

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Swords** Ref: **160**
County: **Dublin** Mark: **286**
Category: **H** Date(s): **17/06/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	39	39
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	36	37
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	29	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13	14
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	34
TOTAL MARK	450	282	286

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Swords is welcome to the Supervalu Tidy Towns competition 2016 – your 11th year in the competition! There are a lot of positive changes happening in Swords at the present and we enjoyed our visit to see some of them. Thank you for your entry form, which was clear and concise. The sketch was most helpful for us in navigating the town and well done for numbering your recent projects on it. Your various photographs gave us an insight into your recent activities. Your Tidy Towns Plan (2015 – 2018) is brief but effective. It lays out your actions under the eight category headings so each area receives equal focus.

Your committee structure is very organised and shows strong linkages across the community. You have the assistance of 40 additional volunteers as required for clean ups and planting projects. We are delighted to read that you have such a diverse committee of 10 nationalities! We must congratulate local resident Matt Cullen on winning 'Volunteer of the Year' at the Volunteer Ireland award!

Your committee is forging good links with outside agencies such as Fingal County Council and Fingal Leader Partnership. You are well supported by the business, several of whom sponsor your various activities. You are engaging well with many of your local clubs such as the Men's Shed and Scouts groups. Your Schools Liaison committee member has ongoing contact with Swords schools and youth groups such as Youthreach and Scouts. We wish you luck with your proposed Junior Tidy Towns group – this would be of great benefit for the future of Tidy Towns. You communicate your messages through various channels including social media (500 hits per week on Facebook) and your newly launched STT website (June 2016). The St. Patrick's Day Parade is a fun way of raising your Tidy Towns profile and letting others know of the wide range of projects you cover.

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

Swords castle is at the heart of the town and of significant historical interest. We are delighted to see that work has begun to sensitively redevelop this site as a visitor attraction. It will greatly enhance the town centre. It would be helpful if in your entry form you could clearly distinguish between new work carried out and general information on the built information, which is of secondary importance in this instance. It's a pity that the Swords Boxing club can't have better quality signage as it occupies an impressive building. The beautiful Carnegie library was admired. All was in neat order at (what looks like) the new Applegreen Service Station. Compliments to the proprietors of the adjacent Des D'arcy Motors for maintaining an excellent standard here. At the Estuary Bar, there were four poles but only one flag, which looks a little odd. Other buildings that caught the eye included the Gourmet food parlour, Swords Dental, Dillon's Hair Salon/barbers and the Old Borough. We noted the efforts to brighten up the Mall area with flower tubs and seating. This area was bright and clean. The Senior Citizens Club has also made good efforts to brighten up their premises with floral displays. The modern Fingal Co Co offices are cleverly hidden behind the trees and enhance this end of the street. Swords Pavilion and Colurtrend were both neatly presented. The Swords

Shoe repairs shopfront is poor in quality. The Cock Tavern is very nicely presented.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The wide pavement area outside Fingal County Council has impressive displays of flowers, complimented by the trees in the background. We loved the bamboo planting scheme around the corner. The Garda Station is not the most attractive building design; however the landscaping compensates. Down the hill at St. Colmcille's well, we can tell by your photos that great work has gone into enhancing this area – well done! We like the colour scheme and mix of plants here. The Lord Mayor's put/restaurant contains some attractive landscaping to the rear and an incredible view of the valley beyond. The junction of Forrest Rd is enhanced by an attractive flower bed. An example of making use of small spaces with some effective planting in small spaces was observed at the corner of Cooldriona Court apartments. Youthreach has some good planting at its entrance.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

We agree that Swords could make better use of its natural amenities and we're delighted to hear that you have done just that with recent work carried out at Ward Linear Park, following an Ecological Study carried out by consultants on behalf of Fingal Co Co. Some of these lovely water/walking amenities should be better signposted from the town centre so visitors can find them and access them.

The community garden is another wonderful way of bringing people from the community together to grow their own food and plants in an environmentally friendly way. We look forward to hearing of your progress (and perhaps seeing a photo) next time. Your St. Patrick's Day parade encouraged residents to think about bees and wildlife when planting and maintaining their gardens. A Simple measure like promoting the excellent www.fingalbiodiversity.ie website is very worthwhile. Your polytunnel activities area also trying to encourage wildlife and promote local biodiversity where possible. No chemicals or weed killer are used here – this is commended. We note that here you are also propagating your own flowers for tidy towns projects – this is much preferable than buying imports from different environments that travel thousands of miles sometimes.

Do tell us if you are linking up with any schools that are working towards their 'biodiversity' green flag. Well done to all community groups involved in your various projects under this category. Keep up the good work!

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

Swords is making good inroads in this category – thank you for your detailed submission. We hope that by becoming a 'Green Community' you will be able to further raise awareness of how everyone in the community can take sustainable actions for a better environment. Thank you for the update on Swords schools – well done to all the students – we know they are also bring tips home to their families on how to reduce waste, water and energy use. Your polytunnel is a wonderful resource and as well as providing a food source, it is as you say, a wonderful way to raise awareness in a fun environment. We look forward to hearing more results from your Green Home programme as you roll-out it out further into the community. Your three local charity shops promote Reuse of items in good condition, while supporting a good cause. We are delighted to read that you are using the excellent Recreate facility to upcycle props for your St Patrick's Day parade. We positively note that you are committed to sustainable water use, in terms of practical planting projects and raising awareness across the wider community. We read with interest of your submission to the Fingal Co Co Development Plan consultation regarding a local bus route. We look forward to hearing of any follow up next time. It is also good to hear that Tidy Towns groups find it useful to learn from each other and relevant organisations while attending events such as the SWRM event held in Monaghan this year. You continue to promote your local recycling initiatives. Keep up the excellent progress.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Litter control was fairly good throughout the busy town so well done to all involved in your ongoing clean ups, removing of unauthorised posters and tackling illegal dumping in conjunction with Fingal Co Co. Well done to the scout group and Youthreach for playing their part in local clean ups. There is an issue of cigarette butts on the pathway at Criona Court apartments, obviously being dropped from an apartment above as there is a cluster in one particular area. A friendly reminder to residents perhaps? Do remember to tell us about your litter awareness campaigns as there are marks going for this.

We walked down the pleasant laneway from the Main St towards the river. This pathway invites visitors to walk around the river, not realising that it is a dead end and passes very a very untidy area to the back of Castle Shopping Centre. Something should be done here to redirect people on a more attractive route or to take on the improvement of this riverside area with potential. There was one litter bin full here in front of the shops and some minor littering. The sign at the entrance to the car park is in poor condition and therefore difficult to read. Inside the lovely Town Park, grass cuttings left on the footpath were creating rather an untidy impression. These should ideally be swept up from the paths immediately after mowing. Near the courthouse, there was wire clutter on the shop facades; this gives as an untidy impression.

Your monthly surveys are a great idea and help you tackle issues quickly. It is frustrating for you that graffiti is such an ongoing nuisance; however your efforts to have it quickly removed are commended. Do keep us updated on the proposed Community Mural initiative at Balheary. Dalkey Tidy Towns has been quite successful in targeting graffiti vandals, in conjunction with their local Garda Station so it might be worth getting more details from them. There was a pole missing a sign near the Carnegie Court Hotel. At the Courthouse, the car park area inside the railings was somewhat untidy.

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

Residential areas were well presented overall. Some residences along town streets were freshly painted and colourful for instance opposite the Boxing club; others were enhanced with window boxes or tubs. Swords has a large number of housing estates – generally well maintained with and litter-free. Well done to those that have gone the extra mile with planting around their entrance and in other key areas (eg. Rivervalley and Mooretown). Well done to the residents of Glen Ellen/Sandford for planting 15 new trees. Please mark your residential areas on your map, if you wish us to visit them or look at any particular projects. Carnegie Court apartments looked well. The two residences beside Youthreach were admired.

You are working very well with your many Residents Associations, some of whom are very proactive. Well done to all involved and keep up the good work.

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

Approach roads were generally well maintained and roundabouts landscaped for visual impact – important to give a positive first and last impression of your town! The entrances to the park could be signposted a bit better (e.g. opposite Carnegie Court Hotel). Your new 'welcome' signs (with colourful planting) further define your boundaries and give both residents and visitors a sense of place. Parking was well marked and there were good pedestrian connections. Visitor information signage was in good order.

Concluding Remarks:

We are delighted to note that Tidy Towns is increasing your community spirit and giving various groups the platform to work together for the greater benefit of the town. Keep up the good work in Swords and we wish you well with future projects.