
YOUR COUNCILS ARE CHANGING –
POTENTIAL COMMUNITY ASSET
TRANSFERS TO SOUTHWATER
PARISH COUNCIL - SURVEY
SUMMARY



SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL
Beeson House, 26 Lintot Square, Fairbank Road, Southwater, West Sussex RH13 9LA

Your Councils are Changing – Potential Assets for Southwater Parish Council to take over – Survey summary

Southwater Parish Council has run a survey to gather residents' views on proposed major changes to local government in West Sussex. Central Government is progressing Local Government Reorganisation, which will replace the current county, district, and borough councils' structure with new unitary authorities. Ahead of this, Southwater Parish Council sought residents' views on whether it should take on the ownership and management of certain local assets (e.g. play areas, open spaces and woodlands) currently overseen and managed by Horsham District Council.

If taken on, these assets would be managed more locally by Southwater Parish Council, **subject to strict legal provisions under Horsham District Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy to ensure long term stewardship and no change of use.**

This may in the future require an increase in the parish precept to cover maintenance and management costs. However, local ownership can also bring benefits, including greater local accountability, improvement or continuity of maintenance standards and decision making focused solely on Southwater.

For more information, please see our [FAQs about Local Government Reorganisation and Asset Transfers](#).

The survey invited responses via a flyer distributed to every household or via an online version by 31 October 2025.

The responses and summary are shared below, alongside pictures of the original consultation flyer and a summary chart of the answers received to Question 1.

We have received 65 responses via the printed flyers, combined with the 91 digital responses, resulted in a total of 156 responses.

Original Flyer delivered to every household in Southwater Parish:

Please place a tick next to the location(s) if you think SPC should consider taking on the ownership, management and care of the following area(s):

Please scan QR code on the front page to access the map to help identify these areas.

<input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Drive Open Space & Play Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly Garden (Leeds Close, Windsor Close)
<input type="checkbox"/> Swan Close Open Space(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodlands Way Open Space
<input type="checkbox"/> College Road Open Space	<input type="checkbox"/> Castlewood Road Open Space
<input type="checkbox"/> Corfe Close Open Space	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Lane Green Space
<input type="checkbox"/> Pevensey Road Play Area	<input type="checkbox"/> War Memorial Open Space
<input type="checkbox"/> Rascals Close	<input type="checkbox"/> Land at Foxes Close

Your views on Southwater Country Park will be obtained via a separate survey over the coming year.

Please let us know of any other asset(s) you feel SPC should look at as part of the Local Government Reorganisation process:

I am a resident of Southwater Parish:

My postcode is: _____ My House Number is: _____

Your data will be used solely to help Southwater Parish Council to improve services, your data will be anonymised and will not be shared with third parties, except as required by law. Southwater Parish Council's Data Protection policies can be viewed at <https://www.southwater-pc.gov.uk/policies>.



Southwater is the first Town or Parish Council in both East and West Sussex to achieve Gold status.

For more information about this achievement, please visit: www.southwater-pc.gov.uk/gold-award

YOUR COUNCILS ARE CHANGING

- **Devolution**
- **Local Government Reorganisation**



Major changes are planned to councils across West Sussex. The Government has asked councils to explore how local government reorganisation could work in the area, with the aim of replacing the current county, district and borough councils with a new unitary council (or councils), responsible for local services.

A community consultation had been run by the County, Borough and District Councils to ask residents of West Sussex for their views. For more information on local government reorganisation, visit www.shapingwestsussex.org.

Please fill out the back page & return the flyer to Southwater Parish Council.

Deadline: 31st October 2025



Use this QR code to access the survey and map online or to contact us



What is the difference between Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation?



- **Devolution** is the transfer of powers and funding from national to local government.
- **Local Government Reorganisation** is the creation of unitary authorities in place of district, borough and county councils. It involves changing how local councils are structured and what they do. Under the English Devolution White Paper, the Government plans to replace the two-tier system with larger councils, typically serving 500,000+ people, though exceptions may be made, based on local needs and devolution goals.

Expected Timeline:



What could it mean for Southwater Parish?

There will be limited changes to the legal role of Town and Parish councils as part of local government reorganisation. However, with Horsham District Council ceasing to exist in April 2028, the ownership, management and care for many local assets in our Parish will inevitably change. At this stage it is uncertain who will be responsible for these assets or what level of service they will receive under the new unitary authority. Experience shows that when larger authorities face budget pressures, they often reduce service levels to achieve savings.



Southwater Parish Council could step in to maintain a higher standard of service and ensure local spaces continue to be cared for at this level. Doing so could mean an increase in the Parish precept, but importantly this would ensure that money raised from Southwater residents is spent directly in Southwater, rather than being absorbed across the wider unitary area.

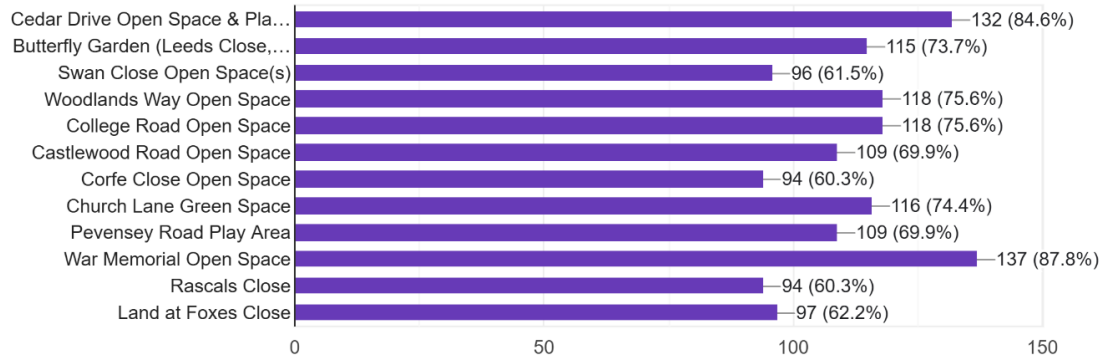
We are seeking residents' views on the assets listed on the following page, and whether SPC should pursue their transfer from HDC so that decisions on their care and investment are made locally.

Please fill out the back page and return your response to us by 31st October 2025.

Question 1:

Please place a tick next to the locations(s) if you think SPC should consider taking on the ownership, management and care of the following area(s):

156 responses



Here are the responses sorted from highest to lowest number of votes, with vote counts included:

War Memorial Open Space – 137

Cedar Drive Open Space & Play Area – 132

Woodlands Way Open Space – 118

College Road Open Space – 118

Church Lane Green Space – 116

Butterfly Garden (Leeds Close) – 115

Castlewood Road Open Space – 109

Pevensey Road Play Area – 109

Land at Foxes Close – 97

Swan Close Open Space(s) – 96

Corfe Close Open Space – 94

Rascals Close – 94

Question 2:

“Please let us know of any other asset(s) you feel SPC should look at as part of the Local Government Reorganisation process.”

Respondents suggested additional areas in Southwater, the most mentioned ones are shared below. Please note that many of these areas are already managed by SPC, such as: Larkspur Field, Woods between Blakes Farm road and Cedar drive, Woods from Cedar Drive down to Lintot square, Warren Drive play area, Blakes Farm bund (Field between Blakes Farm road and Southwater Street), Red Route, Roman Way Play Area, The Downs Link Play Park, Nutham Lane Open space / Village green, the green area in Hazel close, Nye’s Lane Open Space. We manage 7 of the play areas in Southwater already, and the potential ones were listed as options in Q1, please visit the relevant page on our website for more information.

<https://www.southwater-pc.gov.uk/play-areas>

A few people suggested The Ghyll area and the woodland around it, these are maintained by Southwater Ghyll CIO.

Southwater Country Park was another suggestion, which is managed by Horsham District Council’s Parks and Countryside team.

Verges and roundabouts currently come under the responsibility of West Sussex County Council, so as The Bridge and the vegetation around it.

Additional comments

A few respondents highlighted the importance of securing and legally protecting local land, so it remains available for long-term community benefit. The Parish Council notes that this objective sits at the core of the Community Asset Transfer process, which includes legally binding restrictions on use, disposal and future development.

A small number of respondents expressed uncertainty about the survey design, noting that the lack of a “none” or “no confidence” option limited their ability to reflect their views fully and may have influenced selections. It is important to note that the survey was not intended to measure trust in the Parish Council, but to understand views on whether specific assets should be considered for transfer under a defined legal framework.

Some respondents sought further reassurance that open spaces would be safeguarded from inappropriate development. In response, the Parish Council reiterates that any asset transfer from Horsham District Council would be subject to its adopted Community Asset Transfer Policy, **which includes strict legal protections such as use restrictions, clawback provisions and reversion**

clauses. In addition, many of **the sites identified are protected under the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan, meaning development is highly restricted regardless of ownership.** These safeguards were set out clearly in the Frequently Asked Questions document published alongside the survey.

Practical local issues were also raised, including transport connectivity, road safety, easier pavement use for people in a wheelchair and specific infrastructure pressures in parts of Southwater. While these points are noted, they fall outside the scope of this survey which was focused specifically on Local Government Reorganisation and potential Community Asset Transfers. The Parish Council is satisfied that concerns regarding future development or change of use are not supported by the legal and planning framework that would apply to any transferred assets.

Conclusion

This survey has provided valuable insight into residents' views on which local assets Southwater Parish Council should consider taking on ahead of the wider reorganisation of local government in West Sussex. Responses indicated strong support for several key sites, with the six most-preferred assets being the War Memorial Open Space, Cedar Drive Open Space & Play Area, Woodlands Way Open Space, College Road Open Space, Church Lane Green Space and Butterfly Gardens.

Residents also suggested a wide range of additional locations, from woodlands and play areas to verges, public rights of ways and community spaces. This reflects the high value placed on protecting and maintaining Southwater's open spaces.

Alongside this, some respondents raised concerns about governance, confidence in future stewardship, and the risk of increased development or rising costs. These concerns were a key reason for publishing a detailed Frequently Asked Questions document, which explains the legal safeguards within the Community Asset Transfer process and the additional planning protections already in place.

These insights will help inform the Parish Council's approach as Local Government Reorganisation progresses, and future decisions are considered.

Next Steps

Considering the level of community support expressed through the survey, Southwater Parish Council has formally written to Horsham District Council to submit an Expression of Interest under the adopted Community Asset Transfer Policy.

This initial step asks Horsham District Council to confirm whether the identified assets may proceed through the next stages of the policy process, including officer review, consultation with ward members, and the preparation of detailed business cases.

Should Horsham District Council confirm that the proposals can progress, Southwater Parish Council will prepare the required business cases, financial assessments and management plans for further consideration. Any future decision to proceed with asset transfers will be taken transparently by Southwater Parish Council.