



SWANAGE TOWN COUNCIL DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2026-2030

INTRODUCTION

Swanage Town Council is the parish council serving the communities of Swanage, Durlston, Herston, and Ulwell. Our mission is to maintain and enhance Swanage for the wellbeing and prosperity of present and future generations.

Decisions of the Council are taken by 12 councillors who were elected in May 2024 for a five-year term. There are two wards, Swanage North and South, each represented by six councillors. This Corporate Plan outlines the Council's strategic priorities for the final 3 years of councillors' current term of office and the first year of the following term, covering the period 2026 to 2030.

To ensure effective governance, the Council delegates some decisions to six standing committees: Finance & Governance; Planning & Consultation; Community Services; Tourism & Local Economy; Environment & Greenspaces; and Personnel. These committees can appoint sub-committees, two of which relate to Capital Projects and the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council also appoints two advisory committees, which provide recommendations on Traffic Management and Coastal Change & Beach Management.

Established in 1974 as the successor to the Swanage Urban District Council, Swanage Town Council continues to manage a broader range of assets and services than most town and parish councils. Its annual expenditure is approximately £2.9 million, providing services and community facilities that benefit residents and visitors alike.

Implementation of Council decisions is carried out by a dedicated team of officers, led by the Town Clerk. Four experienced departmental managers oversee each of the Council's service areas: finance, administration, operations, and visitor services.

Councillors and officers share a deep commitment to ensuring that Swanage remains a very special place with a unique combination of a thriving natural environment, a rich heritage, and a vibrant community, underpinned by a selfless culture of volunteering.

This plan was adopted in May 2026 following public consultation on a draft version undertaken earlier in the year. A summary of the plan was delivered to the majority of Swanage households, inviting people to submit their comments in hard copy or via the online survey. Copies were also made available from the Town Hall, the library, and the Swanage Information Centre.

Two engagement events were held at the Mowlem, and publicity was provided through coverage in the Bournemouth Echo, an interview on Purbeck Sounds radio and multiple posts

on the Council's social media. Partner organisations also shared the consultation through their networks.

In total, 214 responses were received and an analysis of these was considered by the Finance and Governance Committee prior to adoption of the plan.

IMPORTANCE OF PRODUCING A CORPORATE PLAN

Swanage Town Council has developed this Corporate Plan to:

- Provide strategic direction for financial planning and budget-setting decisions
- Support the prioritisation of future capital investment and infrastructure projects
- Promote transparency by clearly outlining the Council's priorities and the actions it intends to deliver over the plan period
- Strengthen applications for external funding by demonstrating a clear and cohesive strategy
- Guide engagement with residents, community groups, and partner organisations
- Inform the evaluation of grant applications from third-party organisations

This document should be read in conjunction with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, Annual Budget Report, and the Priority Project List, which is reviewed and approved by the Council every six months.

While the Town Council is committed to delivering the priorities set out in this plan, its ability to do so is subject to the constraints set out in its Medium-Term Financial Plan and the wider availability of resources.

SWANAGE NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Swanage is a civil parish located in the Isle of Purbeck, with a population of 9,411 permanent residents as recorded in the 2024 Office of National Statistics mid-year estimates. The town experienced a gradual population decline in the first two decades of this century, from its peak of 10,100 in 2001.

Over one-third of the population (37.4%) is aged over 65, compared to 30.5% in Dorset as a whole; by contrast, only 11.7% of residents are under 16 years of age (compared to 15.4% across the county). In 2021 the median age of the population was 56.

Of the employment sectors listed in the 2021 census, the five largest employers of Swanage residents aged over 16 were retail trade (10.6%), education (9.8%), construction and civil engineering (8.9%), food and beverage service activities (7.7%) and human health activities (7.5%).

Many Swanage residents also have a proud tradition of service, with 5.8% of residents having served in the Armed Forces. The Town Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in May 2025 and is a holder of the Bronze Award.

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

In Swanage, around 20% of the housing stock consists of second or holiday homes (compared with 3% across Dorset), equalling one of the highest concentrations of registered second homes in the Dorset Council area. The reduced supply of housing for local families because of second home ownership is recognised as a significant challenge.

The parish covers an area of approximately 1,120 hectares and lies wholly within the Dorset National Landscape (formerly known as the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or AONB) and serves as the Eastern Gateway to the UNESCO Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. Agricultural land surrounds the built-up area. Major landowners include the National Trust, Dorset Council (owner of Durlston Country Park), and the Scott family, historically associated with Encombe House near Kingston.

Looking ahead, the Town Council supports the following vision for the future of Swanage, whilst recognising that this will only be delivered by joint working between a wide range of public, voluntary and private sector bodies over a sustained period. The Corporate Plan sets out the contribution that the Town Council will make towards achieving this vision over the next five-year period.

Swanage will continue to play a dual role as both a centre for local residents and a popular visitor destination. The town will retain its status as one of Dorset's most self-contained settlements, and will provide a diverse range of facilities, services, shops, employment opportunities and cultural activities.

The special historic character of the town will be protected and enhanced, as will its setting within the Dorset National Landscape, adjoining the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. New development will be accompanied by green infrastructure, improving access to the countryside. Measures will be taken to encourage nature recovery, enhance biodiversity and reduce the town's carbon footprint.

The delivery of new family housing, social housing and extra care housing on sites identified in the Neighbourhood Plan will remain a priority to ensure that local people can continue to live and work in Swanage.

A diverse, thriving and resilient economy will be supported, including niche businesses that reflect the town's unique character and culture. Building a broad business portfolio will help sustain the local economy beyond the traditional tourist season.

Improvements to flood defences and the implementation of beach, cliff and shoreline management plans will increase the town's resilience to processes of coastal and climate change.

The town's role as both a hub for local residents and a visitor destination will be enhanced through improved public spaces, particularly along the seafront, and the continued development of leisure and cultural facilities. Measures will be taken to improve accessibility to physical infrastructure around the town.

Improved community transport will deliver enhanced access to employment, education, and services. There will be better sustainable transport options, which may include the reopening of the Swanage to Wareham railway line.

WHO DOES WHAT?

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

Allotments	Boat Park	Information Centre
Bandstand	Bus shelters	Market
Bathing zone and procuring RNLI lifeguards	Car parks	Memorial benches and public seats
Beach Gardens Sports Park & Tea on the Green refreshment kiosk	CCTV	Neighbourhood Planning
Main Beach and foreshore	Cemeteries	Public conveniences
Beach Huts – Shore Rd and Spa	Children’s play areas	Public gardens, green open spaces and playing fields
	De Moulham Trust and grants	Skate Park
	Festive Lights	Town Hall
	Historic Monuments	

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

Council Tax collection and benefit administration	Environmental health	Refuse collection and recycling
Countryside services e.g. Durlston Country Park	Libraries and archives	Roads and footpaths
Economic development	On street parking	Social services
Education	Planning	Street sweeping
Emergency Planning	Public Health	Trading Standards
	Registration Service	

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

- 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, working closely with community highways officers
- Coastal and seafront enhancements
- Leasing land as part of Durlston Country Park
- Providing a safe school crossing at Swanage Primary School
- Visit Swanage website

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

The Town Council works closely with a wide range of public sector partners and voluntary groups to benefit local residents. 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 foster 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 insight into the range of groups that the Council works alongside.

Accessible Swanage	St Mary's, St Mark's and	Swanage Landers and
Allsort'd	Swanage Primary Schools	Beach Buddies
Cultural Purbeck	Sustainable Swanage	Swanage Museum
Dorset Coast Forum	Swanage & District	Swanage Pier Trust
East Dorset & Purbeck	Angling Club	Swanage Regatta and
Citizens' Advice	Swanage & Herston	Carnival Committee
Greengage Community	Football Club	Swanage Rotary Club
Garden	Swanage & Purbeck	Swanage Royal British
Litter Free Purbeck	Development Trust	Legion
Mowlem Theatre	Swanage Bowling Club	Swanage School
National Coastwatch	Swanage Community	Swanage Sea Rowing
Institution	Housing Group	Club
National Trust	Swanage Cricket Club	Swanage Skatepark
Purbeck Art Weeks	Swanage Defibrillator	Community Project
Purbeck Transport Action	Partnership	Swanage Tennis Club
Group	Swanage Folk Festival	Swanage Town Band

ADOPTED MAY 2026

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 and the RNLI. 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.

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED SINCE THE LAST CORPORATE PLAN WAS ADOPTED IN 2023?

- Increased public engagement, including through consultations for the Seafront Masterplan, the Green Seafront Scheme Options, the Greenspaces Strategy, and the Neighbourhood Plan
- Re-established a regular newsletter to improve Council communications
- Developed new and accessible Town Council and Visit Swanage websites
- Established a disability interest group, namely Accessible Swanage, and collaborated with partners to implement recommendations from the Swanage town centre accessibility report
- Completed Phase 1 of the Skatepark refurbishment project in partnership with the Swanage Skatepark Community Project
- Installed accessible ‘Changing Places’ toilet facilities at North Beach Car Park
- Retained Blue Flag Status for Swanage Main Beach
- Achieved the Green Flag award for Beach Gardens
- Worked with Dorset Council to implement the year-round closure of the southern section of Shore Road
- Developed and delivered the first elements of the Carbon Neutral Plan, including installing solar panels on Council buildings and continuing the switchover of operations vehicles and equipment from diesel to electric
- Secured more trees to plant in the town
- Provided a new safe route to St Mary’s Primary School via Journey’s End/ Day’s Park
- Supported Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust’s Wellbeing Project, including the transfer of the Day Centre and Children’s Centre to community ownership
- Upgraded the tennis courts at Beach Gardens
- Opened an extension to Godlingston Cemetery and installed a new accessible public convenience
- Created new business opportunities at Shore Place
- Supported the transfer of land at Washpond Lane/Ulwell Road to Swanage Community Housing’s development of homes for social rent for local residents
- Provided capital funding to the Mowlem Theatre
- Worked with Swanage & Herston Football Club to secure planning permission for new community sports facility at Day’s Park

PRIORITIES FOR 2026-2030

The Corporate Plan sets out the following priorities for the Town Council over the next four years:

1. Delivering Good Governance
2. Promoting Regenerative Tourism and Supporting the Local Economy
3. Encouraging Health and Wellbeing and Enhancing Community Safety
4. Planning for the Future and Preserving our Heritage
5. 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 2026-30. 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.

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
- Providing training for all staff and members of the Town Council
- Upholding the highest standards of conduct in public life and championing diversity, equality of opportunity and treatment

The Town council delivers good governance by:

- Working extensively with voluntary groups, local businesses and public sector partners to benefit the local community
- Ensuring comprehensive information about the Council's meetings, services and activities is available via its website: www.swanage.gov.uk
- Providing a £10,000 budget each year for small grants to support community groups
- Holding regular meetings of the Finance & Governance Committee to monitor Council budgets and investments
- Considering the views of local residents when making decisions, e.g. by holding public participation time in advance of all meetings and publishing councillors' contact details online

Between 2026 and 2030, the Town Council will:

- Utilise technology and ethical Artificial Intelligence to improve efficiency in Council administration
- Increase opportunities for members of the public to engage with the work of the Town Council
- Take steps to improve access to Council meetings
- Apply under NALC's Local Council Award Scheme for Quality Council status to drive improvement
- Promote grant funding more widely

**PROMOTING REGENERATIVE TOURISM AND SUPPORTING
THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

Regenerative Tourism refers to a form of tourism that goes beyond sustainability by actively improving and revitalising the places people visit. It aims to leave destinations better than they were found, by supporting local communities, restoring natural environments, and fostering cultural resilience. Unlike traditional tourism, which can deplete resources, regenerative tourism encourages visitors and organisations to contribute positively to the long-term health of local ecosystems and economies.

The Town Council will promote regenerative 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
- Supporting an environment in which businesses can thrive, which will consequently help with the provision of employment opportunities for young people
- Supporting a range of ‘Sustainable Tourism’ initiatives, such as car-free travel
- Promoting the work of the Swanage & District Chamber of Trade and supporting the organisers of local events to further enhance the cultural offering of the town
- Recognising the importance of culture to the local economy, especially outside of the main season

The Town Council supports regenerative tourism and the local economy by:

- Operating a range of Visitor Services, including the award-winning Information Centre on Shore Road, Peveril Boat Park, and beach huts
- Maintaining the Main Beach to Blue Flag standards and procuring the services of RNLI lifeguards
- Operating a number of long-stay and short-stay car parks, providing low-cost residents’ parking
- Operating Swanage Market
- Co-ordinating a programme of events throughout the year in its parks and open spaces
- Funding the town centre and seafront Festive Lights, organising a ‘Switch-On’ event and the ‘Artisans on the Beach’ each Christmas

Between 2026 and 2030, the Town Council will:

- Collaborate with local partners to create a sustainable tourism strategy for Purbeck
- Continue to implement opportunities from the Seafront Masterplan
- Invest in the Green Seafront, thereby providing an enhanced event space, improved accessibility, increased biodiversity and preserving the town’s heritage
- Work with partner organisations to improve the town’s cultural offering
- Improve visitor information and wayfinding
- Consider proposals to improve access from the sea

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

The Town Council supports health and wellbeing and enhances community safety by:

- Providing a range of community services, including allotments, cemeteries, public conveniences, and bus shelters
- Providing 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
- Providing financial support for the Citizens Advice service
- Working with Accessible Swanage to implement actions from the accessibility audit
- Collaborating with partner organisations to protect public services
- Funding a network of Town Centre CCTV cameras and Speed Indicator Devices
- Leasing the Town Hall Annexe to Dorset Police

Between 2026 and 2030, the Town Council will:

- Seek opportunities to improve sports facilities, including working with the Day's Park Community Sport Trust CIO to provide enhanced amenities, including a new artificial sports pitch
- Seek opportunities to enhance wellbeing facilities and related projects across the town, including support for Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust's wellbeing project
- Support the Swanage Community Housing Group in their efforts to deliver housing for social rent for local people
- Seek opportunities to provide additional accessible public conveniences
- Continue future phases of the skatepark refurbishment alongside Swanage Skatepark Community Project
- Work with partner organisations to improve community transport provision
- Promote the town's footpath network and work with partners to increase access to the countryside

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE AND PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

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

- Helping shape 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
- Supporting local-needs housing and resisting the loss of affordable housing stock
- Preserving and promoting knowledge about the town's unique heritage

The Town Council supports planning for the future and preserving heritage by:

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

Between 2026 and 2030, the Town Council will:

- Secure the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan containing policies to protect the town's character and ensure that future development delivers benefits for local residents
- Explore options for the preservation of the WW2 gun emplacement at Peveril Point
- Support public access to local history and heritage by working with Swanage Museum
- 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

PROTECTING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND
ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

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

- Remaining committed to reducing the Town Council's carbon footprint
- Implementing projects from the Swanage Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Ensuring that all new construction projects, including the Green Seafront Scheme, have sustainability embedded within the design
- Managing its parks and open spaces to adapt to climate change and identify opportunities to increase biodiversity.
- Developing the Motion for the Ocean to protect Swanage's Blue Flag beach and Marine Protection Zone

The Town Council supports the protection of the natural environment and addresses the climate crisis by:

- Supporting local community environmental projects delivered by community groups
- Delivering on actions identified in the Environmental Action Plan, Motion for the Ocean Action plan and the Greenspace Strategy
- Requiring all events held on Town Council land to complete an Environmental Impact Assessment and prohibiting single-use plastics
- Keeping the beach and seafront litter free, including working with Dorset Council, Beach Buddies, and Swanage Landers to achieve this
- Managing many green spaces to enhance biodiversity

Between 2026 and 2030, the Town Council will:

- Continue to work with Sustainable Swanage and other community organisations, e.g. Planet Purbeck
- Continue to review and deliver the elements of the Carbon Neutral Plan
- Explore options to reduce reliance on fossil fuels
- Continue its commitment to increase tree planting in Swanage and develop a tree warden scheme
- Explore obtaining additional Green Flag Awards and the inclusion of Town Council land in the Purbeck National Nature Reserve, where appropriate
- Increase the number and wattage of electric car charging points in its car parks
- Consider ways to increase active travel and accessibility across the town