



Community Investment Plan 2019

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Sevenoaks Town Council Community Investment Plan 2014

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1. Summary

In 2014 Sevenoaks Town Council set out its first ambitious £4m Community Investment Plan to restore and improve community facilities. It was an ambitious plan for a small authority with the aim to invest £4m into improving community facilities. Building on the success of the first Community Investment Plan this document continues with the original plan and sets out additional priorities for the next five years.

Sevenoaks Town Council is mindful of the financial resources required to maintain current community facilities and meet the ambitions of its Community Investment Plan and also to be adaptable for future opportunities which benefit residents of the town. For this reason, it continues to maintain its 'Development Fund' which enables development work to be undertaken to provide a higher success rate when applying for grants and loans if required to assist with essential cash flow and finances for major capital projects.

The Community Investment Plan enables public and partner organisations to be aware and comment on the Sevenoaks Town Council long term plans. As previously mentioned, the approved plan has been one of the reasons the Town Council has been successful in obtaining external funding for its capital projects.

It should be noted that capital projects are in addition to the Town Council's provision and maintenance of community facilities. For more details see www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk

The capital projects are normally delivered 'in house' by professional staff supported by appropriate paid professional e.g. architects, and quantity surveyors. The Town Council staff carry out these roles in addition to their 'day jobs' which is maintaining and administering community facilities. This creates real value for money but does mean the availability of all resources need to be considered when implementing ambitious plans.

2. What did the first Community Investment Plan achieve?

As previously mentioned in 2014 Sevenoaks Town Council set out its first ambitious £4m Community Investment Plan to restore and improve community facilities. Below is a summary of the projects achieved and those that are ongoing.

2014 Community Investment Plan

Ref	Project	Funds Invested	Funded by	Status
1	Replacement of Raleys Gym – investment into new facilities at Sencio Leisure Centre	£95,000	Sale of Raleys	Completed
2	Replacement of Indoor Cricket School – funds provided to Sevenoaks District Council in s.106 agreement	£150,000	Sale of Raleys	Ongoing

Note ICET = Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust and CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy.

Projects not included in 2014 original Community Investment Plan

Ref	Project	Funds Invested	Funded by	Status
13	Bat & Ball Station building refurbishment (25 year peppercorn lease)	£1,452,000	Heritage Lottery Fund CIL Railway Heritage Trust STC Budget	Completed
	New Access Ramp to Platform 1	£60,000	CIL	2019
	Cycle racks at station entrance.	£29,000	CIL	2019
	Cycle racks (including electrical charging) on community centre land adjacent to ramp.	£45,000	CIL	2019
	New Pedestrian Access to Otford Road	£35,000	CIL	2019
	Additional capital investment into community facilities	£1,621,000		
	2014 Capital Investment Plan into community facilities	£4,649,000		
	Additional total Capital Investment Plan into community facilities	£1,621,000		
	Total Community Investment	£6,270,000		

3. What are the plans within the second Community Investment Plan?

Building on the success of the first Community Investment Plan this 2019 document continues with the original plan and sets out additional priorities for the next five years.

3.1. Bat & Ball Centre

The current facilities although used extensively as a community hub are now more than thirty years old and the fabric of the building requires costly maintenance and is uneconomic to run. Public feedback indicates that the centre is no longer a venue where they would want to hold a special family occasion e.g. wedding. Also, a larger venue has

been requested by businesses and public for events with a sit-down capacity for 250. Currently businesses go out of town for such facilities.

Sevenoaks Town Council has been through a public development period where various options have been tabled and discussed, including a two storey building which would have involved the relocation of Sevenoaks Town Council offices.

The plan is now for a one storey facility with the Town Council offices remaining at its current location.

The new plan provides several advantages

- Less pressure on car parking at the Bat & Ball Centre
- At Town Council site continue to enable nearby residents to use some car parking spaces at the Town Council site during non-office hours.
- Retains community assets
- Enables Sevenoaks Day Nursery to continue with its original plans
- Enables a new Business Hub to be created on the STC office site

The new refurbished Centre is part of the Masterplan for the Northern Ward of Sevenoaks and continues the Town Council's investment and regeneration of the northern part of the town.

In the next eighteen months there is also likely to be new developments within walking distance of the Centre e.g. at the Gas Works and South East Water site with more in the pipe line. The Town Council believes that this community provision which was already a priority has become a greater need.

It is envisaged that the new Bat & Ball Centre will be one of the key projects for the regeneration of the Bat & Ball area; complimenting and interactive with the adjoining rail station refurbishment, which will be physically linked for the first time.

The driving vision for the new Bat & Ball Centre is to replace the tired and no longer fit for purpose thirty-year-old community centre with a facility that will be characterised by being a high-quality contemporary building, within accessible and vibrant public space enabling a lively and eclectic mix of daytime and evening activities.

Sevenoaks Town Council has been working on this project for some time and it has evolved. Unfortunately, it has also been subject to delays initially due to planning problems relating to the sale of Raleys land which was needed to provide the capital funds and subsequently due to planning problems with the proposed Centre. The project is now scheduled to commence construction in June 2019.

Following the completion of the building a second phase of the project will address other facilities on the site.

3.2. Multi Use Games Area

It was previously agreed the old tennis courts on the current community centre site should be replaced with a Multi-Use Games Area. Due to land required during the construction of the new centre the Multi Use Games Area will be constructed as part of the second phase of the project which will address landscaping of the area.

3.3. 3G Rugby Pitch at Knole Paddock

The need for a 3G rugby pitch at Knole Paddock was identified as part of the Sevenoaks Sports Strategy. The facility will be available primarily for rugby but should also be available for other compatible sports.

The project is part of the Sevenoaks Mayor's Fund-raising capital funds.

It is also subject to obtaining successful planning approval.

3.4. Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

The draft NDP provides a long-term strategy for Sevenoaks Town and identifies development opportunities including the potential for approximately 1,000* new homes in Northern Sevenoaks, together with new significant leisure facilities. The new homes will require supporting infrastructure.

**The figures are from the Masterplan - 600 is the tarmac site, the balance (to total of 990) is from redevelopment / intensification in the area surrounding Bat and Ball station circa 183 houses and 207 flats.*

Through the preliminary work on the NDP the Town Council's Steering Committee identified Northern Sevenoaks as one of the only areas of the town that was suitable for large scale development. It was also seen as an area with untapped potential that needed regeneration. It was therefore agreed that a dedicated Masterplan would be prepared for the area.

The Masterplan was developed through a series of meetings and workshops with local people and stakeholders, including a formal public consultation which took place in May 2017. The views expressed through this process informed the Masterplan and form part of the evidence base of the NDP.

The Masterplan was also consulted on as part of the District Council's Local Plan 'Issues and Options' consultation. The Masterplan received overwhelming positive public support

through this consultation. 66% of respondents stated that they either 'strongly supported' or 'supported' the plan (based on responses from 13,654 people), and it was subsequently included in the draft Local Plan.

There are other proposals within the draft NDP to be developed including the Sports Strategy, creation of an Indoor Market and a Cultural Quarter for the town centre.

3.5. Stag Community Arts Centre

It is ten years since Sevenoaks Town Council took over the bankrupt facility and with a new business plan and the creation of an independent charity has turned this into a vibrant venue which underwrites the local economy by attracting visitors to the town.

The 2014 Community Investment Plan provided £150,000 towards the Stag's project costs of £184,000 bringing its air handling system up to date, replacing its antiquated vehicle lift and upgrading its ticketing system.

In 2018 Sevenoaks Town Council commissioned an Independent Economic Report relating to the Stag, a summary of which is below:

- The Stag attracts around 250,000 to 300,000 visits per annum
- Total visitor spend is estimated at £9.2m per annum
- Some spend is captured by The Stag and supports 20 permanent FTE jobs at the venue
- The remaining visitor spend, an estimated £7.6m, is captured in the wider local economy, supporting approximately 140 FTE jobs
- The Stag is estimated to support a further 18 jobs through its purchasing power
- In total, this equates to 179 FTE jobs supported by The Stag
- After considering the effects of leakage, deadweight, displacement, substitution and multiplier effects, the total net impact of The Stag is 151 FTE jobs
- This equates to approximately £7m of GVA contribution to the local economy
- The Stag provides around 6,000 hours of volunteer opportunities for the people of Sevenoaks
- The Stag adds cultural value to Sevenoaks as a place to live and visit

For these reasons Sevenoaks Town Council is committed to continue to invest where funds are available and where capital investment is required to ensure that the Stag remains a valuable asset to the local community.

3.6. Sevenoaks Business Hub

Sevenoaks Town Council (STC) has inherited the former Red Cross building that currently sits, disused, on the town council site in Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks. STC would like to renovate the building to make it, once again, valuable to the surrounding community.

The proposed solution is to create a Business Hub with rentable desks and a meeting room for self-employed professionals and small businesses to rent.

This aims to solve the problem of a lack of affordable office space in Sevenoaks for small and new businesses, as well as positively contributing to economic development in the area by promoting business growth. This is in keeping with the aims set out in the masterplan for Northern Sevenoaks, to develop and rejuvenate the area.

The Town Council has previously resolved to convert the former Red Cross building into a Business Hub and has set aside £25,000 of CIL funding towards the refurbishment. The £25,000 is being used towards match funding and feasibility and development work for a larger grant and some immediate roof repairs.

The Town Council has submitted an Expression of Interest to the SELEP (South Eastern Local Enterprise Partnership) for a grant of £265,400. The Expression of Interest has been accepted and the Town Council has completed a full application to be considered in March 2019.

The Business Hub will provide the following:

- 16 x Desk Space
- 5 x individual office hubs
- Limited storage
- Meeting room for 8-10
- Kitchen
- Dining area
- Free parking
- Wi-Fi etc

The Town Council commissioned an Independent Economic Report to support its funding application a summary of which is below. Subject to successful funding and obtaining planning permission the Business Hub should be available for use by the end of 2019:

- 30 Gross FTE jobs (15 net addition)
- £3.35m cumulative GVA
- Net additional FTE job gains (£2.8m at NPV)

- Strategic potential to contribute towards improving the viability of other regeneration initiatives in the town, particularly the Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan area.

3.7. Community Rail Partnership

As part of the regeneration of Bat & Ball Station and the Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan Sevenoaks Town Council, endorsed by the Friends of Bat & Ball Station have proposed to create a Community Rail Partnership (CRP) with the following key aims:

1. Bring together 5 separate stations & Darent Valley Pathway to create the scenic rail route - Samuel Palmer Line
2. Share promotion to encourage passengers to use the stations to visit local tourism attractions.
3. Increased footfall to local tourism attractions at each station
4. Create a distinctive 'brand' for the line
5. Link the use of the train to other non-car form of transport e.g. walking and cycling
6. Raise awareness of local heritage relating to the Samuel Palmer artist

3.8. Electric No. 8 Bus

Sevenoaks Town Council commissioned an Integrated Transport Strategy which will form one of the appendices in its Neighbourhood Development Plan. During consultation for the strategy one of the needs identified was for a regular orbital service linking the residential areas to the Town Centre.

The Town Council worked with Kent County Council and local bus operator Go Coach to put in the place the provision of the No 8 bus originally on a three-year trial.

The bus operates six days per week, linking the two train stations, bus station, residential areas and town centre. It operates on a loose figure of eight route – hence its name.

The service benefits local residents who do not want to drive into town potentially experiencing sometimes difficult and busy car parking.

The introduction of the No. 8 bus has also enabled the Town Council to provide free bus independent travel within the town for young people aged 11 to 18.

Elderly passengers have informed the Town Council that in addition to the obvious transport benefits they find the transport a social experience meeting neighbours and conversing with the bus driver and helps sometimes with loneliness experiences.

Sevenoaks Town Council promoted the No. 8 bus with support from Kent County Council and Go Coach and has been operating for approximately two and half years and is becoming

established. It has been successful exceeding original business plan and attracting up to 100 passengers a day. The scheme is still developing and therefore both Kent County Council and Sevenoaks Town Council have invested funds to operate the service for a further 3 years until 2021 (6 years in total).

The Sevenoaks Town Partnership Vintage Bus Service and the Sevenoaks Route 8 Bus Service were awarded the top prize in the **Transport Planning Society's** inaugural People's Award for 2018.

Following a recent trial Sevenoaks Town Council would like to purchase with grant funding help an electric bus for the No. 8 route to make it more economically viable and for environmental benefits.

3.9. Development of Tarmac Site - Northern Sevenoaks

The proposals for the Tarmac site within the Local Plan / Neighborhood Development Plan / Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan are long term and unlikely to be developed in total within the next ten years.

There is a possibility however that some areas of development may happen in advance of that time period.

Sevenoaks Town Council wants to ensure that the proposals continue to have a community focus and not be led by developers. The Town Council will therefore continue to invest in community plans relating to the site and its future uses. This will include the community development of related infrastructure, the Oast House, leisure facilities and integration with the town.

3.10. Business Improvement District (BID)

Sevenoaks Town Council supports and invests in all areas of the community to ensure that Sevenoaks continues to be a vibrant, successful and happy place to live, work and visit. With the exclusion of any external grants obtained the costs relating to this is funded by the local domestic ratepayer. The Town Council wants to initiate a BID for the town to enable work relating to economic development to be funded by a contribution from non-domestic rates e.g. 1%, smaller businesses (with a Rateable Value less than £15k) would not contribute.

The BID would build on the successes of the Sevenoaks Town Partnership and take the projects to an enhanced level bringing together local businesses to add value and make a tangible difference to Sevenoaks.

In an increasingly competitive environment the need for Sevenoaks to manage itself as a place for business has never been greater. With nearby business centres e.g. Tunbridge Wells and Orpington moving forward with BIDS and investing hundreds of thousands of pounds each year, Sevenoaks could become less attractive.

3.11. Development Fund

Sevenoaks Town Council is mindful of the financial resources required to maintain current community facilities and meet the ambitions of its Community Investment Plan and also be adaptable for future opportunities which benefit residents of the town. For this reason, it continues to maintain its 'Development Fund' which enables development work to be undertaken provides a provable higher success rate when applying for grants and loans if required to assist with essential cash flow and finances for major capital projects.

3.12. Summary of Community Investment Plan 2019 projects

Ref	Project	Funds Budget
3.1.	Bat & Ball Centre	£2,750,000
3.2.	Multi Use Games Area	£100,000
3.3.	3G Rugby Pitch at Knole Paddock	£500,000
3.4.	Neighbourhood Development Plan	£100,000
3.5.	Stag Community Arts Centre	tbc
3.6.	Sevenoaks Business Hub	£265,400
3.7.	Community Rail Partnership	tbc
3.8.	Electric No. 8 Bus	£300,000
3.9.	Tarmac Site Community Development	tbc
3.10	Business Improvement District (to include improvements to Public Realm)	tbc
3.11	Development Fund	£100,000 p.a.

4. Where does the money come from?

Sevenoaks Town Council has a policy that wherever possible external funding should be sought initially for Capital Projects. External funding could be from grants, sponsorship and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

As previously stated, to obtain significant grant funding there is a need to invest in obtaining professional information to support grant applications and this comes as a cost, hence the Development Fund as mentioned in 3.11.

Sevenoaks Town Council has a good track record of obtaining external funding for capital projects and, in the last ten years this has totaled more than £3,500,000.

5. How can I make comment or become involved?

Comments on the Community Investment Plan can be forwarded to the Town Clerk, Sevenoaks Town Council, Council Offices, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3QG. Alternatively emailed to townclerk@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

The Town Council holds weekly meetings at its premises above and each meeting has a time allotted for the public to address Councillors. A schedule of meetings can be obtained from the website at www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk or by contacting the Town Council on 01732 459953 or emailing council@sevenoaktown.gov.uk.

Sevenoaks Town Council wherever possible will include public participation in its projects and currently there are opportunities for the public to be involved via the following – please contact the offices if these are of interest to you:

- Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Committee
- Friends of Bat & Ball Station
- Friends of Greatness Cemetery (to be established 2019)
- Community Centre User Group
- Sevenoaks Youth Council (11 – 18 Age)
- Sevenoaks in Bloom
- Sevenoaks Town Partnership