

Swanage Town Council CORPORATE PLAN 2023-2025





Introduction

Swanage Town Council is the parish council for Swanage, Durlston, Herston and Ulwell. Its mission statement is to maintain and enhance Swanage for the well-being and prosperity of present and future generations.

Decisions of the Town Council are taken by 12 councillors who were elected for a five-year term in May 2019. There are two wards, Swanage North and South, each with 6 councillors. This plan covers the final 15 months of their term and the first year of the new Council to be elected in May 2024.

The Town Council delegates some of its decisions to its six standing committees: Finance & Governance; Planning & Consultation; Community Services; Tourism & Local Economy; Environment & Greenspaces; and Personnel. The Council also has two sub-committees, focussed on Capital Projects and a Neighbourhood Plan, and two advisory committees, making recommendations in relation to Traffic Management & Coastal Change and Beach Management.

The Town Council was established in 1974 as a successor to the former Swanage Urban District Council. Largely as a result of decisions taken at that time, the Council has a much wider range of assets and provides a broader range of services than most other town and parish councils. Its annual expenditure is in the order of £2¼ million.

The Council's decisions are implemented by the Town Council's staff, headed by the Town Clerk. Four departmental managers lead the Town Council's finance and administration sections, operations department and visitor services.

Councillors and officers are united by a strong belief that Swanage is a very special place with a unique combination of beautiful natural surroundings, a fascinating heritage and an extremely active community with a remarkable record of volunteering.

This plan was adopted in March 2023, following public consultation on a draft version in the autumn of 2022. A summary of the plan was delivered to a majority of Swanage households, encouraging people to send in their comments, either in hard copy or via an online survey. Copies were also available from the library and the Swanage Information Centre. An engagement event was held at Swanage Market, publicity was provided by the Mayor and Town Clerk being interviewed on Purbeck Coast Radio and officers attended a meeting of Swanage and District Chamber of Trade.

A total of 181 responses were received and an analysis of these was considered by the Finance and Governance Committee prior to adoption of the plan. The detailed feedback on each of the Council's objectives has also been considered by the relevant committee to shape their future plans.

Why produce a Corporate Plan?

The Town Council has produced a corporate plan in order to:

- Give clear direction for financial planning and budget setting decisions;
- Assist in prioritising future capital projects;
- Promote transparency by being clear about what the Town Council's priorities are and what actions will be delivered over the plan period;
- Provide a basis for securing external funding;
- Guide discussions with the community and partner organisations;
- Aid in the assessment of grant requests from third parties.

This document should be read alongside the Town Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, its Annual Budget Report and the priority project list approved by Council every six months. While the Town Council is committed to delivering on the priorities set out in this document, it can only do so within the constraints of its medium-term financial strategy.



The iconic blue shelters, Shore Road

Swanage - Now and in the future

Swanage is a civil parish with a population of 9,429 permanent residents (2021 census), a reduction from its high point of 10,100 at the time of the 2001 census. Over a third of the population (35.5%) is aged over 65, compared to 29.6% across Dorset; by contrast, only 12.5% of residents are under 16 years of age.

In Swanage 17.4% of properties on the Council Tax register are considered second homes. 18% of all second homes in Dorset are in Swanage. This excludes those registered for business rates as holiday lets. The reduced supply of housing for local families as a result of second home ownership is recognised as a significant challenge.

The main employment sectors are 'wholesale, retail and repair' and 'human health and social work' which together employed almost 30% of residents in 2011. 'Accommodation and food services' employed 12.5% of the working population, and was the third largest employer.

The town acts as a hub for its neighbouring parishes. The town centre contains a good selection of independent shops and Swanage hosts a wide range of public services, including a community hospital, medical centre, library, museum, primary and secondary schools, post office and sports facilities.

The parish lies within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is considered the Eastern Gateway to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. Agricultural land surrounds the main built-up area. The major landowners are the National Trust and Dorset Council (as owner of Durlston Country Park). The largest private landowner is the Scott family, formerly of Encombe House near Kingston.

Looking to the future, this is the Vision for the town contained in the Swanage Local Plan, which was adopted in 2017 with the support of the Town Council. Although STC has no statutory powers to deliver this vision, it can use its influence wherever possible.

Swanage has a dual role as a centre for local residents and seaside resort. The town will be enhanced through the provision of a range of facilities, services, shops and employment provision. Swanage will retain its status as one of Dorset's most self-contained settlements, whilst enhancing the special historic character of the town and its setting within the AONB and the Jurassic Coast. Opportunities will be considered to reinforce service provision through the improvement of health and sports facilities. New family housing and, in particular, affordable housing and extra care housing, will allow local people the opportunity to continue to live and work within Swanage.

A diverse, thriving and prosperous economy will be developed through the promotion of a variety of business uses, the development of niche businesses which reflect the specific character and culture of the town, and a broad business portfolio which will ensure a strong economy beyond the traditional tourist season. New development will be accompanied by areas of new green space that will improve access to the countryside and improve the setting of the town within the AONB. The town's role as a visitor destination will be developed through the provision of improved facilities and creation of enhanced public spaces along the seafront. The re-opening of the Swanage to Wareham railway line will improve accessibility to employment and educational opportunities along the A351 corridor.

Who does what?

The Town Council is one of two tiers of local government.
It is responsible for the following:

Allotments

Bandstand

Bathing zone and RNLI
lifeguards

Beach Gardens Sports
Park & Tea on the Green
refreshment kiosk

Main Beach and foreshore

Beach Huts – Shore Rd
and Spa

Boat Park

Bus shelters

Car parks

CCTV

Cemeteries

Children's play areas

De Moulham Trust and
grants

Festive Lights

Historic Monuments

Market

Memorial benches and
public seats

Public conveniences

Public gardens, green open
spaces and playing fields

Public help desk (jointly
with Dorset Police)

Skate park

Swanage Information
Centre

Town Hall



Swanage Beach and Town

Dorset Council is the principal authority for Swanage and Purbeck, with responsibility for:

Council Tax collection and benefit administration

Countryside services e.g. Durlston Country Park

Economic development

Education

Emergency Planning

Environmental health

Libraries and archives

On street parking

Planning

Public Health

Registration Service

Refuse collection and recycling

Roads and footpaths

Social services

Street sweeping

Trading Standards

The Town Council works closely with Dorset Council on the following matters:

- Funding School Crossing Patrol at Swanage Primary School
- Funding Bay Safety Patrol
- Providing a civil wedding/partnership venue at the Town Hall
- Supporting seafront waste collection
- Commenting on all planning applications
- Considering changes to traffic management and on-street parking
- Planning improvements to the town's sea defences
- Leasing land as part of Durlston Country Park



RNLI Lifeguard on Swanage Beach

Working in Partnership

The Town Council works closely with a wide range of public sector partners and voluntary groups. A number have seats on Council Committees to provide advice and guidance, including Prospect Allotment Association, Swanage & Purbeck Chamber of Trade, Durlston Country Park and Swanage Railway. The Council's Coastal Change and Beach Management Advisory Committee is attended by a large range of stakeholders to consider matters relating to the beach and Swanage Bay more broadly. The Town Council also administers the Swanage Town and Community Partnership which brings together a wide range of voluntary organisations with Town Councillors to consider issues facing local people and encourage co-operation.

The Council fully recognises the importance of helping other organisations to deliver their aims and objectives where they benefit the residents of Swanage and visitors to the town. The following list is not comprehensive, but gives some flavour of the range of groups that the Council works alongside.

East Dorset & Purbeck CAB	Swanage Pier Trust	Swanage School
Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust	Mowlem Theatre	St Mary's Primary School
Swanage Regatta and Carnival Committee	Swanage & Herston Football Club	Swanage Defibrillator Partnership
Swanage Folk Festival	Swanage & District Angling Club	Swanage Tennis Club
Swanage Coastal Change Forum	Swanage Sea Rowing Club	Swanage Bowling Club
Litter Free Purbeck	Swanage Town Band	Sustainable Swanage
Swanage Landers and Beach Buddies	Dorset Coast Forum	Purbeck Art Weeks
Greengage Community Garden	Purbeck Transport Action Group	Swanage Arts Club
	Swanage Community Housing Group	Swanage Cricket Club
	Swanage Museum	Swanage Rotary Club
		Swanage Royal British Legion

The Town Council also supports the local services provided by a range of countywide and national organisations. As well as Dorset Council, the Town Council works with NHS Dorset, Dorset Police, Maritime & Coastguard Agency, RNLI and National Coastwatch Institution. The Town Council seeks to lobby and influence decision making bodies to protect and enhance the quality of services provided to the local community, as it has done most recently in respect of the Swanage & Purbeck Ambulance Car. The Town Council also seeks to work together with its neighbouring parishes, and those representing other coastal communities, to pursue matters of common interest.

Priorities and Progress to Date

This document sets out the following priorities for the Town Council over the next three years:

- Delivering Good Governance
- Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Supporting the Local Economy
- Providing Opportunities to Improve Health and Wellbeing
- Planning for the Future and Preserving our Heritage
- Protecting the Natural Environment and Addressing the Climate Crisis

These priorities are described in more detail on the following pages. Each is considered equally important, and therefore they are not set out in order of priority. Under each heading there are three boxes that set out the actions that the Council will take in broad terms, examples of what the Council is currently doing to deliver the priority, and a list of specific projects that are planned for the period 2023-25. Some of the projects are straightforward and can be delivered relatively quickly; others will be more difficult to achieve and may only be delivered beyond the lifetime of this plan.

Since its election in 2019, the Town Council has achieved the following:

- Upgraded its three children's play areas
- Funded improvements to Day's Park football facilities
- Opened the former St Mark's School Playing Field as a public open space
- Completed restoration of the Bandstand
- Commissioned a survey of the parish's footpaths
- Designated Peveril Point and The Downs as a Local Nature Reserve
- Successfully worked with the community to protect the Swanage Ambulance Car
- Installed a new astroturf tennis court at Beach Gardens
- Agreed to renew the lease of Prospect Nursery to Greengage Community Garden Group
- Established Swanage Community Housing Group as an independent CLT
- Funded a Sustainable Swanage support officer
- Adopted an Environmental Action Plan
- Planted approximately 30 new trees per annum
- Acquired new electric vehicles and installed new electric car charging points
- Provided new cycle storage around the town
- Taken the operation of Swanage Market in-house and expanded its operation year-round
- Replaced and upgraded the Festive Lights
- Installed water refill stations



Former St Mark's Playing field



The restored bandstand



Play area and exercise equipment at Days Park

Delivering Good Governance

The Town Council will deliver good governance by:

- Monitoring spending and minimising waste;
- Obtaining best value for the community from the Town Council's assets and investments;
- Working in partnership with community groups and other public sector bodies;
- Actively communicating, consulting and engaging with residents;
- Ensuring transparency about its actions;
- Positively representing the community;
- Making best use of new technology;
- Being an excellent employer;
- Upholding the highest standards of conduct in public life and championing diversity, equality of opportunity & treatment.



Town Hall, High Street, Swanage

In support of Good Governance...

The Town Council works extensively with voluntary groups, local businesses and public sector partners to benefit the local community.

- A vast amount of information about the Council's meetings, services and activities is available via its website www.swanage.gov.uk
- The Town Council provides a £10,000 budget each year for small grants to support community groups.
- The Finance & Governance Committee meets regularly to monitor Council budgets and investments.
- The Town Council considers the views of local residents when making decisions. Councillors' contact details are available online and anyone is welcome to speak in public participation time, held at the start of all Town Council and Committee meetings.

Between 2023 and 2025 the Town Council will:

- Increase opportunities for residents to engage with the Town Council;
- Take steps to improve remote access to Council meetings;
- Better promote the availability of grant funding to community groups;
- Apply under NALC's Local Council Award Scheme for Quality Council status to drive improvement;
- Deploy technology to improve efficiency in Council administration.

Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Supporting the Local Economy

The Town Council will promote sustainable tourism and support the local economy by:

- Encouraging visitors to the town outside the main summer season;
- Ensuring Swanage is a high-quality visitor destination;
- Exploring opportunities to improve access from the sea;
- Providing an environment in which businesses can thrive, particularly providing employment opportunities for young people;
- Supporting 'Green Tourism' initiatives, such as car-free travel.

In support of tourism and the local economy the Town Council...

- Operates a range of Visitor Services, including its award-winning Information Centre on Shore Road, Peveril Boat Park and 74 beach huts.
- Maintains the Beach to Blue Flag standards and employs RNLI lifeguards.
- Operates a number of long-stay and short-stay car parks, providing low-cost residents' parking.
- Operates Swanage market.
- Co-ordinates a programme of events throughout the year in its parks and open spaces.
- Funds the town centre and seafront Festive Lights, organises a 'Switch-On' event and the Artisans on the Beach each Christmas.

Between 2023 and 2025 the Town Council will:

- Make a significant capital investment to enhance the Spa, Weather Station Field and Sandpit Field;
- Work with local businesses and accommodation providers to develop a marketing strategy for the town;
- Develop a Sustainable Tourism Vision;
- Improve the Town Council's website to provide a more interactive online presence;
- Develop an enhanced programme of events to attract visitors year-round;
- Undertake public consultation and publish a Seafront Masterplan to guide future development;
- Consider proposals to improve access from the sea.



Peveril Point and the Downs Local Nature Reserve



Swanage's award-winning Main Beach



Swanage Information Centre, Shore Road

Encouraging Health and Wellbeing and Enhancing Community Safety

The Town Council will encourage health and wellbeing and enhance community safety by:

- Supporting the development of social housing for local people;
- Encouraging participation in sporting and cultural activities;
- Protecting and enhancing the delivery of public services in Swanage, particularly health services and the library;
- Providing grant funding in support of educational, social and cultural activities;
- Working with partners to enhance community safety;
- Implementing measures to improve accessibility.



In support of health, wellbeing and community safety the Town Council...

- Funds a network of Town Centre CCTV cameras and a Speed Indicator Device.
- Leases the Town Hall Annexe to Dorset Police.
- Provides a range of community services, including allotments, cemeteries, public conveniences and bus shelters.
- Provides opportunities for sport and recreation for all ages, including children's play areas, a skate park, Beach Gardens sports park (tennis, bowls, putting and basketball), designated beach swimming zone and football pitches.
- Provides financial support for the CAB advisory service.
- Has commissioned a report to identify barriers impeding access for disabled people in Swanage town centre.
- Works with partner organisations to protect public services e.g. Swanage Ambulance Car.

Between 2023 and 2025 the Town Council will:

- Provide a new safe route to St Mary's Primary School via Journey's End and Day's Park;
- Work with Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust and Swanage & Herston Football Club to provide enhanced sporting and community facilities at Day's Park;
- Support the Swanage Community Housing Group in their efforts to deliver social housing for local people;
- Promote the town's footpath network and work with partners to increase access to the countryside;
- Work with partners to implement recommendations from the Swanage town centre accessibility report, and install 'Changing Places' toilet facilities at North Beach Car Park;
- Support Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust's Wellbeing Project, including the potential transfer of the Day Centre and Children's Centre to community ownership.

Planning for the Future and Preserving our Heritage

The Town Council will plan for the future and preserve our heritage by:

- Shaping planning policy and commenting on planning applications;
- Working with Dorset Council as the highway authority to consider proposals to improve traffic management;
- Championing the protection of the Swanage and Herston conservation areas;
- Preserving and promoting knowledge about the town's unique heritage.

To plan for the future and preserve our heritage the Town Council...

- Comments on behalf of local residents on all planning applications in the parish lodged with Dorset Council.
- Makes recommendations to Dorset Council regarding proposed changes to parking restrictions and traffic flow.
- Organises meetings of the town's heritage attractions (Swanage Pier, Swanage Railway and Swanage Museum).
- Maintains the Town Hall with its ornate Grade II listed 17th-century frontage.
- Maintains three closed burial grounds and several historic monuments and memorials (Albert Memorial, Alfred Monument, John Mowlem's Memorial, Trevor Chadwick Memorial, War Memorial).



Prince Albert Memorial, Prince Albert Gardens

Between 2023 and 2025 the Town Council will:

- Lead the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan;
- Work with Dorset Council to implement a trial closure of the southern section of Shore Road;
- Explore options for the preservation of the WW2 gun emplacement at Peveril Point;
- Work with Dorset Council to protect the existing Swanage and Herston conservation areas and explore the designation of additional such areas;
- Work with Dorset Council and the Environment Agency to improve sea defences and public spaces between the Pier and the Mowlem Theatre.



Aerial View of Prince Albert Gardens and Peveril Point and the Downs Local Nature Reserve

Protecting the Natural Environment and Addressing the Climate Crisis



Grassland, Peveril Point and the Downs Local Nature Reserve

The Town Council will protect the natural environment and address the climate crisis by:

- Developing a Carbon Neutral Plan with the aim of ensuring that Council energy use is carbon neutral by 2030;
- Implementing projects from the Swanage Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Ensuring that all new construction projects, including the proposed seafront enhancement scheme, have sustainability embedded within the design;
- Managing its parks and open spaces to adapt to climate change;
- Identify opportunities to increase biodiversity.

In support of the natural environment and addressing the climate crisis the Town Council...

- Funds and supports Sustainable Swanage to work with the community to deliver local environmental projects, including a Community Pantry, Repair Café and Greening Swanage.
- Has developed an Environmental Action Plan.
- Has installed a free water refill station on the seafront.
- Requires all events held on Town Council land to complete an Environmental Impact Assessment and prohibits single use plastics.
- Works with Dorset Council to implement waste management systems along the seafront.
- Manages some green spaces to enhance biodiversity.

Between 2023 and 2025 the Town Council will:

- Continue to support Sustainable Swanage;
- Develop and deliver the first elements of the Carbon Neutral Plan;
- Provide Climate Crisis training for all staff and councillors;
- Explore options to reduce reliance on fossil fuels;
- Continue its commitment to increase tree planting in Swanage;
- Increase the number of electric car charging points in its car parks;
- Consider ways to increase cycling and walking across the town.



Cycling at Ulwell, Swanage