

## 1. Introduction

Sevenoaks Town Council has 16 voluntary elected Town Councillors and has paid staff led by the Chief Executive / Town Clerk. Each year Town Councillors elect a Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

### Town Councillors

Cllr Libby Ancrum	Liberal Democrat		Cllr Lise Michaelides	Liberal Democrat
Cllr Keith Bonin	Conservative		Cllr Tom Morris Brown	Liberal Democrat
Cllr Sue Camp	Liberal Democrat		Cllr Rachel Parry, Mayor	Conservative
Cllr Dr Merylyn Canet	Liberal Democrat		Cllr Richard Parry	Conservative
Cllr Tony Clayton	Liberal Democrat		Cllr Robert Piper	Conservative
Cllr Andrew Eyre	Conservative		Cllr Simon Raikes	Conservative
Cllr Victoria Granville Baxter	Liberal Democrat		Cllr Claire Shea, Deputy Mayor	Liberal Democrat
Cllr Roderick Hogarth	Conservative		Cllr Nicholas Busvine OBE	Conservative

During the last year the country engaged with the commemorations of the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee and then sadly marked her passing. The Sevenoaks community participated in both in equal measures of respect and dignity.

Writing the report for March we are aware that 2023 will be a landmark year for the country and the local community.

The Coronation of King Charles III is clearly a significant change for the country. The Town Council and the District Council have local elections which could see changes to policies and facilities.

Also, after many years of consultation and voluntary work, this year Sevenoaks residents have the opportunity to vote on the future of their town. The referendum for the first Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan will be on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023, alongside the local elections.

The Town Council has continued to work hard to maintain its functions and facilities as much as possible in a constantly changing society, impacted by Covid, cost of living crises and world events, including the need to help refugees.

This report highlights aspects of our regular functions which includes allotments, public open spaces, play areas, cemetery, grants to voluntary organisations, markets, community events, supporting local businesses and youth facilities. See the list at the end of this report.

In addition to its normal operations of community functions and facilities, the Town Council has also continued to progress some of its planned key objectives and other projects including:

- Finalist in the National Britain in Bloom competition
- Activities for the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee
- Activities to commemorate the late Queen's death
- Marking the accession of King Charles III
- Refurbishment of two play areas
- Continuing with Green Projects including planting numerous trees
- Returning to holding many events, post-pandemic
- Purchased a portable Speed Indicator Device which will be moved between Bradbourne Vale Road, St Johns Hill and Brittain's Lane
- Progressed the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan towards its Referendum, to be held on 4th May 2023

We hope you will find this report, which provides detailed information relating to Sevenoaks Town Council's performance and activities during the past financial year, interesting and useful.

## 2. Climate Change Initiatives

In November 2019 Sevenoaks Town Council (STC) resolved to make the following its Number 1 Priority:

- To recognise the Government and Kent County Council (KCC) declarations for aiming for Zero Carbon.
- To integrate this within the vision and throughout the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) [now known as Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan (STNP)] and within the Town Council's general operation.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted some of STC's original plans from 2019. However, STC has used the time to refocus its draft Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan on climate and green issues, identifying policies which would contribute to a more sustainable town.

At a meeting in November 2021, Councillors met to review STC's original 2019 climate change initiatives and considered additional and new proposals. It was agreed that STC should communicate more to the public about the practical local initiatives it was already undertaking and its plans for the future, and that STC should take a local leadership role, providing information about simple measures that can be taken to help the local community to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle to help the planet.

Friends of the Earth states: "*Parish and Town Councils may not be as powerful as local authorities, but they can 'do their bit' in addressing the climate and nature emergency and be a force for change.*"

STC's overall aim is to put in place affordable and practical initiatives with long-term green benefits for the local community and to support and encourage residents to pursue them individually. Little steps together, reducing Sevenoaks' carbon consumption footprint = big changes to the planet.

**The STC 2021 Green Community Investment Plan moves away from primarily investing in community facilities and towards investing in the local environment and making Sevenoaks greener.**

STC's Green Community Investment Plan (appendix to STC Community Investment Plan 2019 – 2023) brings together all of its climate change initiatives to publicise to and involve the local community and progress practical delivery under the following five themes:

Theme 1	Buildings
Theme 2	Transport & Movement
Theme 3	Making Sevenoaks Greener
Theme 4	Consumption
Theme 5	Information & Access to information

Public consultation on the Green Community Investment Plan took place during December 2021 and January 2022.

**Climate Change initiatives during 2022**

The **Greening Sevenoaks Survey** was produced and distributed via QR codes at STC noticeboards and on screen at Sevenoaks Station. To date 140 responses have been returned.

**World Refill Day** on the 16<sup>th</sup> June was promoted, with a new business signing up as a result. This scheme aims to lower plastic consumption by encouraging people to refill their water bottles in businesses that have signed up, instead of buying bottles in a shop.

**The Great Big Green Week** from the 24<sup>th</sup> September to the 2<sup>nd</sup> October was promoted with different events around Sevenoaks, as well as information on STC policies and environmentally friendly practices.

**An information pack titled 'Green tips for Sevenoaks'** (available on the Town Council website: [https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Green\\_Tips\\_for\\_Sevenoaks\\_43540.aspx](https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Green_Tips_for_Sevenoaks_43540.aspx)) was produced and distributed on the STC website and via the Town Crier newsletter. This pack suggests ways for Sevenoaks residents to lower their carbon footprint and energy consumption:

The Town Council has explored the possibility of introducing a **Car Club** in Sevenoaks. Car Clubs are short-term rental services that give members access to locally parked cars which they can pay for by the hour. They offer an alternative model to private car ownership for individuals and businesses and have the potential to reduce car ownership, inspiring a shift away from private car use to walking, cycling and public transport instead. In January 2023 it was agreed to review the financial viability and to consider a small trial of two cars based at a Town Council site.

Following on from installing **EV charging points** at the Bat & Ball Centre and STC Council Office site, research is being undertaken to enable additional EV points to be installed in the town.

In January 2023 a **clothing bank**, where people can donate their used clothes, was installed at the Bat & Ball Centre. This will run for a trial period of three months. STC will receive payment of £70-£100 per full bank of clothing which go to be recycled. This helps extend the lifecycle of clothes.

A **Climate Fair**, to be held jointly with Sevenoaks Climate Action Network, is being organised for Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2023 on The Vine. This event will have guest speakers, advice stalls, businesses offering environmentally friendly products, as well as vegetarian and vegan food.

## Climate Change Youth Forum

The Climate Change Youth Forum was launched in September 2022 as a place for student representatives from the secondary schools in Sevenoaks to discuss what their schools were doing to tackle climate change and share best practice. A second meeting took place in December and further meetings are planned. Representatives from the following schools have attended: Knole Academy, Sevenoaks School, Trinity School, Walthamstow Hall, and West Heath.

The meetings were beneficial in sharing best practice; for example, regarding the installation of bio-digesters, and encouraging students to be more environmentally conscious. Future guest speakers at the Youth Forum are Sevenoaks District Council, a member of the Sevenoaks Climate Action Network (SCAN), Kent Wildlife Trust, and the Cost Reduction Company. Town

Council plans and policies, and information were distributed, including the Green Community Investment Plan, Green Tips for Sevenoaks pack, Adopt a Tree scheme, Give it a Grow scheme, Refill Scheme, and Plastic Free Pledge.



## Carbon Footprint

A Carbon Footprint Appraisal for Sevenoaks Town Council for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 was undertaken by Carbon Footprint Ltd. This identified (for all its buildings and vehicles) that the total location-based carbon footprint for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 was 96.01 tonnes CO<sub>2e</sub>, and the market-based total was 93.04 tonnes CO<sub>2e</sub>. The Town Council has adopted an Action Plan setting out practical methods to reduce its carbon footprint within its general operation, including changes to its buildings and assets.



## Renewable Energy

During the refurbishment of the Bat & Ball Centre in 2020, the Town Council's overall aim was to install a system to enable the most cost-effective use of and carbon reduction of energy. The new Centre is considerably more energy efficient than the previous facility and produces some of its own energy via solar panels. In January 2023 the Town Council resolved to enhance the use of solar energy by investigating the possibility of installing more solar panels as well as solar batteries. This will enable the Centre to reduce its carbon footprint even further by using renewable solar energy first, save money by charging the batteries with night priced electricity when there is not enough solar power to do so, and, as a last resort, use grid electricity. The potential to generate 32,698kwh of solar energy would reduce the Bat & Ball Centre's (and Sevenoaks Town Council's) carbon emissions by 7.6 tonnes, assuming average UK emissions per kwh.

The Town Council is also considering how the research into battery storage for electricity could be valuable for other Town Council sites, as batteries could be installed to access cheaper night-time electricity for use during the day. These batteries do not require solar panels to be installed, and can therefore be applied to any site, such as the STC offices.

### 3. Bat & Ball Centre



Since its reopening in 2021 following extensive refurbishment, the new Bat & Ball Centre has flourished with both regular hirers and bookings for other events. This year we have hosted a wide range of activities including wedding receptions, business conferences, training courses, meetings, support groups, faith groups, birthday and other celebration parties, children's theatre, literary festival events, musical events, sports, and family fun activities.

We are delighted that the Centre has re-established as a valuable community facility and is performing well in accordance with its anticipated income budget.

We continue to receive positive feedback from users:

*“The caretaking team before the event and on the day were fantastic, happily spending time in advance to explain where things were and how they worked, and on the day even moving the chairs and tables out and away for us plus sweeping up even though we had our team ready to do that. On the day the amount of parking and close proximity to the entrance was noted on by many of our visitors and everyone commented on how bright, light, spacious and welcoming the hall was. Had it been a sunny day rather than snowing! many would have explored the gardens outside which provided a wonderful backdrop during daylight hours and made it a very welcoming space for our event. The simplicity of the audio system for providing music and easy use of the microphone were hugely appreciated and enabled a far more professional structure to the event than was possible before the refurbishment when we all remember having to stay standing in the one place the microphone worked clearly! Thank you for developing this into such a versatile and positive space.”* (December 2022)

In October 2022 we relaunched the Bat & Ball Centre User Group, a forum for users to share their views and, where applicable, make suggestions for improvements.



For further information on the Centre and other room hire available, please visit our website:

<https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Room & Hall Hire>

or contact: [hallhire@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:hallhire@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## 4. Bat & Ball Station Building

During the restoration of the Bat & Ball Station building, Sevenoaks Town Council employed a Heritage Engagement Officer responsible for delivering heritage activities as per Sevenoaks Town Council's Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Activity Plan. Unfortunately, the pandemic brought many of the activities and promotions to a halt.

In March 2022 the Town Council engaged a new part-time person to build on the Activity Plan and progress the Bat & Ball Station project as originally planned. We are delighted that this has regenerated interest in the station as a community facility with a range of activities engaging the community and volunteers.

Beginning the year with a good start, our station platform loos were awarded Loo of the Year! In our restoration project, having a functioning station toilet was very important issue; before the restoration, the station building was in disuse and there was no functional toilet, which was a great concern for many residents and people visiting. We're proud to have been awarded this, as it not only shows how important a station toilet is but how hard our staff work to keep it in tip-top condition!



This year we also welcomed our Cycle Friendly Accreditation for the Station Café. We are keen to make the whole of our station more environmentally friendly and accessible for all. Being awarded a Cycle Friendly Place 2022 means we have secure bike-friendly storage, bike maintenance kit, list of cycle repair shops nearby, cycle clothes wall hook, and our warm café for cyclists to visit! We also received a free cycle planter from the Cycle Friendly scheme, which Lynda, our gardener, has kindly planted up for us!

## Heritage Open Day

Heritage Open Day is England's largest festival of history and culture. Every September thousands of volunteers across England help celebrate our history and culture for free. We had planned to take part in this event to celebrate Bat & Ball Station, and to bring alive our local heritage landmark for our community, but sadly the event had to be cancelled due to the death of Her Majesty The Queen. We would like to thank all those who were involved in the organising of the event; hopefully in 2023 the Heritage Open Day will be bigger and better!

## Arts & Crafts Workshops



The first workshop from this season was our Art & Craft session running on a Friday for three weeks, which of course had to be train themed! The workshop was tailored to children aged between three and 11 years, with over 80 children attending. Families were able to make paper station buildings, trains, station masters' hats, and much more. It proved to be a great hit, with families coming back and asking for more workshops.

## Halloween and St Johns Hill Pumpkin Trail

We kicked off Halloween at the station by designing a free pumpkin trail on St Johns Hill. The trail was sponsored by Wealden Properties and the pumpkins were sourced by Aspens Garden Centre in Tonbridge. The trail map could be picked up from the Station Café and on our website (printable download); families would count the pumpkins they see in shop windows and collect a sweet from the café as a reward. It proved to be a successful trail, with over 20 shops involved!

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October, we hosted our Spooky Halloween workshop collaborating with The Creation Station; children making sticky slime, funky headdresses for Halloween, and eating our delicious Station Café cake. Before the event started at 2pm, our new nifty volunteers Edwina, Edwina's two sons Luke and Antonio, and Marianne got to work decorating the station with spooky ornaments. We would like to thank all our volunteers for their efforts and The Creation Station staff. It wouldn't have been a success without them!



## Winter at Bat & Ball Station

Sevenoaks is very busy over Christmas time, starting in November when the High Street Christmas lights are switched on. We thought it was important that the station should host a few Christmas themed events for the northern part of Sevenoaks, keeping us connected with the Christmas spirit and, of course, celebrating how the Victorians brought Christmas to life!



To start, the Christmas lights were up and ready by the 1<sup>st</sup> December, transforming the station into its own wonderland ready for our station's first Christmas craft market on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December. Twelve stall holders joined us, showcasing knitting, chocolate, jewellery, skincare and more; all individual businesses and a few new businesses from the Sevenoaks area. The Station Café opened especially during this market as well, making a good profit and driving customers through to the market. As this was our first market, there were a few tweaks to be made and things to be improved for next year!



Father Christmas made his special appearance at the station on the 10<sup>th</sup> December, bringing Christmas cheer and presents for children who visited him in his wonderful grotto. As part of the event, children could make Victorian-inspired crafts such as Christmas crackers, paper angel decorations, and Christmas cards for Father Christmas. Children had a wonderful time meeting him and learning a little about how a lot of Christmas traditions arose during the Victorian era.

### **Warm Welcome Space**

The purpose of these spaces is for people who might be struggling with the cost of energy crisis and would like to visit a non-judgmental warm space. Around the UK, many households are struggling with the cost of living, often having to make the decision between feeding their family or turning the heating on. Due to this, Councils have been taking the initiative to set up 'signposts' for public places that cater to families. Although our café is open during the week until 2pm, we wanted to open up our Station Booking Hall for families or individuals needing a free warm space, and also a chat with volunteers who help with running the mornings.



We have welcomed these mornings by opening up our station building with the occasional talk, teas and coffees, a second-hand coat rack, and book swap bookcase; all of which are free. Our new volunteers have been keen to help out by referring speakers for talks and offering to help on the day.

## Forget-Me-Not Café

Similar to our Warm Spaces mornings, we have started up a new Forget-Me-Not Café at the station running every 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month from 10:30am to 12:30pm. Forget-Me-Not Cafés are a place where anyone with memory loss, their carer or family may find friendship with like-minded people and be signposted to more formal help if so desired. These cafés are a lifeline for many families to feel safe and enjoy some happy social time over a cup of tea or two.



On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November, we hosted a volunteer meet-and-greet morning with one of the founders from Forget-Me-Not Café, Elaine, to discuss the volunteer role and learn more about Forget-Me-Not Cafés in Sevenoaks. It was great to see a few locals who aren't volunteers for the station attend the meeting and share their insights for the café.

Following on from this, we launched our first café on the 14<sup>th</sup> December! Over 10 visitors came and two volunteers so it proved to be a very successful launch. The Town Mayor kindly opened the café along with Forget-Me-Not Founder, Elaine, before starting off the event with a talk from Austin Blackburn at Go Coach on his new Art Deco bus garage. We have booked in a few brilliant speakers for 2023 such as Chris Conlan on being a Pearly King, Sevenoaks Fire Fighting Museum, and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

## Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership

Darent Valley commissioned a set of six artworks promoting the stations along the Darent Valley Line. The posters were designed by the wonderful Kit Boyd who designed original artworks for each station: Swanley, Eynsford, Shoreham, Otford, Bat & Ball, and Sevenoaks. The artist was commissioned in 2021, when he spent six months exploring and absorbing the relevant areas, capturing details and speaking to local residents. From this, he created designs using traditional fine art techniques using linocut printing and two watercolour paintings. We were delighted to



host a poster launch in partnership with Darent



Valley on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, with these posters available for purchase through Bat & Ball Station Café in sizes ranging from A4 to A1. Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership has also produced A5 cards, which are also available at Bat & Ball Station.

## South East & Chatham Style Bench

When the station building was renovated in 2019, we placed a heritage South East & Chatham Style Bench on the station platform, providing a seat for those visiting the café, station, or railway. During the last week of December 2022, we were able to obtain a grant from Railway Heritage Trust to make a replica of the bench, replacing a metal South Eastern platform bench on the platform.



## 5. The Mayoral Year & Civic Events



The Mayor, Councillor Mrs Rachel Parry, was elected in May and the meeting was attended by Councillors in person this year.

The Charity the Mayor chose to support was SAYT, Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust.

The Mayor and her Consort have attended 129 events so far this year and the Deputy Mayor has represented her on six occasions. The Mayoral Year was disrupted once again by the Coronavirus pandemic resulting in several events being postponed or cancelled. The sad death of Her Majesty the Queen also meant that a number of engagements were cancelled during the period of mourning.

### Civic Service

The Mayor and Consort of Sevenoaks, Councillors Mrs Rachel and Richard Parry, held this year's Civic Service in St Nicholas Church in Sevenoaks on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The Deputy Lieutenant, Lord Sackville, and the Lord Mayor and Consort of Canterbury, Councillor Mrs Anne Dekker, and Mrs Caroline Foreman, were amongst the Mayors, Chairmen and dignitaries who attended the Service. The Mayor's Cadet, L/Cpl Libby Simmons and a representative of the Mayor's charity, Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust, both read lessons at the Service.



## Peppercorn Rent Ceremony

On 1<sup>st</sup> August the Mayor attended the historic Peppercorn Rent Ceremony at The Vine



The Vine Cricket Ground is one of the oldest cricket grounds in England. It was given to the town in 1773 by John, 3rd Duke of Dorset, owner of Knole House.

Tradition has it that the Vine Cricket Club must pay Sevenoaks Town Council a rent of one peppercorn per year for use of the ground and the Town Council, in turn, must pay Lord Sackville one cricket ball each year.

This year the Mayor of Sevenoaks, Cllr Mrs Rachel Parry, accepted the peppercorn from the Club and paid Lord Sackville a cricket ball.

## Civic Events

### Beacon Lighting, The Vine, Sevenoaks

On the evening of 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 thousands of Sennockians gathered at The Vine before processing to the Beacon for the Lighting Ceremony in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Beacons were lit throughout the country simultaneously.

A bagpiper played 'Diu Regnare', followed by a trumpeter playing 'Majesty' and the U3A choir sang 'A Life Full of Grace'. Everyone present sang 'God Save the Queen' and the Town Crier called for 'Three Cheers for Her Majesty'.



### Platinum Jubilee of HM The Queen

#### BIG Picnic Lunch Friday 3 June

12, noon—6:30pm



On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June Sevenoaks Town Council was proud to be involved in the nationally coordinated commemoration of HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, inviting the community to join in a Big Picnic Lunch on The Vine Gardens. The event was hugely successful, with thousands of local residents turning out to enjoy a picnic on The Vine with friends and family, enjoying the live music and children's entertainment.



## Armed Forces Day, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2022

On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June Sevenoaks Army Cadets raised the Armed Forces Day flag at The Vine in Sevenoaks. Prayers were led by Rev Jamie Read from St Nicholas Church and the Exhortation was read by Larry Abraham of the Royal British Legion.

Present were the Mayor and Consort of Sevenoaks, Councillors Mrs Rachel and Richard Parry, fellow Councillors, Angela Newey, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, Members of the Armed Services, Westerham Sea Cadets, Sevenoaks Air Cadets, representatives of local organisations and residents.



## Merchant Navy Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2022



The Red Ensign flag was raised at The Vine on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September to commemorate Merchant Navy Day. The Mayor of Sevenoaks, Councillor Rachel Parry, was joined by Councillors and former Mayors for the raising of the Red Ensign. Prayers were read by The Revd Matt Taylor from St Nicholas Church and Miller Lang from the Royal Naval Association read the Exhortation.

## DEATH OF HER MAJESTY, QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**On 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at 3.10pm, Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms, and the longest reigning British monarch, died of old age at Balmoral Castle in Scotland, at the age of 96.**

Sevenoaks Town Council issued the following press release informing residents of local arrangements:

‘The Mayor of Sevenoaks, Sevenoaks Town Councillors and Officers wish to share the sentiments of loss and sorrow felt across the nation in mourning the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

‘The Mayor, Cllr Rachel Parry, paying tribute to Her Majesty, said: “As the longest serving British monarch, she has inspired generations, and has been a much-loved presence in all our lives.”

‘As a mark of respect, during the period of Royal mourning, the Union Flag at the Town Council Offices and on The Vine will fly at half-mast.

‘The Mayor will be reading the official Proclamation on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September at 3.15pm at The Vine War Memorial, and invites residents to join her and Town Councillors to mark this occasion.

‘For those wishing to leave flowers, The Vine War Memorial, Dartford Road, Sevenoaks is recommended as a fitting location.’

### **Proclamation of Accession, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September the Mayor of Sevenoaks and her Consort, Councillors Rachel and Richard Parry, together with fellow Town Councillors and former Mayors, gathered at The Vine War Memorial in Sevenoaks to read the Proclamation of Accession of King Charles the Third. They were joined by Mr Lennox Cato, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, and representatives of the local churches.

At the end of the short ceremony the Mayor led three cheers for His Majesty which rang out over The Vine. A living wreath was laid prior to the ceremony in remembrance of our late Sovereign, Queen Elizabeth the Second. The flowers form part of a green legacy, alongside a memorial tree to be planted in memory of our longest reigning monarch.



In the week following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II the Mayor visited local care and residential homes to reminisce on the life of Her Majesty and offer residents the opportunity to sign a Book of Condolence.

### **Sevenoaks Mayor and Town Councillors led the local community in moment of reflection to mourn the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II**

At 7.55pm on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022 approximately 500 people, young and more mature, with candles and lanterns, gathered at The Vine to join the national Moment of Reflection to mourn the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This was an opportunity, as a community, to reflect on the Queen's life and legacy.

Following a minute's silence everybody present joined in singing the national anthem. As a mark of respect to the late Queen, the War Memorial was lit in purple.



On **Armistice Day**, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022, the Mayor laid crosses on the War Graves at Greatness Park Cemetery and prayers were said by Fr Robin, Vicar of St John the Baptist Church.

On Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022, **Remembrance Day**, the Mayor and Consort of Sevenoaks, Councillors Rachel and Richard Parry, together with Town Councillors, attended the Remembrance Day Service and Parade at The Vine War Memorial. Members of the local cadet forces were present, together with a large contingent of scouts and guides from several local groups.

Many community organisations laid wreaths on the memorial watched by approximately a thousand people who gathered to join in the remembrance service. Also present was Laura



Trott MP, HM Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, the Lord Colgrain, Chairman of Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council representative.

The Service was led by The Revd Canon Angus MacLeay of St Nicholas Church assisted by Father David Gibbons of St Thomas Roman Catholic Church, together with Pastor Andrew Diaper, representing the free churches in Sevenoaks.

## 6. Finance

The Town Council approved a budget of £1,864,485 for 2022-23. General reserves brought forward were £438,861 (2021-22 £417,571) and earmarked reserves were £1,238,778 (2021-22 £1,352,955).

The 2022-23 Town Council budget includes income of:

- £1,295,675 from the precept paid for by Sevenoaks domestic ratepayers (council tax).
- £528,922 from fees and charges on facilities and services such as hire of community halls, Business Hub, sports pitches, markets, cemetery, Café on the Vine, rents and leases, and allotments.
- £39,888 from Council reserves (£59,888 to fund Bat & Ball Station Café during initial years of opening, offset by an increase of £20,000 revenue reserves).

The Council does not receive money from central government. As a result, it continues to be creative in the way that it funds and delivers services to the community. Capital projects for new and improved community facilities are funded from capital receipts, earmarked reserves, and grants, where possible. Earmarked reserves brought forward included £567,894 capital receipts and £229,518 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), income received for specific activities and projects. This money goes towards the funding of approved capital projects including the new Bat & Ball Centre and the Business Hub.

The Council's income streams have recovered to pre-Covid levels, and the Bat & Ball Centre and Business Hub are both seeing a growing customer base.

Inflation is impacting on the cost of services and our café income; however, we do not anticipate the Council's finances to be in a deficit position at the end of the financial year.

At the Council meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023, Council approved a budget of £1,954,749 for 2023-2024. This will be funded by fees and charges of £510,433 (26%), a precept levy of £1,370,074 (70%), and transfer from reserves of £74,242 (4%) (£94,242 to fund Bat & Ball Station Café during initial years of opening, offset by an increase of £20,000 revenue reserves). For an average Band D house in Sevenoaks, the precept equates to £139.17 per year or £2.68 per week (an increase of £6.50 per year or 13p per week on 2022-23).

## 7. Sevenoaks Town Council's Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Sevenoaks Town Council continues to provide grants to local groups, who are invited to submit applications in August and January for consideration. The Council is also a major sponsor of the Stag Community Arts Centre and Sevenoaks Summer Festival.

Groups which have benefited from the Town Council Grants during the year 2022-23 include:

Sevenoaks Summer Festival 2022	£5,000	Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra	£600
Sevenoaks Society	£500	Art in June	£250
Sevenoaks Voluntary Transport Group	£750	Sevenoaks Literary Festival	£500
West Kent Mediation	£750	Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival, Young Musician of the Year	£600
Baby Umbrella	£500 & £1,380	Sevenoaks History Hub	£500
Friends of Rheinbach	£250	Sevenoaks Counselling	£1,500
Friends of Pontoise	£250	West Kent Mind	£1,000
Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival	£600	D'Vine Singers	£500

Application forms and guidance notes can be found on the Town Council website:

[https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Grants Information](https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Grants%20Information)

To be sent to: [council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## 8. Council Meetings

Following a period of remote, hybrid and face-to-face meetings whilst public health regulations were in place due to the pandemic, the Town Council was pleased to fully resume face-to-face meetings in January 2022. Provision remained for Councillors to attend meeting remotely if necessary although in this eventuality, they would not be able to vote and would not be counted as legally present. The Town Council continued to livestream its Council and Committee meetings on YouTube.

The following meetings took place during 2022-23:

Date of meeting	Committee	Date of meeting	Committee
04.04.22	Planning & Town Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee	19.10.22	Bat & Ball Centre Users Group
06.04.22	Sevenoaks Town Team	24.10.22	Community Infrastructure
11.04.22	Finance & General Purposes Committee	24.10.22	Personnel
11.04.22	Town Council	31.10.22	Planning
19.04.22	Planning	02.11.22	Youth Council
03.05.22	Planning	02.11.22	Youth Services
09.05.22	Annual Council Meeting	07.11.22	Open Spaces & Leisure
16.05.22	Planning	14.11.22	Planning

18.05.22	Youth Services	21.11.22	Town Council
30.05.22	Planning	21.11.22	Finance & General Purposes Committee
06.06.22	Finance & General Purposes Committee	28.11.22	Planning
06.06.22	Town Council	05.12.22	Town Council
13.06.22	Community Infrastructure	12.12.22	Planning
15.06.22	Sevenoaks Town Team	14.12.22	Sevenoaks Town Team
20.06.22	Planning & & Town Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee	19.12.22	Planning
22.06.22	Youth Council	09.01.23	Planning
27.06.22	Planning	16.01.23	Finance & General Purposes Committee
29.06.22	Youth Services	16.01.23	Town Council
04.07.22	Open Spaces & Leisure	18.01.23	Youth Council
11.07.22	Planning	18.01.23	Youth Services
18.07.22	Finance & General Purposes Committee	23.01.23	Planning
18.07.22	Town Council	30.01.23	Community Infrastructure
25.07.22	Planning	06.02.23	Planning
03.08.22	Sevenoaks Town Team	13.02.23	Open Spaces & Leisure
08.08.22	Planning	20.02.23	Planning
22.08.22	Planning	22.02.23	Sevenoaks Town Team
05.09.22	Planning	27.02.23	Town Council
07.09.22	Youth Council	27.02.23	Finance & General Purposes Committee
07.09.22	Youth Services	06.03.23	Planning
26.09.22	Town Council	08.03.23	Bat & Ball Centre Users Group
26.09.22	Finance & General Purposes Committee	13.03.23	Annual Town Meeting
03.10.22	Planning	20.03.23	Planning
05.10.22	Sevenoaks Town Team	22.03.23	Youth Council
10.10.2022	Open Spaces & Leisure	22.03.23	Youth Services
17.10.23	Planning	27.03.23	Personnel

Most Council and Committee meetings take place on Monday evenings, occasionally on other days, and are listed on the Town Council website: [www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

Agendas for meetings are available to view on the website from the Tuesday prior to the meeting.

Members of the public wishing to address a committee should notify the Town Council by 12 noon on the day of the meeting.

## 9. Sevenoaks Business Hub



The Hub provides five private, lockable, office pods which means that hirers can operate as if they have their own premises, leaving their IT and business papers etc. on site at all times.

In the open plan area, there are 13 hot desks, which, as the name implies, means that hirers leave a clear desk each evening.

This new sign (above) is fixed at the entrance to the Hub/Town Council Office in Bradbourne Vale Road.

The facilities include:

- A meeting room for up to eight people
- High quality internet access
- Showers
- Kitchen/café area
- Informal lounge
- Free parking

Booking is extremely flexible with options from just half a day to a full month, and all bookings are renewable.

The office pods have been a great success, being occupied almost 100%, and with a growing waiting list. 81 hirers have registered since launch in July 2021, though in practice only about a third have actually booked space. But hot-desk user numbers are increasing all the time and the Hub is now running at a small profit.



Whereas the Hub was initially managed by the Sevenoaks District Chamber of Commerce, which still has its base in the Hub, the management is now undertaken by the Town Council.

For further information, hire rates and to make a booking online visit:

[https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Sevenoaks\\_Business\\_Hub\\_40590.aspx](https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Sevenoaks_Business_Hub_40590.aspx).

## 10. Open Spaces and Leisure

The Open Spaces & Leisure Committee is responsible for maintaining a diverse portfolio of open spaces and facilities, including public open spaces such as Greatness Recreation Ground, Vine Gardens and Sevenoaks Common; play areas at Pontoise Close, Hillingdon Rise, and Mount Close; rugby and cricket pitches at Knole Paddock and Raleys Field; the War Memorial; Greatness Cemetery; Allotments; Sevenoaks Markets; and public toilets at Vine Gardens, St Johns Hill and Greatness. More details available on the Town Council website:

<https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Services>

### The Vine

The **Vine Cricket Field**, one of the oldest in the country and part of the heritage landscape so important to the local community, was re-opened in the spring of 2021 after much-needed maintenance and improvement which enabled high-level cricket to be played once again.

As a result of normal use, and the very hot and dry summer, the field was beginning to suffer from damage to the grass, undoing the good work that was done when the field was re-sown.

To protect the field, permission was granted from the Conservation Officer to install a row of removable bollards outside the Pavilion just onto the grass to prevent unauthorised vehicles from driving onto the field edge.



The **Pavilion, Bandstand** and **Café on the Vine** are at the heart of Sevenoaks. We continued our commitment to preserving the heritage of the historic ground by carrying out a complete refurbishment of the exterior and redecoration of the Cricket Pavilion, Bandstand, Café and Kiosk.



**The Vine Pond** was drained and sealed, with netting installed across the surface to try and discourage herons from feasting on the adult size goldfish. There are still young fish in the pond and numbers will recover. So far, the solution has been successful.

In line with our Climate Change Policy, a solar pump replaced the older pump.

**The Vine Bridge**, a popular route for many residents, was repaired.



A new safety surface was installed in the play area in **Vine Gardens**.

### **Vine Green Flag Award**

In 2022, The Vine was re-accredited its Green Flag status, the international quality mark for parks and green spaces. The Vine is among 2,127 parks and green spaces in the UK that have received a prestigious Green Flag in 2022.

### **Knole Paddock and Raleys Field**

Significant investment has been made to ensure that sports fixtures can be played to a high standard. In line with the Town Council's commitment towards finding sustainable solutions and protecting the environment, new more efficient floodlights have been installed on the sports pitch at Raleys Field. The new lights, which replaced older less efficient lights, provide a better spread of lighting with less light spill.

The autumn renovation of the cricket squares was a success with good strong grass germination.

Further sand banding work was undertaken at Pitch 1, Knole Paddock, to ensure good surface drainage in all weather conditions. This should reduce or eliminate the occasions when Pitch 1 is water-logged or unplayable.

## Play Areas



In August 2022, children, parents and grandparents joined the Mayor of Sevenoaks at the official openings of the refurbished Hillingdon Rise and Julian's Meadow Play Areas, which were completed ahead of the summer holidays. The ceremonies welcomed children of all ages to enjoy the new equipment and even get a bit silly with entertainer Silly Billy!

The works were carried out with grants totalling £80,000 awarded by Enovert Community Trust. In line with Sevenoaks Town Council's commitment to protecting the environment and finding sustainable solutions, some existing equipment was refurbished while new equipment was also added to cater to a wider range of ages and abilities.

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Community Trust. In line with Sevenoaks Town Council's commitment to protecting the environment and finding sustainable solutions, some existing equipment was refurbished while new equipment was also added to cater to a wider range of ages and abilities.

Enovert Community Trust is a grant-making organisation which is funded by landfill tax credits. It supports projects in the vicinity of landfill sites, and projects that benefit and make a positive impact to the community.

New equipment at Hillingdon Rise Play Area includes a junior climbing frame with slides, ropes, mini climbing wall, a basket swing and swings, outdoor table tennis table, adult gym skier and cycle, along with refurbished bucket swings for toddlers.

New equipment at Julian's Meadow Play Area includes a Pirate Lair climbing frame, tightrope walk, catwalk balance beam, basket and flat swings, rock and bowl spinner and a double zig-zag twister.



## Tree Planting

The Adopt a Tree initiative, which runs from June to December, continues to be a popular way for residents to celebrate special occasions and to remember loved ones through the gift of a tree in one of the town's iconic locations including Vine Gardens, Raleys Field and Knole Paddock, and Greatness Cemetery.

As in 2021, a variety of native species and fruit trees were planted including rowan, hawthorn, lime, maple, crab apple, and cherry. The 13 trees planted will benefit the local environment and help to improve air quality whilst also providing homes for wildlife and insects. A similar scheme will run in 2023.



On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022, schools and residents joined the Mayor in Littlewood to plant trees for The Queen's Green Canopy. The 70 silver birch, rowan, and wild cherry saplings planted were received from the Woodland Trust and obtained by Wild in 7oaks, a small community organisation which encourages Sevenoaks residents to garden in a wildlife friendly way.

The Queen's Green Canopy is a unique, UK-wide tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee 2022, by inviting people to 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee'. The initiative aims to encourage everyone to learn more about the best way to plant trees so that they survive and flourish for years to come.

## Sevenoaks Common

On the 7<sup>th</sup> December the Mayor planted another oak in the glade at Letter Box Lane to complete the group of Seven Charter Oaks.

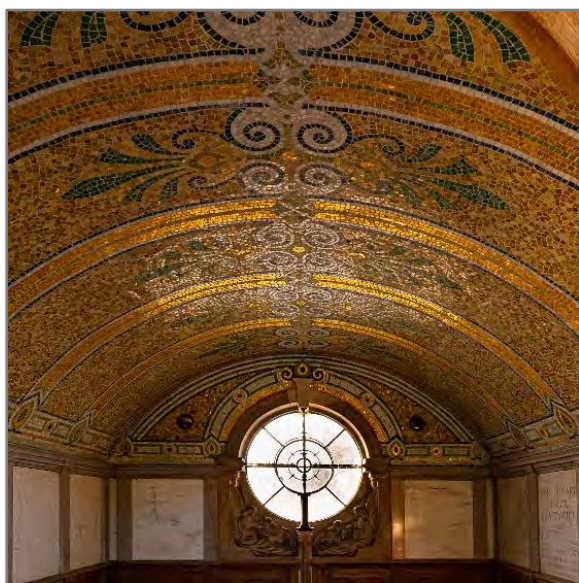
The Greensand Commons Project has continued through the year. In August, they held a Bio Blitz Day, encouraging locals, particularly children, to come and help count species of bird, mammal, and insects on the Common. In autumn, a Fungus Foray was held. With the help of a knowledgeable mycologist numerous species were found in a few minutes.

Regular Volunteer Days continued through the year helping to widen paths and promote young trees by weeding around them.



## Greatness Cemetery

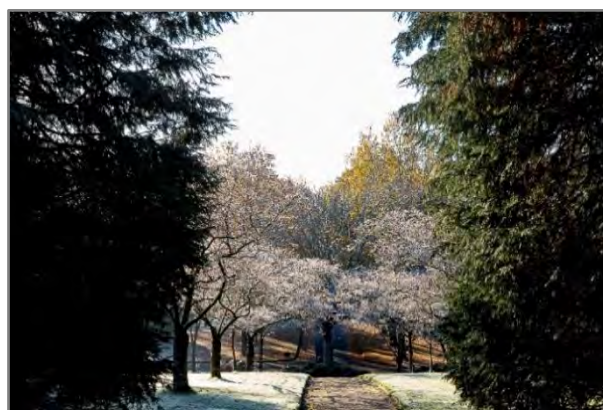
The Friends of Greatness Cemetery group was launched on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at the Greatness Cemetery Open Day. Visitors arrived on a beautifully crisp morning and were



welcomed into the chapel where ledgers and other historical documents were on display, including information about the history of the cemetery, the first burial which took place in November 1906, and information about the trees and nature that can be found at Greatness Cemetery.

The highlight for many was the rare opportunity to look inside of one of the Cemetery's notable monuments, the Grade II Listed Kraftmeier Mausoleum. The mausoleum is built of granite with carved friezes to front and side and a barrel-vaulted copper roof, and is designed in the Art Nouveau style.

The Friends of Greatness Cemetery aim to promote the Cemetery as a place of quiet reflection and to enhance the aesthetics, education, and information provided at the Cemetery site. They welcome volunteers to help them achieve their aims by helping to improve planting areas around the grounds and Chapel, and promoting the Cemetery to a wider audience by providing information regarding the War Graves and Mausoleum via leaflets, talks and on volunteer days.



## Allotments

Sevenoaks Town Council owns and manages two allotment sites in Sevenoaks: Bradbourne Vale Allotments and Quaker's Hall Allotments. An allotment is loosely defined as an area of land large enough for a family of four to feed themselves for a year. Historically, this has been a '10-rod plot' which equates to a modern measurement of around 250 square metres. If that is difficult to picture, then compare it with a standard tennis court which measures about 197 square metres. So, a full-sized plot is a large area!



Bradbourne Vale Allotments (pictured left) comprises 33 plots of varying sizes. The site is currently full, with a short waiting list, and because the site is so small plots don't often come up for rent.

Quaker's Hall Allotments (pictured below) is approximately 11.5 acres and has 250 plots, although this fluctuates as larger plots are usually split in half to make them more manageable. Occasionally, 'half' plots are added back together as tenants wish to take on more space. The site is almost full.



The last 12 months were a challenge with a very wet spring followed by the hottest summer on record. It was interesting to see which crops thrived and which failed in the extreme heat, although most tenants spent a lot of time and energy watering, so they had something to enjoy at the end of the day! The waiting list, which shot up during the pandemic, has now waned and is back to pre-pandemic levels, with just a few people waiting to be matched up with plots.

The trend for families and women to take on allotments continues, too. 49% of tenants across both sites are female (2021-22: 46%) and many more children are enjoying being on-site, learning about nature and gaining an early understanding of where their food comes from.

Anyone interested in taking on an allotment should contact the Allotments Manager at [allotments@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:allotments@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## South & South East In Bloom Awards 2022

Various locations in the town were entered into the South & South East in Bloom competition, and the Town Council was delighted to receive the following awards:

	Location	Category	Award
1	Sevenoaks Town Centre	Town Centre	Gold
2	Vine Gardens	Park	Gold and category winner
3	Upper High Street Gardens	Small Park	Gold
4	Sevenoaks Common	Conservation Area	Silver Gilt
5	Bat & Ball Centre	Business	Silver Gilt
6	Bat & Ball Station	Business	Silver Gilt and category Winner
7	Planting with Purpose	Special entry award	Gold
8	Growing Your Community	Special entry award	Silver Gilt
9	Southern Water Environmental Challenge	Special entry award	Highly Commended

## Sevenoaks in Bloom – 2022 National Finalist Award

Following on from the successes in the South & South East in Bloom Awards, the Town Council was delighted that Sevenoaks was awarded Silver Gilt in the RHS National Britain in Bloom Finals.



2022 was the first time that the town had been nominated for a national award and was one of seven finalists from across the country for its category.

The judges' comments were very favourable including the following:

- With eighty hanging baskets and fifty planters an excellent display of seasonal planting was evident throughout the town. They were particularly notable due to the reduced peat compost used, a sign that sustainable gardening practices were employed.
- The excellent work of volunteers, town council staff and the team at Rockdale and the Housing Association in what has been a difficult year was evident in many places.

- The planting at the station maintained by volunteers provided an excellent welcome to the town, along with the barrier planters.
- The House in the Basement project was a good example of a project that engages young people to grow plants.
- The project to upgrade and maintain the public realm has been a success with signs etc. being repainted and a joint approach to graffiti and litter. The imaginative way in covering the development site next to the Premier Inn by using railway style posters on a very clean hoarding was well done.
- The streets were litter free and generally weed free which takes a lot of effort in a town centre and is to be commended.
- It is important to highlight that the Town Council operates electric vehicles and electric hand tools which form part of its Green Community Investment Plan that contributes towards reducing carbon emissions.
- There is an excellent range of volunteers undertaking a wide range of tasks and responsibilities.
- The seed box swap scheme where gardeners can place spare seeds in a container is excellent and avoids waste and may encourage more people to grow plants and possibly new plant types or varieties.
- The Green Community Investment Plan to tackle environmental issues has the potential for great benefit for residents and visitors alike and it will create opportunities for volunteers to get involved and receive practical support. A good example being the Living Landscape project to revitalise neglected areas that is working with volunteers to improve the environment and green corridors.
- Support for the Bloom competition was well demonstrated by the Party and Carnival shop creating a balloon arch and Bloom themed shop window that raised awareness amongst the community.
- Overall, there was an excellent level of support from businesses, transport operators and the District Council, all of which bodes well for the future.

If you would like to help and support as part of the In Bloom team please contact Ann White at Sevenoaks Town Council for details of how to get involved – [dtc@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:dtc@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## **Play Provision**

Each year Sevenoaks Town Council hosts free summer play activities at a variety of locations around the town during the August school holidays.

## **Family Fun Activities (Reconnect Funding)**

The Town Council hosted ten afternoon Family Fun Activity sessions at Vine Gardens provided by Play Place during February half term, Easter, and summer holidays. This was funded by Kent County Council's Reconnect Locality Grant, which supports organisations and local authorities to help children and young people reconnect to their pre-pandemic lives.

## **Family Fun Days (Funded by Sevenoaks District Council)**

As part of the District Council's Easter and summer play provision, the Town Council hosted two Family Fun Days: April at the Bat & Ball Centre and August at Greatness Recreation Ground. Both were well attended, and we were very fortunate that we were able to move activities into the Bat & Ball Centre in April when the weather was extremely windy.

## Children's Theatre Shows

We were pleased to be able offer free children's theatre shows during August at the following venues: Greatness Recreation Ground, Pontoise Play Area, Vine Gardens and Bat & Ball Centre. The production was 'The Gingerbread Man' (following a last-minute change due to ill health).

The show was well received, and we were delighted to receive the following heart-warming feedback:



*"I just wanted to pass on my thanks on behalf of my mother and niece who attended the children's event at Bat & Ball Centre yesterday. They both thoroughly enjoyed the performance, and this was the first time my mother had seen my niece get up to participate when asked by performers (she normally says no and sits away from it all)."*

## Easter Egg Hunt

A family Easter Egg Hunt was held at Vine Gardens in April. Entry was £1 with funds raised going to the Mayor's Charity, the MS Society. All entrants received a small chocolate gift, with the finder of the Golden Ticket winning an Easter Egg donated by The Chocolate Shop.

## Roadside Advertising and Highway Banners

The Town Council enables local community organisations to advertise via a highway banner or roadside boards, subject to terms and conditions, for a maximum period of two weeks. This restriction enables more local community members to advertise their events during the year. For more information contact: [council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## 11. Sevenoaks Markets

Sevenoaks Town Council manages the following Sevenoaks Markets:

- Wednesday Market next to the Bus Station 8am to 2pm
- Saturday High Street Market 9am to 4pm
- Saturday Bligh's Market 9am to 4pm
- Bligh's Christmas Market 9am to 4pm (nine days prior to Christmas)

Residents and members of the public continue their enthusiastic support of the weekly markets, and traders show their gratitude by bringing varied and high-quality goods and services on Wednesdays and Saturdays, come rain or shine!

Long-time favourites Westley's fruit and vegetable stall and Alice Woods flower stall have been joined in the **Saturday High Street Market** by the popular Olive Stall, the Bread Stall, and the newest addition, Organic Village Market.

Westley's, Alice Woods, and Bread on the Rise spoil us by bringing their goods to both the High Street Market and the Wednesday Market in Buckhurst Lane, where they are joined by the Garden Trough trader and newcomer Sevenoaks Clothes House.

**Bligh's Market** on Saturdays features our dedicated long-time traders Shekinah Glass, OKEH, and Dee's along with the delicious offerings from Coco Kitchen, Bread on the Rise, and Cheese Passion. Bligh's Market added new traders selling goods and crafts from South Africa, handcrafted candles and soaps, and homeware and ornaments.

**Bligh's Christmas Market** provided nine days of brilliant gift ideas for that special person as well as some last-minute presents and decorations.



The Town Council's contract for managing the Wednesday Market and Saturday High Street Market comes to an end at the end of March. The Town Council will be submitting a tender to continue to operate the markets.

## 12 Community Events

Sevenoaks Town Council works in conjunction with Sevenoaks Town Team and other organisations to provide an annual calendar of events. These events help to create community interaction, address loneliness and derive economic benefits for the area.

### **Bands on the Bandstand**

The Town Council continued to provide its programme of free live music on the bandstand at Vine Gardens during the summer, on Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons. Residents were invited to bring a chair and refreshments and enjoy relaxing in the beautiful Vine Gardens while listening to a wide range of musicians.

### **Crown Designs for the Jubilee**

As part of Sevenoaks' celebrations of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Town Council invited residents to submit designs for crowns to be printed on banners and displayed for the Jubilee weekend. We had a fantastic response with creative crowns submitted by residents aged from 2 to 96.



The banners were installed on the railings around The Vine Gardens, ready for the Big Jubilee Picnic Lunch on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. In addition, the original artworks were displayed at the Sevenoaks Kaleidoscope Art Gallery.

Many thanks to all those who contributed to this wonderful project.

### **Christmas Lights**

The Town Council was delighted to host its traditional Christmas Lights Switch On event on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November. Thousands of residents gathered in the High Street area to enjoy the live entertainment, fairground rides, Father Christmas Grotto, stalls, food and drink, and the ceremony with the Mayor switching on the lights in Sevenoaks High Street at 7.30pm.



Our thanks to our key sponsors: Specsavers, Manak Solicitors and Bligh's Meadow for helping us to put on a good show and light up the town so beautifully over the festive period. Thanks also to all the volunteers who work so hard to make the evening a success.



### Design a Christmas Light Competition

In September the Town Council invited children under the age of 11 to enter a competition to design a new Christmas light for Sevenoaks Town Centre. Hundreds of entries were received, and the Town Council would like to thank all the children who took the time to send us their fantastic artwork.

Congratulations to the winner: 10-year-old Ted Evans for his wonderful design for a jolly Father Christmas light. The light was installed at The Stag Theatre.

The Mayor commented:

*“We had so many wonderful entries from local young artists that it was very difficult to choose a winner, but Ted’s design stood out for its appealing portrayal of a jolly Santa that made us all smile, and we could see how it could be turned into a light. Many congratulations to Ted whose light will now be part of the Town Centre’s Christmas Lights display for many years to come.”*



### 13. No 8 Bus

In September 2020 KCC agreed to provide two years’ funding and operate the No 8 bus. The purchase of an electric No 8 bus is within the Town Council’s Number 1 Priority of addressing climate change. It is hoped that the Town Council will be able to submit a bid for funding to a future meeting of the District Council’s Community Infrastructure Levy Board.

### 14. Town Twinning

Sevenoaks is twinned with Pontoise in France and Rheinbach in Germany. Both twinning associations continue to be supported by Sevenoaks Town Council. The Friends of Pontoise and the Friends of Rheinbach promote cultural understanding and exchanges.



## 15. Youth Provision

### Sevenoaks Youth Council

Youth Council meetings are held approximately every six weeks in either at the Town Council Offices or the House in the Basement Youth Café. Since its inception in 2009, the Youth Council has been a valuable forum for initiating and developing ideas and events, and raising awareness of issues of concern for young people in Sevenoaks. All young people aged 11 to 18 are welcome to attend. Meetings are held at 6pm on Wednesdays.

The current Youth Council was elected in 2021 for a term of two years and comprises 21 young people representing the following schools: Radnor House, Sevenoaks School, Sevenoaks Prep School, Bennet Memorial Secondary School, Tonbridge Grammar School, Trinity, The Judd School, Knole Academy, Solefields, Cobham Hall, and Willington Academy.

Youth Councillors were pleased to be able to meet in person after the disruption of the pandemic during 2020 and 2021. Over the course of the year, they received interesting talks from groups such as the Kenward Trust, Kent Fire and Rescue services, and Kent Wildlife Trust.

The Youth Council is a keen supporter of the House in the Basement Youth Café, and this year provided a folding football table and contributed to the purchase of an inflatable dart board.

Towards the end of the year the Youth Council and young people from the House in the Basement were invited to visit the House of Commons. Following a tour, they met and had a useful question and answer session with the MP for Sevenoaks, Laura Trott. Some challenging issues were raised and discussed:

- What does sustainability mean to you, and how can we better combat large businesses and companies that use sweat shops?
- What elements of your childhood helped you to be successful?
- What is the biggest problem brought up in parliament?
- Would you like to be Prime Minister?



Being a Youth Councillor is an opportunity to gain an insight into local democracy, to provide a voice for young people in our town, to work together and make a real contribution to your local community. If you are interested in joining:

- please visit: <https://www.sevenoaksyouthcouncil.com/>
- or contact: [council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

### House in the Basement Youth Café

The Youth Services Committee oversees the management and development of the House in the Basement Youth Café (known as HitB), now in its eleventh year. It is a safe space for young people to relax, meet with their friends, make new friends, get information and advice and support with homework, and take part in a range of activities including music, art projects, chess, pool, board games and video games. Low-cost hot meals are available.

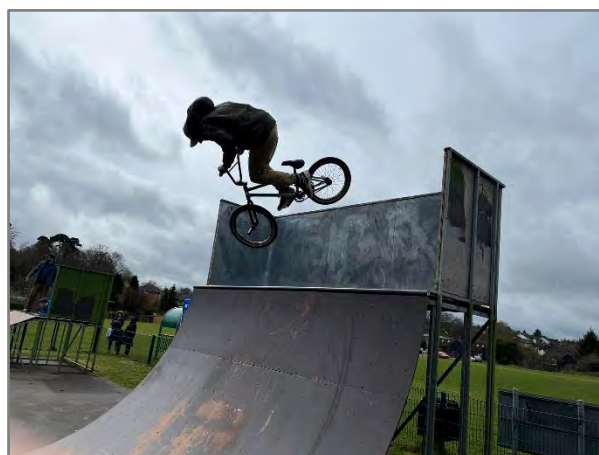


The manager, Daren Mountain, is supported by casual staff and volunteers from Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust.

During the last year HitB has seen a steady increase in attendees, particularly for the Tuesday evening Special Educational Needs group. The popular pool and darts tournaments and art activities have been re-established. The youth workers have undertaken out-reach work to local schools and detached work at events such as the Jubilee celebrations, fireworks night, and Christmas Light Switch On.

A number of events and trips were held, including:

- Trip to **Bewl Water** in February half term, in partnership with West Kent Housing, for a range of fun activities such as canoeing and archery.
- **Skatepark Fun Day** at Greatness in April, hosted by King Ramps, who provided exhibitions from professional skateboarders and BMX riders, together with workshops and competitions.
- Visit to **Hastings Beach** and **Skatepark** in August.
- As part of its move to explore the possibility of some youth provision in the north of the town, a **Silent Disco** was held in October at the Bat & Ball Centre, hosted by the HitB in partnership with West Kent and SAYT.
- **Christmas Party** in December.



The HitB also took part in the Britain in Bloom submission, receiving a fantastic Level 4 – Thriving award.

### **Young Mentor Project**

HitB continues to work with Sevenoaks District Council on the Young Mentor Project and, as part of this, conducted a survey to record the impact of Covid-19 on young people, their lives and their hopes for the future.

**The Youth Café is also available for hire. For further information contact:**

[hallhire@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:hallhire@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## **16. Planning**

### **Planning Committee**

Sevenoaks Town Council is a Statutory Consultee to the Local Planning Authority, Sevenoaks District Council, on planning applications received within Sevenoaks Town area. As such, it is consulted for its **recommendation** on most types of planning applications, which primarily consist of Full, Householder and Listed Building Consent. The Planning Committee's recommendations help to inform the District Council's decision on whether to approve or refuse a planning application by adding a local perspective.

The Planning Committee meets every two weeks to discuss planning applications submitted within the Sevenoaks town area, and a wide array of associated planning matters.

The Committee actively seeks to maintain and enhance the positive features of Sevenoaks town, while promoting sustainable growth to help maintain the long-term economic and social stability of the town.

Meetings are open to the public, who are able to register to speak on either an item or planning application on the Agenda, or on any other related planning matter.

Planning Committees are held primarily at the Town Council Chambers, although the Bat & Ball Centre may be used as an alternative for meetings when a larger number of public is expected to attend. The venue will always be announced on the Planning Committee Agenda, which is published on the Tuesday preceding each meeting.

Meetings are live-streamed and uploaded onto YouTube, and this audio-visual feature also allows for hybrid meetings so Committee members or registered speakers and/or presenters may attend virtually. Members of the Committee attending via Zoom may take part in discussions, but are not permitted to vote on matters under consideration, as they do not legally constitute as being 'present' at the meeting.

### **Planning Applications**

During 2022/2023 the Town Council will have commented on circa 400 planning applications submitted within the Sevenoaks Town Council area. It has supported Sevenoaks District Council in its refusal of applications via a number of virtual and in-person representations at

Development Control Committee, as well as at the February 2023 Public Inquiry Appeal held for Land South of Little Brittain's, Brittain's Lane.

The Town Council continues to monitor tree work applications in the area despite not being a consultee and will make representation when applications of concern are submitted.

### **Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan (STNP)**

The Submission Draft of the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan (STNP) was received and approved by both the Planning Committee and Town Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 it was formally submitted to the District Council who arranged a Regulation 16 Public Consultation to run between 4<sup>th</sup> August and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022. The Submission documents, comprising the June 2022 Submission Draft of the STNP, Consultation Statement, Basic Conditions Statement, Neighbourhood Area Designation, and Strategic Environmental Assessment can be found via the following link: <https://sevenoaksndp.wordpress.com/>

Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd were appointed by SDC in their capacity as the Local Planning Authority to undertake the Examination of the STNP. This process included an Independent Examiner (IE) reviewing the Submission documents, as well as responses received throughout the consultation, and measuring how well the STNP conforms to Basic Conditions and existing planning legislation.

The IE provided his final Report on the STNP on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022, which was received and accepted by the Planning Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023. The Report confirmed that the STNP as modified\* conforms to Basic Conditions and existing planning legislation and made the recommendation that the STNP proceed to Referendum.

*\*17 Plan Modifications were proposed by the IE, which have been incorporated into the February 2023 Referendum Draft of the STNP alongside 13 Minor Modifications as proposed by STC with agreement from SDC.*

The February 2023 Referendum Draft was provided to and received by Sevenoaks District Council's Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023. The decision to approve the STNP as modified for Referendum was publicised on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023, and the **Referendum date announced for 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023**. This to coincide with the 2023 District and Parish elections, with the hope that it will encourage a larger number of people to engage with the document and respond to the Referendum.

An Information Statement will be publicised by the District Council 28 working days prior to 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to announce the Referendum, and banners to be displayed by Sevenoaks Town Council in the High Street from 9<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Following a count of votes received, and should the Plan receive more than 50% votes in its support, the Plan will be made and become a Statutory document in SDC making planning decisions.

*All documents referenced in this section are available to view via the following link:* <https://sevenoaksndp.wordpress.com/>

For more information, please email [planning@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:planning@sevenoakstown.gov.uk). Alternatively, please visit <https://sevenoaksndp.wordpress.com/blog/>, which posts periodic updates on the STNP and may also be subscribed to for notifications on new posts.

## Speed Indicator Device

Sevenoaks Town Council has invested in a Speed Indicator Device (SID) to be installed and periodically moved between three locations within Sevenoaks Town. The purpose of this device is to reinforce the 30mph speed limit in roads near schools which have been identified by the Town Councillors as being especially prone to speeding. After much debate by the Planning Committee on which roads to prioritise – with the limit allowed being three – the following roads were selected:

- Bradbourne Vale Road near the entrance to the riding school
- St Johns Hill near the Church
- Brittain's Lane near Beaconfields

The St Johns Hill and Brittain's Lane locations have been successfully installed as bi-directional, while the Bradbourne Vale Road location has been set up to face WEST (affecting East-bound traffic as it approaches Knole Academy) due to the site not being viable for Eastern facing infrastructure. The equipment will remain in each of its five allocated positions for 8 weeks each before being moved to the next location. This is in order to comply with traffic sign regulations, and also has the added benefit of limiting the effects of “sign blindness”. Also known as “inattentive blindness”, this can occur when a driver sees the same traffic signs every day, and therefore stops being as aware of and adhering to them.

**The following schedule for when and where the SID will be located is outlined below, and will be reviewed again in January 2024:**

Bradbourne Vale Road facing WEST (affecting East-bound traffic)	15 <sup>th</sup> February 2023 – 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2023
St Johns Hill near Holly Bush Lane NORTH (affecting South-bound traffic)	12 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 – 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
St Johns Hill near Holly Bush Lane SOUTH (affecting North-bound traffic)	7 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 – 2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2023
Brittain's Lane by Beaconfields facing NORTH (affecting South-bound traffic)	2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2023 – 27 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
Brittain's Lane by Beaconfields facing SOUTH (affecting North-bound traffic)	27 <sup>th</sup> September 2023 – 22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023
Bradbourne Vale Road facing WEST (affecting East-bound traffic)	22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023 – 17 <sup>th</sup> January 2024

## 17. Sevenoaks Town Team

Established in 2011, Sevenoaks Town Team is a Sevenoaks Town Council initiative bringing together a wide range of people from the local community to establish



Sevenoaks as a prosperous and vibrant place to visit, shop, and do business. Cllr Andrew Eyre, Chief Executive of the Stag, is Chairman of the Sevenoaks Town Team.

Contact [townteam@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:townteam@sevenoakstown.gov.uk) for further information and details of events.

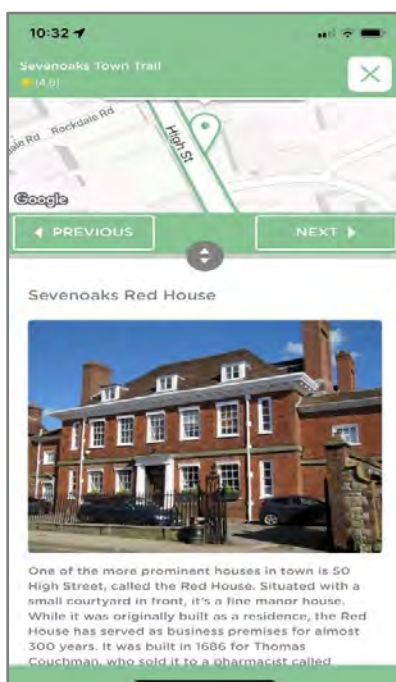
### Town Team Projects 2022

#### High Street Safaris



These interactive digital trails are provided for families to have fun, and at the same time encourage pedestrians into the town centre to visit town centre shops and leisure facilities. Three trails have been run over the last 12 months and about 250 people took part in each.

#### Sevenoaks Town Trail



In 2021 Sevenoaks launched a self-guided walking trail taking in 23 historic sites and buildings, mostly in the town centre.

The trail is on the TrailTale app which is free to use attraction. The trail requires promotion from time to time and presently has been downloaded 269 times.

## Bus back advertising

To encourage people, post-pandemic, to come into the town again, these posters could be seen all around the area covered by the Go Coach bus company. The adverts have been refreshed and are now promoting the three Sevenoaks markets.



## London advertising



To promote the town further afield during the summer of 2022 a campaign was run at Charing Cross underground station using this image.



## Sevenoaks Business Awards

Sevenoaks hosts an annual Business Awards celebration, which in 2022 was held in the newly opened Bat & Ball Centre. It is the centrepiece of the business year in the town, and well supported by both sponsors and competing businesses.



## Public Realm Improvements

A survey of the town centre identified more than 400 public assets, the vast majority of which were in very poor condition.

Funded mostly by Sevenoaks Town Council with contributions in kind from the District Council and the County, a major overhaul was undertaken with the painting of more than 80 blue lamp posts, belisha beacons and traffic signs, and 50 black bollards; washing of the town's white railings and lampposts; cleaning of the granite fountain and drinking trough; renewal of bins; refurbishment of six road name signs, and some road markings were refreshed.



The scheme was completed in the week before the judging of the National Finals in the Britain in Bloom competition 2022.



## Sevenoaks Business Show

This is another annual event which has now been held twice at the Bat & Ball Centre. Around 30 businesses take part and the majority plan to return in 2023.





## Vegan Markets



As well as Sevenoaks' three traditional markets which are held each week, post-pandemic vegan markets were introduced too. Each event attracts more than 30 stalls. They are held in Vine Gardens, which provides the opportunity for live music to be played on the bandstand. Future Vegan markets are going to be held each spring and autumn with the next one already planned for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

## Best dressed window



Competitions were held in 2022 for the Platinum Jubilee and Christmas. These competitions generate a great deal of interest, and many businesses take part. For the Jubilee, of the 126 town centre shops, restaurants etc., 82 were decorated.



## Holly Party



The Town Team recognised that, in 2022, businesses could find it hard to fund Christmas staff parties and hence created a low-cost shared Christmas party. The Holly Party was priced at just £12 with a street food van providing meals in the £8-10 price range. Feedback was very encouraging, and another is planned for 2023.

## Wayfinding Scheme



The directional signage in Sevenoaks is very poor so the Town Team is leading a project to address that. The broad parameters and matters to consider have been identified and a detailed scheme is now being designed. It is expected that, subject to successful funding applications, the scheme will be implemented during 2023.

## 18. Summary

The Town Council is committed to continue delivering, protecting, and enhancing community facilities, and providing good quality facilities and a vibrant and green environment, to ensure it is a town where residents want to live, businesses prosper, and which attracts visitors.

**The Town Council continues to be more people orientated than simply providing facilities. Examples of this include the Warm Spaces for people who need it, collection and donations of coats, Forget-Me-Not-Café, free children’s entertainment during school holidays, and progressing the application for Town of Sanctuary, demonstrating support for refugees.**

**There are many opportunities for residents to be involved in Town Council activities and help to make Sevenoaks a more sustainable and thriving community. All you need to do is get in touch with us. Please see the front page for contact details.**

