkinson), Administrator (Charlotte Matthews), and Advisory Officer (Ruth Waller), all highly qualified and experienced in the sector.

**“We have progressed loans for community projects worth over £1million”**

With this enhanced team, GAPTC is moving forward with renewed energy, progressing new work streams while strengthening our pre-existing delivery services. Our effective communications and networking activities have been recognised, with a nomination for a NALC County Association of the Year award.

We have also expanded our engagement with Parish and Town Council members, clerks, and officers, as well as key stakeholders such as NALC, County Councils, and District Councils. New initiatives include the CEO **Monday Morning Message** through our social media channels and collaborative efforts to establish Comms Hubs across the county.

Furthermore, GAPTC is committed to promoting professionalism and supporting our members through initiatives such as the SLCC Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) training programme. We are exploring additional professional programmes and opportunities for further professionalisation beyond Level 3 studies.

**“We are committed to developing our services through strong collaborative partnerships”**

In addition to our ongoing services, GAPTC has supported several Public Works Loans for Councils, enabling them to progress community projects worth over £1,000,000.

Reflecting on the past year, I am struck by the dedication and hard work of the GAPTC team in serving our member councils. Looking ahead to 2024-2025, we are committed to further developing our services through strong collaborative partnerships with councils and with the launch of our new website and member portal.

I am excited about the journey ahead and the opportunity to continue serving and supporting our members.

Best regards,

**Chris Haine**  
**CEO, GAPTC**

GAPTC is working proactively and interventionally to raise awareness among our members of the Code of Conduct and Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life. This work goes hand in hand with the national Civility & Respect agenda founded by the National Association to combat the bullying and harassment experienced in our sector. We are pleased to announce that our CEO, Chris Haine, has been invited to join a task force established to make recommendations to the Improvement & Development Board for this project.

# Reviewing the Year's National Agenda

## Report from GAPTC's Executive NALC Representative

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) enjoys a close affiliation with the forty-four county associations across England. It provides a robust legal service, leads conversations on sector-relevant topics and lobbies national government on behalf of the 11,000 town and parish councils across England. The National Association actively works to:

- Ensure strong national and county voices that promote the sector and its prospectus for ultra-localism
- Create more local councils in England
- Support councils and councillors
- Build effective national and county associations working together to deliver our vision

The 2023-2024 year began with a meeting of the National Assembly last July. Significant updates were provided, including the finalisation of the sale of NALC's London headquarters. Committee reports highlighted discussions on strategic vision, the November 2023 Star Council Awards, and scrutiny of financial matters.

Further meetings of the National Assembly were held in October and November 2023 and January and April 2024. Notable items discussed included:

- government proposals that money in dormant bank accounts should be forfeit and distributed to councils on a levelling-up basis; and
- NALC's lobbying of government to make it



mandatory for local planning authorities to engage with affected local councils about pre-application discussions for major developments.

Some key takeaways from the year include:

### Government Planning Consultations

In response to government consultations, NALC emphasized the importance of democratic planning involving parish and town councils.

- **Local Plans:** NALC disagreed with the proposed renewal of local plans every five years, advocating for a sustainable planning system with ongoing consultation.
- **Permitted Development Rights:** NALC opposed the blanket extension of permitted development rights and stressed the necessity for local council consultation on planning applications. They supported the use of very local design codes.
- **Hedgerow Protection:** NALC advocated for simplified regulations and wider community involvement in hedgerow protection. They emphasized the need for consultation with local councils before hedgerows are removed.

### By-election Thresholds

Discussion ensued regarding the potential adjustment of the threshold required to trigger a by-election. Committee members are exploring options to ensure broader representation and participation.

### Martyn's Law Steering Group

The Martyn's Law Steering Group convened to address proposed anti-terrorism legislation impacting local councils and community halls. Discussions focused on:

- Clarification of proposed thresholds and

### Empower communities

Empowering communities entails extending the General Power of Competence to all local (parish and town) councils, enabling them to undertake a broader range of activities for the benefit of their communities. Reforming outdated legislation, such as allowing flexibility to hold remote meetings, strengthens community engagement and participation. Strengthening community rights to protect neighbourhood plans, support community assets, and take over services enhances local decision-making processes and fosters community resilience.

### Diverse funding

Diverse funding mechanisms provide parish and town councils with direct access to government funding and enabling powers for ministers to support local initiatives. Granting the freedom to set the precept without a referendum empowers councils to address local needs efficiently. Additionally, sharing business rates with the community and exempting cultural assets ensures sustainable funding for community development projects. Increased developer levy contributions and flexibility in their use further bolster local financial resources.

administrative requirements.

- Identification of training needs and potential challenges in compliance.
- Advocacy for sector-specific support and guidance to navigate the legislation effectively.

### Policy Committee

GAPTC's Executive Member, Richard Page, was elected deputy chair of NALC's Policy Committee and is playing a lead role in steering NALC's position on Martyn's Law. The Bill will impose requirements on premises



with a capacity of over 100 and certain outside events to increase their preparedness for, and protection from, a terrorist attack by requiring them to take proportionate steps to protect everyone attending. This law will have a direct impact on town and parish council events and village hall usage. GAPTC will keep its members updated as information becomes available.

Special Policy Committee meetings were also convened to formulate responses to a range of government consultations including: addressing the local council audit backlog, broadband for rural areas, Street Vote Development Orders, strengthening planning policy for brownfield development and proposed changes to permitted development rights. Key outcomes included:

- Detailed examination of proposed policy changes and their potential impact.
- Formulation of recommendations to

address concerns and ensure alignment with NALC's objectives.

### Other Activities

Throughout the reporting period, NALC remained actively engaged in various activities and initiatives, including ongoing participation in NALC-related meetings and advocacy efforts for political commitment to local council roles and funding opportunities. It continues to work tirelessly to empower communities, diversify government funding, strengthen local leadership, and build capacity and capability.

Regards,

Richard Page  
**Deputy Chair GAPTC Executive  
 Committee and NALC  
 Representative**

### Strengthening Local Leadership

Strengthening local leadership involves expanding parish and town councils across England and simplifying their creation process, ensuring representation and responsiveness at the grassroots level. Promoting **CIVILITY AND RESPECT** in public life, along with strengthening the standards regime and introducing sanctions, fosters a culture of accountability and ethical governance. Improving links with various bodies, including principal authorities and health organisations, enhances collaborative decision-making and service delivery.

### Building Capacity and Capability

Building capacity and capability within parish and town councils is essential for effective governance. Encouraging diverse participation as councillors or professional officers ensures representative and inclusive decision-making. Streamlining processes to make it easier to stand and serve as councillors encourages broader civic engagement. Supporting the National Improvement Strategy for local councils facilitates training and development opportunities, equipping councils with the skills and resources needed to meet evolving community needs effectively.



# Committed to Greener Councils



## Exciting News: Our Climate Initiative Funding Application is Successful

We are thrilled to announce that our application to the Greener Gloucestershire Community Climate Change Fund has been successful! This is a remarkable achievement considering the scheme was oversubscribed by five times. It reflects the confidence that Gloucestershire County Council has in our project and the vital role our organisation plays in supporting Town and Parish Councils like yours.

### What Does This Mean for Our Members?

Our initiative, 'Empowering Communities for Sustainable Futures', is poised to bring significant benefits to our members and the communities they serve. Here's a glimpse of what to expect:

1. **Comprehensive Support:** Through bespoke training sessions, case studies, model policies, and innovative thermal imaging equipment, we will empower local councils to take effective steps in reducing carbon emissions. These resources will be tailored to address key areas such as transport, food production, energy, and more.
2. **Enhanced Services:** Our project will extend services to help councils identify areas for improvement within their communities, implement sustainable policies, and engage residents in collective action to combat climate change. From energy-efficient retrofitting to community awareness campaigns, we aim to catalyze tangible reductions in CO2 emissions.
3. **Accessible Initiatives:** Our inclusive approach ensures that all members of our diverse community, regardless of background or characteristics, can actively participate and benefit from our efforts. We prioritise accessibility and inclusivity in our training sessions, outreach programmes, and resource dissemination.

### Celebrating Success Together

This success wouldn't have been possible

without the collective effort and commitment of our members. Your dedication to building resilient and sustainable communities, and the support and enthusiasm you have shown in declaring your own climate emergencies and developing climate action plans for your councils, has been instrumental in securing this funding. As we embark on this exciting journey, let's continue to work together to

make a positive impact on our environment and future generations.

Keep an eye on our social media pages and the monthly newsletter to find out more about these initiatives. Together, we can create a greener, healthier, and more sustainable Gloucestershire.

## **GAPTC Joins Climate Leadership Gloucestershire**

We're thrilled to announce that GAPTC has been unanimously welcomed as a non-voting member of Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, marking a significant stride in our collective commitment to combat the climate crisis at the grassroots level. Climate Leadership Gloucestershire serves as a vital forum comprising key partners dedicated to formulating and owning a countywide action plan to address strategic climate change issues. As a member, GAPTC pledges unwavering support to champion climate action among our member councils, aiming for net zero carbon emissions in Gloucestershire by 2045 at the latest. While holding a non-voting position, GAPTC is dedicated to contributing expertise, resources, and support to further the forum's objectives, collaborating with partners to identify priority environmental actions and advocate for sustainability initiatives countywide. Our membership is particularly significant because it grants us the opportunity to amplify the voices of our communities and advocate for the impactful actions initiated by local councils. In forums like these, where objectives are defined and action plans formulated, it's crucial that the endeavours of our members are championed and acknowledged. By participating in such groups, we ensure that the aspirations of our members are integrated into strategic visions, empowering them to shape the future of our county's climate agenda.

# Fulfilling our Objectives



## Building Effective Communication Channels for Local Government: A Comprehensive Strategy

In the realm of local governance, effective communication channels are the cornerstone of collaboration and progress. Recognising this fundamental aspect, GAPTC has meticulously crafted a robust communication strategy aimed at facilitating seamless interactions across various tiers of local government. Let's delve into the intricacies of this strategy, designed to cascade up and down the tiers of local government, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and shared success.

### **District and County Council Engagement**

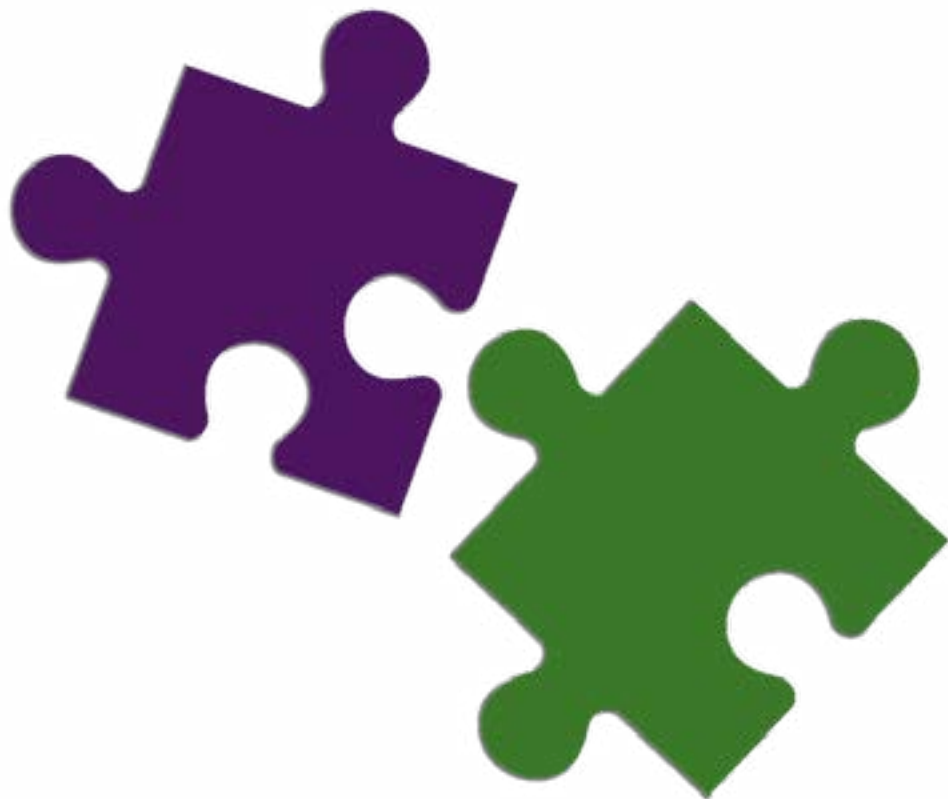
In the initial phase, GAPTC set out to engage with District and County Councils, laying the groundwork for meaningful collaboration.

Conversations revolved around GAPTC's role in assisting districts and counties with their Town & Parish Council (T&PC) liaison responsibilities, aligning core objectives, and exploring avenues for mutual support. The objective was clear: establish strong, effective relationships with councillors and officers while advocating for closer partnership working. Through proactive engagement and proposal presentations,

significant progress has been made, with keen interest shown by District and County Councils to engage in closer collaboration with GAPTC.

### **Establishing Town & Parish Council Hubs**

Recognising the importance of effective member engagement, GAPTC is embarking on a mission to establish T&PC Hubs. These hubs will serve as vital platforms for facilitating more effective communication with member councils, nurturing a two-way conversation, and providing support tailored to their needs. Initiatives such as buddy schemes for new Clerks and Chairs, induction





and mentoring programmes, and the promotion of training offers underscores GAPTC's commitment to empowering its members and fostering professional development within the sector.

### **New GAPTC Website & Member Portal**

In tandem with outreach efforts, GAPTC focused on enhancing its digital platforms to streamline communication and support for its members. The launch of a new website is aimed at expanding access to knowledge and resources while raising the profile of the sector. Simultaneously, the development of the member portal seeks to streamline

administrative processes within the organisation and facilitate content sharing to assist members in their responsibilities.

### **Social Media Engagement and Beyond**

Harnessing the power of social media, GAPTC embarked on a multifaceted approach to raise awareness, inform members of services and support, and foster two-way engagement. CEO bi-weekly video messages and daily social media posts serve as conduits for disseminating information, sharing tips, and showcasing the sector's positive impact. Expanding its reach, GAPTC will explore new avenues for engagement.

Our Hubs present a groundbreaking initiative aimed at fostering stronger communication and collaboration among our members, as well as with district and county councils. Serving as the voice for all 260+ Parish and Town Councils in the county, GAPTC recognises the exemplary work undertaken at the local level and seeks to enhance support and communication across Gloucestershire. Despite commendable efforts from the districts and county to engage with parish and town councils, there is a recognised need for more focused communication within specific regions.

To address these challenges, GAPTC proposes the establishment of Parish and Town Council Hubs,

dividing the county into hubs of roughly eight councils to facilitate tailored communication. These hubs aim to enhance support, facilitate effective two-way communication, advocate for member needs at higher tiers, and promote knowledge sharing and professionalisation within the sector.

By providing informed training, recognising local efforts, streamlining messaging, facilitating mentorship opportunities, and enhancing access to funding and skills, the Hubs represent a significant step towards fortifying communication, collaboration, and professionalisation within the county. Through collaborative efforts, GAPTC aims to better serve and support the communities, enriching the communities they are elected to serve.

# Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

## Income and Expenditure

	2024 £	2023 £
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions	120,513	107,444
Course Fees	16,745	15,265
IAS		21,036
Other Grants		20,000
Other Income	35,577	3,867
Publications		1,251
Interest Received	-195	1,262
<b>Gross Income</b>	<b>172,640</b>	<b>170,125</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Publications	42	1,323
Wages and Salaries	91,249	116,176
Pension	7,006	6,042
Rent and Service Charges	21,489	9,120
Insurance	1,318	1,162
Travel and Subsistence	619	291
Telephone	922	990
Postage	421	78
Printing and Stationery		
Office Equipment	2,290	1,406
Website and Computer	5,517	16,830
Sundry Expenses	566	1,094
Affiliation Fees	26,994	24,981
Catering	879	646
Training and Hall Hire	6,145	3,993
Conferences and Meetings		
Consultancy	5,533	
Accountancy and Payroll	2,784	1,590
Depreciation	35	43
	<b>173,808</b>	<b>185,765</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year</b>	<b>-1,168</b>	<b>-15,640</b>
Balance brought forward	102,487	118,127
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>101,319</b>	<b>102,487</b>