

Sevenoaks Town Council  
Greatness Recreation Ground – Management & Improvement Plan 2021

**SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL**



**Greatness Recreation Ground  
Management & Improvement Plan  
Adopted September 2008  
Reviewed March 2021**

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## Open Spaces & Leisure Committee – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021 - Minutes

	Page No
1. Introduction	3
2. The Roles of Parks	4
3. Greatness Recreation Ground – Fundamental Purpose	5
4. Greatness Recreation Ground – Facilities	5
5. Declaration of Aims	5
6. Sevenoaks Town Council Open Spaces Services	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Policy</li> <li>• Mission Statement</li> <li>• Vision</li> </ul>	
7. Greatness Recreation Ground Plan	6
8. Aims for Achievement in five years	7
9. Greatness Recreation Ground History	8
10. The Future	8
11. Nature Conservation and Promotion	9
12. Environmental Policy Statement	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sevenoaks Town Council’s No 1 Priority – Climate Change / Carbon Neutral</li> <li>• Horticultural Peat</li> <li>• Pesticides / Herbicides</li> <li>• Water Management</li> <li>• Soil Conservation</li> <li>• Energy Conservation</li> </ul>	
13. Wildlife Initiatives	10
14. Tree Management and Conservation	10
15. Car Parking	10
16. Security Matters	10
17. Management Statement	11
18. Conclusion	11
19. Map of Site	12
Appendix	
Five Year Action Plan	

## 1. Introduction

This document was created by Sevenoaks Town Council in 2008 and although most of the actions and more have been carried out, it has not been formally reviewed since that date. The Management & Improvement Plan provides a comprehensive framework for all management and development within Greatness Recreation Ground. It is an organic document, which will develop further with input, not only from the Town Council, but also stakeholders and users of the facility.

**The Aims** of this Management & Improvement Plan are to assist those responsible for conserving, managing and improving Greatness Recreation Ground and to do so in a consistent, sustainable and – where possible – an environmentally sensitive way, with the intention of encouraging more people to enjoy this local facility and to respond to changing needs.

Copies of the document are available from the Town Council Offices and on the Town Council's website at: [www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk).

Sevenoaks Town Council wishes to encourage existing and potential new partner agencies to work with it to incorporate targets into this Plan. We also encourage suggestions from the wider community, from park users to local residents and community groups, to have an input into Greatness Recreation Ground's management and improvement.

## 2. The Role of Parks

There are estimated to be more than 27,000 parks and green spaces across the UK (Urban Parks Forum, 2001). These spaces are diverse, ranging from principal parks with many facilities and amenities, to small neighbourhood or pocket parks.

Parks encourage physical exercise and wellbeing, whether through organised sports or through informal activity such as walking, running or playing. The OPENspace Research Centre at the University of Edinburgh noted that the health benefits linked to urban green space include:

- Improved social functioning.
- Improved functioning of the immune system.
- Reduced exposure to air pollution.
- Optimised exposure to sunlight and improved sleep.
- Improved mental health and cognitive function.
- Reduced cardiovascular morbidity.
- Reduced prevalence of type 2 diabetes.

The Parks Alliance provides the following information: for every £1 spent on parks in England an estimated £7 in additional value is generated for the health and wellbeing of local people and the local environment. Parks have never mattered more to local people. They connect people to the natural world, providing places for people to enjoy the outdoors, exercise their pets, keep fit and meet their neighbours.

### **3. Greatness Recreation Ground – Fundamental Purpose**

- i) Social cohesion – to be free, accessible, inclusive and to provide an important urban ‘social space’ for the community.
- ii) To provide meaning and significance by use so contributing to people’s quality of life. To provide a location that enables recreational activity, general opportunities for sociability or – alternatively – peace and solitude to escape from everyday life.
- iii) Environmental benefits – to have a high amenity value by providing a contrast to the urban environment.
- iv) To provide positive psychological effects, even for those not consciously appreciative.
- v) An ecological benefit in the value of an urban park in removing toxins in the air.
- vi) Health and wellbeing – to provide an attractive environment, an antidote to the stresses of modern living, can contribute to a sense of wellbeing and improved mental health.
- vii) Educational benefits – can provide an educational resource for a wide range of subjects, including acting as a catalyst to educate visitors about the nature of the countryside as a sustainable resource. Can provide outdoor education / activity programmes, which are used as tools suitable for addressing issues such as juvenile delinquency.
- viii) A safe environment for everyone to meet, exercise, socialise and for the young to play together.

### **4. Greatness Recreation Ground – Facilities**

At the point of review in 2021 Greatness Recreation Ground had the following facilities:

- i) Play area
- ii) Skateboard park
- iii) Futsal goals
- iv) Open air gym equipment
- v) Two football pitches (one enclosed)
- vi) Sports pavilion

### **5. Declaration of Aims**

- i) Continue to improve leisure facilities and recreational space within Greatness Recreation Ground.
- ii) Continue to improve security to provide a safe environment for the local residents and users of the park.
- iii) Promote the facilities of Greatness Recreation Ground through public events.
- iv) Work together with residents, local authorities, voluntary and other organisations.
- v) Encourage new users and activities in the park.
- vi) Improve the landscaping and car parking of the park.

- vii) Explore and obtain funding for achieving these aims.
- viii) Continue to support those providing exercise, both formal e.g. Sevenoaks Town Football Club and local walking groups, or those using free outdoor gym equipment.
- ix) Create and support Friends of Greatness Recreation Ground (to include a diversity of membership).

## **6. Sevenoaks Town Council – Open Spaces Services**

### **Strategic Policy**

The Town Council aims to provide a strategic approach to the management, development and promotion of recreational and statutory facilities in a sustainable way. Within the service, the key objectives that relate to Greatness Recreation Ground are to provide a facility that meets the needs of both the local community and across Sevenoaks Town, encourages involvement, promotes a healthy lifestyle and provides a safe, clean and sustainable environment.

### **Mission Statement**

“Sevenoaks Town Council together with local stakeholders will ensure that the outdoor environment is valued, nurtured and enhanced for the benefit and enjoyment of all, now and for the future.”

### **Vision**

To maintain a high performance, multi-skilled team (including volunteers) that will strive to develop the full potential of green space within the remit of Sevenoaks Town Council through effective partnership and joint working; to achieve the aims and key tasks within agreed principles and values and in particular to:

- Contribute to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing, improvement and development of Sevenoaks town.
- Improve the quality of life for the people of Sevenoaks in accordance with their needs.
- Make the recreation ground more attractive to visitors.
- Promote inward investment, development and heritage conservation.
- Promote biodiversity through sustainable habitat and species management practices.
- Promote community activities on the recreation ground (not including fun fairs).
- Promote and develop a Friends Group.

## **7. Greatness Recreation Ground – Ownership and Management**

Greatness Recreation Ground is solely owned and operated by Sevenoaks Town Council.

Two football pitches and the area for the football pavilion is leased to Sevenoaks Town Football Club who manage these facilities.

## 8. Aims for Achievement in Five Years – 2021 - 2026

The vision for Greatness Recreation Ground's 5-year Management & Improvement Plan is to increase the enjoyment for all sections of the community visiting Greatness Recreation Ground. This will be achieved by improving leisure, play and customer services facilities and by renovating areas of horticultural interest.

The vision can be split into the following objectives:

- i) Continue to create a safe, secure and welcoming park and facilities.
- ii) Continue to maintain customer service facilities, bins, benches and good paths etc.
- iii) Develop a planting scheme for high quality / fully stocked shrubs / wildflower area.
- iv) Continue to provide and review signage and on-site interpretation (where necessary) to improve the quality of experience for visitors.
- v) Maintain and further improve play facilities.
- vi) Increase community involvement by liaison with local stakeholders; consider community planting days and other events and the creation of a Friends Group.
- vii) Seek funding to achieve the above.
- viii) Continue to support community groups using the recreation ground e.g. Sevenoaks Town Football Club.
- ix) If the football club proceeds with plans to build a new pavilion, to retain the current pavilion for community use.

## 9. History of Greatness Recreation Ground

Greatness is an area in the north-east of the town. It was owned by Lord Greatness until the 1920s, when it was given to the local council. Greatness Recreation Ground is situated within this area, adjacent to Greatness Cemetery.

Greatness Recreation Ground is also home to Sevenoaks Football Club, founded in 1883, who currently play in the Premier Division of the Kent County Football League.

In 2007, Sevenoaks District Council transferred the ownership of Greatness Recreation Ground to Sevenoaks Town Council.

Since acquiring the park, the Town Council has provided tangible improvements in the form of the following:

- Installation of £50,000 play area and fencing
- Installation of £100,000 skateboard park
- Outdoor gym equipment
- Futsal goalposts
- Public toilet
- New fencing
- New seats, including youth shelter
- Regular grass cutting
- Regular litter picking
- Marked reduction of anti-social behaviour
- Increased usage of open space for correct purpose

## 10. The Future

Sevenoaks Town Council continues to invest in Greatness Recreation Ground both in regular maintenance and ongoing capital infrastructure. Details for the next five years are included at the end of this document.

In addition, the Town Council continues to encourage ongoing community involvement with the recreation ground by supporting formal organisations such as Sevenoaks Town Football Club with its ambitious plans; encouraging community activities and the proposed creation of a Friends Group.

During the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Development Plan process a Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan was created, which provides aims to improve green corridors between public open spaces, both new and present.



## 11. Nature Conservation and Promotion

Sevenoaks Town Council continues to be committed to realising the potential for open space to be utilised as wildlife resources. The Town Council will bear in mind the following principles in relation to this:

- To coordinate and take action to make sure that all sectors of the Sevenoaks community are committed to improving, valuing and protecting our habitats and wildlife, to provide a well-balanced and sustainable environment, which contributes to a good quality of life for present and future generations.
- The Town Council will – where possible – aim to reduce chemical, energy and water use by good management practices.
- The Town Council will encourage the management of open spaces in a manner which maximises their wildlife value, whilst complementing its open space recreation and amenity objectives on Town Council-owned land. This should be done in co-operation with the local community, which will also be encouraged to keep disturbance of wildlife to a minimum.

## 12. Environmental Policy Statement

The following policy statement explains how Greatness Recreation Ground management is being developed in accordance with sustainable work practices.

- **Sevenoaks Town Council's No 1 Priority – Climate Change / Carbon Neutral**

Practical aspects for parks including:

- planting of more trees (in 2020 it planted 790);
- promotion of the Refill Scheme;
- Sevenoaks Plastic Free Pledge;
- installation of water fountains where possible;
- initiatives to reduce litter and encourage recycling;
- installation of cycle racks; and
- providing green links to open spaces.

- **Horticultural Peat**

Every effort will be made not to use horticultural peat within the park.

- **Pesticides / Herbicides**

To maintain the park with the minimum use of any chemicals to control weeds or pests. All paths, shrub beds and borders to be maintained by hand.

- **Water Management**

Where appropriate, watering to take place at various times of day to ensure minimum water evaporation, and to consider options for rain harvesting.

- **Soil Conservation**

Poor soil conservation methods result in the reduction of soil fertility and poor soil structure. In turn, this leads to plants having reduced flowering vigour and increased propensity to disease. Buying in compost to remedy such a situation would be costly and damaging to the environment.

To prevent this situation arising, the aim is for the Town Council to produce or obtain compost bays from its partners. Where possible, all compostable material produced on site is either to be shredded and put directly onto shrub beds or put into the compost bays. The resulting compost will then be used in shrub and flower beds. This organic matter will rot down and improve and maintain soil structure, aid moisture retention and provide a habitat for micro fauna.

- **Energy Conservation**

Working towards composting on site would provide a sustainable end use, removing the need for transporting materials via road and therefore reducing pollution and the need to use landfill sites.

### **13. Wildlife Initiatives**

The Town Council intends to develop a Friends Group, which will be encouraged to assist with the development of a planting scheme, as well as initiatives such as the installation of bird, bat and insect nesting boxes in the park to provide additional habitats.

### **14. Tree Management and Conservation**

Greatness Recreation Ground contains some mature trees. A stock condition will be incorporated into this Management & Improvement Plan. The results of this will be used to provide a tree management strategy, which will include a succession planting programme to provide sustainability over the generations. Any trees which are dead, dying or dangerous will be felled and reused within the park as park furniture, used as habitat piles and deadwood habitats for decomposers or composted on site and replaced with suitable trees.

### **15. Car Parking**

As the park increases in vitality and attracts more visitors the pressure on available car parking space will also increase.

There are also additional pressures on car parking in the area from the well-attended Hope Church and Sevenoaks Town Football Club.

Initiatives will be of primary importance to encourage alternative uses of transport than the car: walking, cycling (installation of cycle racks) and public transport.

### **16. Security Matters**

Sevenoaks Town Council will continue to work with Police Community Support Officers, Community Safety Unit, Kenward Trust and other organisations to increase security for the users of Greatness Recreation Ground.

It is inherently difficult to provide CCTV at recreation grounds. The Town Council and the football club have provided CCTV cameras and are looking to improve the provision longer term.

The essence of the 'eyes on the street' approach to planning and design is to increase the opportunities for informal surveillance and reduce the number of isolated places where crime can take place unseen. This practice has been put in place both for the children's play area and car park.

Since Sevenoaks Town Council took over the recreation ground in 2007 it has seen a decrease in anti-social behaviour.

## **17. Management Statement**

The day-to-day management of Greatness Recreation Ground will continue to be carried out by full time Sevenoaks Town Council open spaces staff. The play areas will continue to be inspected regularly by open spaces staff and independently twice a year.

The football pitches and pavilion are managed under a lease by the Sevenoaks Town Football Club.

## **18. Conclusion**

Sevenoaks Town Council believes that the active involvement of the community, allied to the enthusiastic and accomplished work of the open spaces staff, with the full support of Sevenoaks Town Council, will deliver improvements to the Greatness Recreation Ground every year.

The most critical aspect of the Greatness Recreation Ground Management & Improvement Plan is to ensure that a methodology exists that will enable all stakeholders involved in the development of the park to assess the effectiveness of the management and the extent of the progress made. A 5-year action plan is attached to this document.

Sevenoaks Town Council intends to ensure continuous improvement, development and assessment of the management of Greatness Recreation Ground. This will enable those organisations involved in the management and development of the park to ensure that it is safe, pleasant and a sustainable green space now and for the future.



## Greatness Recreation Ground

### KEY

- 1 - Car Park
- 2 - Children's Play Area
- 3 - Pavilion
- 4 - Football Pitch No. 2
- 5 - Skateboard Park
- 6 - Football Pitch No. 1

