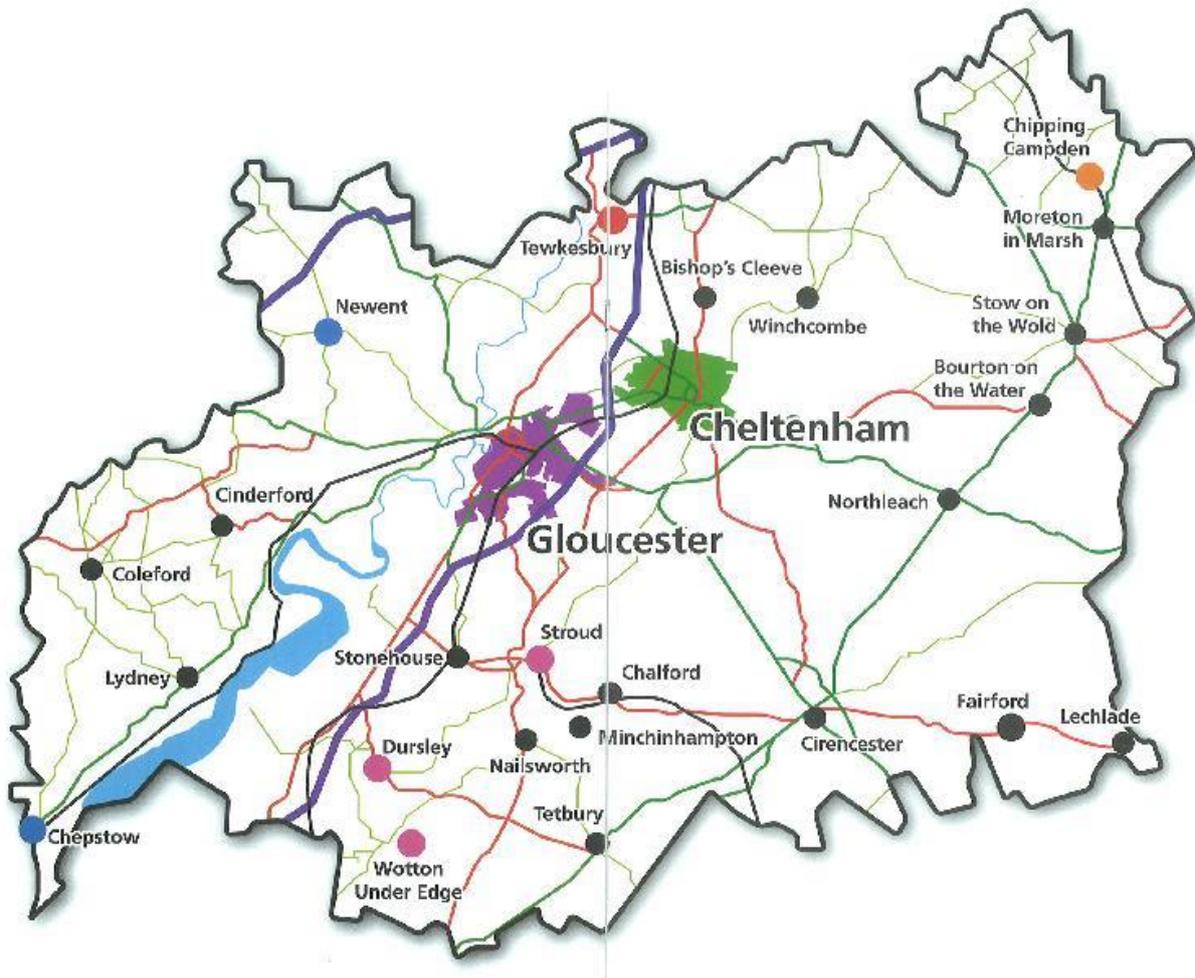


Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils
Our Plan for Gloucestershire 2018-2022



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1. FOREWORD

The last ten years have seen the national government initiate and encourage a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people. Town and parish councils now enjoy new freedoms and flexibilities. Communities and individuals have new rights and powers available.

In our County, the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) represents 92 per cent of all parish and town councils. GAPTC plays a crucial supportive role to these councils working to deliver the benefits to their communities.

We are a long-established membership body (established in 1939) providing training, advice and advocacy, and undertaking positive partnership work within and beyond our membership.

In this plan – “Our plan for Gloucestershire 2018-2022” - we outline our vision, mission and aims, and the actions we will take. We are ready to address new challenges and opportunities that may present themselves.

We do not work in isolation. We are one of 41 county associations working collaboratively with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the national body representing the interests of parish and town councils. NALC work with county associations supporting, promoting and improving local councils. They also lobby national government on behalf of members, and fund national programmes and profile raising. A proportion of the GAPTC membership fees goes to NALC, so that our member councils locally can access and benefit from national activity on our behalf. (See **appendix 1** for membership structure).

We also work with the principal authorities and relevant sector organisations including the Gloucestershire Market Town Forum (GMTF) and the Gloucestershire Rural Communities Council (GRCC).

The Executive Committee approved this document for members at their meeting in October 2018.

Bernard Barton-Ancliffe
GAPTC Chairman

Alison Robinson
Chief Executive Officer

2. VISION, MISSION AND AIMS

GAPTC vision

'To support parish and town councils within the County of Gloucestershire to deliver local services to their full potential; enabling development through good practice, working with other organisations and groups, and with local people to ensure their parish is a great place to live and work'.

We want all sectors of local communities to feel well served and have a voice on local matters. We believe all levels of government should work together for the benefit of the communities they serve and there should be greater devolution to the parish and town council sector, including, where possible, devolution of funding.

GAPTC Mission

'GAPTC share best practice, give advice, training, guidance, and provide a voice for our members at a national level through NALC.'

GAPTC's aims

- Promoting professionalism
- Being accountable
- Proactive communication
- Effective partnership working
- Facilitating change through community engagement
- Leadership in communities - supporting local democracy

As the county-wide organisation within the National Association of Local Councils, GAPTC cascades out expert legal and other advice, and feeds back issues which the national association can take up with national government ministers and officials

Our aims align with the aims identified in the NALC document, 'A Prospectus for Ultra-Localism' <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/publications>.

NALC has also produced the 'National Improvement Strategy' 2017 to 2022 <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/2192-draft-improvement-strategy-consultation-october-16/file>.

See **appendix 2** for more information on the National Improvement Strategy core aims, which will underpin GAPTC's work locally, set out as 'delivering the aims' in the next section.

3. DELIVERING THE AIMS

Promoting professionalism

1. A training programme designed by GAPTC's 'General Training Panel', cross referencing with the NALC Improvement Development Board (IDB).
2. A high-quality support service for member councils in the shape of: -
 - Induction training for new councillors
 - Development of councillors and clerks to meet locally and nationally identified needs
 - Leadership development for town and parish councillors
 - A telephone/online advice service for local councils looking to source best practice or to ensure that they operate within legislative requirements
 - Website presence with a comprehensive library of useful documents
 - Mentoring and human resources dispute resolution
 - Advice on legislative requirements and performance improvement
3. A model welcome pack including all the important sources of guidance (Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, Good Councillor's Guide, GAPTC training programme and self-assessment tool etc) to enable all new councillors to contribute positively and productively in their role.
4. Facilitating the qualification of clerks in partnership with the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) to support the professionalism of the sector.
5. The Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) peer review process, with the aim of encouraging all parish and town councils to achieve ever greater standards of administration and accountability.

Being accountable

1. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) with all our Member councils outlines our 'offer'.
2. The officers of GAPTC will be proactive in delivering and communicating new processes, legal requirements and procedures, identifying needs as they arise.
3. The Executive Committee will monitor progress and will maintain a strong management structure in order to deliver the needs of Member Councils.

Communication

1. Provide regular communication, giving updates on legal developments, sharing examples of good practice, and training opportunities.
2. Communicate lessons learned from visits to and from other towns/parishes outside the county to help increase ambition
3. Ensure clear and simple communication links with the NALC website to allow members access to NALC resources (good practice guides, training etc)

Wider partnership

To benefit from the wider expertise in local government matters:

1. Liaise closely with the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
2. Closer working with the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) and Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum (GMTF) – including joint events/training
3. Meet with higher tier local government, including the portfolio holders at Gloucestershire County Council, and officers in district authorities, to highlight matters of interest or concern from member councils

Promoting local community engagement

GAPTC believes that democracy at the first-tier level is essential in order to foster a sense of ownership and pride in local communities. GAPTC will seek to achieve this by:

1. Promoting the establishment of parish councils where none exist
2. Engage with local organisations and community groups to increase awareness of local matters, including the roles and responsibilities of parish and town councils

Promoting leadership in communities

1. Working generally to increase the profile of parish and town councils and the need to attract new candidates
2. Promoting training for Chairmen and councillors

4.MEASURING SUCCESS

To deliver our aims, we have identified a set of SMART¹ outputs that can be used to measure success/performance.

Issues identified	Proposed solution	Action required	Timescale/ progress	Resource required	Comments
Maintain the level of membership	Promoting the membership offer and seek ways to improve the service	Proactive communications Customer care prioritised	Ongoing	Staff - AS	Reviewed subscriptions to include discounts for councils that have LCAS and CiLCA qualified clerks
Increase the number of qualified clerks	Offer CiLCA mentoring, Clerks the Knowledge training, mentoring Celebrate the clerks who qualify. Ask clerks for feedback on what difference their qualification makes.	Promotion of the support, and of the benefits of being qualified – to increase professionalism	6-monthly running of mentoring	Staff - SG	The discounted subscription fee may act as an incentive.
Number of parishes that have received training (since January 2016)	Encourages engagement Improves professionalism Celebrate those that have had training (social media/newsletters) Collect and use strong positive feedback.	Target councils that have not received training	Reviewed quarterly as a team, reported on in GTP	Staff - AS	May 2019 is the next election cycle
Number of parishes that have achieved LCAS (since it was introduced in 2015)	Promotion of the scheme to the sector and higher tier local government Celebrate the parishes who have achieved LCAS and the	Contact NALC about relaunch to inject new interest. Linked to taking on additional responsibilities	Report to Executive Committee meetings	Staff - AR	

¹ SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound

	difference it will make to their communities (social media/newsletters)				
Number of HR referrals reduced	Establishment of buddying scheme Promotion of mediation service	Contact qualified clerks willing to buddy Advertise mediation service in newsletter/on training sessions Work with NALC to promote commonly accepted standards for both councillors and employees. Promote HR training for both councillors and clerks	Launch start of calendar year (2019)	Staff – AS and SC	Monitor from April 2018
Reduction in the level of clerk turnover	Support clerks through networking and buddying Professionalising sector	Buddying service Promoting CiLCA and LCAS Personal contact between GAPTC Executive and clerks to encourage and monitor professional development, Incentive to member councils to encourage professional qualifications for clerks (membership fee reduction)	Launch start of calendar year (2019)	Staff – AR and AS	Monitor from April 2018
Number of complaints	Track and set up in-house training, if required	Create complaints policy and log	Start in calendar year (2019)	Staff - AR	Monitor from April 2018

Councils that have proportion of elected to co-opted members since the last election cycle in 2015	To help councils democratise in preparation for elections	Identify councils where uncontested elections in 2015 left vacancies to be filled by co-option Encourage training for new councillors to add interest and a sense of professionalism.	Review after 2019 elections	Staff – AR, AS and SG	Do an exercise following elections in 2019 compared to 2015
Partnership events	Initiate better and more transparent partnership working	Organising events – GRCC and GMTF	2 a year (minimum)	Staff – AR and AS	
Good practice stories published	Highlighting in newsletter, on newsfeed, in the 'good practice' tab on the website. Feed in stories at events, networking meetings etc	Going out to councils to visit them and write up their story	1 a month	Staff – AS, AR, SC	
Mentor recruitment	For clerks and councils	Using generic areas e.g. community development, finance	Launch start of calendar year (2019)	Staff – AS and SC	

It is vital to monitor progress and review periodically to ensure GAPTC is on track to deliver the outputs and add new ones as appropriate.

The ongoing review will take place as follows: -

- At executive committee meetings
- An annual review of the strategy
- Data set analysis
- Through specific meetings – General Training Purposes panel, Communications sub-group

APPENDIX 1

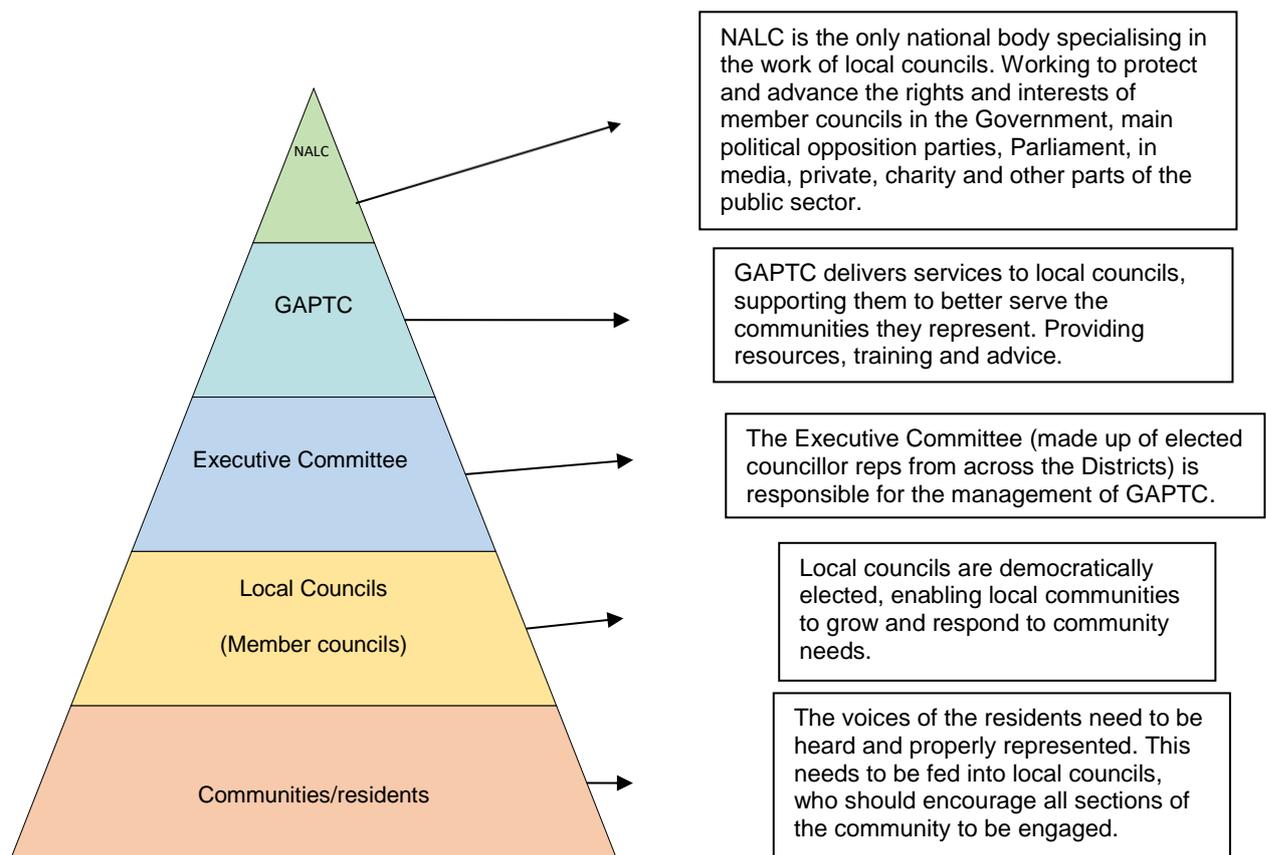
The public sector in Gloucestershire

In Gloucestershire, the public sector comprises three tiers; County, District and Parish/town councils. There are six district authorities, and there are 264 parish and town councils across Gloucestershire. These P&TC are defined as first tier local government because they are closest to their community.

92% of parish and town councils are members of GAPTC as at October 2018.

Membership structure

The diagram below provides a visual representation of the GAPTC membership structure that parish and town councils across Gloucestershire fit in to:



APPENDIX 2

NALC's - 'National Improvement Strategy' 2017 to 2022

All local councils have the potential to deliver benefits to their communities through the activities they undertake. They hold a unique position through their democratic mandate, their ability to raise a precept and the responsibility to act within the laws that govern their processes and financial management.

- **Service provider**

Parish and town councils have powers to provide or influence local services, for example: -

1. Providing local transport solutions
2. Supporting the local economy and businesses
3. Improving the visual appeal of the area
4. Increasing community safety
5. Contributing to arts, culture, local museums and leisure provision
6. Creating and managing parks, playgrounds and local open spaces
7. Helping meet health and social care needs

Such services may be delivered and managed directly, or through contracts. Or they could be operated under delegation or contract from other tiers of government, the National Health Service, or another organisation (Voluntary and Community Sector and private sector).

- **Culture creators**

Parish and town councils can also deliver a range of community, cultural and recreational activities, essential to the well-being of local citizens. These activities include: -

1. Fetes and street parties
2. Music and arts festivals
3. Sports clubs
4. Seasonal events such as Christmas fairs
5. Community hubs

Such activities can benefit simply from the time, expertise, resources and co-ordination skills of the local council. Or the local council may go further and provide local venues and facilities and provide financial assistance to local groups who can deliver activities.

- **Place shapers**

Parish and town councils can influence the physical development of their area – both in a responsive and proactive way. For example:

1. One crucial responsive role is the right to make representations when consulted on planning applications or emerging draft development plans
2. Local councils also have a more proactive opportunity in the right to work with their community to prepare their own local neighbourhood development plans

Through their ownership or management of local property and land, or through working with those who do, local councils can:

3. Protect the heritage and history of their area
4. Shape the future of their communities in a very tangible way through local spaces and buildings
5. Contribute to regeneration programmes

- **Builders of community resilience**

Parish and town councils can help build the capacity and resilience of their communities through working with local groups and organisations, local businesses and individuals – as well as with county and district/borough councils and other public-sector bodies. For example, they might:

1. Work with the Environment Agency on issues of flood management
2. Engage with housing associations to help provide homes for all who need them
3. Register local assets of community value
4. Provide encouragement, information and advice to local organisations to facilitate community participation

- **Democratic and accountable**

Local councils share many characteristics with local community groups, charities or active citizens, but their nature as the first tier of government for their communities makes them unique and distinct. Through their democratic mandate, ability to raise a precept and the legislation that governs the transparency of their processes and finances, they hold a unique position and legitimacy within their communities. The best local councils go above and beyond their legal obligations, demonstrating efficiency and transparency in all their work and continuously seeking opportunities to improve and develop even further.

<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/2192-draft-improvement-strategy-consultation-october-16/file>