

Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Swords - Sord** Ref: **160**
County: **Dublin** Mark: **398**
Category: **H** Date(s): **29/06/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	57	59
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	51
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	52	55
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	44	46
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	33	35
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	42	43
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	42	43
TOTAL MARK	600	383	398

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Bailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2026. Go raibh maith agaibh as bhur n-iarratas a chur isteach. Maith sibh as an obair atá déanta agaibh in bhur gceantar go dtí seo - guímid gach rath oraibh i bhúr dtionscadail amach anseo.

Welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2026 competition and thank you for your comprehensive application form including photos, map, and your 2021-2028 Master Plan with activities completed on a month by month basis. This amount of detail will certainly focus your work. We admire that you have a committee member's name after each activity who will lead the project. It's also good to add collaborators – you'll need help with some projects/activities. Nice to read the poem about the Swords Tidy Towners on the website. Your Facebook page has 4.6K followers which is wonderful and we see that you update it on a regular basis which is crucial for all social media feeds. You have 11 on the committee and 140 who volunteer which is wonderful. But truthfully, in a town as big as swords, you would need a volunteer force of that number. Well done for recruiting them. You also have support from other voluntary groups, businesses, Fingal Co Co and other state and semi-state organisations. Your engagement with the schools is wonderful for both the National and Secondary students and also for transition year students as part of their Gaisce Award. Your participation in the Tidy Towns competition for 20 years is admirable and you list the achievements that participation in this competition has brought to your community. We are delighted to see the achievements, and particularly that a pride of place, and a stronger community has been developed. We note that you have entered quite a few of the Special Awards and we wish you the very best in these.

See Concluding Remarks for advice.

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

Although the population put you into the highest category, we always get a feeling when visiting Swords that we are entering a busy village. Having business, commercial, social and residential properties sitting side-by-side along the main street enforces this village feel. You have a large number of heritage sites which you have now listed on a Heritage Trail. Centre to this is Swords Castle with ongoing works – it would be good if a plan was available for all to see the proposed works ... but perhaps we missed it? The Cultural Quarter is an interesting concept and its location at the end of the Main Street near the LA offices will ensure it is well used. We look forward to it being completed. It's good that there are Awards for businesses which will encourage them to take pride in how their premises are presented; all of which adds to the streetscape and makes Swords extremely presentable. Some of the business premises had colourful planting displays which added to the streetscape. Some business premises were a little drab and maybe these could be encouraged to paint the premises and make them more inviting. Does FCC give grants for businesses to update/paint their façades? Or perhaps the local paint supplier could sponsor them with a reduced cost for the paint? Something for you to investigate. We admired that there are numerous

benches for people to sit along the Main Street and many of these are amongst very colourful planters. We note both young and old using the benches when we visited. We suggest that you audit the town and see where there are locations where benches could be installed and present this to FCC for their parks department to assess/act upon. We noted just one utility box which was painted (the deck of cards) and we recommend that you would consider doing this to others. Choose a topic or topics which relate to Swords – history, famous writers or other personalities, nature, etc. Needless to say permission is needed from the utility providers but other villages towns have got this so why not Swords? St Colmcille's Well had been recently painted and looks beautiful. A small discrete name sign should be added to the low wall near the pump (which also looked good having been recently painted black and gold). We look forward to seeing the butterfly mural on the Main Street and Malahide Road being completed.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

What wonderful roundabouts welcome the motorists to Swords. We entered from the Pinnockhill roundabout and loved the work you have done around the welcome sign and the adjacent Bug Hotel. The new planting was noted and in time this bed may need some to be removed. Don't over plant, as shrubs, particularly pollinator friendly lavenders, grow quite large. We walked around Swords and therefore saw quite a few of the parks. Swords Town Park is impressive. We looked for the rose garden mentioned on the map (at the entrance) but couldn't find one. It's good to see that the Tennis Club has been relocated here as we saw that its original grounds are being developed as part of the Cultural Quarter. The Commemorative Garden beside St Colmcille's Well was in a poor state. While sections of the grass were cut and looked well, the long grasses at the edges beside the walls should be cut. This is a small garden and all of the grass should be neatly trimmed so as to make the garden inviting; it's acceptable to have 'meadows' in larger parks. The planting bed at the junction of the two roads looks good and had lots of insects buzzing around. While we didn't walk the full length of the Ward River walk we did walk along part. It would be nice to have steps down to the river opposite the Old Schoolhouse Pub - perhaps even a fishing stand. We loved the layout of the Rock Garden and noted its Green Flag Awards. The trees - European horn beams, silver birch, Yoshino cherry, etc. - are well maintained. The limestone post with ogham and Irish name sign at the entrance was noted. The black bollards need to be cleaned. Your work along the Main Street, and particularly in the pocket garden at the junction of Malahide Road and Main Street and also the Feature Planters at the Colourtrend Building and Shopping Centre, were admired. The planting beds at St. Colmcille's NS with flowers in full bloom (fernleaf yarrow, lavender, hooker's hebe etc), were alive with visiting insects. The trees on Main Street are spectacular. Let's hope with the Public Realm Works undertaken by FCC will ensure that these remain. We noted that quite a few have roots that have damaged the pavement, and so make area challenging for the pedestrians, particularly those with mobility issues, and those pushing buggies.

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

Although Swords is a large town there are quite a variety of habitats for birds, insects and mammals to thrive – you have great vast areas of green spaces along the Ward River, Broadmeadow river and Broadmeadow estuary. Add to these your parklands with mature trees and shrubs and the communal spaces in housing estates and we see that nature and biodiversity in Swords is catered for. We see that FCC have a Tree Planting and Biodiversity Management Strategy to which you contributed. It is crucial now with global warming that tree planting is prioritised amongst our local authorities. We were delighted to read that 70 trees were planted this year in your area... but you'll need to continue with this tree planting work annually. We see that there are six swift nesting sites in Swords. It seems very few for a town of such a large population/area. Perhaps encourage schools, of which you have many, to install swift nesting boxes and swift lures/callers. The booklet Havens For Nature, which is published by the Heritage Council, shows how 'faith communities' can turn their grounds and properties into places where nature and heritage can thrive together. Do you know if any of the Swords faith communities have signed up and are supporting biodiversity in their grounds? We noted your other projects/actions including the 'Fresh Water Watch' – an interesting project/survey. We loved the annual Biodiversity Art Competition for schools. Hopefully the 'Clean Air-Show you Care' entries went on exhibition for the whole of the community to see? If not can we suggest that perhaps an exhibition in the Atrium of FCC or in the open space of the Shopping Centre might be possible. Just ask and hopefully you'll have a positive response. It would bring addition shoppers to the shops! The Nature & Biodiversity Learning Hub has some interesting videos – well done.

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

Is rewarding to see that this category, where many communities struggled when it was introduced, is now being embraced by TidyTowns groups. It's just about being aware of how we use the dwindling resources of the planet so that we cut down on our waste. We see that Swords Tidy Towns are leading by example – well done. The Community Repair Corner, as an extension of your Clothes Swap Shop, was introduced following 'volunteer recruitment and upskilling in sewing, repair and upcycling.' Could this initiative be brought into the schools? It would be good to teach the skills of sewing and knitting to our juniors as was done when we and our parents went to school. The 'Plant Seed Swap and Share' held six times a year is wonderful. Gardeners love, sharing their products with others and also love introducing new plants to their gardens. Having 35 cages for leaf mould, shows the valuable resource that previously was put into landfill. The Polytunnel Open Day, welcoming the community to your garden with demonstrations on Christmas centrepieces, composting children's craft, etc., is a successful story. We hope that you will continue this annually. We see that you are part of the Conscious Cup Campaign and have a list of the premises who give rewards for 'bringing your own cup' on your website. We were delighted to see that you also have a list of Repair Shops and business who repair items on your website. It's probable time to revisit this list and expand it with the additional voluntary upskilling talent now in your group? We tried to access the STT Polytunnel are but failed to do so – but from the photos we see that it is an active hub. When we visit a large town,

we always look for a public water refill station ... we didn't see any in Swords. Are there some? If not, something to request. We noted a lot of people standing, waiting for buses. Perhaps additional seating should be added near bus stops.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We assume that your active 'Swords Pickers' and volunteers take part in the An Taisce Annual National Spring Clean. With the number of volunteers you have if even half came out decked in their high jackets, they would bring great attention to the community on the volume of litter/fly tipping/ illegal dumping that occurs in your town. It's good to see that you have a Tidiness & Litter Officer on your committee who regularly surveys the town and reports issues that need attention. In town as big as Swords this is probably needed to ensure that Swords is free from illegal dumping. Your attention to clutter is noted and we are delighted to read that you remove, fly posters, broken bicycles, sandwich boards etc., and that redundant poles are reported to FCC for their removal? All of these are clutter and attract from a streetscape. Did you have success with the survey which you gave to FCC for her removal of the 27 signs? Follow up on this. It will be interesting to see the works, which will be carried out where mature trees on the Main Street have caused lifting of the footpath. We noted the damage done as we walked along the street. We noted only one skate park in Swords. This is an area in other towns where the graffiti artists can show their prowess and therefore it reduces graffiti elsewhere. Unfortunately Cobblelock paving has been used a number of areas which needs constant attention with weed growth removal. Well done to your volunteers in hand weeding these areas – truthfully it's frustrating but in the end rewarding work. The day we visited was busy, but we are delighted to report that there was only a small amount of litter on the streets and parks. Weed growth was noted in quite a few areas, particularly at wall pavement junctions. Some of the public seating along the side streets are in need of attention. Have a walk around and make a list and give it to FCC for the attention of the parks department. The lovely mural at the back of the Old Schoolhouse pub needs to be washed.

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

In addition to the houses along your Main Street there are some housing estates to the east of the town while the larger proportion of estates is to the west. While we didn't visit all we did visit quite a number. The houses on the Main Street were well presented, and those with gardens, had wonderful pollinator, friendly flowers, and shrubs behind well maintained garden walls. We see that there are plans for additional homes on North Street, the Dublin Road and in the Swords Cultural Quarter. It's always good to see residences in the town as it gives a town nighttime activity when the businesses close. You actively liaise through your Resident Association Liaison Officer with 47 residents' associations which we admire. In the estates we visited most of the residents had made considerable efforts to display their properties with freshly painted walls and fences. We visited some of the mature estates and here we found that most of the residents had wonderful well maintained gardens with great displays of annual and perennial flowers which were attracting buzzing insects. There was some with mature trees and hedgerows and some of the trees were ornamental adding additional beauty to the estate. In many of the mature estates the requirement of communal open space did not exist in the planning requirement and so these residents rely on their own property or your parks for child play. In the estates which had communal open space we recommend that the areas not required for ball play be allowed to grow as wildflower meadows. In addition, we recommend that the grass around the base of trees be allowed to grow for, say, a 60 mm radius from the tree. This will allow wildflowers to grow and also will stop the damage being done by strimmers. We admired the entrance to St. Colmcille's Crescent where this was done. We noted some chemical weedkiller had been used around poles, trees and at roadside kerbs, which was a pity. It is important that you inform Residents' Associations of your policy regarding chemical weed killer. We are delighted to read that you recently surveyed the Residents' Associations on the pollinator, friendly actions being undertaken by their residents. The townwide pollinator map will inform your policies and will assist you in identifying areas which need attention. Along some boundary walls, we see the possibility of planting and we recommend that Residents' Associations are advised to plant ivy, wisteria, pyracantha or other climbing plants which will add to your pollinator corridors. We looked on your website, but didn't see evidence of advice which you give to residents on suitable flowers and shrubs to include in their gardens for pollinators. Perhaps we missed it. If not, this is something for your website. There was also a lack of seating in many of the communal open spaces. We encourage residents to add these, not only for the elderly, but also for the youth of the estate where they can sit and chat where it is safe.

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

The Lions Club beautiful discrete sign on the R132 welcomed us. Further in, at the Pinnockhill roundabout, we are met with formal and wild meadow planting. The combination of both is suitable for the location. The four welcome signs on your main entrance roads were beautifully presented and due to the flowers selected the town name signs were legible. Very often Tidy Towns groups plant incorrectly and so hide the town name sign. The welcome sign planting gave us an indication of what we were about to see along your main streets and we weren't disappointed. There has been quite a lot of work, undertaken around Swords with Active Travel and Infrastructure improvements. It will be good when these have been completed. The Quiet Streets Initiative is an interesting concept which will add greatly to the various areas by preventing cut-through motor activity while maintaining access for pedestrians, cyclists, emergency services and local car parking. We look forward to reading more about this in future applications. Have you told your Residents' Associations to apply? While ivy is wonderful for wildlife its roots cause damage to stone structures. Ivy roots penetrate between the joints in the stones causing instability in the wall, and finally leading to the collapse of the structure. We strongly recommend that ivy is removed from natural stone walls, bridges and other stone structures. We were happy to see that there were a few carparking spaces along the Main Street – no harm to have a few. There are quite a number of areas where there are dipped kerbs and rumble strips. It would be good to see the crossings at these locations marked on the roads. This might be something to discuss

with the area office engineers. While probably not yet a policy, it might be something they would consider. The road surfaces in Swords generally are good, but there are some areas with edge break up and tarmac unravelling where the roads had been previously repaired, and these areas need attention. Swords is a large town, so perhaps a survey could be undertaken in stages, and the results given to the area office for the attention of the Area Engineer to include in his/her budget next year. We loved that parking is provided behind the shops on the Main Street, which is accessed down narrow laneways. The yellow road markings, indicating these entrances need to be repainted in quite a few areas.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your town ... but we have a couple of suggestions for 2027.

- You mention a number of parks and gardens in your application but failed to locate these on your map... correct this next year. Remember it's acceptable to have more than one map. On one, as you are a large town, you can give a general overview (locating the parks, rivers etc.) and on another, the detail of the projects you'd like us to visit. Although outside the bounds of your map we drove to the Broadmeadow River Park. This is quite impressive. The community garden was locked, but we had a peep inside through the gates and see that it is well-maintained by the local housing estate residents. We spoke to two ladies who told us that barriers have been removed and the walk has been extended around a lake – we'll need to revisit and explore!
- You have given us a number of weblinks but unfortunately due to time constraints it's impossible for us to open all of these. We suggest that you limit them to two or three and that these are the ones of which you are most proud.
- We were delighted to see that you had limited the number of projects/ sites for the adjudicator to visit. In a town as big as Swords the number you gave us to visit was perfect ... although we did walk around exploring. We wish to state that this is not a criticism of your work but to explain to you that as adjudicators we rely on a clear application form and accompanying map to inform us of your projects and make our visit rewarding. Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2026 competition. It was a pleasure to visit and adjudicate Swords.