

Sevenoaks Town Council's Strategy 2026-27

Introduction

Sevenoaks Town Council has worked since publication of its last Strategic Plan to deliver the aims of its then Strategy agreed, cross-party. This renewed Strategy builds on the achievements since then and recognises new challenges.

Aims

Sevenoaks Town Council aims to offer community leadership to ensure Sevenoaks remains one of the best market towns in Kent to live, visit and do business in.

Challenges

- 1 Climate Change – e.g. carbon reduction, impact of droughts and flooding.
- 2 Financial challenges both for the Town Council and local businesses via significant rates increases and inflation. Potential loss of Community Infrastructure Levy funds currently used for capital projects and maintenance of community assets.
- 3 Local Government Reorganisation and uncertainty around ownership of key assets and provision of community services.
- 4 Significant population and housing development creating additional strain on current services.

Priorities

1 Climate Change

Using the Town Council's Green Community Investment Plan and Carbon Reduction Action Plan climate change initiatives to publicise 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

2 Community Voice & Engagement

Increasing opportunities for all residents, enabling inclusive and equitable opportunities to influence decisions through enhanced communication channels (social media, newsletters), "listening" at events, and stronger volunteering opportunities.

3 Neighbourhood Planning & Environment

Implementing the 2023 adopted Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Plan and working towards its renewal in 2028 to enable recommendations and policies to carry weight alongside Sevenoaks District Council's / new Unitary Council's Local Plans – to guide local development, improve public spaces, and protect heritage with a focus to biodiversity and protecting the natural environment.

4 Economic & Health Support

Supporting and promoting local businesses and collaborating with partners to provide mental and physical health support, particularly in response to the cost of living crisis.

5 Sustainability & Public Realm

Investing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds into green spaces and community assets and promoting sustainability through Sevenoaks Town Council's Green Community Investment Plan.

6 Community Grants

Support voluntary groups, prioritising those in need and continuing with activities relating to Town of Sanctuary.

7 Good Governance

Retain good governance and robust financial management.

8 Community Assets

Be custodians of community assets for current and future generations. Invest in new leisure, sporting facilities, green spaces or the expansion or enhancement of existing facilities including the Stag Community Arts Centre, those items identified in the Community Investment Plan.

Resources

Sevenoaks residents are the Town Council's greatest asset, and the community has benefitted hugely from their contributions, both financial and practical, when it has really mattered. Big project examples include the Stag and Longspring Wood, but also in volunteering in the day-to-day delivery of community projects.

To achieve the Council's ambitious aims it 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:

- 1 Ensuring rents, fees and charges are within limits set by the market, in line with trends, and to meet core objectives.
- 2 Using grants and other resources to support community organisations, for pump-priming, in most cases.
- 3 Contracting out facilities and services, where appropriate.
- 4 Considering the disposal of assets, where appropriate and as per legislation, which are not relevant to strategic objectives.
- 5 Borrowing for major capital projects or purchases.
- 6 Applying, where appropriate, for external funding to underwrite town projects.
- 7 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.