

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.

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Swanley Town Council

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Background

At time of writing we are amidst a global pandemic and the United Kingdom has recently negotiated its exit from the European Union. However, despite uncertain times we must look forward and plan for the future. Without a vision for Swanley, we are at risk of the town falling behind in terms of modernisation, provisions and economic recovery.

This plan will set out a simple set of targets for Swanley Town Council to work towards with the support of Sevenoaks District Council.

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 the 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 2023 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 timescales.

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|---|-----------------------------|
| SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030 V1 | APPROVED 2020 |
| SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030 V2 | APPROVED 04/05/2021 |
| SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030 V2 | REVIEWED 11/05/2022 |
| SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030 V2 | REVIEWED 17/05/2023 |
| SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030 V2 | REVIEWED.../.../2024 |
| SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030 V2 | REVIEWED.../.../2025 |
| SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030 V2 | REVIEWED.../.../2026 |

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. The Town Council 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. The Council will also strive to become financially self-sufficient so as to not burden Swanley tax payers and to keep overall council tax as low as possible.

Swanley Town Council seeks to boost employment opportunity in the town and is a key stakeholder of the Chamber of Commerce. In 2020, the council also assisted in the setting up of Swanley Business Partnership to engage with new and existing business and provide network opportunities. In 2021 and further ahead we seek to build upon this and help create an effective network of Swanley businesses.

Swanley Town Council will also engage with prospective developers to push for improved employment opportunities around the town. This includes retaining and growing the shopping centre and stressing our desire not to see Swanley Square become overwhelmed by residential properties. This should be achieved through a fair balance between residential, business and/or leisure space within proposed developments, which will in turn better serve the community. Swanley Square currently lacks leisure, entertainment and an overall night time economy. Any new development in the centre should focus on these areas.



The Environment

It is the wish of the Town Council to ensure that the economic development, 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. Swanley Town Council will do its utmost to improve the quality of life in Swanley and support the need for housing appropriate to the town.

Since 2016 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. The Council is to also lobby Sevenoaks District Council to replace the closed recycling facilities once at Whiteoak Leisure Centre. There is much more to do going forward and the Council desirably would be 'Carbon Natural' by 2030.



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. The Town Council 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.

The Council 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.

The Council 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, Music Festival and many more.

Service Delivery

We will aim to deliver the following for Swanley:-

Economy

1. The Town Council 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.
2. 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 the Precept.
3. Continued lobbying to potential developers for a mixed use approach to developments in order to regenerate the town and create employment opportunities whilst tackling the housing shortage.

Environment

1. Throughout the consultation and delivery of the Local Plan for Swanley and Hextable by Sevenoaks District Council the Town Council will lobby for development of the town to be suitable with regards to traffic movement, pollution, health and wellbeing facilities, conservation etc.
2. Continue to ensure that the 'Winter Plan' is delivered by Kent County Council and assisting where possible, keeping the town accessible during inclement weather.
3. Continue to support the Swanley In Bloom initiative to recognise the efforts of residents, schools and businesses that contribute to the initiative.
4. Continue entry into South & South East in Bloom (S&SEiB) and increase floral displays across the town, making Swanley a better place to live and helping to support wildlife and fight climate change.
5. Continue to promote pride in the town by supporting flag raising events such as Armed Forces Day, Commonwealth Day, Remembrance Day and other Remembrance Events.
6. Continue to provide litter and dog bins alongside supplementary litter picks across our open spaces, all the while promoting recycling across our site.
7. Organise and run community education events in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy and S&SEiB, such as Spring Clean, Plant a Tree and Just Bin It.

Community

1. Continue to support residents using all our facilities as appropriate and to develop new services to provide sustainable income.
2. Continue to ensure the utmost transparency in all Council business wherever possible.
3. Continue to deliver and develop a range of events that will bring residents together in mutual celebration and participation.
4. Continue to produce a regular Council newsletter keeping residents up to date with Council activities and local interest stories.
5. 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.
6. Continue to provide outdoor entertainment in Swanley Park such as cinema evenings, circuses, shows and sporting events.
7. When appropriate, during moments of local or national crisis, divert resources to help support the community.
8. Continue to offer grant aid twice yearly to successful applicants who demonstrate a positive return to the community.
9. When appropriate, provide resources to support community good bodies such as: Swanley Sports Forum, Swanley Business Partnership and Chamber of Commerce.
10. The Town Council will continue with the Mayoral tradition in Swanley. Activities such as the school cluster meeting, Just Bin It, Remembrance Day. Mayoral visits will continue prioritising local events. The work of the Mayor will be focused to consider how they wish to promote Swanley in the most positive terms.



Improving the Council

Swanley Town Council is committed to making the following improvements over the next 10 years:-

1. Work towards and then maintain the Gold Local Council Award which recognises the professionalism of local councils in delivering a range of services.
2. To develop the website and social media pages to ensure they are accessible to all and operate with the highest level of transparency and up to date information about the Council and the community.
3. Grow the amount of community events that the Council hosts and maximise financial sustainability, by developing existing partnerships with entertainment providers.
4. Increase the financial sponsors and advertisers within the Council to assist in the self-sustainability aims.
5. Create new sustainable income streams which help decrease the Council's dependence on the Precept.
6. Invest in staff training to ensure that the workforce continue to feel motivated and valued in their roles all while delivering excellent services to Swanley residents.
7. 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.
8. To review the rents across all our existing tenants to ensure best value for Swanley residents.
9. To increase the number of awards applied for within S&SEiB, Green Flag and other accolade opportunities. Aim to increase the awards won year on year. In 2018 the Town Council received one S&SEiB award and one Green Flag award. In 2019 the Town Council received four S&SEiB awards and one Green Flag award.

10. Aim to become a 'Zero to Landfill' waste organisation, by recycling more and only using responsible waste management firms, who utilise energy recovery facilities when recycling is not possible.
11. Plant 2500 trees across the town and help support the implementation of pocket forests.



12. Supporting the use of zero emission transport by installing electric vehicle chargers at all our key sites and promoting use of travel by train, foot and cycling.
13. Generate renewable energy at each of our key facilities and ensure the Council is running on 50% renewable energy by 2030.
14. Seek to become a 'Carbon Neutral' organisation by 2030 through the above measures and through other initiatives such as: converting fleet into electric vehicles, ensuring improved energy efficiency certificates, installing greener sewage processes, reducing or removing single use plastic items and reducing paper usage.
15. Create a new community action group to support Swanley Park and help it best serve park visitors.
16. Purchase and retain privately rented houses. Look to expand the portfolio where possible.
17. Create additional sports and fitness provisions to better serve the growing community. New amenities should be offered across the town with a focus on The Olympic, The Recreation Ground and Swanley Park.
18. Working in partnership with NHS England, ensure new and improved health and wellbeing facilities are provided at Town Council sites.

Supporting the 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 but within budget allowances.

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

Town Crier will continue to develop as an informative, low cost newsletter that provides interesting and relevant information about the Town Council's activities. The Council will improve the website and all social media platforms to expand our communications, keep them up to date and stimulating for residents whilst keeping all informed on local happenings in the town. The Council will ensure that annual town reports are generated and that regular press releases are produced and promoted widely. In addition, notice boards will be maintained across the town and will be updated weekly.

Partnerships

The Council will cultivate relationships with all the key stakeholders in Swanley, such as the police, housing associations, town centre management, resident groups, GP surgeries, local businesses and many more. This will ensure that we take into consideration the wider needs of the community. The Council 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. The Town Council 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 proven base of Swanley users within each club must be confirmed before resources can be provided to any Forum members. Club membership of the forum is currently free.

Neighbourhood Planning

The Town Council obtained funding towards this project in 2018 with an expected completion in early 2022, 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.

Free Access

Annual parking permits for free parking at Swanley Park can be obtained through a simple application process which is applicable to Swanley residents only. Permits expire every March, but can be renewed by the same simple application process if the driver remains a resident of Swanley. Swanley residents will also retain free access to community events such as: Armed Forces Day, 1812, Firework Night and Light Up The Town.

How will the Town Council measure progress?

There are various committees that oversee the functions and activities of the Council. These committees will now be primarily focused on the strategic plan of Swanley Town Council and the objectives contained within. The Council 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 any achievements through the various communication channels and ask for feedback from the community on how the Council is doing and take on board this feedback to develop the strategic plan. Swanley Town Council will ensure all updates get to hard-to-reach groups and individuals to promote an all-inclusive town strategy.

An annual report will be produced detailing any financial progress and outlining the progress of each committee against the agreed aims and objectives to summarise how the Council is doing. Progress shall also be logged within the 'Progress Report' section of this plan which highlights the key actions taken by the Council against the set objectives.

A summary of progress shall be made at the Annual Town Meeting each year and residents will be encouraged to ask questions of the plan and any achievements in an open forum. The plan will then be reviewed by Council annually at the Annual General Meeting.

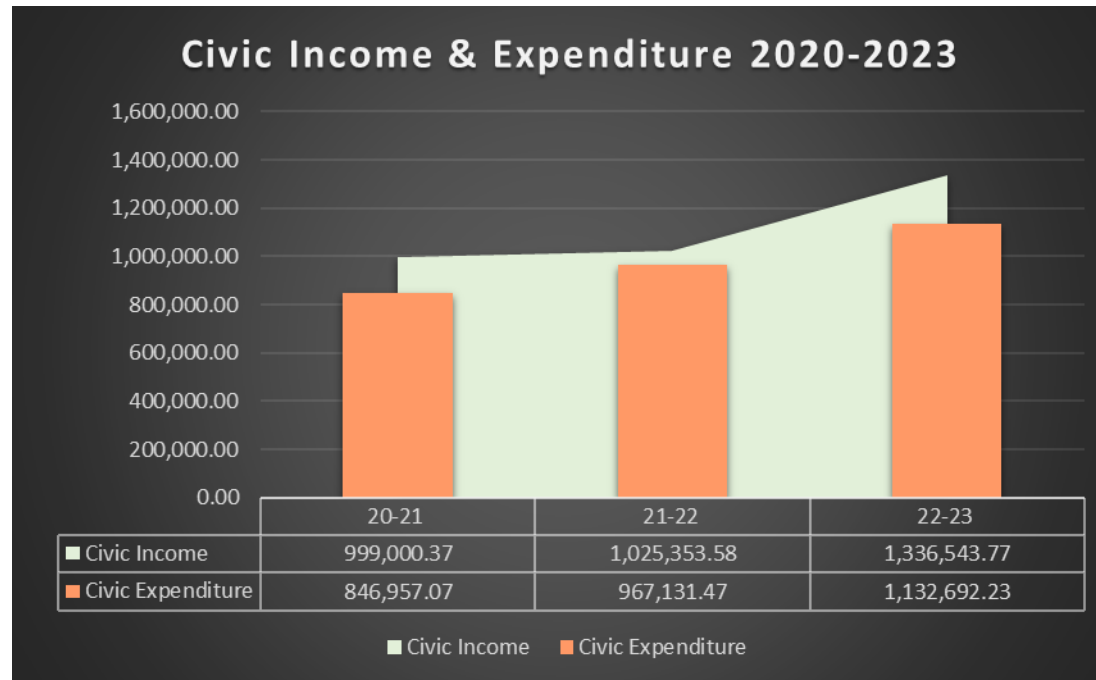
The Council acknowledge that the strategic plan will be a 'living document' and may evolve as future plans for Swanley advance. As the plan evolves this document will be updated to reflect the modifications and reasons for such.

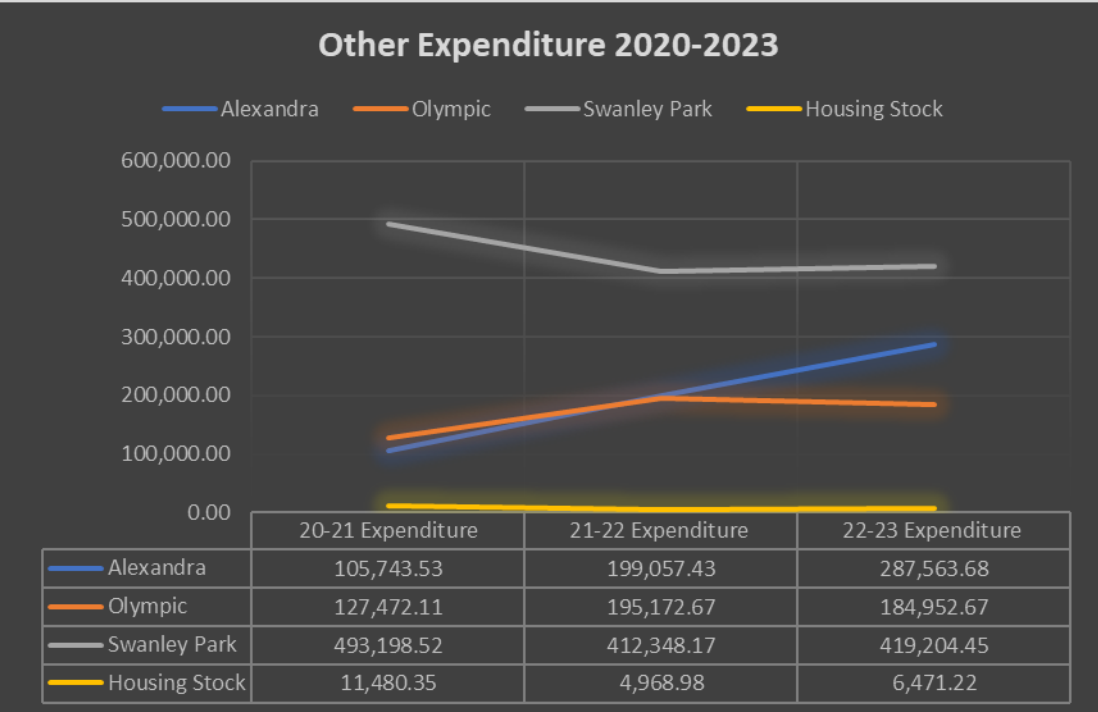
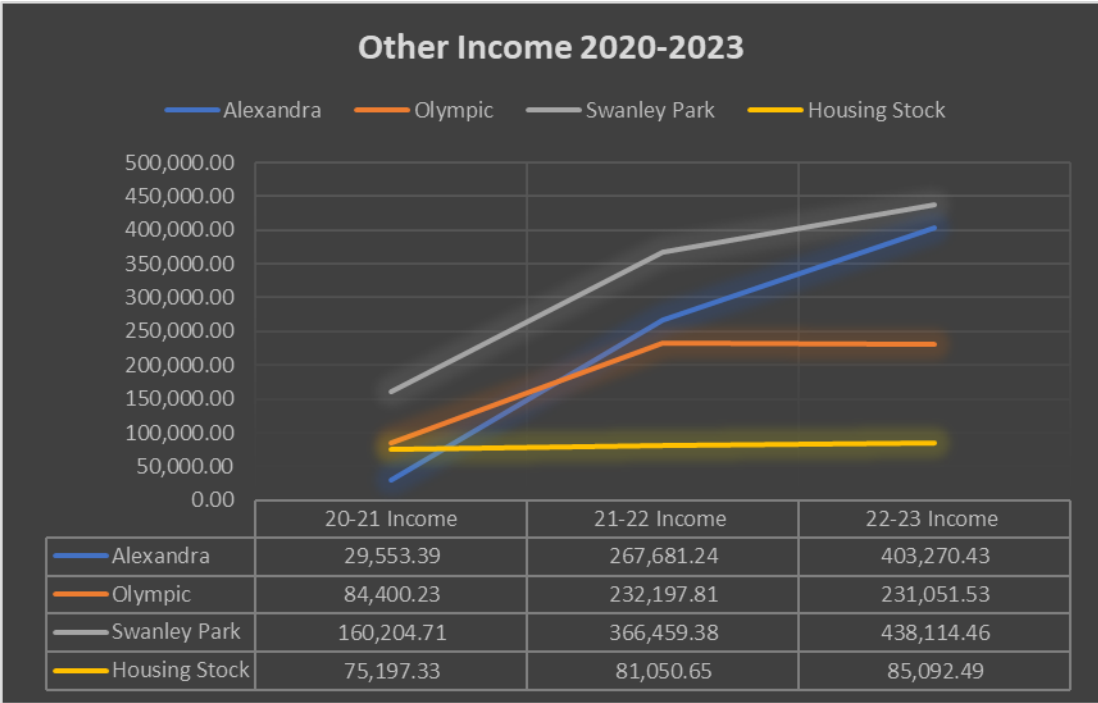
Supporting Information

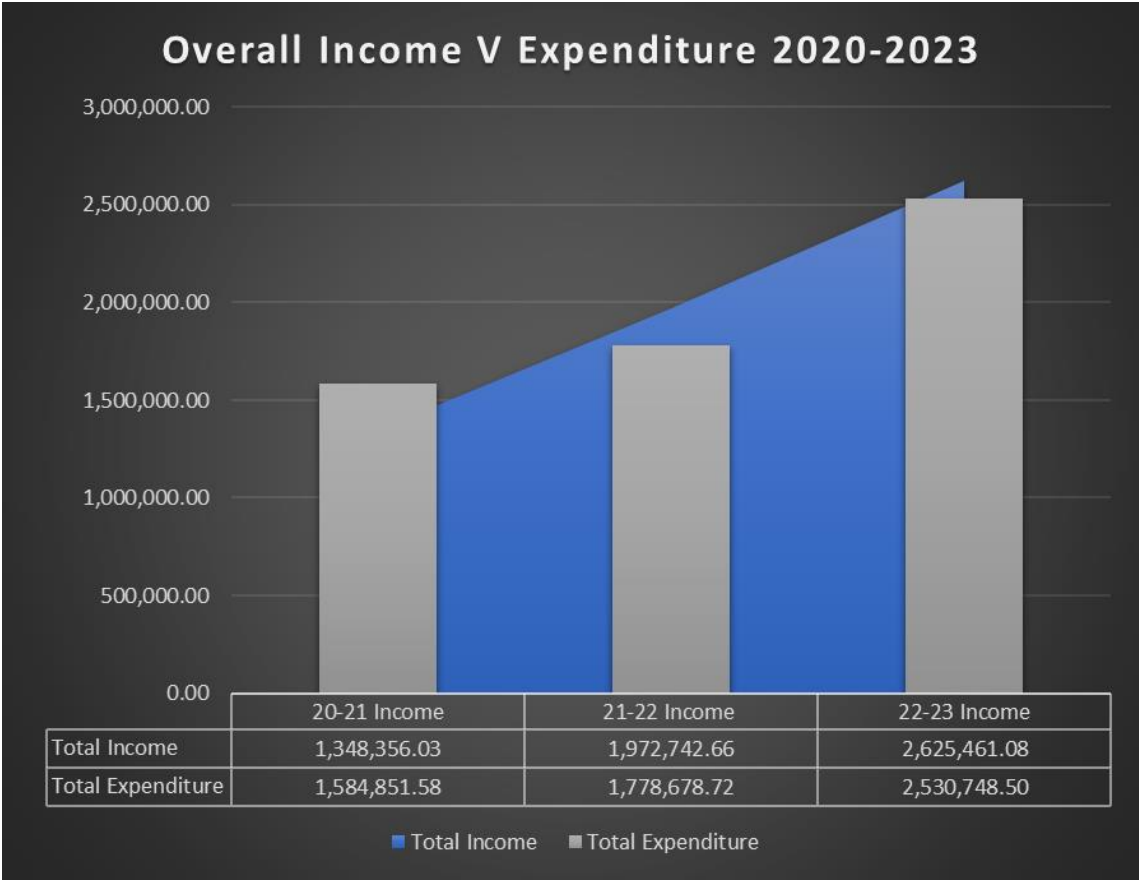
In order to deliver the plan, the Town Council needs resources, namely capital. Most of the Town Council's income arises from four main sources:-

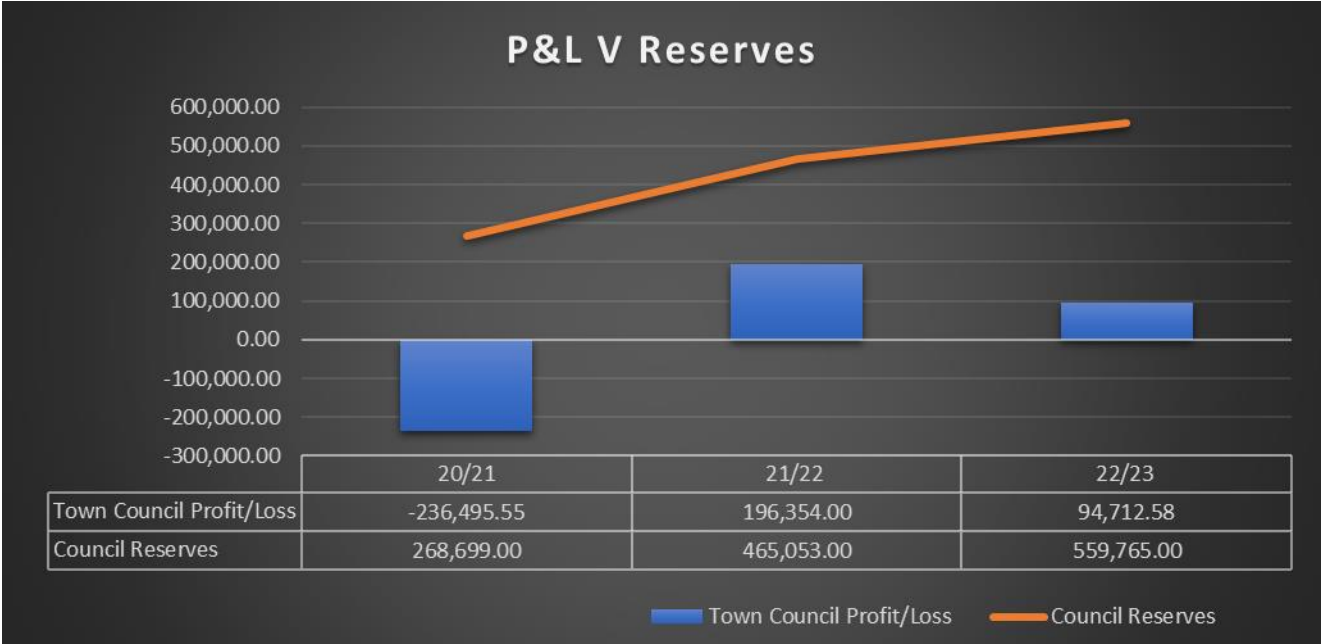
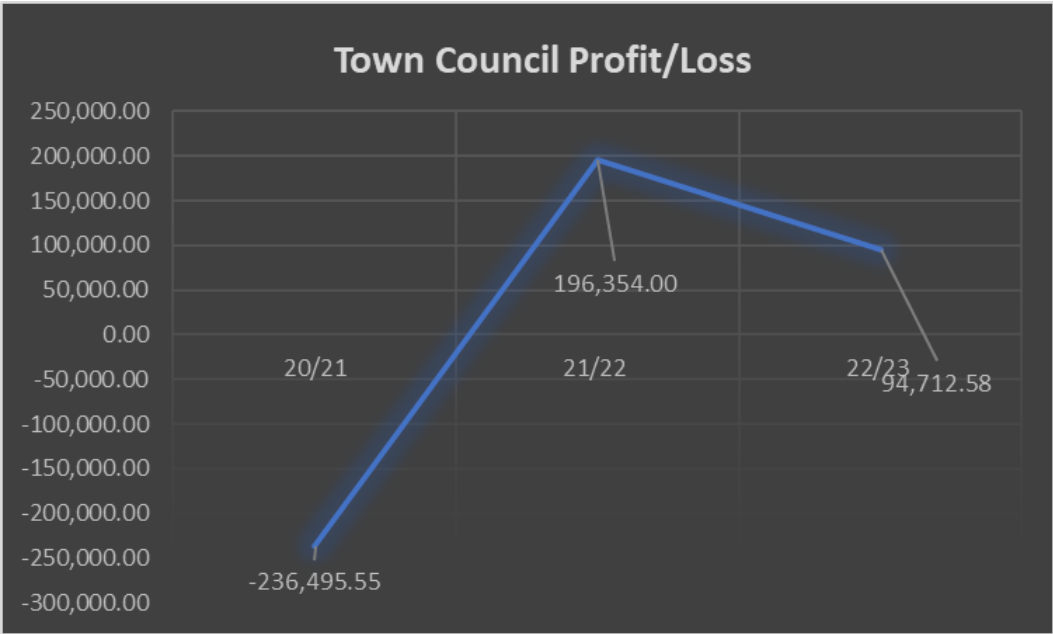
- The Precept
- Venue hire (Alexandra Suite/Olympic and Swanley Park)
- Rentals (House rentals, licences, leases and sports bookings)
- Any capital sums from developers to reflect the costs of providing/maintaining amenity areas etc.(CIL)

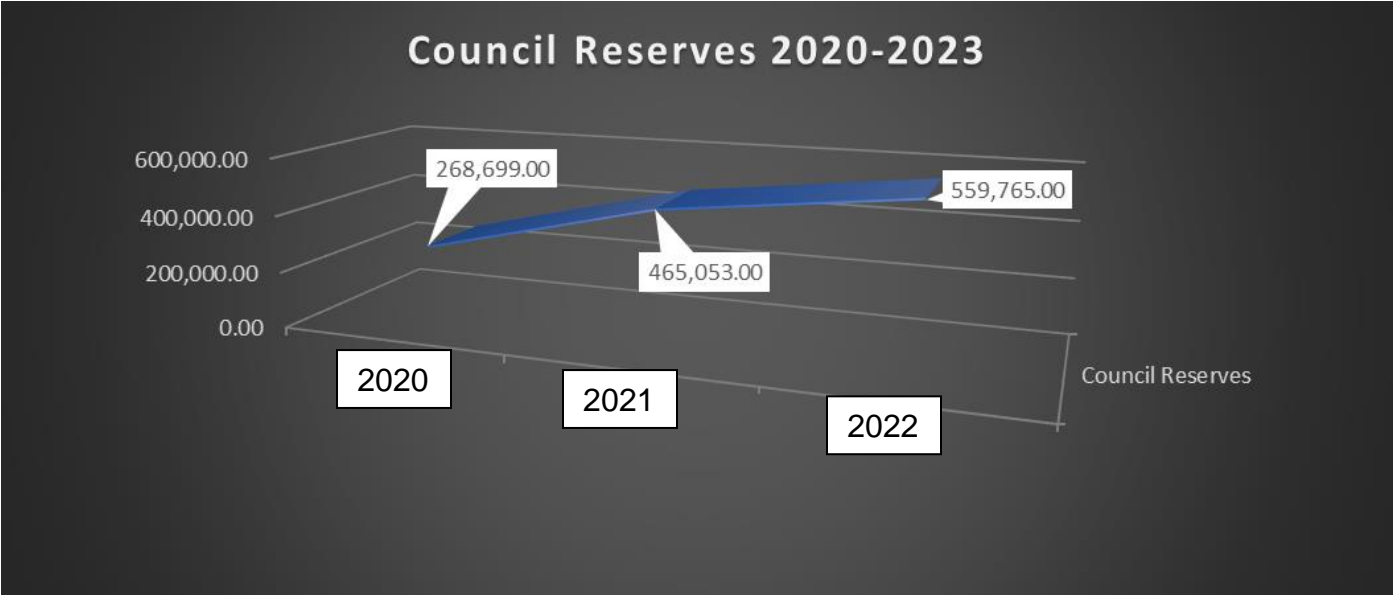
Budgets 2020 – 2023











Progress Report

| Improving the Council – 2020/2030 | | |
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| Number | Action Point | Action Taken |
| 1 | Work towards and then maintain the Gold Local Council Award which recognises the professionalism of local councils in delivering a range of services. | Gained and maintained. Due for re-assessment in June 2024. |

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| 2 | 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. | <p>Increased revenue: The Town Council have experienced an increase in revenue across departments and sources such as grants.</p> <p>Efficient budgeting: The Town Council have implemented effective budgeting strategies that allowed us to manage resources better and optimise spending.</p> <p>Economic growth: Despite a national down-turn on economic activity the Town Council was able to 'buck the trend' and across the board numbers are up.</p> <p>Savings on expenses: The Town Council identified ways to reduce expenses and streamline operations, which led to cost savings and increased efficiency.</p> <p>Unexpected windfalls: The Council have received unexpected windfalls, such as a few one-time grants, which boosted finances.</p> |
| 3 | Grow the amount of community events that the Council hosts and maximise financial sustainability, by developing existing partnerships with entertainment providers. | A full portfolio of events were held in 2022. When compared to pre-pandemic we actually hosted an additional two community events verses 2019. This was largely down to the Queens Jubilee Celebrations but also thanks to the introduction of the Swanley Skate Jam. |
| 4 | Increase the financial sponsors and advertisers within the Council to assist in the self-sustainability aims. | <p>2018/19 In Bloom Sponsorship = £7,731 Christmas Lights Sponsorship = £6558 Town Crier Advertisements = £540</p> <p>2022/23 In Bloom Sponsorship = £9320 Christmas Lights Sponsorship = £6643 Town Crier Advertisements = £4716</p> |

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| 5 | Create new sustainable income streams which help decrease the Council's dependence on the precept. | <p>Since 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Stock • Soft Play Centre • New Estate Contracts • New Office Lets • Dog Training • NB Tennis Academy • ANPR Car Parks • Dawn to Dusk Nursery |
| 6 | Invest in staff training to ensure that the workforce continue to feel motivated and valued in their roles all while delivering excellent services to Swanley residents. | Enrolled and supported five apprentices and one 'Kick Starter'. CPD for all staff, regular 1-2-1's and yearly KPI's set during appraisals. |
| 7 | 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. | <p>KCC contract reviewed and kept to ensure residents are guaranteed more cuts than the County standard. Last reviewed 2022.</p> <p>SDC contract sort but unviable due to structural changes made at the District. Last reviewed 2021.</p> <p>St Marys Church Yard contract reviewed and amendments made to ensure the agreement is viable.</p> <p>St Marys School contract notice served as no longer viable.</p> |
| 8 | To review the rents across all our existing tenants to ensure best value for Swanley residents. | 20 rental agreements reviewed in the past 12 months. |

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| 9 | To increase the number of awards applied for within South & South East in Bloom (S&SEiB), Green Flag and other accolade opportunities. Aim to increase the awards won year on year. In 2018 the Town Council received one S&SEiB award and one Green Flag award. In 2019 the Town Council received four S&SEiB awards and one Green Flag award. | <p>Entered five and won five 'S&SEiB' awards. A record year including three golds and a category winner.</p> <p>Entered four and won three Green Flags. A record year for our highly performing open spaces.</p> <p>Won Disability Confident Leader award, the fastest Council to obtain the award.</p> <p>Won Kent Lawn Tennis Association Award for best 'Community Venue' at Swanley Recreation Ground.</p> |
| 10 | Aim to become a 'Zero to Landfill' waste organisation, by recycling more and only using responsible waste management firms, who utilise energy recovery facilities when recycling is not possible. | <p>Our contract with Veolia ensures the collection of waste is converted to a supply of heating and electricity when traditional recycling is not possible. Incineration reduce the volume of waste by 90% which means much less ending up in landfill, of what is left biogas is generated which is captured and used to create electricity.</p> <p>Energy recovery from waste Veolia - YouTube</p> <p>Landfilling waste and biogas recovery Veolia - YouTube</p> |
| 11 | Plant 2500 trees across the town and help support the implementation of pocket forests. | <p>2020 – 600 Trees Planted at Swanley Park</p> <p>2020 – 300 Trees Planted at Archer Way</p> <p>2021 – 100 Trees Planted at Swanley Park</p> <p>2022 – 15 Trees for Queens Jubilee</p> <p>2023 – 3700 Trees Planted at West View, Pinks Hill, Elephant Park</p> |
| 12 | Supporting the use of zero emission transport by installing electric vehicle chargers at all our key | <p>Electric Vehicle Chargers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Sockets at The Olympic (2022) • One Socket at The Civic Centre (2023) • Infrastructure installed for chargers at The Birches (2023) |

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| | sites and promoting use of travel by train, foot and cycling | |
| 13 | Generate renewable energy at each of our key facilities and ensure the Council is running on 50% renewable energy by 2030. | Solar panels in place at the Civic Centre and the Olympic. New solar panels have been installed at Swanley Link. Investigations to install panels at Swanley Park and/or create a Solar Farm at a suitable site are ongoing. Our current supplier for energy uses 75% renewable energy sources. |
| 14 | Seek to become a 'Carbon Neutral' organisation by 2030 through the above measures and through other initiatives such as: converting fleet into electric vehicles, ensuring improved energy efficiency certificates, installing greener sewage processes, reducing or removing single use plastic items and reducing paper usage. | <p>A report produced in 2021 found that Swanley Town Council had a carbon footprint of 196.7 tons based on 2019-2020 data. During the pandemic it has been hard to accurately record a drop in carbon emissions. To be 'Carbon Neutral' by 2030 a reduction or offsetting of emissions of 19.7 per annum would need to be made over ten years.</p> <p>In 2021, improved energy efficiency certificates were sort at our least efficient properties. New solar panels were installed at Swanley Link and 100 trees were planted at Swanley Park.</p> <p>In 2022/23, over 3700 trees were planted across our parks. These have a five year maintenance plan with Tilhills in place.</p> |
| 15 | Create a new community action group to support Parks and help it best serve park visitors. | <p>In May 2021, Friends of Swanley Park was formed and key stakeholders and volunteers now meet every three months to help support the operations and future vision for Swanley Park.</p> <p>In April 2022, West View Community Group was formed and residents have helped shape and now volunteer to look after the Park.</p> |
| 16 | Purchase and retain privately rented houses. Look to expand the portfolio where possible. | Swanley Town Council maintain a stock of seven properties. As an when opportunities arise there are options to expand the portfolio. |

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| 17 | <p>Create additional sports and fitness provisions to better serve the growing community. New amenities should be offered across the town with a focus on The Olympic, The Recreation Ground and Swanley Park.</p> | <p>In 2021 NB Tennis Academy was launched and since then tennis usage has increased from two regular users to one hundred.</p> <p>Swanley Rugby Club were homed at Swanley Recreation Ground which helped secure the future of the club. The club invested grant monies totalling £14,000 to upgrade the changing rooms, which has benefited all clubs using the Ground.</p> <p>Two new small sized football pitches were created at Hawkhurst and Elephant Park shortly in 2021.</p> <p>Plans are afoot for a new Sports Hub facility at the Olympic, Veolia have supported this through a £75,000 grant and the District Council have supported the application with a £60,000 grant. Planning has held up progress on the scheme but we have managed to install the changing room units under permitted development.</p> <p>Swanley Skate Park was installed in 2022, this cost £250,000 and was funded through £220,000 worth of grants and £30,000 of CIL monies.</p> |
| 18 | <p>Working in partnership with NHS England, ensure new and improved health and wellbeing facilities are provided at Town Council sites.</p> | <p>In 2021, the Alexandra Suite became a Vaccine Centre for Swanley and beyond. Over 100,000 jabs were administered at the venue. Swanley Town Council continue to house the Oaks practice and are exploring a new build Health Hub facility.</p> <p>In 2022, the Cedars Surgery stepped in to help run our facility at The Oaks due to staffing shortages and a closer partnership between the two practices has been established.</p> |

HOW TO CONTACT SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Our Correspondence Address:

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Email: towncouncil@swanleytowncouncil.gov.uk

Website: www.swanleytowncouncil.gov.uk

Our reception opening Hours at Swanley Link:

Monday – Friday: 9am – 5pm

Saturday: 9am – 12pm