

First Edition

Welcome to the first edition of the Talk of the Town Hall newsletter, brought to you by Swanage Town Council.

We want to keep Swanage residents informed about what the Council is doing - and just as importantly, to listen to your concerns. You can now contact us via our new dedicated email address: comms@swanage.gov.uk. You can also use this address to register to receive future issues of the newsletter.

This edition includes the first of our councillor profiles, helping residents get to know their elected representatives. Councillors Tina Foster, Sarah Vile, and Cliff Sutton are acting as the editorial team, and they've answered the first set of questions being asked of all current councillors. You'll be able to read the responses from other councillors in upcoming editions.

The newsletter will be published quarterly - in **June, September, and December** - and we'd love to hear your feedback.

Each issue will cover topics that matter to our town, raise awareness of the Council's work, and provide updates on local projects. While many concerns raised with councillors may fall outside the Town Council's direct responsibilities, we'll always do our best to point you in the right direction.

We'll also feature interviews with local people and organisations, exploring a range of topics. In this issue, we start with Culvin Milmer, the Town Council's Visitor Services and Business Development Manager, who shares an update on recent developments at Shore Place.

Your Town Councillors are committed to working together with our dedicated staff and the wider community - to improve Swanage and enhance the quality of life for all.

Tell us your views

Over coming months the Town Council will be seeking your views on a number of forthcoming projects that will impact the town and seafront. These include the Green Seafront Scheme, the Swanage Neighbourhood Plan and the Town Council's Corporate Plan for the next five years. Information will be posted on Facebook and the Town Council's website and a range of consultation and engagement opportunities will also be publicised in the local press and media. We hope you take this opportunity to provide your feedback to the Town Council and play an active part in shaping the future of your town.



Future issues of Talk of the Town Hall will be published in June, September and December so we look forward to hearing your feedback



A quick introduction to...

Councillor Tina Foster

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

I have always had an interest in local politics and sat on Studland Parish Council in the 1980s. On my return from running a business in Spain I took over as the temporary clerk to that Council. That gave me a good understanding of the role that local councils play in the community.



What key issue are you most passionate about?

As the current Mayor and Chair of the Council, my focus is on the smooth running of the Council. Our twelve councillors were elected in May 2024 and bring to the role a range of different perspectives with the youngest being 22 years old. Improving communication between the Council and local residents is my main passion, hence working with the team to publish this new-style newsletter.

What do you love most about Swanage?

Swanage is my home. I was born here and went to school in the town. Swanage is where my friends live, my children were brought up here and attended local schools, and it's where I returned to when I retired. Living here I am part of the wonderful community that is Swanage: a small town with a huge heart.

Councillor Cliff Sutton

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

My interest in the Council began during the Shore Road consultation, where I helped gather public opinions on the seafront. As a trustee of the Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust and an active member of local charities, I saw the positive impact of community efforts and wanted to contribute further.

What key issue are you most passionate about?

Protecting Swanage Bay and its incredible marine life is a top priority and the council has recently declared a Motion for the Ocean to support the protection of marine biodiversity. Our coast is not just beautiful - it's vital to our environment, economy, and wellbeing.

What do you love most about Swanage?

The community! Swanage is a town where people look out for each other. From charity work to organising festivals, our volunteers bring so much heart and energy to everything they do. We live in a stunning place, but it's the people who make it truly special.



Councillor Sarah Vile

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

I went to an open evening at the town hall for prospective councillors and was really impressed with how many services and assets the hard-working staff are responsible for. My background of working with people experiencing domestic abuse gives me a confidence in advocating for others which I thought might be a good fit for a community role.

What key issue are you most passionate about?

I am very concerned about the lack of genuinely affordable housing - nearly 200 local people are registered as being in Housing Need. We regularly face private housing development companies initially committing to include affordable homes in new developments, only to back-track later. On a positive note, we have a Community Land Trust which is working hard to develop sites for social-rent homes for local people and key workers.

What do you love most about Swanage?

I lived here from 1988-1990 when my Dad worked at Wytch Farm, and I knew I'd come back one day. I have never lived anywhere else where the sense of community is so strong, and where people genuinely want to look out for each other and come together.



Ten Minutes With:

In this edition, Talk of the Town Hall meets Culvin Milmer to talk about Shore Place

Tell us more about what your role involves:

My main role is to look after the visitor services that the Town Council operates - Beach Huts, the Swanage Information Centre, the Boat Park, Beach Gardens, and, of course, our beach itself. I am also the lead officer on the Council's environment projects.



Tell us more about Shore Place; what is it and where is it?

Shore Place is the name recently given by the Council to the large pedestrian space between the Information Centre and the steps up to Mermond Place. It's an open space that has been empty since the demolition of a public shelter over 20 years ago. Although it has played an important community role during the summer months, for events and charity stalls, the Town Council decided that it could be utilised to increase the local economy.

How has the Town Council tried to give the space its own vibe?

The council decided to advertise the opportunity for two concessions to operate from this area and agreed that a mixture of catering and activity businesses would be best suited to this seaside location. The Town Council had a really strong response from the business community, and after going through a scoring exercise in early 2024 the concessions were awarded to [Carve Coffee Roasters](#) and [Swanage Bay Sauna](#).

Whilst the new businesses have brought more activity to this location, the Council has made sure that its community use continues by protecting sufficient space for charity stalls and small events.

Shore Place sits beside the area of Shore Road which is now permanently closed to traffic – tell us more about how that decision was made.

The Town Council had long been concerned about safety in this area and the confusion experienced by visitors who could freely wander across the road during the summer season but had to remember to look out for traffic in the autumn and winter. Local residents also raised safety concerns with the Town Council, including Cliff Sutton who is now one of our Town Councillors.

As the road is owned and managed by Dorset Council as the Highway Authority the Town Council could only make a request for the road to be closed, and as part of making the case an extensive public consultation was carried out in 2019. 847 people responded, 60% of whom wanted the road to be closed all year. In light of this, Dorset Council agreed to a trial closure which was considered a success, after which the legal process was completed to close the road to traffic on a permanent basis.

Looking ahead, what aspirations does the Town Council have for the area in general?

The closed road still looks very much like a road that is closed, rather than a pedestrian promenade. The Town Council's seafront masterplan sets out a vision for it to be redesigned, in consultation with groups such as Accessible Swanage, to create a multifunctional space that can cater for a wide range of events and activities.

The Mowlem Triangle is another area we would like to see developed, transforming it into an attractive and informative gateway to the main town - drawing visitors in and seamlessly connecting the town and beach. Currently, the Town Council switches on the Christmas lights from this location, but the Mowlem Triangle has the potential to become a fantastic year-round plaza at the heart of the town. It's important to imagine what's possible!



News, Updates and Fascinating Facts

Community Award Winners Announced

What an amazing evening we all had at this year's Annual Parish Assembly, which was held at The Centre, Chapel Lane, Swanage, on 17th March, at which we celebrated the community work of our town's incredible volunteers and businesses.

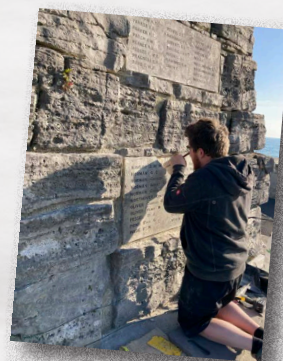


Earlier this month, the Community Awards Panel carefully reviewed the nominations received for the 2024 awards, of which there were 40 in total. Hard decisions had to be made to determine the winners in categories including Youth Citizen of the Year, Small Business of the Year, and the Lifetime Achievement Award. A full list of winners is available on the Town Council's news page: <https://www.swanage.gov.uk/NewsArticle.aspx?id=458>

The Town Council would like to express heartfelt gratitude to all the town's volunteers and local businesses for their dedication, energy, and enthusiasm. Their efforts truly make a positive difference to our community.

War Memorial

The Town Council has been awarded a grant of £1,050 from the Grants for War Memorials scheme supported by Historic England. The money will enable the repair of damage to the carved stone name plaque on the south side of the memorial. Frances Moreton, Director of the War Memorials Trust said, "War memorials remind us of the millions of lives ended, or impacted, by conflict. Preserving them not only ensures we continue to commemorate them but also shows future generations the consequences of war and encourages them to avoid such suffering".



Council Tax

As Council Tax bills have recently been delivered, local residents will have seen that the Town Council's share of the Council Tax for the upcoming financial year has increased.

From 1st April 2025 the annual Band D charge has risen by £11.71 to £188.86. Although the Town Council recognises that any increase is unwelcome, this equates to only 23p more per week. Following the Annual Estimates meeting on 20th January, Swanage Town Mayor, Cllr Tina Foster explained "The Town Council faces some significant challenges, particularly regarding coastal erosion and land instability. This modest adjustment ensures we can build reserves for future maintenance of services and facilities that our community relies on, including play equipment, public toilets, environmental projects, and more."

Skatepark

The Town Council is working in partnership with the Swanage Skatepark Community Project (SSCP) to improve the skatepark at King George's Field. During the recent budget setting process the Town Council agreed to increase its capital budget for new skatepark equipment from £15,000 to £35,000. This, along with money raised by SSCP, has enabled the Town Council to go out to tender for Phase One of this exciting project. It is anticipated this will result in the installation of new equipment later this year providing rideable features that accommodate all ages, abilities, and wheeled sports.



DID YOU KNOW?

Last year the Town Council planted over 950 bulbs in a range of locations around the town.

The Town Council owns and manages over 37 hectares (91 acres) of green spaces.

In the past 5 years the Council has reduced the amount of annual summer bedding plants it uses by 75%, replacing it with perennial planting that is attractive to wildlife, improves biodiversity and reduces the amount of water used by the Council.