

SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2016 - 2017



Swanley is a town and civil parish in the Sevenoaks District of Kent, England. It is located approximately 15 miles (24 km) southeast of central London, adjacent to the Greater London boundary and within the M25 motorway. The population at the 2011 census was 16,226. Swanley Town Council formed in 1974. The Conservative Party has a majority of councilors on the town council with 2 Labour seats, 1 UKIP and 2 Independents.

SWANLEY TOWN COUNCILLORS

Christchurch Ward

Cllr Laurence Ball (Conservative)
Cllr John Barnes (Conservative)
Cllr Shanker Gaire (Independent)
Cllr Ray Morris (Conservative)
Cllr Victor Southern (Conservative)

St Mary's Ward

Cllr Clare Barnes (Conservative)
Cllr Lesley Dyball (Conservative)
Cllr Michael Hogg (Labour)
Cllr Elizabeth Komolafe (Labour)

Swanley Village

Cllr Tony Searles (Conservative)

White Oak Ward

Cllr Paul Darrington (Conservative)
Cllr Laxmi Gaire (Independent)
Cllr Jim Halford (UKIP)
Cllr Claire Barnes (Conservative)
Cllr Nina Scott (Conservative)
Cllr Harry Willingale (Conservative)

Swanley Town Council elects a Mayor and Deputy Mayor annually at its annual general meeting.

The Mayor for 2016/17 was Cllr Shanker Gaire until November 2016 followed by Cllr Laurence Ball.

The Deputy Mayor for 2016/17 was Cllr Lesley Dyball

COMMITTEES AND MEMBERSHIPS

Swanley Town Council operates its powers and duties through a committee system. These committees, wherever possible, reflect the political balance of the Council. The Council and its committees make the policy decisions of the Council, the CEO/Town Clerk carries out the decisions of the Council and has some delegated powers under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 to ensure the smooth day to day running of the Council.

Development Control Committee Considers responses to planning applications on behalf of the Council
Cllr Laurence Ball
Cllr John Barnes
Cllr Jim Halford
Cllr Michael Hogg
Cllr Michael Horwood
Cllr Ray Morris

Finance and Audit Committee Reviews the financial performance of the Council and considers monthly expenditure
Cllr Victor Southern
Cllr Laurence Ball
Cllr Lesley Dyball
Cllr Elizabeth Komalafe
Cllr Ray Morris
Cllr Tony Searles
NOW DEFUNCT COMMITTEE

Estates and Facilities Committee Oversees parks, open spaces and assets of the Council
Cllr Victor Southern
Cllr Clare Barnes
Cllr Jim Halford
Cllr Shanker Gaire
Cllr Michael Hogg
Cllr Nina Scott

Personnel Committee Oversees staffing matters
Cllr Lesley Dyball
Cllr Tony Searles
Cllr Ray Morris
Cllr Nina Scott
Cllr Elizabeth Komolafe
Cllr Harry Willingale
Cllr Victor Southern

Swanley Banqueting Board Oversees the performance of the Alexandra Suite and Olympic
Cllr Ray Morris
Cllr Laurence Ball
Cllr Clare Barnes
Cllr John Barnes
Cllr Laxmi Gaire
Cllr Nina Scott
Cllr Harry Willingale
NOW DEFUNCT COMMITTEE

Both DEFUNCT COMMITTEES have been Amalgamated to form a new committee

POLICY AND FINANCE

COUNCIL ASSETS

Swanley Town Council owns a variety of open spaces and buildings in Swanley. The Council, as a 'corporate body' is also the Trustee of Swanley Recreation Ground. A large proportion of official's time is spent managing the large portfolio of open spaces and land assets owned and maintained by the Town Council.

Archer Way & Newland open space	Title Deed Number	K518904
Bus shelter - Azalea Drive	Title Deed Number	K465342
Civic Centre, Alexandra Suite, Clocktower	Title Deed Number	K980832
Football pitches	Title Deed Number	K532178
Footpath from Nightingale to Rec	Title Deed Number	K979730
High Firs Open Space 2	Title Deed Number	K527988
High Firs Open Space 1	Title Deed Number	K527989
Kettlewell allotments	Title Deed Number	K755155
Lower over flow car park	Title Deed Number	K505609
Open Space on Beechenlea Lane 1	Title Deed Number	K211877
Open Space on Beechenlea Lane 2	Title Deed Number	K486133
Petham Allotments & Open Spaces	Title Deed Number	K579699
Petham Court Farm	Title Deed Number	K600884
St Marys Recreation Ground (Trustees)	Title Deed Number	K980833
10 Station Road	Title Deed Number	TT18411
Swanley Paddling Pool	Title Deed Number	K504137
Swanley Park	Title Deed Number	K407898
Swanley Park Bungalow & Swanley Park (Yard)	Title Deed Number	K520500
The Oaks Clinic	Title Deed Number	K282317
The Oaks Clinic Ground floor	Title Deed Number	TT17049
The Olympic, Bowls Pavilion & Golf Range	Title Deed Number	K304959
The Woodlands	Title Deed Number	K555857
West View Open Space	Title Deed Number	K36203

Major Changes for Swanley Town Council

During 2016 a number of significant changes were introduced to save money and bring in smarter ways of working, with the long term goal of ensuring the sustainability of venues and to allow improvements to existing services. While many changes were not well received by staff and residents they were absolutely essential for reducing costs and had to be introduced very quickly.

Swanley councillors recognise that many cut backs were unpopular at the time but those changes allowed the council to come in on budget for 2016/17 and safeguarded the jobs of the remaining staff. We are now working hard to restore confidence in our services and have authorised the use of many new initiatives around the town which are set out below.

In responding to public demand we have been very transparent in our accounting and publish up to date figures on our web site for people to see, we ensure Agendas and Minutes along with supporting reports are made available for local residents and we answer questions as quickly as we can, where we are able.

We will continue to support local community groups and seek external grant funding to improve facilities within the town for the enjoyment of our residents.

New Staff at Swanley Town Council

A new CEO / Town Clerk Mr Stephen Nash has been employed since the 3rd January 2017 and has a great deal of experience as a Clerk having worked for 3 larger councils in the past. Within a matter of weeks he had provided significant financial savings through negotiating contracts and introducing new activities to generate new income streams. He has introduced a variety of new policies and procedures to ensure the smooth running of the council and is working closely with Councillors to keep them informed and up to date on new initiatives available.

The council has also employed an RFO (Responsible Financial Officer) Mr Steve Innes who has a great deal of experience in finance having worked for many years as a Bank Manager. Working with the CEO he has been able to create new accounting information to aid in transparency and take control of venue finances for up to date reporting. He has arranged procedures for the safer handling of all monies and was instrumental in identifying a range of debtors who owed money to the town council.

The Park Activities have now come under the control of the Town Council for the first time ever and we have taken on 20 seasonal staff to run activities for us. The revenue generated by these activities will provide the salaries for these staff in addition to allowing the town council to carry out essential works within the park.

New Activities for Swanley Town Council

Within this reporting year we have already provided a number of new events for the residents of the town to enjoy:

Markets

In February and March we saw an Italian Market and a (French) Continental Market appear in the town centre. While the first trials were allocated to dates that the Market providers had available they have since come back offering alternative dates for the coming year. The town council hopes to make this a regular feature along with its own market which it will be providing on a Saturday.

Park Activities

From 3rd April Swanley Town Council has been operating the park activities directly following the removal of last years concession providers. Some redecoration has taken place of the toilets and boat house and some improvements to the frequency of cleaning provision. In addition we have provided some new children's boats and some new electric rides. We have significantly increased the standard of training for staff and will be offering new 'Survival Parties' in the woods there for schools and individuals for the summer.

Event Use

Has increased for The Olympic with new activities being tried out since the New Year, including Open Mic Nights and the launch of Carvery Diners in May. Responding to public concern we re-opened the bar at lunch times and can provide bars meals such as Chicken and Chips, Fish and Chips and Toasties. There are other events planned for 2017 including Drag Night, Psychic Night and Race Night. The council hopes local residents will get behind these new initiatives to ensure their sustainability for the future.

Banners and Signs

To help publicise events and to raise awareness the town council has put up banners around the town at key locations to publicise events such as Swanley in Bloom and the Opening of Swanley Park. These banners will be used to publicise new events in 2017 including Armed Forces Day, 1812 Night and Firework Display. We have also placed a number of new leisure signs (brown backed) around the town showing the direction to the park and ensure others can also come and enjoy activities here. These signs will help us control traffic direction and alleviate traffic problems on New Barn Lane. We have increased the parking areas at Swanley Park and the parking system to accommodate more cars but also to get cars off the lane quicker to avoid congestion.

SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL EVENTS AND SERVICES

Swanley Town Council is committed to building and maintaining open communication lines with the residents of the Town. We have a new website which is still being populated and includes community pages and Facebook pages are constantly being updated. All meeting documents are available from the Town Council's website or in hard copy on request at the Link or from the main office. The 'Town Crier' is a regular newsletter delivered to residents providing news about the town and the Town Council and there are plans for a more frequent electronic version being made available. The Town Council organises and supports many community events throughout the year including:

Events 2016-2017

18th April 2016 School Cluster Council

The School Cluster Council meeting took place on the 18th April 2016. Four members from each of the Primary Schools in Swanley were invited to a meeting in the Council Chambers. The Mayor presided over the meeting which gave the students a glimpse into council life, how a council meeting is conducted as well as learning more about Swanley Town Council. The students asked lots of questions after which squash and biscuit were served.

Just Bin It Competition

The Just Bin It competition entries were received from all the primary schools in Swanley. The entries were in 3 categories of ages 3-5, 6-9 and 10 and over. The completion winners were chosen by the new Mayor. The winning students were invited to the Council Chambers along with their parents to receive their prizes.

20th June 2016 Fly the Flag for Armed Forces Day

On a very wet Monday morning the raising of the Flag for Armed Forces Day took place. The Flag was raised by the Deputy Mayor whilst the Councillors, Dignitaries, local business representatives, STC staff and public who were in attendance sheltered under the cover of the Civic Centre. The flag flew for a whole week.



8th and 9th July 2016 Luna Cinema

For the first time films were shown back to back over 2 days. On the 8th July Pretty Women was shown followed by Top Gun on the 9th July. Over the 2 days more than 1500 people attended the showing of these films. Swanley Town Council received a percentage of the ticket and food sales which totalled £3201.46.



26th August 2016 1812

The free 1812 concert took place at Swanley Park. The music which was provided by the Eynsford Concert Band from 7.30pm was this year preceded by a performance from The Rock Choir who were very well received by the public. Children's entertainment was provided by DNG bouncy kingdom with food and drink being on sale by Swanley Park Café and DNG. The glow item stall manned by STC was once again very busy. Local charity organisations had stands where they raised awareness and money. The weather was good and in excess of 5000 turned out to watch the Fireworks.

27th September 2016 Mayor at Home

The annual Mayor at Home afternoon tea took place in the Alexandra Suite from 1.00pm – 3.30pm on the 27th September and was attend by more than 100 senior citizens who live in Swanley. The live entertainment which was provided by Alan Simmons was followed by the usual 3 games of bingo for which prizes were available.

4th November 2017 Bonfire Night

Bonfire Night was hosted on Swanley Recreational Ground, with children's entertainment and refreshments provided by DNG. Swanley Town Council ran the glow item stall. Entry to the Recreational Ground was free of charge. Fireworks will commenced at 7:30pm with the Fireworks going off to a selection of popular Disney songs.

13th November 2016 Remembrance Day Parade

On Remembrance Sunday a Parade formed of The Royal British Legion, Army, Air and Sea cadets, Scouts and guides, Councillors, Dignitaries including The Lord Sackville and The Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon, and the public left the Town Centre at 2.30pm and marched towards the War Memorial situated in the grounds of St Mary's Church. Wreath Laying took place followed by a service in St Mary's Church and refreshments at The Clocktower Pavilion.



25th November 2016 Christmas Light Switch On

Swanley Christmas Lights were switched on by the Mayor in the Town Centre. Father Christmas was there with his sleigh there were children's activities and a DJ played a selection of Christmas Music. The Rock Choir performed both before and after the lights were switched on.

25th December 2017 Christmas Day Lunch

The senior citizens of Swanley who would have been on their own on Christmas Day attended Emily Court in Wilmington for their Christmas dinner. The cost of this was covered by Swanley Town Council. Transportation was provided for those needing it by The North West Kent Volunteer Centre.

24th February 2017 Italian Market

A new themed market came to Swanley Centre on Friday 24th February. The stalls are owned by Italian people with food from Italy who were able to bring their knowledge of Italian cuisine and gave helpful tips on recipes. The stalls included a cheese stall and a Panini stall.



3rd- 4th March 2017 The Great British Spring Clean

A Spring Clean took place on the 3rd to the 4th of March which Swanley Town Council ran in conjunction with Sevenoaks District Council as part of the Great British Spring Clean initiative. Members of the public, staff from local business, students from 2 primary Schools, the community warden along with STC staff collected over 1.5 tons of rubbish from around Swanley. As this was so successful STC intend to make this a regular feature in the calendar. It was really good for members of the community to all get together and tidy up littered areas of their town.



13th March 2017 Fly the Commonwealth Flag

The raising of the Commonwealth Flag took place for the third year running time in the Civic Centre car park. Councillors, Dignitaries, local business representatives, Orchards Academy teachers and students, STC staff and public were in attendance. The flag was raised by a student from Orchards Academy. Tea and coffee was served afterwards in the Alexandra Suite.



17th – 19th March 2017 French Market

A second themed market for Swanley was held over three days in from the 17th-19th March in Swanley Town Centre. This included both food and craft stalls displaying and selling French Cuisine and crafts.



25th March 2017 Swanley in Bloom

For the first time Swanley in Bloom was launched in Swanley Town Centre. Coolings Gardens Centre will once again running the competition on behalf of Swanley Town Council. The launch day was attended by The Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon MP. The SWAN history group, and Swanley Town Council also had a stands on the day.



There are a growing number of new events planned for 2017 with a planned monthly Craft Market which we hope will encourage greater footfall into the town at weekends. The town council are looking for new opportunities for development and investment into local business and want to work with local groups to ensure Swanley is a great place to live and work.

A new Swanley Rugby Team has been created and we hope to see them make their mark in local leagues in the coming years, we are supporting other sports clubs with their facilities and want to see more people involved in recreational and sporting activities.

SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORTS 2016/17

The Mayor Cllr Laurence Ball

I was asked to step in as Mayor quite late on in the year after Councillor Shanker Gaire resigned from the position of Mayor in November 2016. I have to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my time so far and have been impressed with the many groups and organisations I have met over this time that do such amazing work within our community.

It would be fair to say that this has been a very turbulent year for the Town Council and has seen huge restructuring of staff take place in addition to the closure of one of our popular facilities, The Woodlands. The Town Council did not enter into these changes lightly and had taken external advice from an HR company before starting the changes in addition to reviewing the Finances of the council.

While some of these changes were made quite quickly it was essential that we followed the advice received in order to ensure the financial stability of the council and secure the remaining staff positions we now have. Since April of this year we have taken on recreational staff within the Swanley Park operation and we hope to have activities being provided there throughout the year. It is worthy of mention that this is the first time the town council has ever run this service directly and we are already looking at new activities and events being provided in the park.

Earlier this year with the support of local residents we were able to stop the Vision Plan from going ahead and building on green belt land around the town. This is a great testament to the power of partnership work between town council and residents and could provide a useful platform for future issues which affect whole communities within the town and surrounding area.

This also backs up the fact that Swanley was identified as the number one commuter town where people wished to live away from London. Residents completed questionnaire's which showed they were more satisfied than other areas with their quality of life rating it 8.5 out of ten. We hope we will continue to improve on this annually and we are working to provide more sports, more business opportunities, better facilities and improved recreational activities for all our residents.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their support during my time as Mayor and look forward to meeting more of you in the coming year.

Cllr: Laurence Ball
Mayor of Swanley 2016/17

Swanley Banqueting Board – Cllr Ray Morris

2016/17 was a difficult year for Swanley Banqueting. In fact the past 10 years or more have been difficult. It is sad to say but Banqueting days are over and residents no longer attend banquets and dinner dances which were our bread and butter at one time. Wedding venues have changed as well and although we are competitive and offer a good package so many couples now days want something far away and more exotic.

The council tried hard to adjust and provide a good service for residents but our venues are getting old and looking dated and are very expensive to run, all the venues were proving a constant struggle to continue. We had professional trade advice and the situation was that we had 3 large venues but business only for 2 – as simple as that. So we reluctantly decided to sell one of the venues and as the Woodlands was the most expensive to run and the oldest we decided to consider our options for the building and site.

If we look back at the history of the Woodlands it has been a school, a cinema and much more before it became a social venue so it has done well to adapt to various demands and social fads over many years. It had been renovated, patched and repaired so many times it was just uneconomic to repair any longer.

After careful consideration we decided not to just sell the site to the highest bidder as 96% of residents said in the recent survey that they wanted more homes for older people so retirement accommodation was our preferred option. The Town Council made the decision to invite a number of companies to tender for the site and have entered into an agreement with one of them subject to planning.

The new Town Clerk, Steve Nash, has made some changes at the Olympic and I am pleased to say the new Sunday Roast menu starts this weekend I believe. Now that we have 2 venues instead of 3 and are not spreading the staff so thinly there will be much improved monitoring of the services of the venues. The venue is now holding its own but we will monitor this closely. The golf pro decided to terminate his arrangement at the Olympic and I would like to thank him for all the years he has worked at the Olympic and wish him well for his future.

The Alexander Suite is also progressing thanks to the hard work of our staff and relationships with the users has improved greatly. I look forward to hearing good things in future. It is still early days.

We will keep residents informed but I am confident that we have consolidated and streamlined our facilities and sharpened our service and are open for business for 2017 and beyond.

Ray Morris
Chairman Swanley Banqueting 2016/17

Personnel Committee Report – Councillor Lesley Dyball

Two meetings have taken place during the year, although various members of this Committee have spent a great deal of time dealing with confidential staffing issues.

The appointment of a new CEO, Stephen Nash, who took up office in January 2017, was followed by an internal reorganisation of staff and management structure which has seen the recruitment of a Responsible Finance Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

The Staff Handbook has undergone complete revision updating policies and processes where necessary, particularly around recruitment, induction, probationary period review and appraisal.

A recruitment campaign was undertaken early in 2017 to employ a number of park rangers following the Town Council's decision to take over the operation of Swanley Park. Two Park Supervisors and 18 park rangers have been inducted and received training to undertake these roles.

Development Control Committee – Cllr Laurence Ball

A concerted effort from residents and councillors from this council saw off the attempt to build on Green Belt Land by Sevenoaks District Council through its Vision Plan. Without everyone's input at the District Council meeting which discussed this issue there is every likelihood that this plan would have been approved and led to huge congestion within the town and loss of green space.

Councillors on this committee meet twice a month on average which is more than ever other committee and is a measure of the seriousness applied to each application we see. While at this level of government we are classed as 'consultees' we have now demonstrated we can be far more than this with support from our residents.

We are aware of large developments coming to Swanley and we are working with developers already to ensure the housing scheme going into the St Marys Road area of the town on the old school field will meet local needs. In addition we are working closely with developers of the now closed Woodlands site to make sure the design for older peoples flats is sympathetic with the surrounding area and will meet the needs of older people in the area.

Swanley residents are able to comment on all applications during our meetings and we welcome input from you

Cllr Laurence Ball
Mayor 2016/17

Finance and Audit Committee – Cllr Victor Southern

This has been a year of real change for the council and I am glad to see greater transparency with all our activities and reporting via the CEO Mr Stephen Nash and our newly appointed RFO Mr Steve Innes. The committee again consisted of 7 councillors although both the Finance and Audit Committee and Swanley Banqueting Committee have now been amalgamated into Policy and Finance.

Overview

- To scrutinise and agree all actual and projected expenditure, with the exception of staff remuneration. This includes reviewing and validating the following reports:
 - Monthly bank / Cashbook reconciliation;
 - Monthly payments out;
 - Aged creditors and debtors;
 - Cashflow projections across each venue within the Council
- To examine the income sources of the Council and any official's reports pertaining to such matters; and,
- To agree, with other officials, of setting the annual budget for consideration by the full Council.

Given the number of reports and the inclusion of detailed figures, I will refer to senior officials if any clarification is required before the reports are presented to the committee.

During the year the Council transitioned to one accounting package to ensure "one source of truth". This has resulted a number of key improvements, namely:

1. Greater clarity in relation to income and expenditure;
2. Venue specific data analysis;
3. Timely and accurate reports;
4. Clearer understanding of aged debtors and creditors, enabling intervention at a much earlier stage to resolve any disputes;

We now employ a Responsible Financial Officer and this will ensure that:

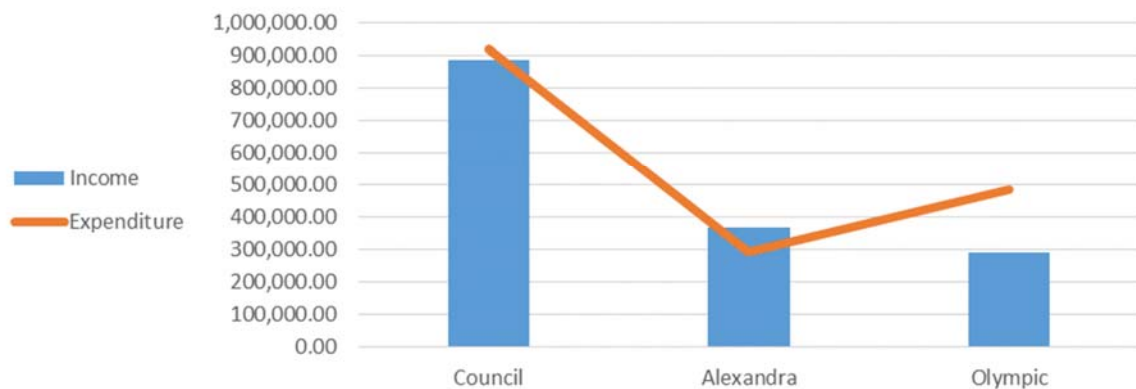
- We meet all our requirements insofar as the Financial Regulations are concerned;
- Appropriate procedures are in place to meet best practice; and,
- Increased and effective controls are introduced to mitigate any risks.

The Council's accounts for the last financial year are to be submitted by early June 2017 and we anticipate that all such matters will be approved without any adverse or advisory comments.

Budget Performance

2017 saw a twinned improvement with slight increase in the overall income, and also a small reduction in the overall expenditure. Although the overall expenditure did exceed the income by c£15,000 this was a reduction on the previous year of c£12,000.

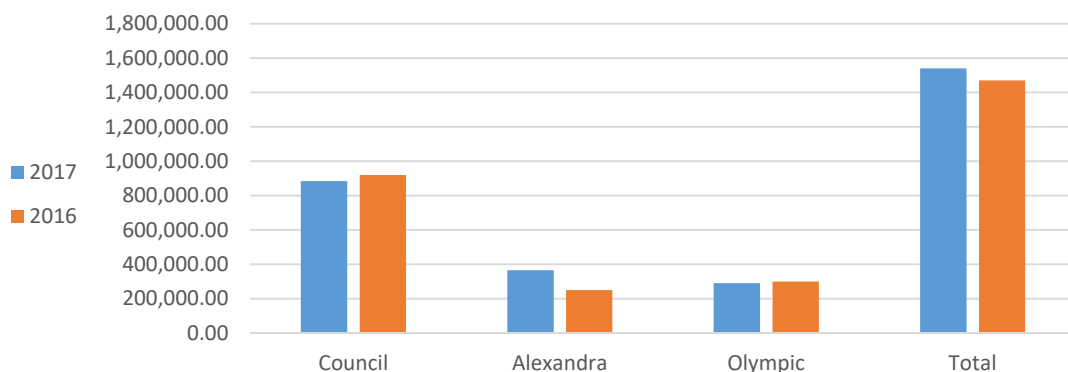
Income / Expenditure: 2016 - 2017



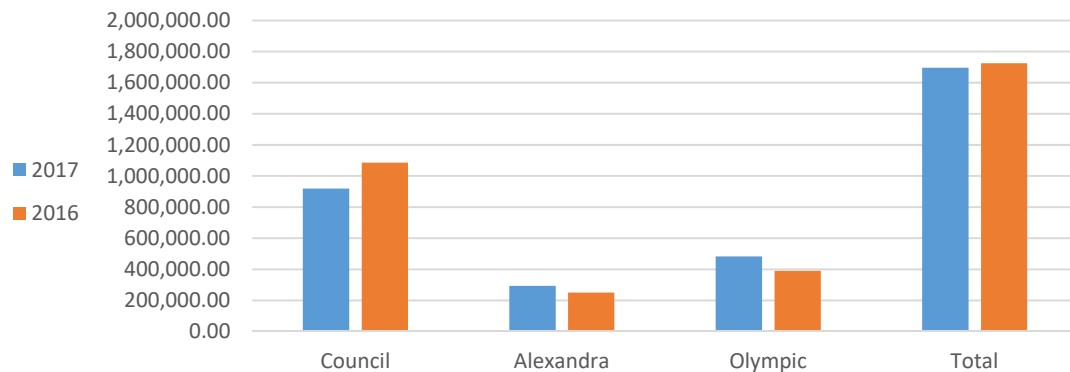
Income and Expenditure Comparison

The graphs below demonstrate that overall income is up on last year and over expenditure is down which provides a bigger saving across the board. In addition the new activities and events taken on (most notably Swanley Park) will provide greater sources of income against expenditure in 2017. The sale of the Woodlands later this year will return STC reserves to appropriate levels and will allow for new business developments to come forward.

Income 2017 vs. 2016



Expenditure 2017 vs. 2016



Accountability

When the administration of the Council changed in 2011 full investigations were ordered. The Council's accounts were independently audited and reviewed for the first time and an action plan put into place to further improve the positions of the venues and the Council in order to prevent further financial implications to the tax payer. Since then the net position of the Banqueting has improved year on year and the Council's expenditure has been reduced substantially.

Estates and Facilities Committee – Cllr Nina Scott

There were huge changes made in the later part of this financial year which I hope will really help to deliver better services and better facilities to the residents of our wonderful town. Sadly the sale of the Woodlands was not well received by many residents but the savings made and the value of the sale will allow this council to carryout work to existing sites and to develop new areas of interest.

The park activities have now come under our control for the first time ever and required an additional 20 seasonal staff which provides some valuable employment opportunities and will allow us to work with other partners.

The Athletics Club is moving from one of our buildings into another smaller building which will allow us to expand catering operations in the park and has secured the club only 25m from their previous base.

The Boxing Club will be moving into The Olympic Building as they need more hours to train and have out grown the session they had available at White Oaks. In addition we have worked with them to apply for grants which will help them purchase equipment and make alterations.

A first for Swanley is an all new Rugby Club which will be homed on the fields behind Swanley Park and Rugby Posts will be fitted later this month. As it's the end of the Rugby season the time will now be spent in recruiting team members and setting up a junior section for September. The town council will be making containers available for the storage of equipment and having the pitches marked up ready for their first games.

We are currently reviewing our play areas and will be seeking to provide additional Disabled Play equipment at our sites to ensure they are accessible to all.

YOUR COUNCIL TAX EXPLAINED

In 2016/17 Swanley Town Council's element of the Council Tax collected by Sevenoaks District Council was £97.87 per band D property.

This amount is multiplied by the average number of band D properties to give the 'precept' value. The Precept is the amount that the District Council passes onto parish and town councils in order to carry out their powers and duties.

For Swanley in 2016/17 this amount was £539,867.

Swanley Town Council needed to provide a 2% increase in Council Tax for the forthcoming year 2017/18 for residents.

How do we compare to Parish and Town Council's with a similar precept amount?

	Band D Tax	Band D Tax	
	2016/17	2017/18	% Increase
Edenbridge	130.87	133.49	2%
Sevenoaks Town	88.69	105.53	19%
Crockenhill	100.53	103.49	3%
Swanley	97.87	99.83	2%