

Sevenoaks Town Council
Minutes of the Community Centre User Group Meeting held at the Sevenoaks Community Centre on Thursday 22nd March 2018 at 7.00pm

Present:

Cllr Andrew Eyre	Sevenoaks Town Council (Chairman)
Cllr Roderick Hogarth	Sevenoaks Town Council and Community Infrastructure Committee
Cllr Richard Parry	Sevenoaks Town Council
Linda Larter MBE	Sevenoaks Town Council
Liz Hodgson	Sevenoaks Town Council
Janet Davies	Sevenoaks Day Nursery
Allan De Turberville	PROBUS
Jim Garlinge	Otford Bridge Club
Pamela Holmes	The Arts Society-Knole
Bryan Miles	Tea Dance
Barbara Phillips	North West Kent Family History
Bryan Richardson	Sevenoaks District Arts Council
Nick White	U3A

Apologies for Absence were received from: Cllr. Marilyn Canet, Cllr. Robert Piper, Cllr. Simon Raikes, David Williams (PROBUS), Stewart Armstrong (Knole U3A), Jo Wilkinson (Kent Association for the Blind), Adrienne Brewin (Breathe Easy), Phyllis Smith (Family Anonymous).

Cllr Eyre chaired the meeting. It was agreed to send Best Wishes to Cllr. Piper and his wife Marilyn.

545. Minutes of the Meeting of the Community User Group held on 7th February 2018
RESOLVED: To accept and sign the minutes of the meeting as a true record.

546. Bat and Ball Centre

Cllr. Eyre apologised on behalf of Sevenoaks Town Council that the change of plans for the build of a new community centre had been leaked to the press before hirers had been advised.

Members of the Community Centre User Group were provided with the document reviewed by Town Councillors in considering potential options for the provision of the new community centre. A copy of a draft plan for Option B was also circulated.

It was noted that in 2015 Sevenoaks Town Council embarked on an ambitious journey to appoint architects to work on the redevelopment of the Sevenoaks Community Centre site Northern Sevenoaks. This project was borne out of a need to increase both the capacity and number of hireable spaces within the Town. At the time proposals involved the sale of the Town Council Office site on Bradbourne Vale

Road, and the creation of a new combined community/conference centre with Town Council Offices on the Community Centre site off Cramptons Road.

It was noted that there had been serious planning issues in the sale of the Raleys site and also for planning permission for the Town Council site, the income of which was needed to pay towards a two storey community centre with new offices.

Since this time there had also been two major developments:

- Sevenoaks Town Council was granted a 25 year lease to the Bat & Ball station building, and has secured £755,600 from the Heritage Lottery fund to restore the building. The restored building would provide a cafe, and two hireable rooms. The building was expected to reopen late 2018.
- Following internal reorganisation the Red Cross returned the lease of its building on the Bradbourne Vale Road site to the Town Council.

These developments had resulted in a significant uplift in the amount of community space which the Town Council can make available to residents and organisations.

The Town Council had always believed it was important to remain an agile and adaptive organisation. This meant, where necessary, considering the original ambitions of a project against the current situation.

Following careful consideration, the Town Council had made the following decisions:

- continue working with the award winning Theis and Khan Architects who developed the initial scheme
- To reduce the overall bulk of the proposed new centre on the Community Centre site whilst maintaining the key elements of the original scheme, in particular the enlarged main hall.
- To consider recycling some of the structure of the existing centre to ensure the project is delivered in the most cost effective manner possible.
- To maintain or enhance the level of finishes within the new building, both internally and externally.
- To retain the Town Council Office site (including hireable Chamber)
- To consider how best the former Red Cross building can be repurposed to maximise community use.

The revised direction for the Capital Investment plan would allow the Council to focus capital investment on community facilities, rather than on the redevelopment of its own offices. Compared to the original 2015 proposals there would be an increased amount of community space, both in terms of footprint and in terms of individual rooms.

The following benefits were noted:

- Maximising car parking space on the Community Centre site by reducing concurrent uses, and retaining existing provision. The loss of parking capacity was raised as a major concern by current hirers.
- Avoids the overprovision of space following the successful Bat & Ball station project which was not considered to be feasible at the time of the 2015 competition.
- Allows flexibility to the Charitable Sevenoaks Day Nursery who operate on the Sevenoaks Community Centre site.
- Improves the diversity of rooms for hirers in terms of style, finish, and size. Improving efficiency of the hiring process.
- Enables retaining and development of Community Assets on current Town Council site.

It was however noted that the Option B would need current hirers to relocate during building works. The Town Council would negotiate with other local hall operators to assist with this.

Hirers expressed their concern for finding alternative hiring space during the period of closure and Linda Larter said that Sevenoaks Town Council would do its best to relocate hirers to other sites including the Bat and Ball Station, which was expected to be open towards the end of 2018, together with the Council Chamber and Red Cross building on the Bradbourne Vale site with the possibility of the Plaza Suite being used for hirers requiring a larger hireable space. The Plaza and Bat & Ball Station would also be able to offer hirers the use of commercial kitchens.

Otford Bridge Club and North West Kent Family History said that they would be happy to consider the Bat and Ball Station for their meetings

Bryan Richardson expressed concern about the loss of income during the closure of the community centre and Linda Larter said that this would be considered. It was noted that this was offset by the savings made from the Town Council not having to rent facilities when it sold its current offices prior to relocation.

It was felt by representatives of Sevenoaks Town Council at the meeting that drawbacks in closing the community centre to carry out works to rejuvenate and extend the existing building would be outweighed by the advantages of providing modern facilities with increased community space, storage and retention of free car parking spaces to hirers.

Although a precise timescale for the start of the community centre works to begin could not be given at this stage, it was anticipated that this would be before the estimated start date for the original two storey community centre.

RESOLVED: to continue to provide regular updates for hirers via the User Group meetings and to continue to bring on board their suggestions and hiring requirements.

547. Quality of Service Feedback

Barbara Phillips and Allan De Turberville praised the caretaker Martin for his kindness and good work in setting up for their meetings.

548. Dates of Next Meetings

The next Community Centre User Group meeting would take place on 25th April 2018 at 7pm. Further meetings for 2018 are scheduled for:

20.06.2018

15.08.2018

17.10.2018

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.50 p.m.

Signed

Chairman

Dated