

## 1. Introduction

This is the second Annual Report where Covid-19 has heavily impacted the Town Council's activities, functions, and facilities, as well as the wider community.

The Town Council has continued to work hard to maintain its functions and facilities as much as possible including those which were needed even more by the local community during the pandemic. These include allotments, public open spaces, play areas, cemetery, grants to voluntary organisations, supporting local businesses and providing a venue for an Asymptomatic Covid Testing Centre.

During this difficult time the Town Council, in addition to its normal operations of community functions and facilities, has achieved some of its planned key objectives:

- Bat & Ball Centre officially opened
- New Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) officially opened
- Vine Cricket Ground renovated
- Vegan Markets
- Business Hub opened
- South & South East in Bloom Awards
- Loo of the Year Award
- Green Community Investment Plan

This report provides detailed information relating to Sevenoaks Town Council's performance and activities during the past financial year.

## 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) 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 Neighbourhood Development Plan on climate and green issues, identifying policies which would contribute to a more sustainable town.

Practical environmental projects include:

- i) Production of a Green Community Investment Plan
- ii) Rebuilding Bat & Ball Centre as eco-friendly as possible
- iii) Review of draft Neighbourhood Development Plan, making Climate Change a top priority
- iv) Installation of additional cycle racks and planters
- v) Supporting and being involved in the Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership
- vi) Installation of Electric Charging Points
- vii) Purchase of first Electric Vehicle
- viii) Planting of hundreds of trees and Adopt a Tree launch
- ix) Give it a Grow project
- x) Edible Planting
- xi) Environmental policies for recommendations on planning applications
- xii) Promoting Refill scheme
- xiii) Promoting Sevenoaks' Plastic Free Pledge
- xiv) Involving young people

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.

### 3. Community Investment Plan & Green Community Investment Plan

In 2014 Sevenoaks Town Council (STC) set out its first ambitious £4m Community Investment Plan to restore and improve community facilities. Building on the success of that Community Investment Plan the second document in 2019 continued with the original 2014 plan and set out additional priorities for the next four years, which increased investment to £6.5m.

**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.

### 4. Bat & Ball Centre

The new Bat & Ball Centre was completed in December 2020 and used as an Asymptomatic Testing Centre for Covid up to June 2021. In July 2021 it was finally possible to have a celebration opening.

Despite different levels of public health restrictions during the year, the venue has already become very popular and is working well in accordance with its anticipated income budget. The new Bat & Ball Centre is as eco-friendly as possible.

- Rebuild instead of new build.
- Eco friendly and sustainable materials.
- Solar panels.
- Motion sensor lighting.
- Additional insulation.
- Improved heating and ventilation systems.
- Electric Vehicle Charging Point.



For all hall hire enquiries please contact: [hallhire@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:hallhire@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## 5. Bat & Ball Station Building

During the restoration of the Bat & Ball Station Building, Sevenoaks Town Council employed on contract a Heritage Engagement Officer responsible for delivering heritage activities as per Sevenoaks Town Council’s Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Activity Plan. This led to a team of volunteers engaging with the community, generating interest, researching the heritage of the building and station and managing the production of interpretation material.

The progress made was very successful and can be viewed within the Evaluation Report at [www.batandballstation.com](http://www.batandballstation.com). Unfortunately, the pandemic brought many of the activities and promotions to a halt and the Town Council has resolved to engage a new part-time person, initially for 12 months, to review and build on the original Activity Plan to progress the Bat & Ball Station project as originally planned. Funding from the HLF Earmarked Reserves will be used to cover the cost of the post.

The Station Building received the following award nominations and is featured in the Design Council’s publication ‘The Value of Design to UK Rail Infrastructure’.

2021	Constructing Excellence SECBE Awards - Finalist
2021	RIBA Journal McEwen Award – Long Listed
2021	AJ Retrofits Award 2022 – Short Listed
2021	Loo of the Year, Platinum Winner

## 6. The Mayoral Year & Civic Events

Once again, the Mayoral year has been affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic, causing many events to be cancelled or postponed.



The Mayor, Councillor Dr Merilyn Canet, was elected in May; attending the event in person were Linda Larter MBE, Town Clerk and Councillor Nicholas Busvine OBE, the outgoing Mayor. Councillor Mrs Rachel Parry, the incoming Deputy Mayor and other Councillors attended via Zoom.

The Mayor's chosen charity this year has been Multiple Sclerosis, and she has actively raised awareness about the charity during her term of office.

The Mayor is passionate about environmental issues and launched her 'Give it a Grow' campaign to encourage interest in gardening, support wildlife and help the community to protect the local green environment.

She also championed the 'Adopt a Tree' scheme and planted a variety of trees in various locations in the town.

The Mayor officially 'opened' a Bee Hotel on The Pound and Bug House at the Bat & Ball Centre to provide additional wildlife habitat.

The Mayor has visited many local schools during her year of office, encouraging the young people to take an interest in their surroundings and environment.

So far this year the Mayor has attended 115 events and other councillors have represented her at 15 events.

## **Civic Events**

### **Armed Forces Day**

On 26<sup>th</sup> June, Westerham Sea Cadets raised the Armed Forces Day flag at The Vine in Sevenoaks. Prayers were led by Brigadier Ian Dobbie and the Exhortation was read by Miller Lang of the Royal Naval Association.

Present were the Deputy Mayor of Sevenoaks, Councillor Mrs Rachel Parry, fellow Councillors, Members of the Armed Services and residents.

The Deputy Mayor said: "Today, as for so many years, the United Kingdom's Armed Forces personnel are deployed around the world, often in dangerous and difficult conditions. They are holding other nations' humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts as well as protecting the United Kingdom and our support for them and their families is vital."

### **NHS Flag Raising**

On 5<sup>th</sup> July the Deputy Mayor of Sevenoaks, Councillor Mrs Rachel Parry, attended the raising of the NHS flag at The Vine in Sevenoaks, celebrating 73 years since the inauguration of the National Health Service.

The Deputy Mayor said: "Today is a very special day when we are able to demonstrate our thanks and show our appreciation and gratitude to our NHS heroes and to thank each and every one of our exceptional NHS workers, at all levels, for their care and commitment during the Coronavirus pandemic.

"Never since its inception on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1948 has so much been owed to our doctors, nurses, paramedics, other front-line workers and every other member of our NHS who works on our behalf.

"This 73<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Health Service, has today become even more special as we can celebrate the recognition by Her Majesty the Queen, who has today awarded the George Cross to the NHS."



## Merchant Navy Day – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

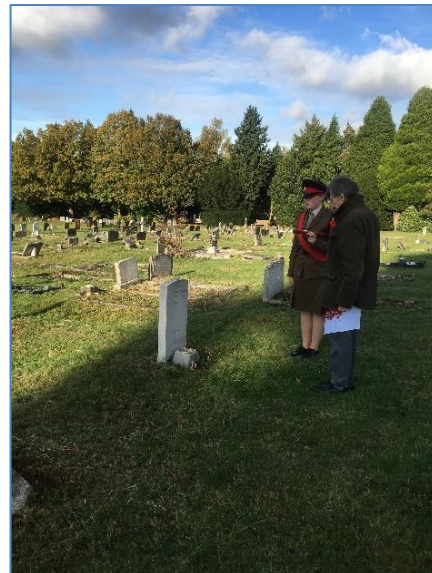
The Red Ensign flag was raised at The Vine on 3<sup>rd</sup> September to commemorate Merchant Navy Day. The Mayor of Sevenoaks, Councillor Dr Merilyn Canet, was joined by the Deputy Mayor and Councillors for the raising of the Red Ensign by the Westerham Sea Cadets. Prayers were read by Revd Canon Angus MacLeay from St Nicholas Church and Miller Lang from the Royal Naval Association read the Exhortation

The Mayor said: “It has been a privilege today to help raise awareness for Merchant Navy veterans and our support for the seafarers on which the United Kingdom depends by proudly flying the Red Ensign.”



## Armistice Day

On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 the Mayor, together with representatives from the Army Cadets, laid crosses on the War Graves at Greatness Park Cemetery. Prayers were conducted by Fr. Robin Jones, Vicar of St. John the Baptist Church. The service was attended by Town Councillors and members of staff.



## Remembrance Day

The Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade in Sevenoaks was held on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November at The Vine War Memorial. The Mayor and Councillors were present, together with contingents from the local cadets and youth groups. The Service was led by Revd Canon Angus MacLeay of St Nicholas Church, assisted by Father David Gibbons and Revd Dermot Thornberry. The Eynsford Concert Band played at the Service and rendered the Last Post. The Service was well attended and was also live streamed for those unable to be present.

## 7. Finance

In 2021-22, the Town Council approved a budget of £1,858,154. General reserves brought forward were £417,571 (2020-21 £383,872) and earmarked reserves were £1,352,955 (2020-21 £3,569,864, including Public Works Loan Board loan to finance Bat & Ball Centre).

The 2021-22 Town Council budget includes income of:

- £1,239,898 from the precept paid for by Sevenoaks domestic ratepayers (council tax).
- £557,482 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.
- £60,774 from Council reserves (£39,700 to fund the No 8 Bus, and £41,075 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 £668,597 capital receipts and £102,065 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.

Coronavirus lockdown and restrictions have impacted the Council's income streams, with some facilities closed in the spring, and restrictions affecting hire of halls in particular.

Despite the impact of Covid-19, 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 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021, Council approved a budget of £1,864,485 for 2022-2023. This will be funded by fees and charges of £528,922 (28%), a precept levy of £1,295,675 (70%), and a reserves transfer of £39,888 (2%) (£59,888 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 £132.67 per year or £2.55 per week (an increase of £4.17 per year or 8p per week on 2021-22).



## 8. 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 2021/2022 include:

Clean Up Sevenoaks Campaign	£639	Baby Umbrella	£500
Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival, Young Musician of the Year	£1,000	PS Breastfeeding	£450
Sevenoaks Literary Festival	£500	South East Open Studios	£250
Citizens Advice, North West Kent	£500	Stag Community Arts Centre	£5,000
Hi Kent	£1,000	We are Beams	£600
Sevenoaks Counselling	£1,500		

## Community Grants 2022/23

Would your community group benefit from a financial grant from the Town Council?



Visit: [www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk) or contact [council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk) for more info

Application forms to be sent to [council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk) or  
Sevenoaks Town Council, Council Offices, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3QG  
by 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in August or 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in January



## 9. Council Meetings

In April 2020 Government regulations were introduced to allow local authorities to hold meetings remotely. The regulations ended on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and the Council returned to face-to-face meetings. However, in the light of high infection rates in Sevenoaks and work from home guidance issued by the Government in December 2021, the council agreed emergency measures (*Town Council Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021 – Minute 411 refers*) delegating authority to the Town Clerk to make decisions on behalf of the Council. This was carried out following online advisory meetings or working parties, or consultation with councillors by electronic means or telephone. Face-to-face meetings returned from 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

The following meetings/working parties took place in 2021/2022 and were livestreamed on YouTube. The number of views on YouTube are shown below.

Date of Meeting	Committee	View Count	Date of Meeting	Committee	View Count
06.04.2021	Planning	46	13.09.2021	Town Council	27
12.04.2021	Finance & General Purposes	36	20.09.2021	Planning	79
12.04.2021	Town Council	36	27.09.2021	Open Spaces & Leisure	34
26.04.2021	Planning	603	04.10.2021	Planning	322
04.05.2021	Annual Council Meeting	129	18.10.2021	Planning	22
10.05.2021	Planning	122	25.10.2021	Personnel	N/A
17.05.2021	Planning	N/A	01.11.2021	Planning	23
01.06.2021	Planning	36	03.11.2021	Youth Services	N/A
07.06.2021	Finance & General Purposes	21	08.11.2021	Open Spaces & Leisure	267
07.06.2021	Town Council	21	15.11.2021	Planning	21
14.06.2021	Planning	42	22.11.2021	Finance & General Purposes	20
21.06.2021	Community Infrastructure	23	22.11.2021	Town Council	20
21.06.2021	Town Council	23	29.11.2021	Planning	16
28.06.2021	Planning	31	06.12.2021	Town Council	40
30.06.2020	Youth Services	17	13.12.2021	Planning	30
05.07.2021	Open Spaces & Leisure	35	20.12.2021	Planning	18
12.07.2021	Planning	36	10.01.2022	Planning	438
26.07.2021	Planning	77	12.01.2022	Youth Services Committee	12
02.08.2021	Finance & General Purposes	20	17.01.2022	Finance & General Purposes	18
02.08.2021	Town Council	20	17.01.2022	Town Council	18
09.08.2021	Planning	32	24.01.2022	Planning	142
23.08.2021	Planning	38	31.01.2022	Community Infrastructure	15
06.09.2021	Planning	51	07.02.2022	Planning	28
08.09.2021	Youth Services	N/A	14.02.2022	Open Spaces & Leisure	55
13.09.2021	Finance & General Purposes	27	21.02.2022	Planning	12

It is noted that figures relate to the number of views, not individuals.

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 Wednesday 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.

## 10. Sevenoaks Business Hub

The proposal to use the building formerly occupied by the Red Cross, at Bradbourne Vale Road, as a Business Hub had been part of Sevenoaks Town Council's plans for some time. The refurbishment began in November 2020 and, despite the additional challenges arising from the pandemic, was completed in June 2021, and formally opened by Sevenoaks Mayor, Cllr Dr Merilyn Canet in July 2021.



The building has been completely refurbished and provides flexible first-class business accommodation. While the primary use of the building is to provide good quality accommodation for Hub users, the Town Council's Finance department is also now housed in the building. So too is Sevenoaks District Chamber of Commerce, which is headquartered there.

The Hub provides five private, lockable, office pods which means that hirers can operate completely as if they had 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.

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 Hub has attracted a range of users including a removal company, a recruitment company, property developers, IT security and a hospitality supplier. It is a great multi-purpose facility for any business seeking low-cost, flexible accommodation, or for those who now need to work from home but find that that solution does not work for them.

The Hub bookings are managed by the Chamber of Commerce, though hirers do not need to be a member to book space. It does, however, give hirers opportunities to take part in a network as the Chamber hosts its member's meetings on site.

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

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



## 11. Open Spaces and Leisure

### Allotments

Sevenoaks Town Council own and manage 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 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 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, with the remaining vacant plots being a bit more of a challenge to bring back to full cultivation. It usually takes a very special gardener to accept that challenge, and these gardeners do exist as the pictures demonstrate!



This time last year we were talking about how *"... allotments suddenly became places of refuge, fresh air and permitted exercise during Covid-19 lockdowns, when our movements were otherwise restricted."*

The last 12 months have continued in much the same way: we still have a waiting list and enthusiasm for 'grow your own' doesn't seem to have waned, although the initial rush for plots has levelled out now that people have drifted back to working in offices rather than at home.

The trend for families and ladies to take on allotments continues, too. 46% of tenants across both sites are female (2021/22: 44%) 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 joining the waiting list should contact the Allotments Manager at [allotments@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:allotments@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## South & South East in Bloom Awards 2021

Various locations in the town were entered into the South & South East in Bloom, together with entries in the RHS desktop-judged Community Awards.

The outstanding results reflected the time and effort put in by the staff and volunteers who make these endeavours possible.

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







Sevenoaks Town Council is delighted that Sevenoaks Town Centre has been selected to represent our region in the 2022 RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals in the BIDs, Town Centres & City Centres Town category.

## Summer 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 Day

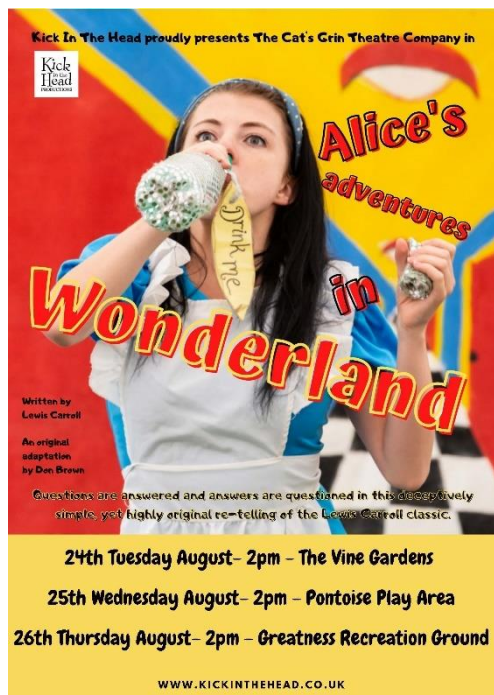
On 17<sup>th</sup> August, a Family Fun Day was held at Greatness Recreation Ground, commissioned by Sevenoaks District Council and delivered by Play Place.

The fun and games, sports and arts and craft activities were provided by Play Place. Sevenoaks Town Council funded additional activities in the form of a magician and African Drumming.



## Alice in Wonderland

Sevenoaks Town Council commissioned three performances of Alice in Wonderland from Kick in the Head Productions.



Performances were held at Vine Gardens, Pontoise Play Area, and Greatness Recreation Ground and proved popular with families who were able to enjoy the fun and outdoor entertainment in the good weather.



## Hillingdon Rise and Julian's Meadow Play Area Refurbishment and New Equipment Project

Sevenoaks Town Council's goal is to create free spaces where children and parents can go to experience the outdoors and escape the rushed pace of life. The Town Council has a programme for refurbishment of play areas that it is responsible for.

In 2021, Sevenoaks Town Council was awarded grants totalling £80,000 by Enovert Community Trust for improvements to the play areas at Hillingdon Rise and at Julian's Meadow. The grants awarded by Enovert Community Trust will be used to update, refurbish and extend the play areas at each site.

The improved play areas and additional equipment will cater to a wider range of ages and abilities. The projects will commence in May 2022 and are scheduled to open in the early summer.

The Chairman of the Open Spaces and Leisure Committee, Cllr Nicholas Busvine OBE, said: "A very big thank you to the Enovert Community Trust for £80,000 grant funding. Wonderful news to end the year!"

## Greatness Cemetery

The cemetery continues to provide a popular and peaceful place for the bereaved.

In summer 2021 a large section of the paths at the rear of the site was resurfaced with Tarmac, including levelling a section under a large tree which was becoming a hazard, and installing new curbing to the Remembrance rose bed.

The Friends of Greatness Cemetery group will be launched later in 2022.



## Tree Planting



The **Adopt a Tree** initiative ran from June to December and allowed sponsors 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, Judd's Piece and the newly inaugurated Bat & Ball Centre.

A variety of native species and fruit trees were planted including apple trees, Rowan, Hawthorn, Pin Oak and Amelanchier.



The twenty trees planted in late December 2021 will benefit the local environment and help to improve air quality whilst also providing homes for wildlife and insects. A similar initiative is planned for 2022.

## Sevenoaks Common

Approximately 300 saplings of Hornbeam and Blackthorn were planted in an area of ancient woodland in Sevenoaks Common thanks to Lloyds Bank volunteers.

The volunteering day, organised by Employee Volunteering, worked to plant understorey trees to thicken the boundary whilst also providing dense cover for small birds and mammals. This work continued the valuable work carried out by the Greensand Project volunteers two years ago, which saw the removal of invasive Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel. The trees were provided free of charge by the Woodland Trust.



## Bee and Bug Hotels

As part of the national initiatives to encourage wildlife and pollinators, Sevenoaks Town Council installed Bee and Bug Hotels at The Pound and at Bat & Ball Centre.

Children from Sevenoaks Day Nursery helped the Mayor open the Bug Hotel at Bat & Ball. After filling the hotel with twigs, pinecones and straw, the children scattered native wildflower seed balls into the wilderness section of the garden at Bat & Ball Centre. The hotel was donated by a local resident and carpenter.



## Vine Green Flag Award

In 2021, The Vine was re-accredited its Green Flag status. The Vine is among 2,127 parks and green spaces in the UK that received a prestigious Green Flag Award in 2021, as the scheme celebrated 25 years as the international quality mark for parks and green space

## Vine Gardens

During the second year of the pandemic, the town's green and open spaces continued to provide a lifeline for people to exercise and socialise outdoors. Our Open Spaces Team worked hard to ensure spaces were maintained, safe and an enjoyable environment.

The Vine Gardens, at the heart of the town, experienced a significant level of activity and our staff at the Café on the Vine worked hard to meet the demand and provide a safe and enjoyable meeting place. We were heartened to receive a lot of positive feedback, including the following from a local resident:

*"I write to express my appreciation and sincere thanks to you and the staff of The Cafe on The Vine..... the cafe was like an oasis in the social desert throughout lockdown and the dark winter days. The staff are always interested in your well-being as well as providing an efficient cafe service. A plastic screen may protect against covid but is no barrier to the*





*warmth and friendship of your staff..... The contribution made to the mental health of many people in Sevenoaks by the availability of The Vine Gardens and cafe and the opportunity they provided for safely distanced social contact through lockdown cannot be overstated!"*

The Vine Gardens are also a popular venue for events, which this year included a Vegan Market, Boxing4Parkinsons and Dementia Roadshow, Community Planting Day, Sevenoaks Lions' Beer Festival, WK Mind Skiffle Band, a free Alice in Wonderland summer show, a Silly Billy Funday, as well as the return of our Thursday evening and Sunday afternoon free music at the bandstand. The Vine Railings saw an exhibition and sale by Sevenoaks Art Club and the installation of knitted poppies to commemorate the end of World War II.

### **Roadside Advertising and Highway Banners**

The Town Council agreed to take over the responsibility for regulating road-side advertising within the town, which was previously a Kent County Council function. It also informally regulates the installation of posters at seven sites enabling advertising of local community events. Local interest groups pay a small fee to help cover the cost of administration of the scheme.

The Town Council enables local organisations to advertise via a highway banner, 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)

## **12. Sevenoaks Markets**

The challenges of lockdowns and restrictions did not deter the dedication of our Sevenoaks traders. By ensuring safety measure for themselves and their customers, traders were able to bring their goods and services to the markets.

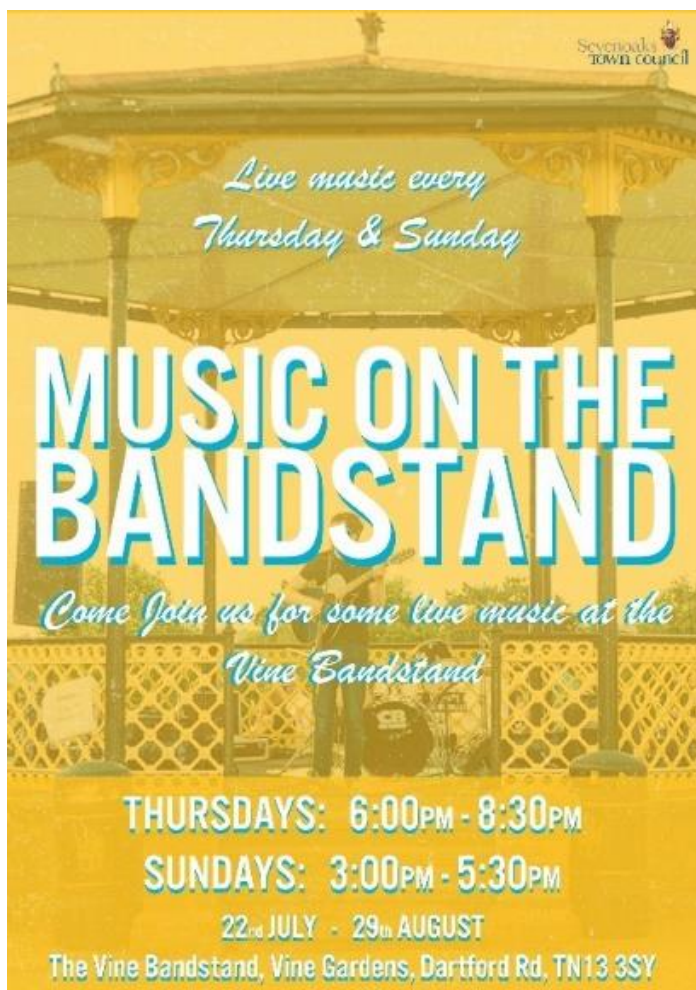
The markets continue to grow and are well-attended by residents and members of the public. The regular stall holders were joined by many new traders offering an even greater variety of goods.

Sevenoaks Town Council manages the following Sevenoaks Markets:

- Wednesday Market next to the Bus Station 8am till 2pm
- Saturday Bligh's Market 9am till 4pm
- Saturday High Street Market 9am till 4pm
- Bligh's Christmas Market 9am till 4pm (each day in the week prior to Christmas)



## 13. 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.

Our ability to hold events this year was impeded by the continuing restrictions arising from the pandemic.

However, we were very pleased to welcome back our free live music sessions on the bandstand at Vine Gardens

### Christmas Lights

Following a year off due to the pandemic, we were delighted to be able to bring back the traditional Christmas Lights Switch On event this year. With Father Christmas, fairground rides and games, festive characters, food and drink, stalls, shops opening late and fantastic live entertainment, it was a joyous family event.



The Mayor was joined by the panto cast to turn the lights on



The event drew a large number of residents to the town, with people being delighted to see the return of one of our most popular community events.

#### 14. 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 No. 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.



## 15. 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, although sadly, no exchange visits could take place during this year.

The Town Council was pleased to support the Friends of Rheinbach in its fundraising campaign to assist the town of Rheinbach in its recovery from the devastating flooding in the summer.

## 16. Youth Provision

### Sevenoaks Youth Council

Youth Council meetings are held approximately every six weeks in the Town Council Chamber. Since its inception in 2009, the Youth Council has become increasingly involved in initiating and developing events for young people and raising issues of concern for young people in Sevenoaks. All young people aged 11 to 18 are welcome to attend.

As a result of the uncertainties arising from the pandemic in 2020, the holding of elections for a new Youth Council was postponed to 2021. In November we were pleased to welcome 14 young people who had been elected to the new Sevenoaks Youth Council for a two-year term: November 2021 to October 2023. Katie Willis was elected Chairperson. The Youth Council held its first meeting in November 2021 and took part in a workshop to share ideas and suggestions for Sevenoaks which will be developed into a two-year plan.



The Mayor welcomed the new Youth Councillors to their first meeting. She thanked them for giving their time to get involved with the community, emphasising that what they say and do as a Youth Council can help make a difference. She looked forward to hearing about the issues that concerned them and ideas for what they could do to make an impact.

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 ninth year. It is a safe space for young people to relax, meet with their friends, make new friends, get information and advice, 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 new manager, Daren Mountain, is supported by casual staff and volunteers from Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust.

Following the third national Lockdown, the Youth Café re-opened in May 2021. Numbers were initially low but are steadily rebuilding.

HitB was delighted to welcome back songwriter-producer Adam Wedd, who provided a free song writing course for young people during the summer school holidays. The four-day course included learning how to write, record and produce your own song.

The re-establishment of the Tuesday Club for young people with Special Educational Needs has been particularly popular with young people and their parents.

*"The adults were absolutely lovely and made my two feel right at home. My son is very hyped at going again next week."*

*"My son was there this evening; he loves going every week."*

HitB is being promoted via schools' work, detached youth work and by partnering with other youth work agencies. In partnership with West Kent Housing Association, a visit to Bewl Water for canoeing, archery etc. took part during the February half-term.

### **Young Mentor Project**

HitB is working 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.

In addition, a mini-Youth Festival has been organised at Greatness Skate Park on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April from 11am to 4pm. This will include demonstrations from professional skateboard and BMX riders, competitions and workshops. A visit to the indoor Skate Park in Hastings is planned for the summer.

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

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



## **17. Planning**

### **Planning Committee**

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.

Due to fluctuating health restrictions and government advice throughout the year, various formats of meeting were held. Regardless of the different formats of planning meetings, applications were still allocated to Councillors and details of planning applications considered were published in the normal manner and timescale. Members of the public were able to register to speak on an application at both the virtual and in-person meetings, or watch the livestream on YouTube.

- October 2020 – April 2021: planning meetings were held virtually via Zoom.



- May 2021 – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021: virtual meetings were no longer permitted, with public health restrictions also preventing face-to-face meetings. Decisions and planning recommendations were therefore made via a ‘Working Party’ of the Council and signed off by the Chief Executive, with delegated authority under S.101 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 20<sup>th</sup> July – 13<sup>th</sup> December: planning meetings resumed face-to-face and were open to the public. During this period, Councillors that attended virtually were able to take part in discussions but were not permitted to vote and not legally constituted as ‘present’.
- 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022: planning meetings were held virtually in line with government advice. Decisions and planning recommendations were again made via a ‘Working Party’ of the Council and signed off by the Chief Executive with delegated authority under S.101 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022 onwards: face-to-face meetings resumed following the lifting of public health restrictions on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

### **Planning Applications**

During 2020/2021 the Town Council will have commented on circa 500 planning applications submitted within the Sevenoaks Town Council area, and has supported Sevenoaks District Council in its refusal of applications via a number of virtual and in-person representations at Development Control Committee.

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 Development Plan (NDP)**

A Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee has been arranged for 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022, to be held at 6pm at the Town Council Chambers. This will be open to the public and will feature a full update to the Steering Committee of the NDP’s progress, current status, and next steps. To receive notification of future meetings and their Agendas and Minutes, please sign up via the following link: <https://sevenoaksndp.wordpress.com/contact-us/>

A Regulation 14 public consultation of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan was launched on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and extended until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. The NDP Final Draft 2020 was then edited in line with responses, approved by the NDP Steering Committee and submitted on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) by NDP consultant Hugo Nowell of Urban Initiatives Studio. SDC launched a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening opinion consultation to Statutory Consultees on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 with the date 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 as deadline for comment. These Statutory Consultees were Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. On 11<sup>th</sup> June 2021, Historic England responded with recommendation that the NDP requires a SEA, due to the formatting of the 13 sites that it supports for development appearing to be allocating them. Funding for this was sourced via Locality, who confirmed the application was successful on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2021 and AECOM was appointed to complete the SEA. This has delayed the initial anticipated timeline for the NDP and as of February 2022, the SEA process is on-going.

Following talks with SDC and on their advice that allocating the sites would require extra work and increased delays, the NDP Final Draft 2020 was altered in order to remove doubt that the sites are not allocated. A summary of the edits made may be found via the following link, which also has a copy of the updated NDP Draft: [https://Sevenoaks Town Council NDP\(Final Dec 2021 Draft\)](https://Sevenoaks Town Council NDP(Final Dec 2021 Draft)).

This was not accepted by Historic England as sufficient, and further edits were made in line with Historic England's advice. These included the removal of guidance on potential development quantum and densities on the 13 sites that the NDP supports for development. Should these have been retained, the NDP would not be accepted by the District Council without significant further investigation and delays. These changes were approved by the Planning Committee (Working Party) on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and the full report and copy of the changes made can be viewed via the following link: <https://sevenoaks/2022/01/sevenoaks-town-council-ndp-update-and-changes-approved-at-planning-cttee-10-01-22.pdf>

A copy of the Final SEA Report is expected to be received by the end of February, when it will be reviewed by the Planning Committee and then forwarded by AECOM to Statutory Consultees for five-week consultation. Following the consultation period, an NDP Steering Committee meeting will be arranged for members to receive and discuss both the feedback from Statutory Consultees and AECOM's recommendations on strengthening policy wording. This is expected to be arranged for April 2022, and either the existing draft approved by the Steering Committee, or edits to be made agreed upon and an additional Steering Committee arranged.

The Steering Committee and Planning Committee intend to sign off the final NDP draft during April/May 2022. It will then be submitted for a statutory programme conducted by SDC concluding in a referendum for the residents of Sevenoaks.

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 NDP and may also be subscribed to for notifications on new posts. Future meetings will be announced via this blog, and Agendas uploaded on the Town Council website via the following link: [https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Town\\_Neighbourhood\\_Plan\\_Steering\\_Committee\\_22007.aspx](https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Town_Neighbourhood_Plan_Steering_Committee_22007.aspx)

## 18. 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 2021

### Pop-up Market

As Covid restrictions began to be lifted the Town Team worked on schemes to re-open the town centre. The principal plan was to run a pop-up market at Buckhurst Place providing retailers and market traders an opportunity to do business in the open air. It was also intended that the owners of cafes and restaurants who could not comply with Covid rules would take advantage of an open-air seating area.



The designated market area was in Buckhurst 1 car park and an area equivalent to about five car parking spaces was dressed with artificial lawn, planters and bench café tables. Sevenoaks District Council 'donated' the area for which no charge was made. In a short space of time the area became well used by members of the public.

All relevant town centre businesses were visited to explain the opportunity and to invite participation. All existing market

holders were also invited. So too were market traders from Tonbridge Saturday market and farmers' market.

Uptake for market stalls was disappointingly poor with the main factors being:

- The weather, which was appalling.
- Full time traders having an existing diary of markets in other towns.
- Part time traders not having enough stock and most commonly being unavailable due to childcare commitments.
- Local businesses with premises being unable to staff both their business and a market stall.

However, there was almost universal appreciation among Sevenoaks businesses that had been visited that the Town Team/Council was making the effort to re-open the town.

## Vegan Markets



A very successful outcome from the establishment of the temporary market was the introduction to Sevenoaks of a Vegan Market run by Vegan Markets UK.

This was a one-day market which featured about 25 stalls selling not just vegan food but vegan cosmetics, jewellery, clothing etc.

It was heralded by The Town Crier and opened by the Mayor who commented: "With the huge growth

in vegan interest we are so pleased to be able to offer such a vast range of products to local people. The market has been organised by Sevenoaks Town Team which is working hard to revitalise Sevenoaks post-lockdown. By promoting vegan shopping this will also help grow awareness and the local vegan shops which are now emerging."

Encouraged by the outcome of the Vegan Market another event took place on 13<sup>th</sup> November in the Vine Gardens. To add to the atmosphere, arrangements were made with The Listening Room to provide entertainment on the bandstand.

Such was the popularity of these markets that a further Vegan Market is planned for 9<sup>th</sup> April 2022, which will again be held in Vine Gardens

## Plastic Free Sevenoaks



World Refill Day took place on 16<sup>th</sup> June. The event was promoted by Town Team using a mix of social media and posters. There are presently 25 locations in Sevenoaks where one can refill a water bottle for free or obtain a discount when buying coffee if one has a re-useable cup.



## Town Trails

At Christmas 2020 a town trail was introduced for the first time. This is an updated version of a treasure hunt, designed for children and families to encourage them back to the town centre to visit a variety of shops and businesses.



During the 2021 school summer holidays another town trail was organised and 54 unique users entered. When including parents and siblings, that figure translated to about 175-200 people.

The third Town Trail was organised for Christmas 2021 when the numbers increased to 266 participants. Warners Solicitors sponsored the event.

## Stag Town Takeover

Aimed at encouraging people to return to the town centre, this event was jointly organised by The Stag, Sevenoaks Town Council and the Town Team. In essence, entertainment was provided throughout the town centre during late August and early September. The scheme worked well and will be repeated in 2022.





## Sevenoaks Business Show



The show was held for the first time at the Bat & Ball Centre on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September. Though exhibitor bookings were originally slow the event was sold out. There were 33 exhibitors and eventually a waiting list of two more. The main hall was full to capacity and for future shows consideration will have to be given to using the centre for exhibition space only and without speakers.



The event was opened by Alfie Best, businessman and philanthropist, who also gave a presentation, followed by Thackray Williams, Social Fireworks and Go-Coach. Go-Coach provided a free shuttle bus service for the day.

## Sevenoaks Business Awards

The 2020 and 2021 events were cancelled because of Covid. Plans are being put in place for the Awards Evening to take place once again on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

## Public Realm

The Town Team has improvements and enhancements to the public realm firmly in its sights.

A recent example of how such changes can be brought about is the refurbishment of the old red High Street phone box outside HSBC. The box was very dilapidated and, following investigation, it was discovered that it had been adopted by The Friends of Water Search and Rescue with the intention of installing a defibrillator (AED). The project had stalled through a lack of funding.



The Town Team facilitated the restoration by obtaining the help of members of Sevenoaks Round Table who undertook the work to the box. The materials were funded by Sevenoaks Town Council. Sponsorship donations have now been secured to fund the installation of the AED and the project should be complete in Spring 2022.

The Town Team is now working with Sevenoaks District Council and our Kent County Councillor to identify and find ways of enhancing the ambiance of the town centre. The following quote relates:

*“Well planned improvements to public spaces within town centres can boost commercial trading by up to 40% and generate private sector investment ... and increase footfall by 10%.”  
(CABE)*

## 19. Summary

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

**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 to get in touch with us – please see the front page for contact details.**

## SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCILLORS 2019 - 2023

Town Councillors 2019-2023		Functions & Facilities Provided by Sevenoaks Town Council	
NAME	PARTY		
<b>EASTERN WARD</b>			
Cllr A S Clavton	Liberal Democrat		
Cllr T C Morris Brown	Liberal Democrat		
Cllr E T Waite	Liberal Democrat		
<b>KIPPINGTON WARD</b>			
Cllr A Eyre	Conservative		
Cllr R J Parry	Conservative		
Cllr R L Piper	Conservative		
<b>NORTHERN WARD</b>			
Cllr Dr J M Canet	Liberal Democrat		
Cllr V Granville-Baxter	Liberal Democrat		
Cllr C E Shea	Liberal Democrat		
<b>ST JOHNS WARD</b>			
Cllr S Camp	Liberal Democrat		
Cllr R M C Hogarth	Conservative		
Cllr S G Raikes	Conservative		
<b>TOWN WARD</b>			
Cllr K P Bonin	Conservative		
Cllr N J L Busvine OBE	Conservative		
Cllr Lise Michaelides	Liberal Democrat		
<b>WILDERNESSE WARD</b>			
Cllr Mrs R E Parry	Conservative		
<p>To contact a Sevenoaks Town Councillor, please use the following email format: Cllr.surname@sevenoakstown.gov.uk</p> <p>i.e. To contact Councillor Piper, the email address would be: Cllr.piper@sevenoakstown.gov.uk</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALLOTMENTS (<i>Bradbourne Vale Road, Quaker's Hall Lane</i>)</li> <li>• ARMED FORCES DAY TOWN SUPPORTERS</li> <li>• BAT &amp; BALL CENTRE</li> <li>• BAT &amp; BALL STATION BUILDING</li> <li>• BETHEL ROAD BURIAL GROUND</li> <li>• BRITAINS COMMON</li> <li>• BRITAINS LANE WOOD</li> <li>• BUCKHURST LANE PLAY AREA</li> <li>• BUSINESS HUB</li> <li>• BUS SHELTERS (<i>Dartford Road x1, Bradbourne Vale Road x2, London Road x2, Tonbridge Road x1</i>)</li> <li>• CAFÉ ON THE VINE</li> <li>• CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS</li> <li>• CIVIC FUNCTIONS</li> <li>• CONSULTEES (<i>Planning, Highways, etc.</i>)</li> <li>• FREE SUMMER CONCERTS / VINE BANDSTAND</li> <li>• GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS</li> <li>• GREATNESS PARK CEMETERY</li> <li>• GREATNESS RECREATION GROUND &amp; PLAYGROUND</li> <li>• THE GREEN, HILLINGDON RISE</li> <li>• HANGING BASKETS</li> <li>• HILLINGDON RISE PLAY AREA</li> <li>• HITB (HOUSE IN THE BASEMENT) YOUTH CAFÉ</li> <li>• HORSE TROUGHS (<i>Old Police Station, Rheinbach Gardens, St Botolphs Road</i>)</li> <li>• INFO-PODS &amp; DIGITAL DISPLAY SCREENS</li> <li>• JUBILEE CLOCK (<i>Old Market House</i>)</li> <li>• JUDD'S PIECE</li> <li>• JULIANS MEADOW &amp; PLAYGROUND</li> <li>• KIPPINGTON MEADOW</li> <li>• LAND AT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Letterbox Lane</i></li> <li>○ <i>Littlewood</i></li> <li>○ <i>Tonbridge Road</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• LITTER BINS AND GRIT BINS</li> <li>• MARKETS</li> <li>• MASTERPLAN FOR NORTHERN SEVENOAKS</li> <li>• MIDDLINGS WOOD (part)</li> <li>• MILLPOND WOOD</li> <li>• MOUNT CLOSE OPEN SPACE &amp; PLAYGROUND</li> <li>• MUGA (<i>Multi Use Games Area</i>)</li> <li>• NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN</li> <li>• ORBITAL NO 8 BUS</li> <li>• PLANTERS (<i>The Shambles, Dorset Street, Pembroke Road, London Road, Buckhurst Lane</i>)</li> <li>• PONTOISE CLOSE OPEN SPACE &amp; PLAYGROUND</li> <li>• THE POUND, POUND LANE</li> <li>• PUBLIC SEATS IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS</li> <li>• PUBLIC TOILETS (<i>The Stag, The Vine, Lower St John's</i>)</li> <li>• RALEYS CAR PARK</li> <li>• RALEYS &amp; KNOLE PADDOCK</li> <li>• RHEINBACH GARDENS</li> <li>• SEVENOAKS COMMON</li> <li>• SEVENOAKS TOWN TEAM</li> <li>• STAG COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE</li> <li>• STREETLIGHTS IN SOME UNADOPTED ROADS</li> <li>• TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES / CHAMBER – <i>Available for hire – meetings, conferences etc.</i></li> <li>• TWINNING WITH PONTOISE AND RHEINBACH</li> <li>• UPPER HIGH STREET GARDENS</li> <li>• VINE CRICKET GROUND &amp; PAVILION</li> <li>• VINE GARDENS <i>including Public Toilet &amp; defibrillator</i>)</li> <li>• VINE WASTE</li> <li>• WAR MEMORIAL</li> <li>• WARREN CLOCK (<i>above Brewers</i>)</li> <li>• WHITE HART BEECHES</li> <li>• WOODSIDE ROAD OPEN SPACE</li> <li>• YOUTH COUNCIL</li> </ul>	

Town Clerk / Chief Executive  
Deputy Town Clerk

Linda Larter MBE  
Ann White

[townclerk@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)  
[dtc@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:dtc@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

The Town Council or its committees meet on most Monday evenings at 7pm and members of the public are welcome to attend. For further details of the meetings please contact the Town Council Offices - 01732 459953;  
[council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk) ; [www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk)