

2024-2025

ANNUAL REPORT





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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

It has been a year of progress and purposeful change; GAPTC continues to support its members, communities, and the wider sector. Despite the challenges of local government reorganisation and growing demands on the parish and town council tier, GAPTC has remained a stable and professional presence. The organisation's evolving legal status and upcoming name change marks a significant step in its development. With a focus on strategic engagement, transparency, and member-centred service, the association is well-positioned to review its strategic objectives in 2026.

As Chair of the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC), I am proud to introduce this annual report, which reflects another year of steady progress, purposeful change, and renewed commitment to our core strategic aims: to support our member councils, to support communities, and to support the wider sector.

Over the past year, we have operated in an increasingly complex environment – one shaped by local government reorganisation, tightening resources, and growing expectations of the parish and town council tier. Our role, as ever, has been to provide clarity, stability and leadership. I am pleased to say that GAPTC has met this responsibility with professionalism, foresight and energy.

We have strengthened our governance and continued to improve transparency and accountability. Our evolving legal status marks a significant step forward in the maturity of our organisation, better positioning us for future growth, partnership working, and long-term sustainability. As part of this transition, we will later in 2025 adopt a new name: the Gloucestershire Association of Local Councils (GALC) – a change that reflects who we serve and the ambition of our work.

Guided by our three overarching aims, we have kept members at the centre of our decision-making, championed the vital role of local councils in their communities, and worked collaboratively to promote the interests of our sector at every level. Our participation in high-level strategic discussions – whether through devolution workstreams, national steering groups, or regional partnerships – is always undertaken with one core purpose: to better support

our members in delivering for their communities.

As we look ahead to a full review of our strategic objectives in 2026, our ambition remains clear: to ensure that every parish and town council in Gloucestershire feels supported, connected and empowered. This review will be an opportunity to take stock of our achievements, reflect on emerging challenges, and refine our focus for the years ahead.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our long-standing president, Rev Christopher Hill, his support over the years has been unwavering; we are particularly indebted to him for chairing our AGMs, including those held virtually during the pandemic years. Thanks also to my colleagues, my fellow executive members; it has been a busy, challenging year, and your energies and engagement – while negotiating your own work and home commitments – have not faltered.

As the sector continues to evolve, we recognise the importance of adaptability and ambition. This year has reinforced the value of listening to our members and responding with services that are practical and forward-thinking. Whether through strategic training, improved digital infrastructure, or closer collaboration with our partners, we remain committed to delivering meaningful, long-term value to every council we serve.

And finally, on behalf of the executive, I extend sincere thanks to our chief executive, the GAPTC team, and the many councillors, clerks and partners who have contributed to another successful year. Your engagement, insight and dedication are the foundation of all we do.

Alan Porter, Chair, GAPTC Executive Committee



CEO'S REMARKS

Strategic growth and renewed purpose sum up our year, with an ongoing commitment to supporting our members, empowering communities and professionalising the sector. From launching a new website to delivering bespoke conduct training and guiding councils through devolution and local government reorganisation, the focus has remained on strengthening confidence, capacity and collaboration. With a clear path toward becoming the Gloucestershire Association of Local Councils (GALC), the organisation is evolving with stability and vision – always guided by the needs of our members.

It has been another exceptional year for our association – one that has required adaptability, creativity and a deep alignment with our core objectives.

Supporting our members remains our principal mission. Everything we do is rooted in that commitment. This year we've sharpened our focus – investing in better systems, expanding our training offer, and taking practical steps to improve access to advice, templates and guidance. The launch of our new website and member portal has been transformative in that regard. Our decisions have been shaped by the voices of our councils, with the findings from our member survey informing services, communication and a renewed emphasis on learning.

With increasing expectations for local councils to take on more responsibilities and act as strong partners within restructured governance models, these services will be fine-tuned to ensure that Gloucestershire's local councils are fully equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Looking forward we are already planning resources and training courses focussed on strengthening governance in the context of devolution and local government reorganisation (LGR) that will continue to shape the role of local councils.

Supporting communities is an extension of the first objective – because our members are the councils closest to the people they serve. Whether it's helping clerks and councillors respond to the climate and nature emergency, advising on procurement, or empowering them to participate confidently in devolution discussions, our work is designed to enhance local impact. We've been heartened to see councils across Gloucestershire engaging with

renewed energy and a shared sense of purpose.

Supporting the sector means raising standards and building resilience. We've delivered bespoke Code of Conduct training – tailored for whole councils – because professionalising governance is essential if we are to move forward collectively and credibly. A significant part of our work has involved 'resetting' councils experiencing challenging dynamics. By restoring functionality, building confidence and nurturing trust, we ensure those councils are not left behind as the shape of local government evolves.

All this takes place within the broader context of sector change. While English Devolution presents uncertainty, it also offers opportunity – and we have embraced this moment to ensure our members are informed, prepared and represented. We've renewed our commitment to working with county and district partners, collaborated with other associations across the region, and engaged in national conversations. But we've done so always with one question in mind: *How does this help our members deliver better for their communities?*

As we approach our legal transition to become the Gloucestershire Association of Local Councils (GALC), we do so with stability, confidence and vision. Our focus remains to continue evolving how we serve, communicate, train and represent.

To every councillor, clerk, partner and colleague: thank you for your engagement, your input, and your belief in the work we do. I am proud of what we've accomplished this year – and even more energised about what lies ahead.

Chris Haine, Chief Executive Officer, GAPTC



A YEAR IN NUMBERS

Looking Back on Some of the Year's Highlights

230 social media posts **x3** across our [Facebook](#), [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#) pages. We share daily sector news and updates, consultations, funding opportunities and legal advice and guidance

Offered **115** clerk and councillor [training](#) sessions. We offer training online and in person from our Quedgeley offices across the week

Booked **108** attendees onto our [Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Information Sharing Event](#), our largest online event to date

Shared **12** [newsletters](#) with **1500+** clerks and councillors across the county, highlighting monthly news, events, training and opportunities. We also released two [planning-specific newsletters](#)

Received **2** nominations for the 2024 [NALC Star Council Awards](#): Charlton Kings Parish Council was a finalist in the Star Council of the Year and Victoria Ranford was shortlisted as a finalist for Councillor of the Year

Received **122** responses to our [member survey](#), an incredible 52% of the organisation's parish and town members. We heard you and we have worked hard to tailor services and guidance in response to your feedback

Shared **10** consultations with members, ranging from local audit reform, to strengthening standards. We also prepared two extensive consultation responses, to strengthening standards and the proposed NPPF revisions, and shared them with members to tailor their own responses

Gave **£7,367** away in membership discounts to councils with qualified clerks, and those who have the [NALC Local Council Award Scheme](#) credit

Hosted **16** [free events](#) on a range of council-related topics, like procurement and village halls, rural housing and maintenance contracts. Recordings are available to view via our website

Completed **82** [internal audits](#) via our revised service that streamlines procedures, placing administrative compliance and professionalism at the heart of council business

Conducted **8** bespoke whole-council [Code of Conduct training](#) sessions. This is a new GAPTC offer that examines conduct at meetings, inter-personal conduct within the council, and the Nolan Principles of Public Life

Star Council Awards 2025 – Entries Open
Celebrate excellence in local councils by nominating your council, councillor, or clerk. Don't miss the chance to showcase outstanding work in your community.
Nominations close 5 September 2025



STRATEGIC ACTIVITY

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

A landmark year of engagement and representation

The publication of the [English Devolution White Paper](#) in December 2024 signalled a seismic shift in local government structures. The paper laid the groundwork for future Mayoral Combined Authorities and confirmed central government's ambition to replace two-tier systems with single-tier unitary authorities. In Gloucestershire, this prompted the formation of several workstreams by the seven principal councils, including the Place Model workstream, tasked with designing locality-based proposals that ensure community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment. GAPTC has played an active and visible role in this workstream. Our involvement is rooted in the belief that parish and town councils must not only be kept informed but meaningfully involved in shaping the future of local governance. Our aim throughout has been to make sure Gloucestershire's parish and town councils have a voice at the table, not just a seat in the audience.

Forming the Devolution Working Group

To guide our engagement and amplify the perspectives of our sector, GAPTC established a dedicated [Devolution Working Group](#) comprising 12 councillors and clerks from across the county. While formal district parity wasn't required, we worked to ensure a diverse mix of councils by size, geography, and experience. The group is chaired by Cllr Stephen Andrews of Kempstord Parish Council in the Cotwold District, with GAPTC's Strategic Support Officer acting as clerk.

The group's purpose is clear: to represent our members, monitor and respond to national and local developments, and feed back into the county and district workstreams. Its terms of reference include identifying opportunities and risks, ensuring ongoing communication with members, and helping councils prepare to engage from a position of strength.

Information Sharing Event

On 25 March 2025, we hosted our most well-attended online event to date – a [Devolution Information Sharing Session](#) – with 108 registrations from clerks and councillors. The session, led by county and district officers and advisors, provided clarity on the scope and objectives of the Place Model workstream as well as on Gloucestershire's three unitary proposals, and the early thinking behind localities, or 'neighbourhoods'.

Following the presentation, facilitated breakout groups considered four critical themes:

- Understanding and Concerns about Devolution and LGR
- Opportunities and Risks of Devolution
- Capacity Support, and Collaboration
- Community Views and Engagement

The session gave members space to voice concerns over funding, staffing, transparency, and governance. We heard strong calls for localised neighbourhood arrangements to be bottom-up; for financial models to be realistic and fair; and for rural representation to be safeguarded in any future reorganisation.



Surveying the Sector

To build on this engagement, GAPTC developed and circulated a comprehensive survey with an **explainer document** to further clarify some concepts and misunderstandings arising from the end-March event. The survey was shared with every parish and town council in the county. The survey aims to inform:

- The training, support and resources GAPTC provides to members
- Our contributions to the Place Model workstream and associated proposals
- Our district-level conversations and formal feedback to principal authorities

The survey focuses on governance, capacity, community engagement, understanding of devolution, appetite for additional responsibilities and financial concerns. It also explores views on neighbourhood models, collaborative working, and support needs.

While we understand that there are many councils just starting to come to grips with this governance restructure and what it, and the devolution of assets and services, means for our councils, the results will be central to how we shape training pathways and advocate for our councils. They will also help us

“When you are in local government, you are on the ground, and you are looking into the eyes and hearts of the people you are there to serve.”

articulate what councils need to succeed – whether that means more support, better communication, or clearer boundaries on responsibilities.

Building Partnerships, Sharing Purpose

In tandem with our member-facing activities, we initiated meetings with each of the six district councils to ensure the voice of the first tier is present in every corner of Gloucestershire. These engagements have been constructive, respectful and forward-looking.

From Tewkesbury Borough’s interest in future-proofing the sector, to Gloucester City’s commitment to preserving its identity as a historical cathedral town and Cheltenham Borough’s early Community Governance Review, the message has been clear: our councils are valued and seen as vital partners in this process. Each meeting has been tailored to explore shared challenges and opportunities, with discussions covering:

- Community Governance Reviews (CGRs)
- Asset mapping and service audits





- Skills development and future proofing
- Rural representation and strong communication
- Future district-level summits to deepen collaboration

We are encouraged by how well GAPTC and our member councils have been received. These positive engagements suggest that our principal authorities recognise both the importance and potential of local councils to support resilient, community-based service delivery under devolution.

Learning from Others

Alongside our work in Gloucestershire, we have sought to learn from those who have already experienced local government reorganisation. We've held valuable discussions with county officers and clerks in Surrey, Cumbria, Cornwall and Somerset, as well as ongoing dialogue with our regional neighbours – most of whom now operate under unitary models. These conversations have explored the structure of locality and neighbourhood models, what collaborative working looks like in practice, and the strengths and pitfalls encountered during transitions.

Topics have included the design of Community Boards and Locality Networks, effective alignment with pre-existing boundaries – like those of Primary Care Networks, schools and emergency services – the need for dedicated liaison officers, and preserving local planning knowledge at community level. We've looked at how parish councils can take a more active role in planning partnerships, as well as how funding mechanisms and grant routes could evolve post-reorganisation. We have also benefited from case study insights and direct input from parish and town clerks and councillors whose councils have already lived through LGR, offering a practical, member-led view on what works – and what to avoid.

We will continue to share these insights with the Place Model workstream, district and county colleagues, and you, our members; these conversations are key to influencing our position and planning going forward.

Looking Ahead

As the Place Model workstream progresses, GAPTC will continue to:

- Analyse and share survey and engagement data

- Feed parish perspectives into the formulation of locality models
- Help councils assess what they want – and what they can realistically take on
- Ensure information and engagement continue through every stage of this transition

The message is simple but powerful: when change comes, it should be in partnership with us, not done to us. Our work, since the 16 December 2024 announcement, has laid a strong foundation and we are proud to be standing up for our sector when it matters most.

SIGNPOSTING

What's On Our Website?

- English Devolution White Paper
- Template letter to your district council
- Model Terms of Reference for Council Working Group
- Information sharing event recording
- Devolution and LGR Explainer
- GAPTC Devolution Working Group
- Lessons Learned: Chippenham Town Council
- Lessons Learned: Cornwall Association of Parish and Town Councils
- Lessons Learned: Somerset Association of Local Councils, including Frome, Wellington, Shepton Mallet and Glastonbury Town Councils
- News and blogs



STRENGTHENING SERVICES

Member Survey Insights and Actions

Listening, Learning, Strengthening Services

In the third quarter of 2024, GAPTC launched its most **comprehensive member survey** to date. This was a key activity within our commitment to add value to GAPTC membership and to ensure that every decision we make is informed by the real experiences, needs, and insights of our councils.

The initial survey results were shared during our website and member portal onboarding sessions, which doubled as our first round of engagement on Council HUBs. In response to early feedback, we extended the survey window through to the end of November 2024 to maximise participation. By the close, we had received detailed responses from 122 councils.

The questions were mapped directly to our strategic aims:

- To support our member councils by improving access to advice, training and shared learning
- To support communities by equipping councils to engage residents and deliver local leadership
- To support the sector by raising standards, deepening collaboration, and advocating effectively

What you told us has directly influenced our work in 2024–25. Below is a snapshot of how your feedback shaped our actions, and more detailed feedback is available on our website.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey, it provides us with clear guidance on where to focus our efforts, which services to strengthen and what training to provide

TRAINING

You wanted broader topics, engaging formats, and more accessible sessions.

What we did:

- Launched **new courses including: Agendas and Minute Writing, Legionella Compliance, NPPF Revisions and the new Planning and Infrastructure Bill and whole-council Code of Conduct training.**
- Delivered training direct to your council and broadened our online and in-person delivery across the work week and on Saturdays.
- Began a full review of our training offer, finding new trainers and testing new modules.
- Secured new partners to deliver digital-skills training.

NETWORKING:

You wanted more opportunities to network and better communication.

What we did:

- Rebranded monthly '**networking sessions**' as **Information Sharing Events** to reflect their scope and value.
- Alternated morning and evening sessions to ensure better accessibility.
- Opened all sessions to clerks and councillors – and made recordings available for those unable to attend.
- Created opportunities for councils to present, share learning and spark discussion.



ADVICE & SUPPORT

You asked for access to legal and HR assistance

What we did:

- Flagged under-used services, like **HR**, through our **website** and **member portal**.
- Promoted our **advice ticket system** more clearly.
- Introduced an emergency mobile number and improved day-time phone coverage.
- Signposted our website **knowledge base** and kept it up to date with guidance and publications.

COLLABORATION

You wanted peer support and better links with neighbours

What we did:

- Designed and rolled out the initial phase of **Council HUBs**: groups of neighbouring councils collaborating locally.
- Consulted district/borough council officers to align HUBs with pre-existing clusters and ensure better collaboration.
- Consulted to gauge interest in countywide **WhatsApp forum**.
- Promoted **NALC networks**: countywide council interest groups for clerks and councillors.

COMMUNICATION

You wanted clearer updates and easier access to information

What we did:

- Launched a new user-friendly **website** and **member portal**.
- Shared monthly **newsletters** and daily sector news across three **social media** platforms.
- Added news and blogs to the website and highlighted key items on our homepage.

CLIMATE ACTION

You asked for help to tackle the climate emergency

What we did:

- Created a comprehensive **Climate & Biodiversity Toolkit** with step-by-step guides, templates, and case studies.

“Just being there when there’s an issue is a great help.”

That’s what we’re here for.

- Launched a **thermal imaging camera loan scheme**.
- Developed and delivered 8 training sessions on *The Power of Local Climate and Biodiversity Action*.
- Made everything accessible on **dedicated web pages** with actions for councils of every size.

See pages 12 and 13 of this report for more detailed information on our response to your councils’ climate action needs.

PLANNING

You wanted help navigating planning law and policy

What we did:

- Delivered a **free briefing** on changes to the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**.
- Launched a **planning-specific newsletter**.
- Collaborated to deliver a new training session on updating councils on **NPPF changes** and the new **Planning and Infrastructure Bill**.

“Smaller councils struggle with training costs”

We offer free learning in every monthly information sharing event

THIS YEAR’S FREE SHARING EVENT TOPICS

What Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution mean for Gloucestershire’s Parish and Town Councils
Update on Planning Reforms and Using AI to Respond to Planning Applications
Risk Assessments and Insurance Policies
Legionella Compliance
Village Halls, and Councillors as Trustees
Procurement Legal Frameworks and Compliance
Rural Housing and Local Council Involvement
Allotments
Transitioning to .gov.uk Domains

Recordings are available via our website



STRENGTHENING SERVICES

Supporting Climate Action

Gloucestershire Councils Step Up for Climate and Nature

In 2024, GAPTC secured £4,999 from the Greener Gloucestershire Climate Change Fund to help member councils take meaningful, practical action on climate and biodiversity. This funding enabled us to develop a suite of training, resources and tools tailored specifically to the needs and realities of parish and town councils.

Training: The Power of Local Climate and Biodiversity Action

An important aspect of our work has been the development and delivery of a two-hour training course designed to inspire and equip councillors and clerks. Titled *The Power of Local Climate and Biodiversity Action*, this session breaks down complex concepts like mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity, and reframes them in the context of local governance.

Delivered monthly, the course helps councils identify what they can do – regardless of size, budget or rurality – and builds confidence to act. It focuses on:

- Local audits and data gathering
- Community engagement and action plans
- Planning, policies, procurement and the biodiversity duty

Sessions have been well-received, with many councils using them to initiate climate-related actions or review their council policies.

Launching a Member Toolkit

Recognising the demand for accessible, consolidated support, GAPTC created a comprehensive [Climate and Biodiversity Toolkit](#), now available digitally and as a download via our website:

The toolkit offers:

- [Step-by-step guides](#) on information gathering and community engagement
- Guidance on how to create a climate action working group and declare a climate and biodiversity emergency
- Help developing an [action plan](#) that cuts carbon emissions, boosts biodiversity, and builds resilience
- [Case studies](#) from councils across the country
- [Templates](#) and links to funding, [training](#), planning [tools](#) and [resources](#)

Importantly, the toolkit is peer-reviewed by district and county climate officers and draws on trusted sources including NALC, The Great Collaboration, and the Greener Gloucestershire Climate Dashboard.

Its content is tailored to reflect the powers and opportunities of the local council tier, and the website pages are designed to be user-friendly for clerks, councillors and community members alike.

Whether you're just getting started or are ready to go further, our toolkit walks you through every step of local climate leadership. A collection of small actions by a large group of dedicated communities makes a big difference



Thermal Imaging Camera Loan Scheme

GAPTC has also launched a [thermal imaging camera loan scheme](#) to help councils identify heat loss in council and community buildings, as well as in private homes. This practical tool supports:

- Energy efficiency upgrades
- Community engagement
- Carbon reduction initiatives

The scheme has already proved popular, with members booking the camera for community events and assessing their own buildings.

Did You Know?

Thermal images help visualise where buildings lose the most heat. Councils can use these scans to guide repair plans, access grants, or simply raise awareness.

Policy Support and Resource Sharing

Alongside the toolkit, we have also created a bank of [climate-related policy templates](#) for councils to adopt or adapt. These cover:

- Climate declarations
- Model policies and terms of reference
- Green infrastructure and flood risk

All of these resources are free to access via our knowledge base and are regularly updated with emerging guidance and good practice examples.

What's Next?

Our climate and biodiversity work is ongoing. In 2025–26 we will:

- Continue delivering training sessions
- Encourage all councils to join [NALC's Climate Network](#)
- Keep sharing good practice and funding opportunities

By investing in councils' ability to lead local climate action, GAPTC is ensuring that Gloucestershire's parishes and towns remain active, empowered and resilient in the face of environmental change.

LOOK INSIDE

Our Toolkit's Steps for Climate Action

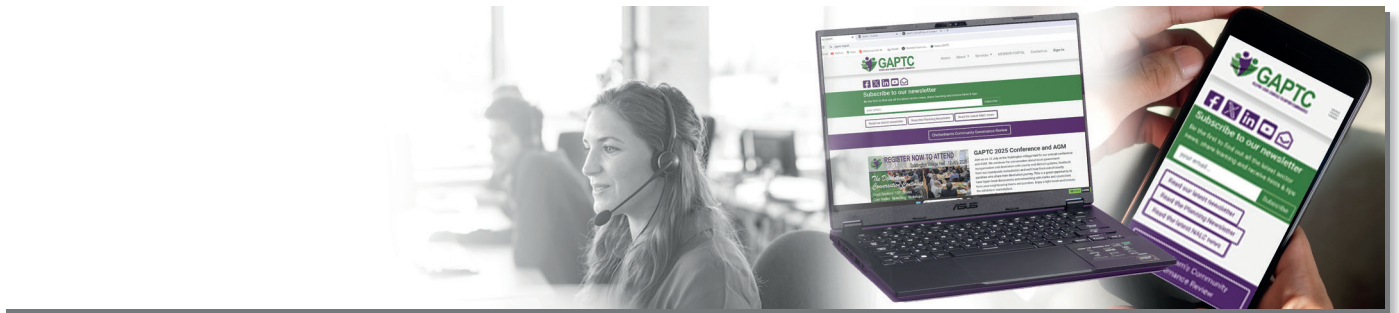
- Step 1: Collect information
- Step 2: Engage the Community
- Step 3: Declare an Emergency
- Step 4: Develop a Climate Action Plan

Including:

- Biodiversity and the Environment
- Carbon and Plastic Reduction
- Sustainable Housing and Retrofitting
- Energy and Renewable Solutions
- Transport and Mobility
- Behaviour Change and Community Engagement
- Waste

- Step 5: Secure Funding
- Step 6: Monitoring, Reporting & Improvement





STRENGTHENING SERVICES

Communication and Engagement

This year has seen a significant leap forward in how we connect with our members. A Digital Innovation Fund grant enabled us to design, build and launch a new website and member portal – a major development that supports all three of our strategic objectives.

Website Launch and Navigation Improvements

The new [website](#), launched in October 2024, has been designed with user experience at its core. Navigation is intuitive, making it easier for clerks and councillors to find the information they need. The growing [Knowledge Base](#) is filled with toolkits, policy templates and guidance. While a robust search function is still in development, we are committed to ongoing enhancements that make this platform a responsive and dynamic support tool for members.

Since the launch, we've added several new dedicated pages under the Services menu, including practical steps to transition to [.gov.uk domains](#).

These pages are continually updated to reflect legal updates and sector news.

Strengthening Member Communication

Improved communication also includes a new emergency number for councils in crisis, and a network of telephone extensions to ensure better weekday phone coverage.

Council HUBs

At the time of the website's launch, we also began engagement on [Council HUBs](#) – an initiative designed

to foster stronger peer support and shared working between neighbouring councils. We gathered feedback on how members wanted these groups to operate and used this to shape their structure and purpose. Council HUB groups are now available to view on the website, and some have already held their first meeting. The next phase will focus on encouraging and supporting further connections, whether online or in person.

Member Engagement

In terms of listening to members, we ran our largest piece of member engagement to date: the [2024 Member Survey](#). Responses have directly informed our work and the full findings are now available to view on our website. We've also followed up with more targeted engagement, particularly around LGR and devolution, to ensure we stay attuned to the shifting needs of our councils.

Sector Collaboration

Beyond our membership, we continue to collaborate across the sector. We meet fortnightly with NALC and other county associations and regularly engage with our South West peers to support and share learning. We've also worked hard to engage county and district partners – and are proud to report that for the first time, representatives from all seven Gloucestershire authorities will attend our 2025 Conference and AGM. Their presence signals recognition of our sector's vital role and a growing commitment to working together for the good of Gloucestershire's communities.



STRENGTHENING SERVICES

Internal Audit Redesign

A Year of Growth and Streamlined Delivery

Our **Internal Audit Service** continues to be a valued member service. This year, 80 councils appointed GAPTC as their internal auditor, and we're proud to report that fewer than 10% experienced any issues with the new digital submission process – a strong indication that the refinements we've made are working. These improvements have led to a significant reduction in the number of hours audits take to complete, which means the service is once again financially and operationally sustainable, allowing us to continue offering it in the long term. A thorough review and lessons-learned process is scheduled for the third quarter to fine-tune the service even further.

What the Service Covers

Our Internal Audit is a governance audit – it is designed to assess whether councils are operating in accordance with best practice and their legal responsibilities. The review spans five core areas of local council operations:

- Policies and Governance
- Financial Management
- Human Resources
- Assets and Risk
- Procurement and Transparency

Councils submit documentation relevant to these themes, supporting a clear audit trail and helping clerks organise records in a way that is efficient and audit-ready.

A Hybrid Process: Digital Submission, Personal Audit

While the process for appointing GAPTC as the council's internal auditor and submitting documents is now digital, the audit itself is still conducted by an experienced auditor. Councils can still request in-person audits and one-to-one meetings with their auditor if needed, ensuring flexibility and personalised support. This approach allows clerks to focus on document preparation and governance, while auditors can concentrate on review and analysis. Fourteen free online drop-in sessions were hosted to support clerks with their submissions.

A Gateway to Quality Recognition

Because of its comprehensive nature, our Internal Audit places councils in a strong position to pursue quality accreditation. Councils using our service are well placed to meet the criteria of the Foundation Award under **NALC's Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS)** – a useful step for evidencing best practice and advancing council development.

Acknowledging Key Contributors

Our thanks go to Janet Eustace, who has coordinated the delivery of the service with care and diligence; to Richard Crighton, our clerks' representative on the Executive Committee, who played a central role in shaping the new submission system; and to our team of internal auditors, whose professionalism and insight underpin the service's continued success.



STRENGTHENING SERVICES

Training and Events

Expanding Knowledge, Skills and Confidence

Supporting clerks and councillors through high-quality training remains central to our work. In the past year, we've delivered a comprehensive and growing **suite of training opportunities** that reflect the duties of local councils and the evolving demands of the sector.

We continue to offer our core modules, which remain consistently popular:

- Clerks the Knowledge – our three-part foundation course for new clerks
- New Councillor Toolkit
- Being a Better Councillor
- In the Hot Seat: Being an Effective Chairperson
- Planning in Plain English

This year, in response to sector developments and member requests, we expanded our training offer to include:

- Agendas and Minute Writing
- Legionella Compliance
- NPPF Revisions and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill
- The Power of Local Climate and Biodiversity Actions
- Bespoke whole-council Code of Conduct training

We are currently developing modules to support councils through future challenges, including:

- Council as Employer (we are now in collaboration with HR specialists to trial and deliver this session)
- Navigating Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution
- Preparing for Audit Season
- Compliant Councils: What Good Governance Looks Like

Training is offered virtually and in-person – on Saturdays – to support availability. From September 2025, we will also trial weekday in-person delivery in response to member feedback. We also partnered with Cloudy IT to deliver digital skills training for councillors and clerks – ensuring councils are not only well governed but digitally enabled too.

Helping communities face their future with confidence.

At Gallagher, we are proud to support over 1,800 town and parish councils and 650 charities and village halls across the UK, helping communities to thrive with confidence.

Our specialist teams work closely with organisations like yours to deliver bespoke insurance and risk management solutions that grow with your community's responsibilities.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK?

For more information, please contact us:
T: 0800 062 2030



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A Strategic Approach to Governance Training

Recognising the growing responsibilities and complexity of the sector, we have introduced a strategic training focus that supports parish and town councils to meet the challenges of devolution and **local government reorganisation (LGR)**, while addressing common areas of risk identified through our **Internal Audit Service**.

Training and resources under development aim to strengthen six essential components of council effectiveness:

- **Compliance** – understanding and meeting statutory and ethical duties
- **Competence** – building skills, confidence and professionalism
- **Capacity** – ensuring councils have the resources, structures and resilience to operate
- **Conduct** – promoting civility, behavioural standards and public trust
- **Continuity** – enabling good record-keeping, succession planning and leadership stability
- **Community** – grounding all work in engagement and local accountability

Good governance is not only about meeting statutory obligations, but about doing so competently, consistently, transparently, ethically, and in a way that respects the community, builds trust, and values each other.

These areas overlap and reinforce one another – for instance, building competence ensures compliance is met lawfully and skilfully, while community engagement sharpens council priorities and justifies resource decisions. Together, they form the basis of strong governance and effective local service delivery.

As a concept, this framework has already shaped the design of new training sessions and will underpin a future governance module currently in development.

By developing training around this holistic model of local council work, we aim to empower members not just to comply, but to thrive. We look forward to finalising all the new training modules, testing them, and delivering them to councils in the coming months.



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PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Our National Partner, NALC

GAPTC is proud to be affiliated to the **National Association of Local Councils (NALC)** – the recognised national voice of parish and town councils in England. NALC supports the work of grassroots councils through a network of independent county associations like GAPTC, ensuring consistent representation, sector support and a shared strategic direction. Our partnership with NALC extends the value of GAPTC membership and provides a vital link between local councils and national policy making.

Support: Legal and Governance Resources

NALC offers a suite of authoritative resources that GAPTC disseminates to members, including up-to-date advice on legislation and procedural matters, and model policies and templates to assist with governance, finance and regulatory compliance, which help councils adopt best practice confidently and lawfully.

NALC's nationally standardised documents and information are an essential layer of support for councils. As a member of GAPTC, your council has free access to these NALC-published materials via our portal, without needing a separate subscription.

Raising the Profile of Local Councils

NALC champions the parish and town council sector at the national level. Through its campaigns, NALC works to secure greater recognition, funding, and powers for local councils, ensuring they are seen as vital partners in delivering community services and strengthening local democracy. These efforts highlight the essential

role parish councils play in fostering community resilience, addressing housing needs, tackling climate challenges, and supporting civic leadership. By showcasing success stories from across the sector, NALC amplifies the impact of grassroots governance and influences national decision-makers to take the sector's contribution seriously.

National Policy and Representation

NALC meets regularly with ministers and civil servants to achieve its core mission of representing local councils to government, Parliament, and regulatory bodies. By liaising with county associations to inform its input, NALC responds to government consultations that impact the local council tier, and shapes national frameworks through its policy committee.

GAPTC plays an active role in shaping NALC's policy and therefore its national agenda, through our executive member, Richard Page, who serves as Vice-Chair of NALC's Policy Committee, ensuring Gloucestershire's voice is heard at the highest level.

Why This Matters

Without NALC, the voice of England's 10,000+ parish and town councils would be fragmented and less influential. Our affiliation means Gloucestershire's councils have a strong national voice, a sound legislative framework to operate in and best practice examples to emulate.

This partnership strengthens the foundation of GAPTC's work and, by extension, the service, advice and representation we offer to our members.



UPDATED GUIDANCE AND PUBLICATIONS

Each year, we work closely with NALC to review and update key guidance to ensure they reflect the latest developments in legislation, policy and good practice. Updates are shared promptly through our monthly newsletters and social media. We monitor sector news from central government and local and regional bodies, updating our resources as needed. Members are encouraged to log in to the portal's Knowledge Base, subscribe to our newsletter and follow us on your preferred social media platform to stay up to date.

- Financial Regulations
- Good Councillor's Guide
- LTN 23 Health and Safety
- LTN 22 Disciplinary and Grievance Arrangements in Local Councils
- LTN 79 Staff Pensions (Auto-Enrolment)
- Consolidated Planning Topic Notes into Single Guidance
- Advice Note on the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity and Publicity During the Pre-Election Period (England)
- Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance: Practitioner's Guide
- Guidance on Website Accessibility Standards WCAG 2.2aa
- Local Councils' Banking
- Annual Precept Analysis
- Guidance for Councils Acting as Charity Trustees
- Enhancements to the HM Land Registry Portal
- English Rural Housing Association Design Guide
- Parish and Town Councils Resource to Enhance Community Safety
- Local Government Services Pay Agreement
- Section 137 Expenditure Limit
- Published an Anti-Terror Checklist Developed by the Martyn's Law Steering Group

Join a Community of Councils

NALC's national networks bring together councillors and clerks from across the country to share experiences and shape national policy. Find the network that suits you:

LGBT+ Councillors' Network – A space for LGBT+ councillors to connect, support each other, and advocate for inclusion.

Clerks' Network – A forum for clerks to discuss key issues and feed into policy from the clerk's perspective.

Women Councillors' Network – Supports women in local councils and promotes leadership and representation.

Young Councillors' Network – For councillors aged 18–30 to shape policy and champion youth involvement.

Super Councils' Network – Brings together England's largest councils to explore strategic challenges and service delivery.

Micro Councils Network – Supports the smallest councils with shared learning and national representation.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are 10,000 parish and town councils in England.

They represent 35 million people with 16 million electors, raising around £700 million in precept and investing over £2 billion in communities.

Some of the largest councils have a precept of over £1 million a year.

100,000 councillors spend over 14 million hours a year serving those councils to help change their communities.

Over 300 new parish and town councils have been created in the last decade.

1,600+ parish, town and community councils have signed the Civility and Respect Pledge



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the year ending 31 March 2025

Income and Expenditure

	2025 £	2024 £
Income		
Subscriptions	118,484	120,514
Course Fees	27,942	16,745
IAS	17,167	18,620
Other Grants	4,999	–
Other Income	4,400	13,973
Publications	408	353
Interest Received	2,761	2,435
Gross Income	176,161	172,640
Expenditure		
Publications	–	42
Wages and Salaries	130,457	91,249
Pension	5,560	7,006
Rent and Service Charges	11,580	21,489
Insurance	2,410	1,318
Travel and Subsistence	293	619
Telephone	850	922
Postage	–	392
Printing and Stationery	–	–
Office Equipment	1,015	2,284
Website and Computer	10,016	5,459
Sundry Expenses	281	565
Affiliation Fees	27,630	26,994
Catering	–	879
Training and Hall Hire	1,009	6,145
Conferences and Meetings	–	–
Consultancy	52,554	5,533
Accountancy and Payroll	4,996	2,784
Depreciation	28	35
	248,679	173,715
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	-72,518	-1,075
Balance brought forward	101,412	102,487
Balance carried forward	28,894	101,412



LOOKING AHEAD

Strengthening Support and Preparing for What's Next

As we move forward, GAPTC's core commitment remains unchanged: to listen carefully to our members, respond effectively to their needs, and proactively prepare for the future. In 2025-26, our work will continue under a new legal structure and as the Gloucestershire Association of Local Councils (GALC), but with the same strong focus on delivering responsive and relevant support to all our member councils.

Our priorities remain clear. We will deepen engagement with both our smallest and largest member councils – particularly micro councils and super councils – to ensure that the breadth and diversity of our membership is fully reflected in the services we provide. These tailored approaches will help us meet councils where they are and provide meaningful, targeted support that aligns with their scale, resources and aspirations.

Devolution and local government reorganisation will remain at the forefront of our strategic agenda. We will continue to equip councils with guidance, specialist training, practical tools and space to share concerns and questions, so they are well positioned to influence and benefit from the changes ahead. As strategic relationships evolve, we are committed to being a strong voice for our sector and a bridge to regional partners, advocating for a model that values collaboration and local knowledge.

Training and development will expand significantly. We will introduce new topics, refine our delivery formats, and trial approaches that enhance flexibility and access for both councillors and clerks. Our staffing review service will be relaunched with a focus on tailored, professional HR support that helps

councils meet their responsibilities with confidence, clarity and compliance.

We also plan to strengthen inter-tier relationships – particularly with Gloucestershire's county and district councils – through regular, constructive engagement. This ensures our sector is seen, heard and actively represented in conversations that matter, including service delivery, policy development, financial arrangements and joint planning.

Supporting this work is the continued growth of our Knowledge Base, with new toolkits, policies and practical resources being added regularly. We are also putting greater emphasis on sharing lessons learned and spotlighting examples of effective practice to inspire innovation and collaboration across our network.

Our Council HUBs will be an integral part of this. These peer-support groups will continue to grow in scope and activity, and we aim to bring in more community partners, district/borough and county councillors, and other local stakeholders to strengthen links, share insights, and enable joined-up action at the most local level.

Importantly, 2025-26 will see us undertake a full review of our strategic objectives. This will be an opportunity to evaluate our progress, consider how our members' needs are evolving, and set our course for the years ahead.

Taken together, these priorities reflect our ambition to be a future-facing, member-led organisation that helps councils meet their challenges with confidence, embrace growth and change, and maximise their positive and lasting impact on local communities across Gloucestershire.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANKS

Serving Gloucestershire's Parish & Town Councils

As we close this report, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the remarkable people who make GAPTC what it is.

First, to our small but mighty team – Ruth, Julie and Kerrin – thank you for your professionalism, energy and absolute dedication to our members. Whether it's through advice tickets, training, finance queries, sector guidance, or strategic development, your work behind the scenes is tireless and deeply appreciated.

A particular thanks goes to all those involved in redesigning and relaunching our Internal Audit Service – especially Janet Eustace and Richard Crighton – for helping shape and test the new format. Thanks also to our excellent team of internal auditors, and to the councils who appointed GAPTC as their auditor this year – your trust in the service has made its success possible.

To our extended training team, thank you for your insight and generosity of expertise – Breakthrough Communications, Steve Parkinson, Andrew Maliphant, Gail Boyle, Dee Thornton and all contributors to our networking and information sharing sessions for clerks and councillors – your willingness to share your knowledge and insights into some complex topics is what makes our training and engagement work so impactful.

We're grateful to our colleagues at NALC, and to the county officers and staff across England's local council associations, particularly those in the South West, who have formed such a supportive network of peer collaboration. The openness with which you share policies, experiences and practical insights is nothing short of inspiring – particularly given how full your diaries already are.

Thank you to our colleagues at Gloucestershire's six district councils and the county council for your willingness to engage with us and the parish and town councils we represent. Your commitment to collaboration and to working in partnership with our sector, to strengthen local delivery, has created real momentum. We share a common goal – to support our councils to support their communities – and that shared objective gives us a powerful foundation to build on as we move forward into an entirely reshaped landscape.

We also want to acknowledge our partnerships with Cloudy IT and Parish Online, not only for delivering excellent digital services and skills training, but also for working with us to explore the role of AI tools in local government, and helping strengthen the sector through professional websites and domains. Their innovation and collaboration are helping us future-proof the support we offer members.

Special thanks go to our Conference and AGM sponsors – our headline sponsor Parish Online, as well as Utility Aid, Worknest, Gallagher and GRCC. As well as to our guest speakers, Alex Khaldi and Conor Ogilvy. Your support helps us bring important events to life and extend the value we offer our members.

And finally, to our members – the councillors and clerks serving communities across Gloucestershire. Your hard work, dedication and care for your local areas is inspiring. Whether you're new to local government or have been serving for decades, it is a privilege to support you.

Thank you for the difference you make.

Chris Haine, Chief Executive officer, GAPTC



With Grateful Thanks

We extend our deepest gratitude to Reverend Christopher Hill, who has served as President of GAPTC since 2014. Over the last ten years, Christopher has brought gravitas, warmth and unwavering commitment to his role, chairing our AGMs with both efficiency and good humour – even when navigating ‘amendments to amendments’.

Christopher studied theology at King’s College London, beginning his ministry in Staffordshire before taking on senior roles in the Archbishop of Canterbury’s office (International Affairs) and at St Paul’s Cathedral. He went on to serve as Bishop of Stafford and later Bishop of Guildford, retiring in 2013. His distinguished service includes time as a Chaplain to Her Late Majesty The Queen, Clerk of the Closet, and a member of the House of Lords, where he was the Church of England spokesperson on local government, Europe and the voluntary sector. He holds a Lambeth Doctor of Divinity and is a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order.

Now living in the Forest of Dean, Christopher remains a steadfast advocate for strong local governance. His working relationships with county and district authorities, particularly in Surrey, shaped his appreciation for community leadership – an ethos he brought with him to Gloucestershire. His understanding of governance and his deep interest in the work of parish and town councils have been a tremendous asset to our association.

We thank him most sincerely for his decade of support, wisdom and service. It has been an honour to have him as President.



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The following are just some of the areas of work that parish/ town councillors and communities have approached us for help with:

- Engagement and Consultation
- Neighbourhood Development Plans
- Community Climate Change Action Plans
- Volunteering and Volunteer Management
- Community Asset Transfer
- Affordable & Community-Led Housing
- How to identify & plan for what local infrastructure is needed regarding housing development in your area

GRCC and GAPTC, working in partnership to serve the communities of Gloucestershire.

Contact Us

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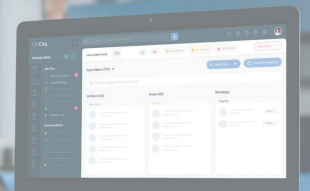
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