

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Swords** Ref: **160**
County: **Dublin** Mark: **282**
Category: **H** Date(s): **23/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	45	47
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	38	39
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	35	36
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	29	29
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	12	13
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	34
TOTAL MARK	450	275	282

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Swords is very welcome to the 2015 Supervalu Tidy Towns Competition.

Thank you for the very comprehensive entry form that included a number of appendices one of which was the detailed 3 year plan.

The inclusive Google maps were sufficient for the purposes of adjudication but a town the size of Swords which has a lot of history and visitor attractions is in need of a well designed town map.

On visiting the TIO in the Castle Grounds the adjudicator was informed that a map had been designed and due for printing and will be available to the public within the next few weeks.

Your application is quite detailed and put together in a very professional manner but the adjudicator was not able to address every item submitted because of limitation of space in a final report document of 2/3 pages.

Suffice to say that the adjudication was done in a fair and impartial manner and within the guidelines of the competition.

For a committee of 9 with a volunteer corps of 40 quite a lot of work and related issues are covered which is note worthy given the size of the town and its expansive outlying areas.

The links that you have developed with both Fingal County Council and the other relevant agencies have certainly had impactive results and it does help when the local authority has its HQ in the town.

Good to note also that you have a strong partnership with Youthreach as this has mutual benefits vis a vis collaboration on projects plus the fact that younger generation get to see the communal value that your tidy towns activities bring to the town.

The list of businesses that support your efforts and the practical involvement with the school network is notable.

Swords tidy towns has an impressive Facebook page and a very large number of followers many of whom maybe potential volunteers.

Good to note that you have had more new members this year than in previous years and of course this shows that you are doing an immense service for the community.

When a major multinational seeks your input on organising a corporate clean up day then you know that you have a new major supporter on board who also could be a source of funding support in the future.

The adjudicator was impressed with your input under the community contribution elemnt of this section and also wishes to thank you for the positive endorsement of the Tidy Towns Competition.

An increase in marks is warranted.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

It had been quite a while since this adjudicator visited the town of Swords and there has been many changes in the interim years the vast majority of which are very positive.

One felt that towns like Swords given its proximity to the Aairport and Dublin City could be swallowed up as a

commuter town and lose its identity.

This certainly has not happened as the centre of town retains its attractiveness despite the hustle and bustle of traffic.

Swords town centre looked resplendent on the day and it was very noticeable that there were very few unoccupied premises which suggest that the economic well being of the town is good and healthy.

It is good to report, and your note on the conservation plan was read, that Sword Castle will be re opened to the public as a heritage and visitor attraction.

Work in the Castle Grounds was ongoing on the day and the TIO Office staff had just taken up residency a few days prior.

The welcoming sign that greeted one as you entered from the Airport and in by Pinnock Hill is a lasting testament to one of your former Chairpersons.

The adjudicator saw for himself the work that was been done both in the town centre and on the outskirts on reducing unsightly graffiti.

There are a few areas that have more than acceptable graffiti one on a wall in North Street and one at the long boundary wall at the back of Merc, Sharpe and Dome as well as Feltrim Road.

They both might be considered urban art in some cultures! But not when it takes away from a nice area.

The following are other observations made by the adjudicator during the walkabout.

The town pumps were painted in a nice black and gold combination and were complemented by stone troughs in some cases with the ever colourful annuals on view.

The following observations were made on the adjudication walkabout; Platinum Barbers simple design, Essence Bistro well managed premises that serves a good lunch, Colortrend Paint and Wallpaper Store, The Old Borough recently opened has retained some old features and Fingal Cafe had a nice bright front.

The Lord Mayors Public House, probably one of the oldest taverns in the island, was in resplendent condition no doubt complemented by the newly planted flower bed at the side wall.

M K Taylor on the corner of Chapel Lane has an old stone facade and Mastersons next is a popular lunch spot and well looked after.

Cumiskey Rea on North Street has a very simple but effective name sign and it's good to see the local boxing club having the use of such a historic building as the old Carnegie Library.

The Carnegie Court Hotel was well presented and looked as if it had been recently painted.

Apace Pizza deserves mention for the manner in which it has been decorated an example to other fast food operations.

The public buildings St Colmcilles Church and adjoining graveyard were in very good condition and were being maintained on the day in question.

The adjudicator visited five schools including the St Colmcilles Girls Primary on Chapel Lane which has attained 5 green flags, all were presented in very good condition and credit is due to the personnel responsible for their upkeep.

The Garda Station in the centre of town was just after being revitalised with colourful hanging baskets.

Fingallians GAA Club on the R132 exit is an excellent facility and St Colmcilles is also well positioned off the Balheary Road.

The Balheary Skatepark also deserves mention for being well looked after even if it does have a contentious art form.

The new civic headquarters of the Fingal County Council and other state services were as expected very well maintained with extensive and creative landscaping.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The standard in this category was quite good and the adjudicator was impressed with the myriad of colour to be seen in the core area of the town.

The traditional annuals like petunia and lobelia were to the fore in the many hanging baskets and planter troughs in Dublin Street and Main Street.

The arrangements at the front of Swords Castle on the railing and in the troughs were particularly appealing.

The new Civic Offices had some excellent and creative planting arrangements in place and one would expect this.

This adjudicator hasn't come across white lobelia for some time so it was nice to see a row of such annuals acting as a backdrop to an excellent bed of lavender.

An integral part of any urban landscaping plan is the provision of appropriate trees, native if possible, at pertinent parts of a street or streets.

Swords is well served in this capacity as both Main Street and North Street was very much enhanced by mature trees.

The landscaping and flower beds at Pinnock Hill were admired on the way in from the Airport side and Seatown was visited during the walkabout.

The excellent bed at the top of Forest Road and the memorial willow tree were both noted during the adjudication.

Well done on the daffodil planting project.

The work done and contacts made during the process of applying for funding under the Coca Cola Thank You fund will stand you in good stead in the future.

The adjudicator thought that the excellent facility that is the Town Park should be considered for a revised planting programme that's if council budget can cater for it.

It was felt that much of the green space looked a bit bare without some additional shrub beds and flower beds interspersed at various points.

A number of existing shrub beds primarily on the outskirts of the town were getting a little over grown and choked. For instance the rather large beds near the Castlegrange/MSD Boundary wall are in need of attention.

As an aside this whole green area which seems to act as connector track for joggers would be an ideal location for a wildlife project.

Overall the standard was good and acceptable with plenty colour in the main area but some of the outlying arrangements aka the one mentioned above are in need of revitalisation.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fíadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádurtha:

There are 12 schools in the Swords catchment area some with exceptional achievements under the green flag programme and not one mentioned under this category!

This is a category that usually involves school related projects that are mutually beneficial by way of creativity and education for the school children and the creation of a specific project for the Tidy Towns committee.

For next year maybe the appointed schools liaison might in conjunction with County Biodiversity Officer engage with the schools and see what could evolve in terms one or two mini projects.

In the last section an area near the Castlegrange neighbourhood was mentioned as a possible location for wildlife project related to that particular neighbourhood and the school that serves that community.

Well done to all involved in the rather tricky job of putting nesting boxes under the bridge at Church Road.

As a youngster the adjudicator remembers a neighbour relating that he came from the Ward area of County Dublin and it is only now that he found out where the name came from.

Age is not a barrier to learning something new every day.

The Rivervalley Park is in the process of being tidied up and made more accessible for public and you are wished well with the Gateway Initiative into the future.

The new outdoor gym is an excellent facility and it was being used by a couple of Swords more senior citizens.

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

The re cycling facilities near St Colmcilles GAA Club and on the Watery Lane were visited and were well maintained.

The new concrete area at the latter will help improve both the look and the accessibility of the facility.

The committee is very much involved in water conservation, the whole area of efficient energy and sustainable transport.

It is also good to note that you have been in consultation with the county environmental officer in all aspects of waste prevention.

Whilst there is a great need to manage waste efficiently the key to the future reduction of the national waste mountain is waste prevention at source.

www.localprevention.ie is an excellent source of idea generation and general information on waste prevention.

The EPA website will give an update on the status of the National Strategy for Waste Prevention.

Repak has devised a waste prevention strategy that is relative to its own business but it would be worth getting into its website to see how the company approached the waste prevention issue.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

There has been a good deal of specific project work done in this category that contributes to the anti litter and general tidiness programme as undertaken by the committee.

The weekly clean ups are critical to keeping a town of the size of Swords free of as much litter as possible.

Also well done to Doosan Trading for its community time contribution.

You are fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers that complement the work undertaken by the council and TUS workers and overall the town was relatively free of litter on the day of adjudication.

Well done on the bus shelter project near the Pinnock Hill side of the town, this looks as if it is a shelter that is particularly busy so the work done had a major positive impact on that particular area.

The following are a few observations that the adjudicator noted and that may be useful to the committee for the year ahead.

The junction at for Ashbourne /Malahide at Balheary Road has too much weed growth at base of low wall at unoccupied premises!

This type of weed growth is replicated in a few other outlying areas.

Plastic bottles and wrappers were observed on the hedge at North Street Business Park and at the base of hedge nearby near pole with ad for the Fingal 10k.

A few plastic bottles were observed at the kerbside entrance to St Colmcilles Drive.

A good bit of litter was observed in the river under foot bridge in the town park.

General tidiness was good with the exception of a few obvious unoccupied sites near the centre of town where there was both weed overgrowth and litter to be seen.

Footpaths were in good condition, poles were clean and signs with the exception of few were also clean and visible.

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

The committee has by virtue of its input under this category given an excellent account of its sensible involvement with residents associations in the town and the adjudicator has noted this.

It is fairly obvious that there has been a good response by way of practical work done in certain areas

There is a myriad of identifiable housing areas in the town and on the outlying areas.

The adjudicator took time out to visit a cross section of these and the following are observations made.

St Colmcilles Drive up from Seatown Road had a nice entrance of cobble lock and trees lining that road up to Chapel Lane.

The road surfaces around this general neighbourhood were very good and well lined with road markings stencilled out clearly.

Oaklands Avenue/Oaklands Park was in good condition with houses well maintained but green area whilst tidy could do with a little planting as it had a rather bare look about it.

Carlton Court is a rather large development of fine semi detached homesteads and has maturing trees to complement the surroundings.

The name sign is obscured by hedging and needs to be made more prominent.

Milton Terrace is an old established local authority terrace of houses that is well kept but one or two have overgrowth in the gardens and at the gable end of one.

The Highfields area bordering on the Rivervalley Park has some extensive properties that are well presented.

There are four very nice bungalows called after various saints on the Dublin Road entrance just after Pinnock Hill and these are well established.

A number of estates on the west side of the town were visited these included the excellent Swords Manor Crescent, Castleview Avenue, Ashton Lawns were all visited.

While in the latter area the adjudicator paid a visit to the locally managed and excellent Broadmeadow Community Garden.

The Castlegrange Estates near the Skateboard Park were well managed and adjacent to them is the large green area that has been mentioned as a possible wildlife project area.

Maybe MSD might be approached as part of its community downtime programme to become involved with the nearest local school and the wider community.

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

The routes into Swords are, to say the least, very busy and hard to navigate by car so taking to the road on foot was a better option near roundabouts.

The work undertaken between the Pinnock Hill roundabout right down to the Seatown Roundabout was noted and this was some body of work.

The TUS workers deserve great credit for such excellent work.

The entrance in from the Belfast Malahide round about in by North Street was easy enough to access and all signage was clear and easy to read.

Pinnock Hill entrance in from the Airport was very attractive and some work was taking place on the actual roundabout site on the day.

The Ashbourne/ Rahthbeale Road out by the large number of housing developments on that side of town was also pretty well maintained.

Overall the standard was very good and the basics of good maintenance were adhered to.

This is only to be expected as Swords has high volumes of traffic coming through or via these roundabouts on to other destinations.

The inner roads and lanes were for the most part well maintained and the quality of road surfaces was good.

Concluding Remarks:

The adjudicator was very impressed with the Town of Swords and how it has handled the level of both private and commercial development that has taken place.

It's a busy town but the traffic is well controlled and relatively straightforward.

The centre of the town looked very well on the day and with the opening of the Castle Swords can look forward to attracting additional visitors.

The Committee has worked hard to improve the town's standing in the competition and has succeeded admirably. You are wished well for the future.