

Spring Edition 2026

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

What's Inside This Edition

- Spring Arriving in Swanage
- An Introduction to Cllr Chris Tomes, Cllr Jules Dorrington and Cllr Phil Burridge
- Tree Planting and Protection in the Town
- Cutting Carbon Emissions in Swanage
- Shore Road Highway Enhancement Project Update
- Dropped Kerb Installation Across the Town
- Precept Charges Explained for 2026/27
- Tennis Courts Resurfaced with Astro Turf

We're committed to keeping you informed about the Council's work, and just as importantly, hearing your views. You can now reach us through our new dedicated email address: comms@swanage.gov.uk, where you can also share your feedback or to sign up for future editions of our newsletter.

SPRING HAS ARRIVED IN SWANAGE

Spring has finally arrived, bringing longer days, milder weather and those first bright bursts of colour across Swanage. From the daffodils opening along our footpaths to the sunshine breaking through over the seafront, it's lovely to see the town waking up after winter.



A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO...

Councillor Chris Tomes

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

Having lived in Swanage all my life, the town has always meant a great deal to me. It's where I grew up, and I have seen first-hand how strong and supportive our community can be. It is important to give something back to the place you call home. I had the privilege of serving as Carnival Chairman for four years, when I met so many people, from local groups and businesses to residents, who simply wanted to help make Swanage the best it can be. Becoming a Town Councillor was a natural step giving me the opportunity to represent residents, listen to their views, and play a part in helping shape the future of the town I am proud to call home.



What key issue are you most passionate about?

I'm particularly passionate about supporting community events and the volunteers who make so much happen. Events like the Carnival bring people together, support local businesses and help create the strong sense of community. I also care deeply about keeping Swanage a vibrant and welcoming place for both residents and visitors. That means supporting local groups, maintaining our town's facilities and public spaces, and making sure that the voices of local people are heard when decisions are made. Most importantly, I believe in protecting the community spirit that makes Swanage unique.

What do you love most about Swanage?

It's a town where people look out for each other, where volunteers step forward to help, and where local groups work hard to keep traditions alive. We are also incredibly lucky with where we live. Being surrounded by such beautiful coastline and countryside is something I think many of us never take for granted. Whether it's walking along the seafront, enjoying the beach, or just seeing the town busy with visitors in the summer reminds me how special Swanage is. But more than anything, it's the people that make the town what it is.

Councillor Jules Dorrington

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

Having lived in Swanage for over forty years, the town has always been an important part of my life. However, the arrival of my four young grandchildren prompted me to think more deeply about its future. Watching them grow up has made me reflect on what Swanage will be like for the next generation. While they may choose to live elsewhere when they are older, I want to help ensure that if they do stay, they grow up in a town that offers opportunity and a strong sense of community. For me, that means a town with the jobs, housing and amenities young people and families need. Becoming a councillor felt like a practical way to contribute to that future.

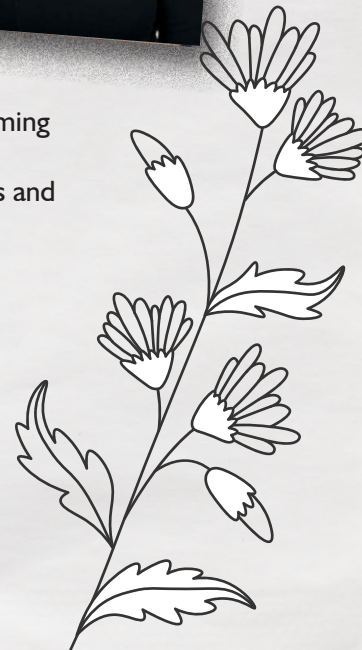


What key issues are you most passionate about?

I feel most passionate about the issues that help ensure Swanage remains a thriving and welcoming place for future generations. I care deeply about the character of the town and its strong community spirit, while also recognising the importance of housing, employment opportunities and services that allow young people and families to build their lives here.

What do you love most about Swanage?

What I love most about Swanage is its community spirit and the many festivals and events that bring people together throughout the year. Combined with its beautiful natural surroundings, these create a unique place that offers so much to everyone who chooses to call it home.



Councillor Phil Burridge

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

I was born in Everest Maternity Hospital and went to local schools. After leaving school I remained living in Swanage throughout my working life and during that time I was a volunteer on-call firefighter at Swanage fire station becoming the Station commander in July 2001 retiring in June 2023. Working to protect the safety of Swanage and its residents for over forty years, on retirement I decided that I could still be involved in the town. I believe that Swanage has a lot to offer to its residents and the visitors to our town and by sitting on the council I can help shape the future as we go forward.



What key issues are you most passionate about?

I believe that Swanage cannot stand still and exist. We now see more housing development growing the town's population so we need to ensure that we all can benefit from living in such a great location, by making sure that the correct infrastructure is in place such as the healthcare, leisure facilities and schools.

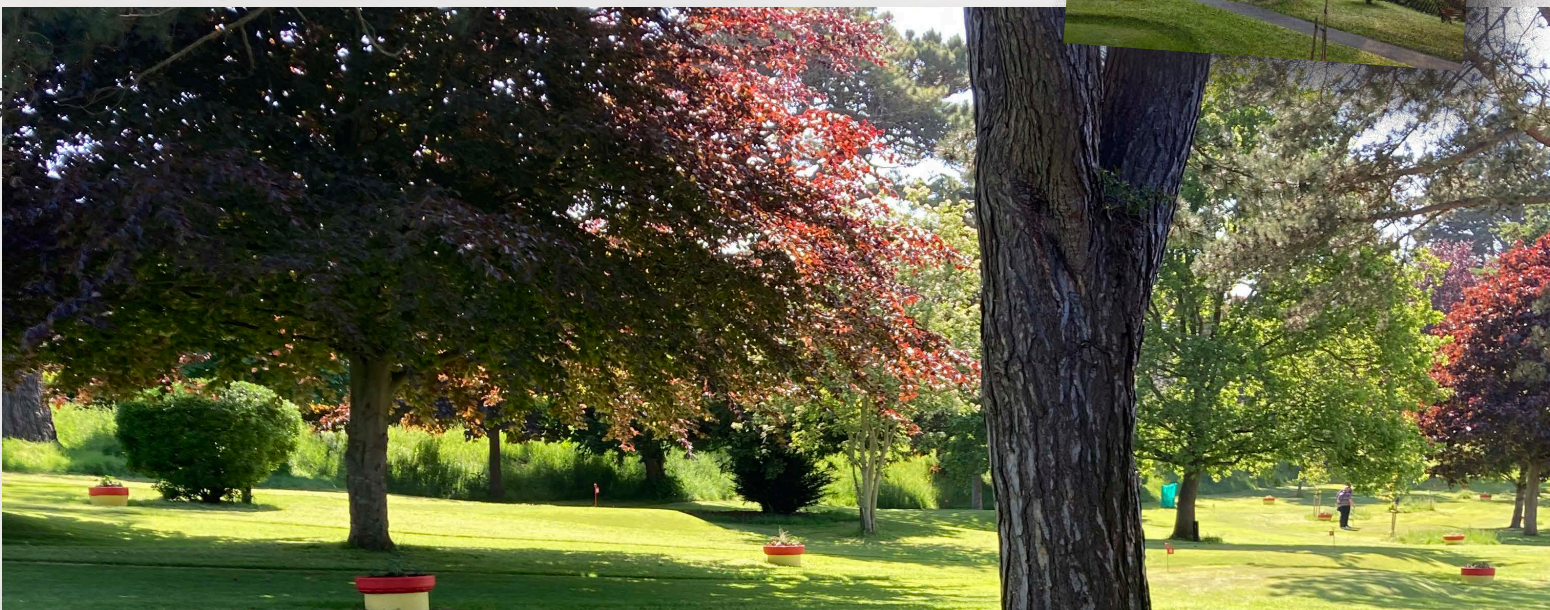
What do you love most about Swanage?

What I love most about Swanage is the community spirit and the different groups and clubs that look after all the different age groups and people with disabilities that share our town and surrounding areas.

LET'S TALK TREES... DO YOU KNOW YOUR ASH FROM YOUR ELDER?

Sustainable Swanage held an event at the Focus Centre recently with the spotlight on trees. Simon Goldsack, Chair of Trees for Dorset, shared what's happening across the county, what species are most needed locally and how the community can contribute to growing and planting trees across Swanage and Purbeck. George Roman, Grounds & Estates Manager for Swanage Town Council, explained how the Town Council intend to bring their tree planting strategy to life. A call to create a new group of Tree Wardens - a national scheme - supporting surveying, planting and acting as tree ambassadors across the town was enthusiastically taken up by at least 8 volunteers.

Whether you're passionate about planting, curious about becoming a Tree Warden, keen to support a local orchard or simply want Swanage to be greener, cooler and bursting with birdsong, you can get more information at: www.sustainableswanage.uk



CUTTING CARBON EMISSIONS IN SWANAGE

Our carbon footprint has dramatically reduced - from 94 tonnes of CO² in 2022 to 39 tonnes in 2025, representing nearly a 60% reduction in emissions.

Additionally, our latest energy report shows that 2025 recorded the lowest energy use since monitoring began in 2022. Total electric and gas consumption fell to 307,458 kWh, down from 342,222 kWh in 2024 - a 10.1% reduction in energy use in just one year.

This is thanks to a range of sustainability measures, including:

- Switching to 100% green electricity
- Introducing electric vehicles
- Installing solar panels at the Depot and Beach Gardens Pavilion
- Upgrading to LED lighting and improving insulation

In 2025 alone, our solar panels generated 29,310 kWh of renewable energy, helping reduce reliance on the grid and supporting cleaner energy for the wider community. While national carbon reporting rules don't allow this exported renewable energy, or the many trees that have been planted by the Council, to be counted in our official carbon footprint, it still brings real environmental benefits to Swanage.

We're continuing to work towards our 2030 net zero carbon target, with further improvements being explored.



NEXTS STEPS... SHORE ROAD HIGHWAY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Dorset Council has now identified the preferred option for the Shore Road Enhancement Project. After reviewing all available evidence, engaging with local Councillors, listening to residents and examining what is technically achievable, the preferred option is to retain twoway traffic on Shore Road while removing onstreet parking to enable wider footways and deliver publicrealm enhancements. This decision was informed by a presentation of the results from the Summer 2025 community engagement by Dorset Coast Forum. The engagement identified that the public preference is for two-way traffic to be retained on Shore Road. Further design works, discussions and a statutory consultation will follow, and we shall keep you informed.

The full report and further information can be found at: www.swanage.gov.uk/SeafrontEnhancements.



DROPPED KERBS BEING INSTALLED ACROSS THE TOWN

You may have spotted new dropped kerbs appearing around town. These improvements are the result of a joint project between Swanage Town Council, Accessible Swanage and Dorset Highways to improve accessibility in the town centre and along key routes.

For wheelchair and mobility scooter users, people with pushchairs, and anyone who finds high kerbs difficult, these small changes make a real difference. In some locations, the historic paving means some of the dropped kerbs in our town are quite subtle – so if you're parking, please take a moment to check you're not blocking one.

These works have been completed at:

- Shore Road (near The Mowlem) – one new pair of dropped kerbs
- Priests Way (around the sycamore tree) – two new dropped kerbs
- North Beach exit – new dropped kerb
- High Street (north side, opposite Mount Pleasant Lane) – two new tapers and two dropped kerbs
- Commercial Road (at Station Road junction) – new tarmac fillets
- Mermond Place (east side, at Station Road junction) – tarmac fillet and minor kerb repairs
- Mount Pleasant Lane (at High Street junction) – tarmac fillets and minor kerb repairs

PRECEPT CHARGE FOR 2026/27

Swanage Town Council has set its precept for 2026/27 at £1,159,000. For residents, this means the annual charge for a Band D property will be £192.64, which is an increase of £3.78 for the year – equating to just 7 pence more per week. The total amount raised from the precept will increase by 6.8%, underpinned by an increase in the tax base.

Although the council faces rising costs – particularly in staffing, business rates and repairs – it has worked hard to keep the increase to household bills as low as possible.

During this year's budget setting the Council has:

- Maintained appropriate reserves to ensure financial resilience in uncertain economic times, providing stability for the Council's longterm responsibilities and supporting future work such as land stabilisation and upgrading children's play equipment.
- Continued ongoing efficiency work across council services, including retendering contracts to achieve best value.
- Prioritised spending on essential services and protecting public assets such as cemeteries, parks, play areas, public conveniences, seafront facilities and community buildings.

The result is a balanced budget that protects important local services, supports community organisations, delivers key projects and maintains adequate reserves. All of this has been achieved while keeping the impact on residents as low as possible, demonstrating the Council's commitment to careful financial stewardship and protecting the wellbeing of our community.

TENNIS COURTS RESURFACED

Courts 4 and 5 at Beach Gardens have now been fully resurfaced with astro turf. The improved surface will offer a better playing experience all year round and support the continued growth of tennis in Swanage.

Cllr Chris Tomes, Chairman of the Sport and Leisure Working Party, commented:

“We’re delighted to see Courts 4 and 5 newly resurfaced with modern astro turf, improving the quality and accessibility of tennis facilities for the whole community. The Council is proud to have contributed £15,000 toward this upgrade... Enhancing local sporting opportunities plays an important role in supporting physical and mental wellbeing, particularly for children and young people... Our thanks go to the Tennis Club for their continued partnership and commitment to providing excellent sporting opportunities in Swanage.”

Liz Le Fevre, Swanage Tennis Club Committee Member, added:

“The Tennis Club were very pleased to see the old tarmac courts 4 and 5 resurfaced with new astro turf... All 5 courts now have astro turf surfaces. Members were delighted with the new surface which drains well, is less slippery, dries quickly and allows play even in winter... The surface reduces stress on the ankles, knees and hips, and gives a softer landing if a player falls... The Tennis Club wish to thank Swanage Town Council for all their help with this project.”

We hope everyone enjoys the enhanced playing experience!

Further to this, Councillors have agreed to the conversion of a tennis court to accommodate pickleball - one of the fastest-growing sports in the country. Schools will be able to use the pickleball court for free in the first year.

