

**Minutes of Sevenoaks Town Partnership Meeting held at the Town Council Chamber  
On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at 6.30 p.m.**

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**Executive Board:**

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Representing	Number	Current Member	Current Organisation	
Sevenoaks Town Council	3	CLr Maxine Chakowa (Chairman)		Present
		CEO / Town Clerk		Present
		CLr Stephen Arnold		Present
Sevenoaks District Council	1	CLr Avril Hunter		Present
Transport	2	Tony Clayton	Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association	Present
		Austin Blackburn	Go Coach	Present
Leisure Facilities	3	Jane Parish CEO	Sencio	Apologies
		Andrew Eyre (Vice Chairman)	Stag	Present
		Knole	To be confirmed	Apologies
Chamber of Commerce	1	Nick Brooker		Apologies Julie Philips representing
Blighs Meadow	1		Savills, agent for Bligh's owners Standard Life Investments	Apologies
Sevenoaks Chronicle	1			Apologies
Sevenoaks Society	1	Roger Walshe		Present
Large Business	2	Vacancy Elizabeth Dolding	Warners Solicitors	Apologies
Small Independent Business	2	Roberta Ware Glenn Ball	Francis Jones Jewellers Local Architect	Present Present
Resident Association	1			Byron Brown – Bradbourne Residents Association present
Round Table	1			Apologies
Police	1			Apologies
	20			

**Also in Attendance:**

Stephanie Harrison – My Sevenoaks Community  
 CLr Roderick Hogarth  
 CLr Richard Parry  
 CLrs Mrs Rachel Parry  
 Bonnie Tarling – Committee Clerk  
 Bryan Chakowa – Independent Business Owner  
 Tyna Carter – Wildernesse House  
 CLr Mrs Pam Walshe

**1. Apologies for Absence**

As noted above.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

**3. Minutes**

The minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Partnership meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> October were received and agreed.

**4. Sevenoaks Business Hub**

A report was received and noted. An application for funding had been made with a decision due on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019. A second planning application had been submitted and the decision due no later than 8<sup>th</sup> April. The tender process had been delayed but hoped to be completed asap. Details of the hire cost would be brought back to the next meeting.

**5. Sevenoaks Vintage Bus 2019**

A report was received and discussed. It was noted that there were strong opinions regarding Knole's position regarding the future of the bus.

**Sevenoaks Town Partnership  
Launches Save its Vintage Bus Campaign**

At the Sevenoaks Town Partnership meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2019 members representing organisations from all sectors of the community voted unanimously to start a campaign to keep the iconic Vintage Bus operational to Knole in Sevenoaks during the summer months.

The decision was taken following a debate relating to the communication from Knole that the bus could no longer access its land for safety reasons and that it added to the car congestion. Knole states that it does not currently permit coaches at weekends, Bank Holidays and school holidays and therefore suggested that the Vintage Bus stop in the High Street and passengers walked to Knole House. It was generally agreed that this was unrealistic, as those needing to use the bus were unlikely to be able to walk the distance.

The Town Partnership believed that the Knole should review its management policies which appeared to be in favor of promoting car use rather than promoting use of sustainable public transport. The car park at Knole had recently been increased considerably to provide what was an 'ugly blot' on the heritage landscape, impractical and difficult to use and of concern relating to its impact on the deer inhabitants who were gradually moving to different areas of the park.

The Vintage Bus is a Sevenoaks Town Partnership project started in 2013 with seed funding from Portas and was one of the 'community elements' within Knole's successful lottery bid. The aim of the Vintage Bus was to integrate Knole with the local community encouraging

visitors from Knole to also visit the town centre and introducing public transport for those without cars or mobility needs to travel direct to the door of Knole. The Vintage Bus links to both stations and the bus station in the town. Unfortunately, the current Knole management do not recognize the Vintage Bus (which is registered under the Public Route No. 7) as public transport and will not therefore promote on its website, which would encourage more people to use it and help to reduce car movement.

Since 2013 The bus has been manned by an enthusiastic group of volunteer bus conductors. In 2018 the Vintage Bus Service and the Sevenoaks Route 8 Bus Service were awarded top prize in the Transport Planning Society's inaugural People's Award for 2018. Judges praised schemes that put community engagement at the centre of local decision making and chose the two community transport initiatives in Sevenoaks as best reflecting what local people really want from transport schemes in the UK.

Lynda Addison OBE, Chair of the Transport Planning Society, said: "The People's Award is a great platform for us to recognise that when good transport planning and strong community engagement combine, they deliver lasting benefit to society. These winners have made a genuine contribution to improving people's accessibility, quality of life and wellbeing and have made such a huge difference to their local communities. "Fundamentally, it is community involvement that makes good transport planning. In fact, delivering exemplary community engagement will make a good scheme great."

Stephen Joseph, former Chief Executive of the Campaign for Better Transport and Chair of the judges, said: "We received entries from communities across the country and reaching a decision on the final winner was very difficult. Each nomination demonstrated that schemes, such as the eventual winners in Sevenoaks, that had been developed with the community had made a positive impact both to the local economy and to residents' quality of life. This is incredibly important at a time when we must encourage a move away from car dependency. We're delighted to be able to recognise their vision and their hard work."

The Sevenoaks Town Partnership also raised concerns that the decision in relation to the Vintage Bus was in part due to Knole management becoming isolated from the town. It was noted that Knole attendance figures had doubled which undoubtedly helped its revenue budget for the House and car park, however believed Knole as did all major businesses have a social responsibility for the wider community of the town in which it operates. During the planning process for the National Trust's recent expansion of Knole property and car park concerns were raised about the impact on the small market town and were reassured these would be managed. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be the case with the High Street regularly becoming gridlocked. On any sunny day, even in February, the car park is being closed as it cannot cope with the visitors, meaning some people that have travelled long distances are turned away, only adding further to the congestion. In the past they could have been guided to another car park and caught the Vintage Bus to Knole.

Knole management was previously an active key member of the Sevenoaks Town Partnership which enabled such problems and potential solutions to be openly discussed unfortunately this no longer happens. The annual Mayor's fundraising event which raised

funds for a different charity each year is no longer able to take place at Knole and it is understood other community activities are being reviewed.

**For all the above reasons the Sevenoaks Town Partnership are encouraging local businesses and members of the public, particularly those who are National Trust members to write to the National Trust Chief Executive, Hilary McGrady, [Hilary.mcgrady@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:Hilary.mcgrady@nationaltrust.org.uk) and ask them to reconsider their travel management policies to encourage and support sustainable transport and the continuation of the Sevenoaks Vintage Bus with a plan to reduce car numbers and the negative environmental impact this is having on Knole Park and the market town of Sevenoaks.**

Linda Larter MBE  
Executive Board Member  
On behalf of Sevenoaks Town Partnership  
28<sup>th</sup> February 2019

The Sevenoaks Town Partnership Vintage Bus Service was launched in 2011 as a partnership. Its aim is to bring together all key stakeholders in the town with the local community to make Sevenoaks a vibrant and successful town to live, work and visit.

The Sevenoaks Town Partnership membership is from the following organisations:  
Sevenoaks Town Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association, Chamber of Commerce, large Businesses, Independent businesses, Resident Associations, Blighs Shopping Centre, Transport Companies, Sevenoaks Chronicle, Stag Theatre & Cinema, Sencio Leisure Centre.

**RESOLVED:**

- I. To start a campaign to 'save the Vintage Bus'
- II. To formally write to the CEO of National Trust to state how disappointed the Town Partnership was regarding Knole's decision to not allow the Bus into Knole grounds and formally ask that they reconsider this decision.
- III. If the bus could not run into Knole it would be unviable to continue the service.
- IV. To produce a press release regarding the matter.

**6. Independent Shopping Day 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

A report was received and discussed.

**RESOLVED:** The Committee Clerk to move forward with plans for the event and start to contact local Independent Businesses to sign up.

**7. STP Events Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January were received and noted.

**8. Business Show & Wellbeing Show 2019.**

An update was received from the Committee Clerk.

Business Show on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April – sponsors had now been confirmed and stand spaces were available for booking. The Sevenoaks and District Chamber of Commerce would be holding a breakfast event at the Stag before the show and the Next Generation Chamber would be hosting a talk during the event. Nominations for the Business Awards 2019 would be launched at the show.

Wellbeing Show on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May – sponsors had now been confirmed and stand spaces were available for booking. Talks and demonstrations were being arranged.

Business Awards – The awards would be held on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September at Knole Academy.

#### **9. Friends of Bat & Ball AGM 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

The minutes of the Friends of Bat & Ball AGM held on 19<sup>th</sup> December were received and noted.

The building had been handed over from the contractors on 27<sup>th</sup> February. Recruitment of staff was ongoing and full opening hours would be from 11<sup>th</sup> March. Arrangements were being made for weekly Thursday night Pop Up Restaurants with further details at a later date.

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 6.30pm at the Bat & Ball Station building.

#### **10. DCLG: Future High Street Fund**

A below report was received and noted.

The Government provides the following information in the summary of the information relating to the Future High St. Fund: - *“The Future High Streets Fund is an essential part of Our Plan for the High Street, providing co-funding towards capital projects that bring transformative change. We want to see the regeneration of our town centres through innovative proposals around transport, housing delivery and our public services.*

*Because no two high streets are the same, we are looking to work with visionary local leaders who understand what their local communities will need in the years to come. I’m looking forward to reading your Expressions of Interest and seeing your positive visions for our future high streets – places that can flourish for years to come”.*

Unfortunately, in creating the fund the criteria does not enable Town Centre Partnerships, Town Teams, Town and Parish Councils and County Councils to make an application to the fund. NALC and ATCM are lobbying on this matter.

If had been able to apply it would have been recommended that STP made an application for funding the development of the Cultural Quarter and related activities for Sevenoaks Town Centre.

## **11. Member Organisations**

Francis Jones Jewellers – Business was good and very busy at present.

Sevenoaks District Council – The new multi-storey car park would be opening early April and was currently on time and on budget.

Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association – The group were concerned regarding rumours that the fast train from Maidstone to London Bridge via Bat & Ball would not happen from December 2019.

Go Coach – The SDC Shuttle service would finish on 5<sup>th</sup> April. Arriva were pulling out services in Sevenoaks from 6<sup>th</sup> April with Go Coach covering several services and becoming the only bus operator in the area. Route 8 had now been extended to include Aldi and Sainsburys and a launch photoshoot would take place at 11am on 28<sup>th</sup> February. Go Coach were currently looking for a member of staff for 4 hours a week to help with marketing and distribution of leaflets.

Bradbourne Residents Association – Currently working on plans to turn one of the lakes back into a model boating lake. Recent working party days had been very successful. Sevenoaks District Council were currently working on their Vision Plan for the lakes.

Bryan Chakowa – A new café would be opening in St Johns Hill at the end of March (previously Olivia's Café site).

Sevenoaks Society – Currently working on a Heritage Exhibition and book with further details to be bought to the next meeting.

Sevenoaks & District Chamber of Commerce – Three new board members had been appointed. The breakfast meeting business card raffle would now raise funds for three charities only – We are Beams, West Kent Mind and Hospice of Hope.

Pink Week – Events for Pink Week had now been arranged with further details to be released shortly.

My Sevenoaks Community – The site continued to go from strength to strength with 30,000 hits across the website and social media in one day. The What's On section of the website continues to be the most popular page on the site.

Wilderness House – The estate was now open and one resident had already moved in. The area was for 60 years + ,private owned, independent living with spa facilities and restaurant. A three day launch of the site would take place at the end of March.

**12. Date of next meeting**

The next STP meeting would take place on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 6.30pm at the Town Council Chamber.

**13. Press Release**

A press release would be issued regarding the Vintage Bus and extension of Route 8.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.05 pm.