

Sevenoaks TOWN Council



Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019

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1. Foreword by Mayor of Sevenoaks, Cllr Stephen Arnold



This document provides a summary of the key aspirations of Sevenoaks Town Council (STC) for the next four years.

It is a 'living document' in so much that it will assist resident's in understanding the council's aims, policies and governance arrangements. Updated regularly, it will determine how your council will plan and achieve these objectives with review and input from the appropriate Sevenoaks Town Council's Committees.

Sevenoaks Town Council is a forward thinking council with a varied programme of new and anticipated community projects. This document is our vision for 2015 – 2019.

Cllr Stephen Arnold
Mayor of Sevenoaks

2. Sevenoaks an Overview

Although Sevenoaks is only a few minutes' drive from the M25, it has remained a pleasant small market town in which to live and work. With its mixture of unique Kentish architecture, housing a selection of interesting speciality and independent shops, it has become an increasingly popular venue for visitors.

At an elevation of approx. 180m above sea level, Sevenoaks is an island rising from the surrounding green countryside. Looking northwards from the Vine Cricket Ground the North Downs dominate the horizon. The descent along Riverhill at the south of the town offers a broad view across miles of fields and woodland comprising the Weald of Kent.

It is believed that the original seven oaks from which the town derived its name stood near the church on the southern side of the town. Indeed the motto for Sevenoaks is "Floreant Septum Quercus" (May the Seven Oaks Flourish). In 1902 seven oaks were planted on the Vine Cricket Ground to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII. It was these trees that made world headlines in 1987 when six of them were blown down during the great storm on October 16th. Consequently seven young replacement trees were planted alongside the remaining oak where the others once stood, which accounts for there now being eight oaks!

Despite its verdant nature, Sevenoaks is only 40km from London, with a frequent rail service from Sevenoaks main station and journey time of about 35 minutes. There is a second station at Bat & Ball which takes slightly longer and accesses different routes. The proximity of the motorway networks puts Gatwick Airport, the Channel Tunnel, and the ferry ports within easy reach. Such accessibility makes Sevenoaks a popular place to live for commuters, and an ideal base for tourists wanting to explore the area and visit London.

There are few records of Sevenoaks prior to the 13th century, and it is the neighbouring village of Otford, not Sevenoaks which is mentioned in the Domesday Book. It was in Otford that one of Archbishop Lanfranc's manors was built. The importance of Sevenoaks grew from the merging of the two main roads from London and Dartford into one main route heading south through Weald to the coast. It was therefore a suitable venue for a market and this was probably established sometime in the 13th century, and Sevenoaks, has remained a market town to this day.

Sevenoaks has grown considerably since the building of the railway in 1862 when the town became a fashionable place for London commuters to live. Covering an area of 15.5sq km its present population is approx. 18,000.

There are a few light industrial estates close to the town which blend harmoniously with the otherwise rural scene. The Town Centre has a Waitrose (large and small) a new M&S (2014) and a Tesco Metro, in addition to other national brand retailers it also hosts a wide range of independent retailers including cd shop, chocolate shop, independent bookshop etc. There

is also a pedestrian retail centre in the town centre – Blighs Meadows, which has a range of shops, restaurants and businesses. Key to the economic development of the town is the major employers being Sevenoaks District Council and Tarmac and the Stag Theatre and commercial cinema which attracts approx. 300,000 visitors per year all of whom are encouraged to shop and eat in the town.

On the outskirts of the town, although within walking distance is the National Trust property Knole House situated within Knole Park which is currently undergoing a very ambitious restoration and improvement project and will attract approx. 200,000 of visitors to the town each year. Local people, regardless of age have an emotional attachment to the house and park and in particular the deer who roam unrestricted.

3. The Town Council

During a Local Government Reorganisation in 1974 Sevenoaks Town Council and Sevenoaks District Council were created to replace the Sevenoaks Urban District Council.

Sevenoaks Town Council aim is to represent the best interest of the town and its residents.

Town Councillors are democratically elected every four years. The last election was May 2015 and the current Councillors are:-

Cllr Stephen Arnold	Mayor Chairman of Personnel Cttee	Wilderness Ward	Conservative
Cllr N J L Busvine OBE	Chairman of Youth Services Sub Committee	Town Ward	Conservative
Cllr J M Canet		Northern Ward	Liberal Democrat
Cllr M A Chakowa	Chairman of Sevenoaks Town Partnership	St Johns Ward	Conservative
Cllr A S Clayton		Eastern Ward	Liberal Democrat
Cllr A Eyre		Kippington Ward	Conservative
Cllr R M C Hogarth	Chairman of Community Infrastructure Committee	St Johns Ward	Conservative
Cllr R E Parry		Northern Ward	Conservative
Cllr R J Parry		Kippington Ward	Conservative
Cllr E Parson		Town Ward	Conservative
Cllr R L Piper	Chairman of Finance & General Purposes Committee	Kippington Ward	Conservative
Cllr S G Raikes	Chairman of Planning Committee	St Johns Ward	Conservative
Cllr O Schneider		Town Ward	Conservative
Cllr P E Towell	Chairman of Friends of Bat & Ball Station	Northern Ward	Conservative
Cllr E T Waite		Eastern Ward	Liberal Democrat
Cllr P C Walshe		Eastern Ward	Liberal Democrat

Appendix A provides a map of the parish indicating parish wards.

Sevenoaks Town Council has 24 (Sept. 2015) equivalent full time staff. Linda Larter MBE, is the Chief Executive / Town Clerk. Appendix B provides details of the staff structure.

The Town Council operates under a delegated Committee Structure. Some Committees also have Sub Committees. Sub Committees report to Committees which in turn report to full Council.

4. Corporate Vision – Sevenoaks Town Council’s Strategy 2015 - 2019

1. The aim of the Council *is* to offer community leadership to ensure Sevenoaks develops into the best market town in Kent, the objective will be realised in two ways. First, by engagement in local initiatives and forming relationships with other stakeholders. Secondly, by promoting the well-being of residents of the town through support for leisure, sporting and cultural activities, by improving the environment and infrastructure of the town and by fostering its commercial prosperity.
2. To achieve these objectives the Council will each year give priority to:
 - i) New leisure and sporting facilities or the expansion of existing facilities *including the Stag Community Arts Centre and those items identified in its Community Investment Plan.*
 - ii) Acquiring additional green spaces
 - iii) Increasing tourism, supporting live cultural events and initiatives to promote commercial activity *including the Sevenoaks Town Partnership’s initiative to have a monthly calendar of events in the town.*
 - iv) Grant aiding voluntary organisations undertaking community activities especially those targeted at marginalised groups
 - v) Actively promoting environmental friendly procedures for all town council facilities and functions, subject to available resources and quality.
 - vi) Conserve and enhance the aesthetics of the town.
 - vii) Encourage and promote economic growth.
 - viii) Provide facilities for marginalised groups.
 - ix) Working with *Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council and neighbouring parishes* for assessing impact and coordinating of town facilities.

- x) Localising local budgets – (Highways etc). *investigating new opportunities and initiatives for undertaking operational matters under service level agreements locally to provide enhanced delivery.*

3. Achieving our strategic aims

- i) Leisure and sporting activities – The Council will provide additional or improved facilities for its existing sports and recreation grounds *and continue its long term commitment to the provision of the Stag Community Arts Centre.* It will also consider assuming responsibility for existing grounds from the District and County Councils.
- ii) Open Spaces – The Council will endeavour to purchase land within the town boundary or land adjacent or near to the boundary which might be used to promote its objectives, including the prevention of unwanted development and to improve public accessibility to Council owned land, creating partnership as appropriate.
- iii) Commercial Development, Tourism and Cultural events – the Council will continue its support for cultural events and other initiatives which promote community and commercial activities enhancing the image of the town *in particular with the Stag Community Arts Centre.*
- iv) Voluntary Activities – the Council where appropriate will continue to support and provide grants for voluntary organisations which meet its strategic objectives.
- v) Neighbourhood Plan – the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan will enable the strategies priorities to be met.
- vi) Community – making Sevenoaks a clean and safe community to live and visit, addressing social cohesion and anti-social behaviour. The Council will also support measures which combat anti-social behaviour.

4. Resources

To achieve these ambitious aims the Council requires a financial strategy to raise additional income and capital. This strategy would combine the following elements, rather than treat the precept as a first recourse to funding:-

- i) Ensuring rents, fees and charges within the limits set by the market in line with trends, and to meet core objectives.
- ii) Using grants, and other resources in most cases for pump priming
- iii) Contracting out facilities and services where appropriate
- iv) Consider disposing of assets where appropriate which are not relevant to strategic objectives.
- v) Borrowing for major capital projects or purchases.
- vi) Applying where appropriate for external funding to underwrite town projects.
- vii) Consider entering into agency agreements to carry out contracts on behalf of other organisations for the benefit of the town – either through *new initiatives*, an improved service and, or cost saving.

5. Providing Leadership in Planning for the Community

Sevenoaks Town Council uses the following process to provide leadership in planning for the community.

1. All Town Councillors are democratically elected.
2. Appropriately skilled and experienced staff are recruited.
3. Training provision is provided for both Councillors and staff.
4. Town Councillors and senior staff hold Blue Skies events twice an electoral term to identify potential community projects.
5. Consultation takes place on Blue Skies ideas – see Community Investment Plan as example.
6. All of the projects are prioritised and costed and reviewed publically at each Finance & General Purposes Committee.
7. Asset management takes place to enable new facilities to be provided and facilities no longer required or not fit for purpose disposed to not be a drain on resources.
8. External funding is sought wherever possible to enable community facilities to be provided.
9. The Town Council is committed to engagement and producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.
10. The Town Council is committed to working in partnership with Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council.

6. The Council's Functions & Facilities

Allotments		Neighbourhood Development Plan
Armed Forces Day		Orbital Bus No 8
Band Stand		Planters
Bethel Road Burial Ground		Pontoise Close Open Space & Playground
Brittains Common		Public Toilets
Brittains Lane Wood		Raleys Car Park
Buckhurst Lane Play Area (Env. Park)		Raleys & Knole Paddock
Bus Shelters		Rheinbach Gardens
Christmas Lights		Sevenoaks Common
Civic Functions		Sevenoaks Community Centre
Consultees (Planning, Highways etc)		Sevenoaks Town Partnership
Free Summer Concerts		Sevenoaks Youth Council
Grants to Local Organisations		Stag Community Arts Centre
Greatness Park Cemetery		Street Lights in some unadopted roads
Greatness Recreation Ground & Play Area		The Pound
Hanging Baskets		Town Council Offices / Chamber
Hillingdon Rise Play Area		Twinning with Rheinbach and Pontoise
Horse Troughs		Upper High St Gardens
House in the Basement Youth Café		Public Seats
The Green, Hillingdon Rise		Public Litter Bins, Grit Bins
Jubilee Clock		Vine Gardens
Judd's Piece		Vine Cricket Ground & Pavilion
Julian's Meadow & Playground		Infor pods & Digital display screens
Kippington Meadow		Vine Café
Land at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter Box Lane Littlewood Tonbridge Road 		Vine Waste
Sports Pitches		Vintage Bus
Markets		War Memorial
Middling's Wood		White Hart Beeches
Millpond Wood		Woodside Road Open Space
Mount Close Open Space & Playground		Town Crier – quarterly magazine

7. The Council's Committee Structure

The Town Council operates under a delegated Committee Structure. Some Committees also have Sub Committees. Sub Committees report to Committees who in turn report to full Council.

Committee	Sub Committee
Finance & General Purposes Committee	Youth Services Sub Committee Youth Council Community Centre User Group Sevenoaks Town Partnership (reports to F&GP for governance of public money)
Community Infrastructure Committee	
Planning Committee	Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Committee
Open Spaces & Leisure Committee	Sports Strategy Working Party Raleys User Group
Personnel Committee	

8. Staff Resources and Performance of Staff

The Chief Executive / Town Clerk is Linda Larter MBE, who leads a team of full time and part time members of staff. Please see Appendix B for the staff structure.

Sevenoaks Town Council uses the following process in relation to performance of each individual member of staff.

1. All members of staff have job descriptions and contracts.
2. Appropriately skilled and experienced staff are recruited.
3. At a minimum of six monthly intervals an appraisal is held with each member of staff.
4. Objectives are set and reviewed at the staff appraisal creating a Personal Development Plan.
5. Training provision is identified to meet the Personal Development Plan and provided for staff.
6. Staff meetings are held at six weekly intervals and the Town Council's priorities and new projects are reviewed.

9. Financial Information

For the financial year 2015 / 16 Sevenoaks Town Council had an annual revenue expenditure of approx. £1,013,000, this excludes the Stag Community Arts Centre which is operated by an independent charity.

£803,102 of this is funded from the Precept. The Precept is the local tax levied by the Town Council which is collected on its behalf by Sevenoaks District Council as the billing authority and part of the overall household Council Tax. The Precept equates to £88.69 per annum per average Band D household.

Sevenoaks Town Council does not receive any portion of the Business Rates or government grants.

The balance of income is from either 1) income generating activities e.g. community halls, sports pitches, markets, cemetery; 2) Service Level Agreements – providing services for e.g. other authorities or 3) rents and leases and 4) obtaining external grants.

For the first time in 2015 the Town Council will start to receive a portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is a contribution by developers on a prescribed scale and has regulations on the type of projects the funding can be spent on.

The Town Council operates within a three year revenue and capital programme. Within the capital programme is allowances for the ambitious Community Investment Plan published in November 2014 (Appendix C). The Community Investment Plan seeks to maximise the sale of assets that have been deemed surplus to requirements and reinvest the capital into new and existing community facilities.

The Town Council has a policy of wherever possible to seek external funding and or work with partners to preserve the Council's balances.

The Town Council also operates under a strict investment policy and is required to meet all statutory audit requirements for a local authority.

All expenditure is available to view on the Town Council's website
www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk

10.Value for Money Statement

8.1 Introduction

Value for Money (VFM) is defined as the relationship between **economy, efficiency** and **effectiveness** ('3Es'). Achieving VFM means achieving a balance between all three: relatively low costs, high productivity, and valued outcomes.

The Council recognises its duty of Best Value and its responsibility to achieve VFM in service delivery. It will seek to incorporate VFM principles in delivering services by taking account of **costs, quality** of services and the local **context**.

8.2. VFM Principles

The principles of VFM comprise of Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Economy. The Audit Commission defines these as:

- i) **Effectiveness** - assesses the impact of spend by reviewing outcomes. For demand-led services, it reviews whether demand is being managed effectively.
- ii) **Efficiency** - assesses productivity - how much you get out for what you put in. It covers the efficiency of the service model, for example, where there is a choice, are services used that are most efficient, with the best outcomes.
- iii) **Economy** - assesses the resources used to provide a service. Obtains wherever three quotations for the provision of a contract.

.3 Putting the Principles into Action

To demonstrate VFM, the Council will seek to achieve the optimum balance between the above principles and strive for continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery by the following means:

a) Identifying Local Needs and Priorities

We will:

- i) Ensure that community needs and priorities are reflected in our plans and strategies
- ii) Involve stakeholders through the use of user-satisfaction surveys and other customer feedback;
- iii) Identify priorities to meet the needs of our community, both as an individual service provider and a partner.

b) Securing Resources at the Appropriate Price Having Regard to the Level of Quality Required

We do:

- i) implement our Procurement to secure the most advantageous combination of price and quality;
- ii) consult, and work in partnership with, as appropriate, other public and private sector service providers;
- iii) use all appropriate methods to achieve economies, including e-procurement, joint working, shared services and market testing;
- iv) strive to attract external funding to supplement our own resources where appropriate;

c) Allocating Resources in Accordance with Agreed Aims

We will:

- i) allocate our resources in line with the Council's priorities, plans and strategies.
- ii) continuously seek to identify opportunities for increased efficiency without adversely affecting service quality.

d) Reviewing Service Delivery to Ensure Good Practice is Adopted and to Secure Continuous Improvement

We will:

- i) adopt working practices, independently and in partnership - to support the drive for increased efficiency and effectiveness, including promoting the use of electronic service delivery and working with other service providers as appropriate;
- ii) challenge our own performance by a variety of methods.

11. Crime and Disorder

Sevenoaks Town Council has a duty to consider the impact of its functions and decisions on crime and disorder in its area, under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

All Town Councillors are to be provided with a copy of 'Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 a Practical Guide for Parish and Town Councils.

As part of that process Sevenoaks Town Council will fully engage with the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership (CPS) to:-

- Reduce and detect crime
- reduce anti-social behaviour and fear of crime and re-assure people
- strengthen community involvement

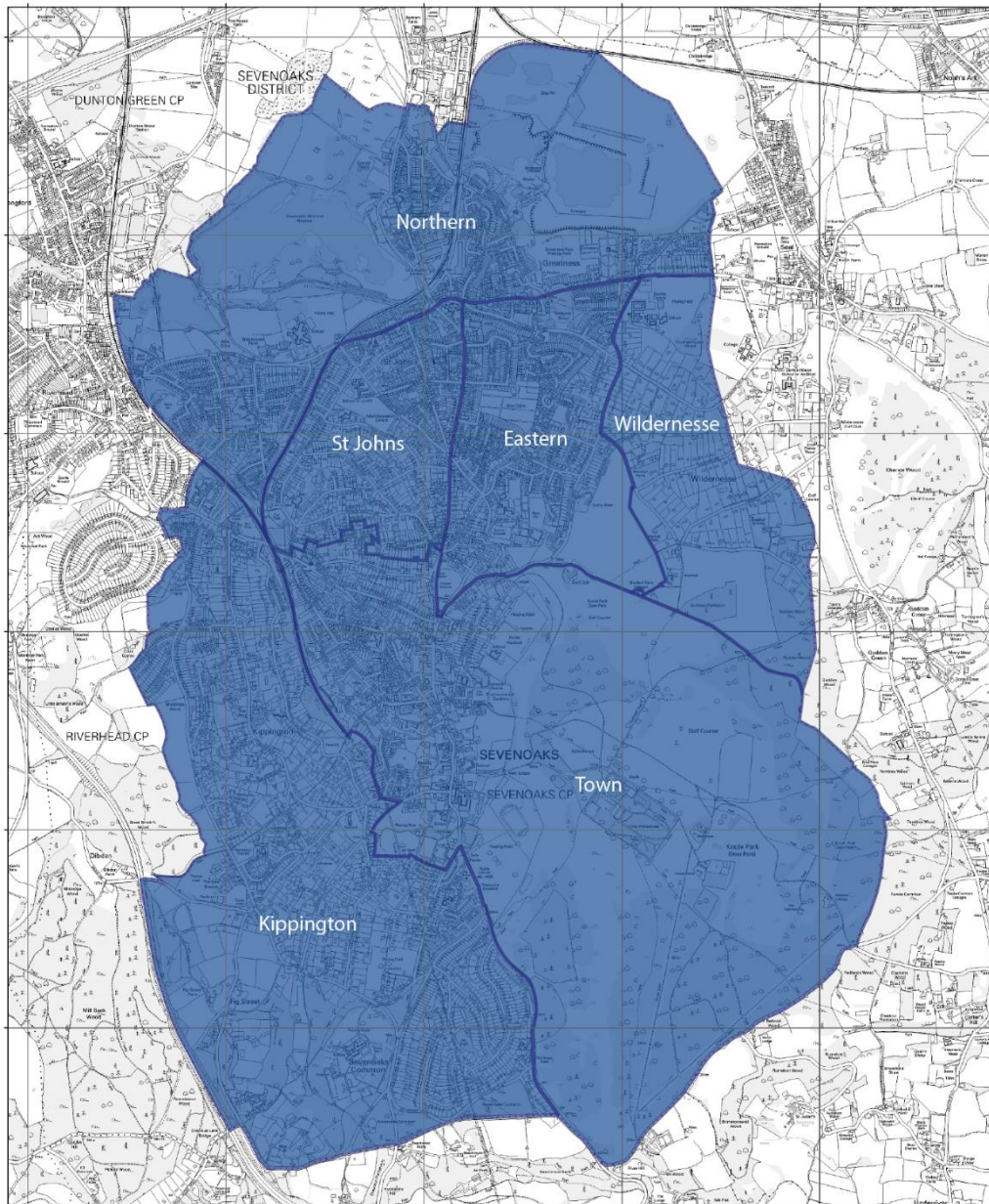
Section 5(2) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (the right of town and parish councils to be consulted).

In exercising those functions, the responsible authority shall act in co-operation with the following persons and bodies, namely:

- a). every police authority any part of whose police lies within the area
- b). every probation committee or health authority any part of whose area lies within the area: and
- c). every person or body of a description which is for the time being prescribed by order of the Secretary of State under this subsection; and it shall be the duty of those persons and bodies to co-operate in the exercise by the responsible authorities of those functions

Sevenoaks Town Council will represent the views of its community and ensure that local crime reduction strategies represent those views.

As an integral part of this policy Sevenoaks Town Council will continually review the ways in which it carries out its various functions and duties to ensure crime and disorder reduction in the parish of Sevenoaks.



Sevenoaks Town Council Wards