

Edition

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2026

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

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New Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor Elected for 2026/27

In May, I had the great honour and privilege of being elected as Mayor of Swanage.

I'm incredibly grateful to my fellow councillors for placing their trust in me, and I'm looking forward to serving our wonderful town and community over the coming year.

I would also like to thank Cllr Mike Bonfield for all his support, guidance, and friendship during my time as Deputy Mayor and throughout my time on the Council. Mike has done a fantastic job as Mayor this past year, and I certainly have some big shoes to fill.

I'm also delighted that Cllr Sarah Vile was elected as Deputy Mayor. Sarah is a dedicated councillor who cares deeply about our town, and I know she will be a fantastic support over the coming year.

A huge thank you as well to all the council staff, volunteers, community groups, residents, businesses, friends, and family who do so much to make Swanage such a special place.

It will be a real honour to represent our town as Mayor, and I will do my very best to serve the community with pride, commitment, and openness throughout the year ahead.



Cllr Chris Tones and Cllr Sarah Vile



A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO...

Councillor John Bishop

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

I became a Councillor because in my retirement I wanted to help. Having worked for 40 years in large organisations I hoped my financial and management experience would be of assistance to the Town Council.

What key issue are you most passionate about?

I believe presently there are two key issues that Swanage must complete. The seafront stabilisation project and Days Park redevelopment, both of which need significant funding but offer huge, longer-term benefits to the town. Both projects will require collaboration with outside organisations, which will allow the Council to demonstrate its experience of working with experienced partners.

What do you love most about Swanage?

I may have been born in a big city, but I grew up in Swanage and whilst I went away to follow my career I always knew I would retire in Swanage. I am very pleased I did.



Councillor John Lejeune

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

My wife and I were first approached by Bill Trite to stand for the Council back in 2012 and although I was not successful, my wife enjoyed four years of serving on the Council. Due to work commitments, it was not until 2024 when I could stand – and was elected.

What key issues are you most passionate about?

I have always liked figures and having a background in building maintenance, amongst other occupations over the years, I was interested and signed up to join three of the main committees: Planning and Consultation, Community Services and the Tourism and Local Economy Committees. I also serve as Vice Chair of the Swanage Chamber of Trade.

What do you love most about Swanage?

I enjoy meeting the residents of Swanage who talk to me about a wide range of subjects and it is by listening to their views and perspectives which help to inform the best way forward. I was reminded by the then Town Mayor we all leave our political views at the door of the chamber and that is what I feel every Councillor has done.



Councillor Gary Suttle

Why did you want to be a Councillor?

I first became interested in the Council at the time of the Marina, fascinated by the debates and the local referendum. I found myself wanting to be part of how the Town worked. In 1991, I was fortunate to be elected as an independent member of Swanage Town Council going on to join the Conservative team and, apart from one year, have served ever since.

What key issues are you most passionate about?

The economic success of the town and the provision of services, including housing for local people, are my passions. Swanage Town Council is a way to ensure that local people have a voice, the interaction with the community and listening to local views is one of its greatest strengths and one that I have the greatest respect for.

What do you love most about Swanage?

Swanage is my home, I was born here, married and brought up my children here, started my business here and I cannot think of anywhere else I would ever live. The community always stands as one when threatened, it's a force to be reckoned with. On so many occasions, closures and changes have been withdrawn when faced with the Swanage Community, who would not want to be part of it



Opening of the Bill Trite Wing at the Focus Centre

Part of the Focus Centre (previously Swanage Youth Club) has been dedicated to the memory of former long-serving councillor Bill Trite, recognising his key role in helping save the building for community use. The "Bill Trite Wing" was unveiled at a ceremony attended by his partner, local representatives and many others who knew and worked with him.

The Focus Centre, operated by the Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust, provides a wide range of support services for the community, including help with wellbeing, housing and family needs, as well as facilities for young children and parents. A new café, run by local organisation Allsort'd, will also offer training and employment opportunities for young people.

A commemorative plaque celebrates Bill's lasting contribution to safeguarding the centre for the benefit of Swanage.



Children's Litter Poster Competition Winners Announced

Earlier this year, children in the town were invited to participate in a litter poster competition, and there were 31 entries full of creativity and great ideas to help keep our area clean and green.

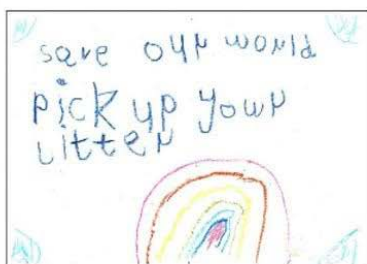
Choosing the winners was no easy task, but after careful judging by Cllr Mike Bonfield (Mayor 2025/26), Cllr Cliff Sutton (Chairman of Environment and Green Spaces Committee) and Gail Percival (Assets and Compliance Manager), we're excited to announce our winners, who are all from two local schools: Skye, Phoebe, Benji and Lincoln.



Cllr Bonfield presented them all with a certificate and a small prize during their school assemblies.

A big thank you to everyone who took part – the standard was incredibly high!

These four designs will now be made into signs to be displayed across our town and raise awareness that littering is not acceptable.



Swanage Neighbourhood Plan Enters Regulation 14 Consultation

The draft Swanage Neighbourhood Plan, prepared by a local Steering Group of Town Councillors and community members, was published for Regulation 14 consultation between June and August. This served as an opportunity for residents, businesses and local organisations to help shape the future of the town, including housing, the environment, the economy and Swanage's character.

Thank you to everyone who attended our engagement events across the Town! Now the consultation has ended, all feedback will be reviewed by the Steering Group, Swanage Town Council and planning consultants, and the Neighbourhood Plan will be updated where necessary during 2026. The revised Plan will then be submitted to Dorset Council for further consultation and independent examination in early 2027. If the examiner approves the Plan, a local referendum will be held, allowing residents to vote on its adoption. If more than 50% vote in favour, Dorset Council will formally adopt the Plan, making it part of the statutory development plan for the area by spring/summer 2027.

Green Seafront Scheme Progress

Dorset Council recently confirmed financial support for the delivery of the Green Seafront Scheme and their own Shore Road scheme, with £2.5 million awarded to the stabilisation works. You can read more about the Dorset Council financial support for the project here: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/news/dorset-council-backs-5m-investment-to-improve-and-safeguard-swanage-seafront-.

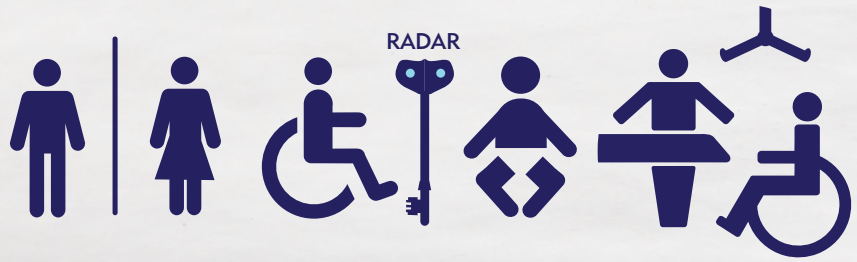
The Town Council has submitted planning applications for the New Option and Essential Option to Dorset Council for consideration.

Two engagement events were held during July, and we would like to thank the local residents who took the time to discuss the plans with Town Council officers and elected representatives. Keep an eye on the project webpage for more information: <https://www.dorsetcoasthaveyoursay.co.uk/swanage-green-seafront-stabilisation>.



A Spotlight On... Our Public Conveniences

Swanage Town Council provides a range of public convenience facilities for residents and visitors, including changing places facilities at North Beach and a new composting toilet at Godlingston Cemetery. Opening hours are designed to offer a consistent and manageable level of service throughout the year, minimising the impact of vandalism.



During June, July and August, the main public conveniences are open from 8.00am to 8.00pm.

A flexible approach is applied where operationally feasible to reflect periods of increased demand. For example, when events are happening, they may be open until 11.00 pm and during the exceptionally busy Spring Bank Holiday weekend, facilities that would normally close at 6.00pm remained open until approximately 8.00pm, supported by the discretion and flexibility of the Council's cleaning contractor.

Full details of opening times for all public conveniences in the town are available on the Council's website: www.swanage.gov.uk/PublicConveniences.

A Visit from the Lady Mayor of the City of London and the Master Mercer

Swanage Town Council welcomed the Lady Mayor of London, Dame Susan Langley, along with the Master Mercer, Alice Hohler, their consorts, and around 170 members of the London Livery Companies in June. Guests were greeted at the Town Hall by the Town Crier and enjoyed a brief history of the building. They viewed the historic Town Hall façade, brought from London by George Burt, and toured the building, where the civic party showed particular interest in Mercers' Company artefacts. The façade, originally built on Cheapside in 1670 and featuring the Mercers' Maiden, is regarded as an outstanding example of post-fire London architecture. The visit highlighted Swanage's historic links with the City of London and showcased one of the town's key heritage features.



L to R: Cllr Sarah Vile, Dame Susan Langley, Cllr Chris Tones and Alice Hohler