



# GAPTC

HELPING LOCAL COUNCILS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITIES



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

# CONTENTS

## 2 INSPIRATIONAL GREEN INNOVATION

Hucclecote Parish Council's climate action so far and how it all began

## 5 OUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Meet the team that collaborates on, and oversees, the organisation's strategic objectives

## 8 R.E.S.P.E.C.T

The Civility and Respect Project and how your council can take a stand against bullying and harassment

## 10 STATISTICS

Some facts and figures from the year, from social media followers to election results

## 11 A YEAR IN REVIEW

An overview of the work and projects undertaken by the team over the past year

## 14 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## 16 NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

*the GAPTC annual report is interactive  
click on words and icons to be redirected  
to more information*



# Inspirational Green Innovation



WHEN HUCCLECOTE PARISH COUNCIL FOUND itself with a £20,000 budget surplus the question was, what should they spend it on? There were many suggestions from councillors, including solar panels for the council office. As with any council decision of import this was something they needed to let their community decide on. Which is exactly what they did.

## The Community Conversation

After much Googling to find out what green-agenda work is being undertaken by other town and parish councils in the country, it was unanimously decided that a community engagement event was called for. The good turn out to this consultation is indicative of the interest that surrounds the climate conversation. Ideas for the consultation were taken from all over the country and included a post-it-ideas' wall and breaking up into smaller groups to tackle specific topics. After a very successful day where many ideas were proposed that were collated into a 'scrapbook', an

Action Group was established, predominantly from community members in attendance. Topics and actions that topped the day's discussion were divided into seven broad areas:

- Biodiversity
- Energy, power and homes
- Transport and travel
- Waste and recycling
- Land use and planning
- The local economy
- Education, communication and inspiration!

## Sustainability Festival

There was a very strong sense among those community members who attended the consultation that people want to do something to act but aren't sure what. This led to the 'inspiration' of hosting a launch event to signpost and share information with the wider community.

The Hucclecote Sustainability Festival was launched on 3 May by Sir Jonathon Porritt, an early environmental campaigner, chair of the Ecology Party in the late '70s (which later became the Green Party), and director of Friends of the Earth throughout the 1980s. He founded Forum for the Future and was appointed by Tony Blair as the chair of the Sustainable Development Commission in 2000. With a headliner like this the event was destined for success.

The festival included talks on diverse topics, from vegetable growing and composting for beginners to the quick returns on solar panels and whether heat pumps are right for you. Visitors were treated to wildlife walks, discussions on how to reduce their travel costs and cut their home energy bill, and of course, no parish event would be complete without a litter pick.

Vice chairperson, Cllr Ted Stevens, says, "There was a fair bit of research, prompting and cajoling of speakers, but otherwise it wasn't a huge amount of work. There was a lot of publicity two weeks before we launched which must have generated a lot of interest as hundreds of people attended at least one of the nine events".

"The Green Guide has been really well received and we encourage other parish and town councils in the county, and indeed the country, to use it in any way they want."



## What's in the Ideas' Scrapbook?

Projects that were identified by the Action Group and that the council has been working on, along with this dedicated group of volunteers include:

- Eleven swathes of wildflower beds have been sown
- A wasteland will be transformed into allotments and a community garden
- A tiny forest will be planted with an outdoor classroom for the school to use
- Seed swaps are planned, and instructions prepared on how to build an insect hotel and a bird box
- Residents have been encouraged to car share and International Car-Free Day on 22 September will be promoted
- Lobbying the County Council to link Hucclecote to the new cycle spine
- Encouraging the local bus company to use eco buses on certain routes
- E-scooter driver education course scheduled for this summer
- Practical home energy saving guidance
- All planning applications are returned to Tewkesbury Borough Council highlighting that the eco standards are not high enough
- Better signposting for recycling and new waste bins are being installed that separate waste and recyclable material
- Setting up a Repair café later this year
- Showcasing local businesses: makers, growers and suppliers; prioritise local business as a council
- Seeking to protect five areas by designating them as community assets
- Produced a Green Guide for every household and made it available online
- Organised a Sustainability Festival from 3-10 May



Top right:  
Sir Jonathon Pirrott gets the launch event to an exciting start.

Bottom right:  
Members of the Hucclecote community take to the streets for a thorough litter pick.



A composting demonstration.



Bike security marking and health checks.



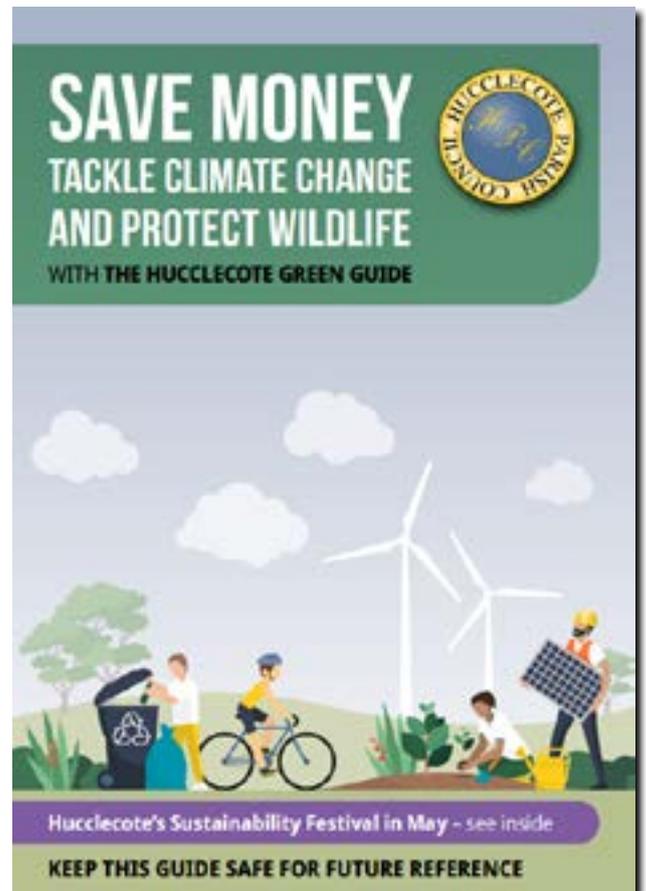
The talk on solar panels was positively received. Many left convinced of the quick returns and long-term benefits.



The seed swap was welcomed by green-fingered residents.



download the Green Guide



# our EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



**STEVE PONTING, GAPTIC CHAIRPERSON  
RODBOROUGH PC, STROUD DISTRICT**

Steve became a parish councillor for Rodborough in 2015 and served as the chairperson for four years. He was appointed to the GAPTIC executive committee in October 2021 and was voted chairperson in September 2022. Steve worked for the Renishaw Group for 22 years and thinks of himself as a 'bigger picture guy'. Since his retirement he has quite possibly been busier than when he worked full time. He has lived in Stroud most of his life and still serves on the board of a local school, even though his children are long grown up.

It has been a year of tumultuous change both nationally and internationally just as we all tried to return to some sense of normality following lockdowns and Brexit. At GAPTIC, I feel we have worked hard to improve the service we offer to Councils in Gloucestershire and were able to provide support and training during the May elections. The work on our strategy has identified areas where we can increase our presence and the networking sessions we have held have proved popular to both councillors and clerks. I would like to thank all our subscribers for continuing to put their trust in our organisation which enables us to provide the services we do. I would also like to thank our Team who work tirelessly to ensure everything we do is timely and delivered to the highest standards. Lastly I would like to thank my colleagues on the Executive Committee who give their time willingly to offer guidance, support and expertise in so many ways.

Steve

“

**Great opportunity to work with a group of so many talented people.**

**“A chance to become more involved in understanding the workings of other councils and NALC, to acquire knowledge that may help in council business”**



**ISAAC BAMFIELD,  
BERKELEY TC,  
STROUD DISTRICT**

Isaac grew up in Thornbury and has lived in South Gloucestershire most of his life. He is a chartered civil engineer and day to day runs large programmes as a project manager and has been involved in nuclear generation and decommissioning (EDF). Most of Isaac's time revolves around his children, but he enjoys long walks with the chocolate Cockapoo and playing squash.



**STEVE WILCOX,  
QUEDGELEY TC,  
STROUD DISTRICT**

Steve has retired three times, but prior to that immersed himself in the details of Health & Safety, Employment Law, Finance, and Training & Security. Prior to closing the door on employment permanently he was employed by a logistics company. He enjoys horses, show jumping, cross country and playing polo. He enjoys collaborating with neighbouring councils.



**LIZ HODGES**  
**VICE PRESIDENT**  
**(NON-VOTING)**

Liz knows it's not the qualifications in your back pocket that make you a caring, passionate member of a community. Liz became a food microbiologist and married a farmer (although she swore she never would). She was a member of the Women's Food and Farming Union and represented the union at parliamentary committee meetings lobbying ministers. Liz became a councillor over 30 years ago and helped establish the Tourist Information Centre and a monthly market.



**SANDRA MITCHELL**  
**UPPER RISSINGTON PC**  
**COTSWOLD DISTRICT**

Sandra worked in Copenhagen becoming fluent in Dutch. Returning to Manchester she worked as a PA, in both the public and private sectors. On retirement she relocated to the Cotswolds where she was struck by the professionalism of the local council. She got involved with local charities and organisations and joined the parish council. Sandra is passionate about recruiting local councillors, encouraging people to share their skills and experience on their council.



**IAN WATSON**  
**TETBURY TC**  
**COTSWOLD DISTRICT**

Ian started his working life with an apprenticeship in a chemical laboratory which transitioned through study into environmental health & safety. A six-month contract at a German start-up turned into a thirty year career. Before retiring early he returned to the UK. Throughout his time abroad he learned the value of diversity and inclusion, listening and teamwork. He helped establish the Tetbury community fridge and joined the council in 2022. He is vice-chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing committee.

**“An opportunity to share ideas and learn from my peers”**

“

**Proud to represent my fellow clerks and have the chance to learn from others.**



**JACQUIE WEBSTER, QUEDGELEY TC, CLERKS' REP (VOTING)**

Jacquie is a life-long Gloucestershire resident. A substantial amount of her career was spent working at His Majesty's Court Service, loving it for its colour and variety, qualities that she found in spades as a clerk. Jacquie is a year into the Level 5 Community Governance Foundation Degree. She strives to be a relaxed, flexible, friendly manager; she enjoys the challenge of clerking and finds that listening is the most important skill a clerk can master. She is proud of the work she has accomplished thus far in changing the council's profile and building a cohesive team of councillors and staff.



**RICHARD CRIGHTON, NEWLAND PC, CLERKS' REP (NON-VOTING)**

Richard has been appointed to the Executive Committee due to the strength of the support his nomination received. After leaving school in London he joined the Met Office, thereafter pursuing a career in banking. After a decade as an estate manager, he found his first position as clerk to a council. Richard was the first clerk in Surrey and the fifteenth in the country to achieve CiLCA. He was instrumental in setting up the GAPTC Internal Audit process, and in 2010 prepared, with the monitoring officer, the FoDDC parishes Code of Conduct; he is a member of the district's standards board, and still watches the weather.

“

A chance to shape the support for the sector across Gloucestershire



**RICHARD PAGE**  
NORTON PC  
TEWKESBURY BOROUGH

Richard is chairperson of his council and represents GAPTC at the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). He also serves on the NALC policy committee and was voted vice-chairperson of GAPTC in September 2022. Richard is a retired lawyer who describes himself as very family orientated. He has a wealth of experience in district planning and citizens' advice.



**JIM HARMSWORTH COWLES**  
DUMBLETON PC  
TEWKESBURY BOROUGH

Jim has been a graphic designer for over 30 years and has been running his own agency for over 20 years. The agency has an exciting portfolio including pharma, healthcare and finance clients. Outside of work, he is a Spurs season ticket holder so to offset this punishment he enjoys watching cricket and indulges his passion for live music. He is struck by the incredible sense of community in his village and enjoys being part of it.

**ALAN PORTER**  
CHURCHDOWN PC  
TEWKESBURY BOROUGH

Alan was born in Leeds, he was a teacher his entire adult life, teaching predominantly in the secondary sector, but not without a short stint in KS2. He was an executive member of a national teachers' union as well as its national defence committee. All these roles have influenced the way he interacts with the people he comes into daily contact with. Alan is a former chairperson of the council and still serves on the Gloucestershire branch of the union. He is an amateur genealogist and rugby enthusiast, having been involved in both refereeing and the assessment of referees.



**RAY COTTON**  
AWRE PC  
FOREST OF DEAN DISTRICT

Ray served on law enforcement matters for central government for over forty years. He specialised in criminal and civil investigations as well as matters of maritime law. Latterly, he acted as liaison for the first America's Cup race in the UK and the 2012 Olympics. Still keen to be involved in public service, Ray has been a Trustee of the Forest of Dean Citizens' Advice Bureau and is the Awre Parish Council chairperson. He is a keen Latin American and Ballroom dancer and was proud to name the European Space Agency Cluster 2 Mission satellites.



## VACANCIES

There are two vacancies on our Executive for councillors from the Forest of Dean district. GAPTC thanks Nick Penny for his time and invaluable input. Serving on the Executive is a chance to represent the councillors and councils from your district, ensuring that their voices are heard and feeding back to them how the organisation is meeting its members' needs.

“Energising and inspirational to hear about so many other amazing initiatives”

# R.E.S.P.E.C.T



DUE TO GROWING CONCERNS ABOUT THE impact bullying and harassment is having on councillors, clerks and council staff, not to mention the reputation of the sector, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and One Voice Wales (OVW) set up a Civility and Respect Working Group. The group has identified a number of areas where changes and improvements can be made to reduce and manage the issues related to these concerns.

- Although training is not mandatory for councillors and clerks, it is good practice for all council members to undergo training to better understand their roles within the council and their responsibilities to their communities. As part of the project's work on training it has established four e-learning modules, available to all councils:
  - Standards in Public Life
  - Respectful and Positive Social Media
  - Personal Resilience
  - Leadership in Challenging Situations.

- Good governance ensures effective and well-functioning democratically elected councils and underpins anti-bullying and harassment.
- When council relations break down, despite training and good governance, it is necessary to provide adequate support to those councils.



## BOOK training

- NALC's committee of Standards in Public Life has reviewed the Local Government Ethical Standards and produced a report, recommending 26 legislative changes. This includes sanctions, suspensions and making training mandatory. Lobbying is ongoing.
- The group is working collaboratively with other associations to navigate a successful path through these sector issues.
- Provision of effective information and support for clerks and councillors.

Civility and respect should be at the heart of public life, and good governance is fundamental to ensuring an effective and well-functioning democracy at all levels. The Civility and Respect Working Group is working to deliver tangible resources, actions and interventions in four main areas:

- providing councils with the tools to support good governance
- lobbying to strengthen the standards regime and encouraging more people to get involved
- training
- processes to intervene to provide support to struggling councils.

## The Pledge

The Civility and Respect Pledge puts the issue of bullying and harassment at the top of the agenda. It is easy for councils to sign up to, and it will enable them to demonstrate that they are committed to standing up to poor behaviour across our sector and to driving through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct. By signing the Pledge, your council is agreeing that the council will treat

councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles, and that the council:

- Has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors
- Has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work policy
- Will seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise
- Will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens
- Will continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council through, for example, the local Local Council Award Scheme
- Supports the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate



download  
RESOURCES



**GAPTC commends those member councils that have taken the Pledge.**

**Berkeley Town Council  
Bourton-on-the-Water Parish Council  
Cainscross Town Council  
Cam Parish Council  
Charlton Kings Parish Council  
 Cirencester Town Council  
Ham and Stone Parish Council  
Hinton Parish Council  
Huntley Parish Council  
Newent Town Council  
Newland Parish Council**

**Northleach with Eastington Town Council  
Norton Parish Council  
Rodborough Parish Council  
Stroud Town Council  
Tetbury Town Council  
Upper Slaughter Parish Council**

We encourage all our members to put this important topic on your agenda, literally, and to take the Pledge.

READ THE MARCH 2023 Civility and Respect Newsletter and sign up to receive regular updates.



## ELECTION RESULTS 2023

### Forest of Dean:

#### DISTRICT

Green Party 15 (25%)

Independent 9 (18%)

Labour 5 (8%)

Conservative 4 (27%)

Lib Dems 2 (10%)

Unknown 2 (8%)

**2** contested parish/town council elections

### Cotswold:

#### DISTRICT

Lib Dems 22 (46%)

Conservative 9 (44%)

Green Party 2 (5%)

Independent 1 (3%)

**13** contested parish/town council elections

### Tewkesbury:

#### DISTRICT

Lib Dems 16 (42%)

Conservation 9 (23.7%)

Green 4 (10.5%)

Non reg pol party 4 (10.5%)

Independent 3 (7.9%)

Tewk & Twynning Ind 2 (5.3%)

**2** contested parish/town council elections



504

followers



114

followers



22

followers



1,500+

recipients



60

views



103

attended  
networking



80+

internal  
audits

# A Year in Review

## THE TWO-WAY CONVERSATION

For a long time, the organisation has been keen to share the good practice that is taking place all around the county. We believe that the work that is undertaken by our councils is worth sharing and emulating. Bimonthly networking sessions, one for clerks and one for councillors, have now been running since September 2022 and just by way of the regular turn out and feedback, we are encouraged that this service is welcomed by our members. Councillors and clerks are notified via email of the upcoming topics and can book via our website.

## TRAINING

Our training has undergone a dramatic change in the past year. Being a Better Councillor and Chairmanship Skills are now presented by Alison and Dawn; both courses are available online or in person. Planning in Plain English is now available to members monthly and we are looking at offering this in person too because feedback from members indicates this will

be welcomed. New training on producing Council Newsletters, both print and digital, has been well received and a module for Agendas and Minute Writing has been produced, again as a direct result of feedback from our clerks. We have commissioned a course on the Council as Employer and will start to offer this in the second half of the year. Three more modules on this topic are also in the pipeline.

## HR SERVICE

We understand that at times our councils are faced with complex challenges. As a result, we offer our members two free hours of HR consultancy. Some of our members will know Marcia Lynall, our HR expert, and will have consulted with her over the past years. Marcia has now completed her work with the organisation, and we thank her for the professional service she has provided. Going forward, our HR consultancy will be provided by Laura Reilly from Taurus HR Solutions. We welcome Laura to the team and look forward to working with her.





### INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

Our Internal Audit Service continues to be popular among our members, with over 80 councils instructing GAPTC to conduct their audit. The internal audit provides an independent assessment of the council's internal systems and operations and helps to ensure accountability, transparency, and good governance. We believe that if you use the GAPTC Internal Audit Service, your council is well on its way already to qualifying for the Local Council Award Scheme. We have taken on a host of new clerks as auditors this year and invite any CiLCA-qualified clerk who would like to get involved in this process to contact the office.

### WEBSITE & CRM

In 2022 we successfully applied to the third round of the county's Digital Innovation Fund and secured the funds needed to redevelop our website and purchase a sector-specific CRM. Calling it a Customer Relations Management tool might not quite explain what it does and how it will benefit our members. Many of the office administrative systems are rather antiquated; when a council's details change there are at least half a dozen places those details need to be updated. Now we have one. This means the time we can dedicate to supporting your council's more immediate and often complex needs is vastly improved. Having a central repository for our members is just one of the CRM's functions. Within the year 90% of the organisation's administration will be performed through this all-singing, all-dancing system. That includes booking training, advice tickets, direct mailing and invoicing. Some of the 'nice to haves' are model policies that download with your council's name already included, and training notifications that are sent to the clerk and the attendee. Documents will be easier to find too. The first step will be to have all our clerks (in the first instance) and then councillors, register on the system. We will send all our members very clear instructions regarding this onboarding process. This system goes hand in hand with a new-look website. The website is intended to promote our sector; everything our members need will now be on a separate, user-friendly portal accessed via the website.

### YOUTUBE

In 2021 we launched our Facebook and LinkedIn pages and together with Twitter these social media pages are kept well-stocked with sector news, helpful hints and tips for councils and useful signposting. The release of our Elections Toolkit saw the organisation establish a YouTube channel too. At this stage we have some wonderful short clips live with councillors from across the county talking about why they became councillors, what work they're involved in and why people should stand for election. These clips are available to all our members to view and share as widely as possible. We also plan to add highlights from all our networking sessions to the channel, as well as some targeted videos on the roles and responsibilities of councils and councillors. Sharing the work councils do and informing the public of this essential role helps to raise the profile of parish and town councils, which we hope will ultimately lead to greater participation in elections and the democratic process.

### LCAS & CiLCA

The Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) has been designed to celebrate the successes of councils, and provide a

framework to support councils to improve and develop to meet their full potential. The scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector. The scheme has been designed to provide the tools and encouragement to those councils at the beginning of their improvement journeys, as well as promote and recognise councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector. It is only through the sector working together, to share best practices, drive up standards and support those who are committed to improving their offer to their communities that individual councils and the sector will reach their full potential. The scheme recognises the council's commitment to its community and its hard work. It highlights to your community that you are a council that is accountable, has integrity and places the needs of its community first.



CiLCA is a qualification that assesses whether clerks have a broad knowledge of all the aspects of their work – roles and responsibilities, the law, procedures, finance, planning and community engagement. When a council's chief officer obtains CiLCA, this meets one criterion for the general power of competence. This also contributes to Quality and Quality Gold in the Local Council Award Scheme. GAPTC offers bespoke mentoring to support clerks through their CiLCA journey, ensuring that it is one of learning and opportunity. We also offer a discount on our subscription fees for councils with CiLCA-qualified clerks as well as to councils that hold the Local Council Award Scheme.

## ELECTIONS

It is a fundamental strategic objective of the organisation to promote contested elections across the county. Contested elections reflect a healthy democracy; one in which the needs and expectations of the entire county's residents are represented through its individual towns and parishes. We aim to achieve this through the initiation of a robust public relations campaign and through the professionalisation of the sector through initiatives like the Local Council Awards Scheme and CiLCA mentoring and showcasing the good work our councils do. To help navigate the election process we launched a comprehensive toolkit to all members councils in January. [FIND THE TOOLKIT HERE](#)

### WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE UPCOMING YEAR

- New website goes live
- New member portal goes live
- Establishment of council hubs to facilitate further good practice, knowledge sharing and member support
- LCAS Toolkit
- Health & Wellbeing Toolkit
- Training on Being a Good Employer

## ... a quick look at what's in our election toolkit

Budgeting for Elections

Election Act Changes

Induction & County Assoc

What Councils should do

Principal Authorities

Resignations

Pre-Election  
Awareness Campaign

Contested vs  
Uncontested Elections

By-Elections &  
Casual Vacancies

Purdah

Standing for Election

Co-option

Council Powers

Declaration of Results

Newsletter articles

Role of the Councillor

Acceptance of Office

Social media posts

Role of the  
Chairperson/Mayor

Register of Interests

Posters & Videos

# Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2023

## Income and Expenditure

	2023 £	2022 £
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions	107,444	105,595
Course Fees	15,265	22,795
IAS	21,036	11,766
Other Grants	20,000	–
Other Income	3,867	14,928
Publication Costs	1,323	–
Interest Received	1,262	40
<b>Gross Income</b>	<b>170,125</b>	<b>155,124</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Publications	1,323	–
Wages and Salaries	116,176	91,161
Pension	6,042	4,372
Rent and Service Charges	9,120	9,120
Insurance	1,162	654
Travel and Subsistence	291	226
Telephone	990	922
Postage	78	–
Printing and Stationery		1,050
Office Equipment	1,406	–
Website and Computer	16,830	2,746
Sundry Expenses	1,094	3,294
Affiliation Fees	24,981	25,424
Catering	646	974
Training and Hall Hire	3,993	10,516
Conferences and Meetings		90
Consultancy		10,943
Accountancy and Payroll	1,590	754
Depreciation	43	54
	<b>185,765</b>	<b>162,300</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year</b>	<b>(15,640)</b>	<b>(7,176)</b>
Balance brought forward	118,127	125,303
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>102,487</b>	<b>118,127</b>