

SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2030



The Strategic plan outlines our vision, to create a town council that is financially self- sufficient whilst providing services that give residents the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and feel supported in their community.

Background

The Town Council recognises that although it does not have the levels of internal expertise or levels of funding of that held by larger councils, it still needs to focus its resources and staff to obtain Best Value for funding. Many procedures are already in place to ensure this and the '5 year Plan' for the Town Council demonstrates its willingness to develop sustainable income for the council and reduce the reliance on Precept.

The Strategy

This document outlines the Town Council's vision for development and improvement of both business income streams and engagement with the residents of Swanley that may require 'pump priming' or 'supportive/sustainable funding'.

Adapting to the changing environment

Councillors and staff recognise the current administration will end in 2024 and so there is plenty time to adopt and agree future plans with a reasonable chance of implementation of the majority of new schemes within this time frame. Risk factors can be attributed to changes in legislation, devolvement of powers, loss of income and staffing. For this reason the Strategic Plan will have an annual review by Full Council to ensure it is meeting its objectives within times scales.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 - 2030

Swanley Town Council's strategy is based on three main objectives:

THE ECONOMY

Swanley Town Council wishes to support the economic growth of the town to ensure its future prosperity. This means recognising the importance of the 'Masterplan' for the town's regeneration by Sevenoaks District Council and the success of the 'Masterplan' will be the driver of the local economy and supporting its further development. We will encourage the consultation and follow through the wishes of the people of Swanley, influencing landowners and local authorities whilst ensuring the positive regeneration of the town. We will also strive to become financially self-sufficient so as not to burden Swanley council tax payers and to keep council tax as low as possible.

In 2020 there will be unprecedented development work undertaken to the Town Centre by the developers U & I which will see the physical structure of the town centre change and the creation of many more business units. To this end Swanley Town Council has already assisted in the setting up of Swanley Business Partnership to engage with new and existing business and provide network opportunities.

THE ENVIRONMENT

We wish to ensure that the economic development so vital to this town is sympathetic to its environment, taking particular care over issues such as traffic movement and congestion, housing and commercial development, conservation and planning and any relevant legislation. We will do our utmost to improve the quality of life in Swanley and support the need for housing appropriate to the town.

Since 2018 the Town Council has worked with others to plant over 1000 new trees in its park and has invested in solar energy on its buildings. There are plans for an anaerobic digester to be provided in the park to dispose of waste and create gas for catering use. The council is to also elect its first 'Environmental Councillor' who will look at all council operations and how they could become more environmentally friendly.

THE COMMUNITY

As a Town Council we are the closest tier of authority to our community and work alongside many local groups to support, engage, advise and inform them of new initiatives. This is an important role and as community representatives we want to improve the quality and range of local services. To this end we are committed to becoming actively involved in all parts of our community by working closely with voluntary and community groups so that we are able to articulate their needs through effective communication.

We will work in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council, Kent County Council, and other agencies, including neighbouring parishes, so that we can

pursue our ambition to give our local community a better deal on local services and a stronger voice on decisions that affect their day to day lives. We will challenge these authorities to support our town.

We have improved existing events and created new events to engage further with our residents which have been well received, these include: Armed Forces Day, 1812, Light Up The Town, Bonfire Night, Circus Event.

SERVICE DELIVERY

We will aim to deliver the following for Swanley:-

Economy

- We will promote the consultation and wider Local Plan for Swanley and Hextable by Sevenoaks District Council and ensure that wishes of residents are recognised and the town develops in an aesthetic and meaningful way.
- Continue to maximise the income from Swanley Town Council assets in order to provide an income to the council that is sustainable and reduces the councils reliance on Precept.

Environment

- Throughout the consultation and delivery of the Local Plan for Swanley and Hextable by Sevenoaks District Council we will lobby for development of the town to be suitable with regards to traffic movement, pollution, conservation etc.
- Continue to ensure that the Winter Plan is delivered by Kent County Council, keeping the town accessible during inclement weather
- Continue to support the Swanley In Bloom initiative to brighten up outdoor spaces, recognise residents, schools and businesses that contribute to the initiative and ultimately make Swanley a better place to live
- Continue to promote pride in the town by supporting flag raising events such as Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Day and other Remembrance Events.

Community

- Continue to support residents using the Link as appropriate and to develop new services there to provide sustainable income.
- Continue to deliver and develop a range of events that will bring residents together in mutual celebration and participation.
- Continue to produce a regular Council newsletter keeping residents up to date with Council activities and local interest stories
- Support local schemes which help support those most in need in our community including: older people, living alone, young people, people with disabilities and low income families.
- Continue to provide outdoor entertainment in Swanley Park such as cinema evenings, circus and sporting events.

IMPROVING THE COUNCIL

We are committed to making the following improvements over the next 10 years:-

- Work toward the Gold Local Council Award which recognises the professionalism of local councils in delivering a range of services.
- Continue to ensure the utmost transparency in all Council business wherever possible.
- We will continue with the Mayoral tradition in Swanley. Activities such as the school cluster meeting, 'Just Bin It', Remembrance Day parade and Mayoral visits will continue always prioritising local events. The work of the Mayor will be focused to consider how he/she wishes to promote Swanley in the most positive terms.
- To develop the website and social media pages and they are accessible to all and operates with the highest level of transparency and up to date information about the Council and the community.
- Maintain the amount of community events that the Council hosts and maximise financial sustainability by developing existing partnerships with entertainment providers.
- Increase the financial sponsors and advertisers within the Council to assist in the self-sustainability aims.
- Invest in staff training to ensure that the workforce continue to feel motivated and valued in their roles and delivering excellent service to Swanley residents.
- To review all grass and verge cutting contracts with Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council to ensure that residents are receiving best value for the works.
- To review the rents across all our existing commercial tenants to ensure best value for Swanley residents.

NEW CAPITAL PROJECTS

Swanley Town Council are committed to the following new projects between now and 2030:-

RUGBY CHANGING FACILITIES

Working with the local Rugby Club we have allocated a site for a pitch and are currently seeking planning permission to install changing facilities, toilets and a kitchen/meeting room which will allow the club to develop further.

A new access point will be created from Leydenhatch Lane and parking will be provide on site to the Rugby Club. A lease will allow the club to seek external funding from that point to further improve their facilities and to ensure the club grows in size and membership to provide Swanley with a high quality team.

SOFTPLAY CENTRE

We have converted one of our barns in Swanley Park to provide a Softplay Facility and meeting room for small groups. It will also house the new park office and be supported with a café following the extension of the existing café facility. We have applied for planning permission and once obtained will have the equipment installed which will provide all year round activities in the park.

The new facility will cater for parties and small gatherings and will provide additional employment for local residents as we seek to use the facility 7 days a week.

CHRISTMAS IN SWANLEY

We will continue to develop the annual Light Up The Town event to as a free event for all and to generate greater participation. The seasonal activities will include access to pantomimes, meeting Santa Claus and various activities at an affordable price so as to allow all to participate. We will work with local organisations to ensure that all Swanley residents have every opportunity to take part in these events.

HOUSING

Swanley Town Council have started a number of house purchases to provide us with sustainable income for the future which will be rented out at commercial rates. Once the income stream is established we will look toward other housing projects in the town which could be made available to our residents such as Self Build Projects, Re-Development of Commercial sites or micro developments.

This will allow the council to assist local families in staying in Swanley and assist in providing affordable housing projects for first time buyers and others.

CEMETARY / CHAPEL OF REST

The Town Council is acutely aware of the lack of burial space within the town which is forcing residents to seek burial plots further away. The council feels that this is a service that should be provide within the town to allow loved ones to pay their respects without having to travel miles and get caught up in the congestion of the M25 and other roads.

The council have identified a viable location to create a cemetery and is looking to provide this as a service for the future. As funds become available the council will commission these works to begin and ensure that we remain sympathetic to the needs of our residents.

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

The Town Council is currently working with Sevenoaks Suns Basketball to provide land for the development of an £8 million facility that will not only provide professional and community level basketball but also many other hall based sport. The facility could support gymnastics, gym equipment, 5 a side football, dance, martial arts and a host of other activities.

The current plans also include a Full Size all weather pitch and tennis courts along-side the use of outdoor courts which will also double up as car parking. Supported by the Olympic Venue the facility should prove popular with people of all levels and abilities.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

GRANT FUNDING FOR LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

For some years we have found that the applications for grant funding from local groups has declined, so we have now made provision for applications all year round. We are keen to encourage local organisations to access the Council's funds and will consider a more robust promotional strategy to encourage more applications and the distribution of funds more widely in the town.

We will review our grant funding procedures with a view to making the fund more accessible to local groups to enable them to develop their aims for a better Swanley.

COMMUNICATIONS

The council will improve how we communicate with residents. The Town Crier will continue to develop as an informative, low cost newsletter that provides interesting and relevant information about the Town Councils activities. We will improve the website, Facebook and Twitter feeds to expand our communications, keep them up to date and stimulating for residents whilst keeping all informed on local happenings in the town. We will ensure that the Swanley Link is the hub of Swanley communications and provides information to those that are unable to access online and social media channels and for those that prefer a face to face approach.

PARTNERSHIPS

We will cultivate our relationships with all the key stakeholders in Swanley, such as the police, housing associations, town centre management, resident groups, GP surgeries, local businesses etc. to ensure that we take into consideration the wider needs of the community. We will support the growth of these stakeholders and lobby where we can to assist in the delivery of their aims and objectives for a better Swanley.

Swanley Town Council have played a key role in establishing Swanley Business Partnership and will continue to support its growth so that new and existing business are able to thrive with the town. We will work with the District and County Council to provide funding streams for training and awareness so that

relevant information is made available to the business community within the town.

SPORTS FORUM

The Town Council has been instrumental in setting up a Sports Forum in the town which allows sports clubs and organisations to come together to share resources, coaching expertise, equipment and apply for funding. It is hoped that this will continue to grow in size and as new or existing facilities come available to establish a permanent home for the forum as office or training centre.

The membership of the forum is open to clubs outside of the town that benefit the residents of the town. A clear membership of Swanley residents must be confirmed before resources can be provide but membership of the forum is currently free for the first year.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The Town Council obtained funding toward this project in 2018 with an expected completion in early 2020, but the town council will continue to support this group until the plan is accepted by the District Council. Members of this group already include a number of Town and District Councillors in addition to Town Council staff.

When complete the Neighbourhood Plan should help shape the way the town is developed in the future and will seek to influence developers to provide a sympathetic facility or housing in line with current structures. It will also help provide information to local business about the need for other types of employment within the town.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE OUR PROGRESS?

There are various committees that oversee the functions and activities of the Council. These committees will now be primarily focused on the vision of Swanley Town Council for 2020 and its main core objectives. We will ensure that the committees address the service delivery aims detailed in this document and challenge the progress of these plans to maintain drive and commitment to completion. Full Council will receive regular reports from the committees to act as the driver of results.

Swanley Town Council will update residents on our achievements through our various communication channels and ask for feedback from our community on how we are doing and take on board this feedback to develop the strategic plan. We will ensure our updates get to hard-to-reach groups and individuals to promote an all-inclusive town strategy.

An annual report detailing our financial progress and list the progress of each committee against the agreed aims and objectives to summarise how we are doing.

We will summarise our progress at the Annual Town Meeting each year and encourage residents to ask questions of our plan and our achievements in an open forum.

The council acknowledge that the strategic plan will be a 'living document' and may evolve as future plans for Swanley advance. As the plan evolves this document will be updated to reflect the modifications and reasons for such.

HOW TO CONTACT SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Our Correspondence Address:

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Our reception opening Hours at Swanley Link:

Monday – Friday: 9am – 5pm

Saturday: 9am – 12pm