

# Tidy Towns Competition 2018

## ***Adjudication Report***

Centre: **Swords**

Ref: **160**

County: **Dublin**

Mark: **317**

Category: **H**

Date(s): **13/07/2018**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2017</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2018</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	50	52
Streetscape & Public Places	50	40	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	39	41
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	35	36
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	20	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	36
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>317</b>

### **Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:**

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Swords Sord Colmcille chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. Swords is very welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2018 in its Anniversary Year and in your 13th year of entry into the Competition. Congratulations to Swords for winning so many awards last year including the Silver Medal in the Tidy Towns Competition, the All-Ireland Diversity Award, the Dublin Bus Community Spirit Award, FCC's Community Initiative Award and the DAA's Community Funding Award Scheme. All these awards are well deserved and are in recognition of all the hard work and the achievements of your Committee and Volunteers in recent years. Thank you for your very comprehensive, clear and informative Submission and Application Form provided with many photos showing your work activities. It was a good to read about all the activities undertaken by Swords Tidy Towns Committee set out in such a clear and concise manner. The maps provided with your application in some instances were quite small and some were faint and not that easy to read. Where possible these maps should be accompanied by an overall map of the central part of the town at A3 size, with projects undertaken in the current year clearly pin-pointed and noted with a numbered legend or key. This would be most helpful in assisting the adjudicator to adjudicate your town. You have 10 full time members on your Committee with a further 20-30 Volunteers who provide assistance with your work programmes and are contacted on a weekly basis through social media, emails, text messages etc. It is wonderful to note that Swords Tidy Towns Committee actively encourages a diverse and inclusive group with 10/12 different nationalities represented on the team – this is very heartening. The voluntary commitment you have shown as a group towards the enhancement of the Town of Swords is very considerable and you attend weekly meetings of your Committee together with meetings involving a wide range of outside agencies, which support your work. Great thanks are due to your many supporters and sponsors who are too numerous to mention. You have an active Facebook page with an impressive 900 plus hits per week and you communicate with the general public through your website, visits to businesses and schools, information stands and participation in Halloween and St Patrick's Day Parades. Local and National Newspapers are also very helpful in publicizing your many achievements to date. The strong links you have established with schools and youth groups augers well for the future and it is good to note that you encourage resident's associations to bring out younger people on their clean- up days.

### **Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:**

Swords has been able to successfully accommodate large commercial development along its Main Street without compromising the traditional character of the streetscape. e.g. Swords Central, Pavilions and Penney's Stores. Essential roadworks were underway on the Main Street on the day of adjudication but happily this did not hinder the adjudication process. The old water pump at the Church Road junction was well landscaped and presented. At the Shoe Repairs and Locksmiths premises, there was a proliferation of inappropriate signage and guttering/roof repairs are needed on this building. The presentation of the area around the Garda Station was greatly admired. The

junction at Malahide Road and at the Morton and Flanagan premises was superbly planted with flowers. The upgrade works carried out on the Plaza Village was noted and this has made a big improvement. Unfortunately, there is a lot of staining on street paving in this part of Swords which needs to be cleaned. Sandwich board advertising signs are also an issue causing clutter here. The car parking beside the pedestrian way adjacent to Ultimate Styling Barbers and inappropriate gable advertising, intrudes on the Main Street and should be screened or rationalised in some way. The new seating on Main Street was particularly admired. Perhaps small planters could be provided beside these seats to make them more inviting to use. The Card and Party Store, Euro Giant and Boylesports shopfronts could be more tastefully designed to complement the character of the streetscape. The Cock Tavern is well presented with good window and floral displays. The tall London Plane trees really add to the character and sense of place on the Main Street and it was interesting to note the extensive rooting structure of one of the trees, recently cut down outside Masterson's premises, which was on display. The Fingal County Council offices are a prime example of high quality contemporary architecture which complements the nearby heritage properties and traditional streetscape. This area is enhanced by the prominent evergreen oak trees along the frontage and colourful planting at the building entrances. Swords Castle is a majestic historic building located as a major landmark and reference point at the end of the Main Street. The demolition and removal of the more modern premises to the front of this building has really created an amazing public space and context for this important landmark in the Town and it is noted there are plans for further Castle restoration works and the development of a Cultural Quarter for Swords in this area. The further progress of these restoration works is awaited with interest. It was good to note a Summer Festival is planned for the Castle and adjoining Park during July. The Pound and Attic Bar Licensed premises were well presented as was the superbly designed entrance to Swords Town Park. The Castle Shopping Centre front wall needs painting or complete replacement with a random rubble stone wall. The Kiosk installed to facilitate the collection of car park payments is unsightly and needs to be removed/replaced. The planting of climbers along high pebble dashed wall facing onto the shopping centre car park would be beneficial, as this wall is quite unsightly. Are there any cycle parking facilities along Swords Main Street and if so are they sufficient to meet current needs? The works undertaken on the St. Colmcille's Well with freshly painted walls and old pump were greatly admired. These works really highlight the fact that the preservation and maintenance of this heritage feature is so important to the people of Swords, bearing in mind its historical association with the naming of the Town. The herbaceous planting was particularly appropriate here and information signage comprehensive and well presented. The newly built Chalk Bar is well designed and enhances the nearby superbly presented Old Schoolhouse premises. The new car park located to rear of Old Schoolhouse Bar along river walk looked unfinished, and requires landscaping and it was wondered what future plans are in place for this area? The Credit Union building on North Street was greatly admired but the 'Clothing for Cash' premises detracts from the streetscape here. The Leader House premises situated on North Main Street would benefit from painting. One wonders are there plans in place for the restoration of the stone and red brick building located on North Street, in the vicinity of the entrance to the Town Park?

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasá agus Tírdhreachú:**

Swords is very fortunate to have a network of very well-developed parks and green infrastructure strategically located within easy walking distance of the Town Centre. What a terrific addition to the Town of Swords is your flagship project for this year, the newly developed Park at the Green called the 'Rock Garden'. The Mediterranean-style planting scheme and rock garden in the corner of the park, presumed to refer back to the history of the site as an old Quarry, was particularly admired. The stonework, ornamental paving scheme with Raven feature and compass points, circular seating, tree sculpture, signage and treatment of the old water pump feature, were all superbly executed and presented and were a joy to behold. The standard of grass and tree maintenance here was excellent and the park was completely free of litter. Well done to all concerned with the planning and implementation of this project. The other important park in the Centre of Swords is the Town Park along the Ward River and located adjacent to the majestic Swords Castle. The Information sign at entrance to the Park was excellently maintained and presented, providing essential information for the visitor. The presentation of park entrances was superb. Of particular note here were the 'Flavours of Fingal' artistic wooden sculpture feature and colourful flower tubs. The pollinator friendly planting scheme and low white picket fence at the entrance looked well. The general maintenance and presentation of the Town Park was excellent and there was a complete absence of litter in the Park. A path sweeper was in operation in Town Park during the visit – the severe drought had caused some premature leaf fall along the walkways. The black pedestrian bridge over the river needs painting. It was good to see the natural vegetation flourishing along the river here providing suitable habitats for wildlife. The Bridge at Watery Lane end of the Park could also be cleaned power washed. The facilities provided in this park are superb and seem to be very well used by the people of Swords, including Tennis Courts, children's playground, adult exercise trail and the park is adorned by well-developed tree-lined walkways. A new Well feature was also under construction on the day of adjudication. The herbaceous planting scheme along the railings at the riverside walk near the pedestrian entrance to the Castle Shopping Centre was admired although there are some redundant poles and signage in place here. The railings along the river walk also need painting. One wonders are there any plans in the future to complete the pedestrian link between the Town Park and the river walk behind the Castle Shopping Centre, in the vicinity of the Grill House premises? The Commemorative Garden at St. Colmcille's Well was visited and the triangular green area enclosed by attractive stone walls, complete with a grove of beech trees, public seating and flower planting at its apex were all excellently presented.

### **Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:**

It is noted that you have taken on board this year the importance of providing a food source for pollinators and many activities have been undertaken in this context, from an educational and practical perspective. In this regard you cleared away brambles near the river at Swords Town Park and planted the area with perennial pollinator friendly plants and have also carried out a number of other pollinator friendly planting schemes at other locations in the

Town- well done. Two pollinator workshops were also organised at the Polytunnel at the rear of the Youthreach Centre in North Street. The Usher's Lake Angling Initiative will no doubt seek to combine the development of the fishery and angling facility with the need to protect of the existing habitats in this area. Well done to Swords Woodland Association and Enterprise Rent-a Car for highlighting in a practical way, the value and importance to establishing native woodlands in the Green Belt areas surrounding the rapidly developing Town of Swords. One feels more work could be done under this category in relation to the erection of bird nest boxes and bat boxes in wooded areas and perhaps swift boxes could to be erected on school buildings, to provide nesting and breeding sites for this bird species which is currently in decline. The pollinator friendly herbaceous planting beds to the front of Cholaiste Choilm were admired. It was good to see the use of signage to explain the management regime here. The judicious pruning of trees and shrubbery to reveal the stone wall on the far side of the Ward River, as viewed from the riverside walk, has greatly improved the environs here. Some evidence of the spread of Japanese Knotweed was noted along the river and will need to be managed to prevent it's spread. The floral displays at the old school and Youthreach premises on North Street and the wonderful garden to the rear near the Polytunnel, were greatly admired.

### **Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:**

Swords Tidy Towns has engaged in a wide range of initiatives under this category over the last year. You have used social media and educational postings, information and updates on your website and facebook page to explain the importance of sustainability issues to the general public. To raise awareness of recycling you built a snowman at Christmas and a Witch at Halloween using recycled tyres and have joined Voice Ireland with a view Swords becoming a Zero Waste Town. The awarding of a total of 14 schools and a training Centre in Swords with Green Flags is very impressive. The Business Waste Survey undertaken by Swords Tidy Towns in conjunction with Fingal Community College was a worthwhile initiative with 6 local businesses completing the survey and well done to the transition year students and teachers who worked on this. The use of resources and particularly Energy and Transport in relation to Climate Change and reducing CO2 emissions are prominent themes under this category and it is good to note that Swords Tidy Towns has this year joined the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities and are now drafting your SEC Charter. You will no doubt be guided by the SEAI on future initiatives under the SEC programme. However, these may include promoting the greater use of low carbon vehicles in the Town, pursuing the installation of additional electric car charge point(s) in the area and extending cycle parking facilities or greenways/cycle routes e.g. along the Ward River Valley linking to the Broadmeadow Estuary and beyond, where this is feasible. The further promotion of grant aid for the installation of wall and attic insulation on older building stock or public buildings in the Town, the greater use of solar panels on roofs and heat exchange units to reduce energy consumption by households/businesses are also worthwhile initiatives to consider. The promotion of the greater use of water butts and rainfall harvesting for the watering of private gardens and public floral displays during the Summer period, might also be considered in the context of future Water Conservation measures.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

It is noted that you have a tidiness and litter control Officer on your Committee which no doubt enables you to focus your activities on particular problem areas, which may arise from time to time. It is heartening that the litter situation seems to be improving over time with less litter collected from the Main Street, as part of your litter patrols on Saturday and Wednesday evenings. You have contributed to the Drafting of the Council's Litter Management Plan 2018-2020 and the final plan details are now eagerly awaited. In the centre of Swords, litter control was to a good standard and the Main Street was tidily presented. Some road signage on the outskirts of the Town would benefit from cleaning and there were small amounts of litter noted along the river walk to the rear of the Main Street and also on the approaches to the Town. The large open space area located to the rear of JC's Supermarket was inspected and was found to be clean and tidy. However, the area to the front of JC's car park is overgrown with ragwort and this detracts from the overall appearance of this area. The car park barrier here could also be refreshed or replaced. Advertising signage on the gable wall of the Estuary premises is visually intrusive along the streetscape. Road signage at the Watery Lane/Balheary Road junction could be renewed. No major issues with Graffiti were noted during the Town walkabout. The Recycling Bring Bank at the Balheary Road was inspected and was found to be spotless.

### **Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:**

Swords is a rapidly expanding Town and the pace of population increase is likely to accelerate over the next few years. There are already 24 different housing estates in the Town and this number is also therefore likely to increase over time. It is good that you are promoting the 'Adopt a Patch Scheme' in residential areas and have appointed a Resident's Liaison Officer on your Committee to engage with local residents to provide advice as to how they can improve their areas. You are also organising your first 'Tidy Estates' competition this year which will help to ensure that the standard of presentation of housing estates in Swords is maintained and improved over time. Well done to the various estates in Swords who have been very active over the last year improving the presentation of their areas including Glen Ellan and Sandford Wood Estates, Ridgewood, Thornleigh, Holywell, Melrose/Kinsealy, Seatown Villas and Longlands estates, to name but a few. Carlton Court was visited and the maintenance of public areas in this estate was to a very high standard with attractive houses and private gardens. The planting beds at the entrance to Carlton Court were admired, although the low walls need to be repaired. The planting scheme at the entrance to Glasmore Park was admired. St. Andrews Park was well presented estate with an attractive house design, good street trees and well-tended open spaces. Hedge planting is recommended along the prominent grey wall facing onto the Rathbeale Road, to prevent future graffiti issues at this location. The Broadmeadows estate was well maintained, although the road signs at the entrance to the estate could be renewed. The standard of presentation of Glen Ellan estate excellent and the road name signage here was admired.

## **Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:**

The Town of Swords has been very pro-active and innovative in recent years in relation to the treatment of the various approaches to the Town and in particular the roundabout junctions on the Swords By-Pass which are very visible to road users and are important traffic nodes with significant volumes of traffic. The presentation of Pinnick Hill roundabout was admired with the planting of ground cover roses and the use of bark mulch to suppress weeds. It is understood that the central part of the roundabout is managed in a sustainable way, with spring bulbs and wildflowers allowed to develop. The wooden sculpture located on the traffic island here is an interesting feature and the new bench and planting scheme enhanced the area. Spring bulbs are also a major feature enjoyed by road users along on other parts of the Swords By-Pass and on other roundabouts. The planting project on the Dublin Road opposite Lidl has really enhanced this area and the roses and clematis and other plants are growing very well, despite the severe drought. The entrance to Lidl Store on the Dublin Road was superbly presented with well - maintained grass margins, mature trees and new tree planting. The apartments at Milton Hall are quite prominent on the Dublin Road but the impact of the buildings here is softened by well - established trees along the road frontage. The frontage of Cholaiste Choilm is also prominent along the Dublin Road - the concrete block facade facing the road here is beginning to tarnish and it would be desirable to clean this or alternatively plant more trees here. The herbaceous perennial planting scheme at the entrance to Seatown Terrace was admired. Road signage in this vicinity however, needs to be renewed. The group of bronze deer located on traffic island at Estuary Road roundabout is a wonderful feature in this area and it is good to note that this installation has been received positively by the general public. Repairs to the damaged stone wall at the Pavilion Shopping Centre have been expertly carried out - well done to all concerned with this work.

## **Concluding Remarks:**

Swords Tidy Towns Committee is making great strides in the competition as evidenced in the range and quality of the different projects you have been involved in over the last year. You are very well organised and are making a significant contribution to the improvement to the Town of Swords and you are wished well for the future. Keep up the good work.