



# Town Clerk's Update

Council news and information from Sevenoaks Town Clerk, Linda Larter MBE



**18th July 2025**

Two weeks since my last Update, a lot seems to have happened.

My meetings this week were

- Meeting with Leader of SDC – Community Asset Transfers
- Planning Committee
- Council Meeting
- Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership
- Investors in People
- Greatness Pavilion project
- Camera Club Preview Exhibition
- STC Chair & Vice Chair Meeting

## Vine Peppercorn Ceremony:

On Saturday 5 July, the traditional Vine Peppercorn Ceremony took place. This is a centuries-old tradition – the exchange of a peppercorn and a cricket ball for use of the Vine Cricket Ground.

The symbolic peppercorn rent ceremony takes place with Lord Robert Sackville, Mayor Councillor Clayton and Chairman of Sevenoaks Cricket Club Hugo Tudor. This annual tradition enables the people of Sevenoaks to retain the right to play cricket on the historic ground. The custom dates back to 1773, when the third Duke of Dorset gave the land to Sevenoaks with a condition that it be used for playing cricket.

Each year, the Vine Cricket Club gives Sevenoaks Town Council a rent of one peppercorn, and the Town Council presents Lord Sackville with a cricket ball. This simple yet powerful gesture enables one of Sevenoaks' most cherished green spaces to be retained for community use.



*Lord Robert Sackville, Mayor Councillor Clayton and Chairman of Sevenoaks Cricket Club Hugo Tudor.*

The Vine Cricket Ground in Sevenoaks is one of the oldest cricket grounds in England. It was named as such because the land was previously thought to have been used as a vineyard for the Archbishop of Canterbury. The first nationally reported cricket match took place in 1734 when 'The Gentlemen of Kent' played 'The Gentlemen of Sussex' – and the Kent team won.



## Skate Jam 2025

A reminder that Sevenoaks Town Council has secured funding to provide this exciting, free skateboard, scooter and BMX event for young people.

Skate Jam 2025 is on 25 July at Greatness Skate Park.



## Town Centre Masterplan – public consultation

We continue to consult on the Town Centre Masterplan. This is an important consultation wide ranging from how the town centre looks in the future to options to consider for changing traffic routes whether one way or potentially pedestrian areas. See our website for more details: <https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Dir/CoreContents/News/Display.aspx?id=76880>



## Sevenoaks Town Council team

Congratulations to Kevin who is a member of our Open Spaces Team and has become a grandad for the first time this week.

This week we have Jacob with us as a work experience student.

Thank you to the team at Bat & Ball Station who became aware of a young 18-year-old lad who is homeless and sleeping on the station, we hope he will now receive the help he needs.

For economic reasons, the Bat & Ball Station Café will be changing its opening hours from 1<sup>st</sup> August to 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Monday and Friday. Sadly, also Leila who works there will be leaving us at the end of this month.

## Sevenoaks Youth Council:

Sevenoaks Youth Councillors serve a two year term, and the current term has just finished. Some of the Youth Councillors who were available and not taking exams gathered at the Council Chamber for the Deputy Mayor Cllr Victoria Granville to provide them with certificates of appreciation. The recruitment process for the next term of Youth Councillors starts in September.





## Vine Gardens – new surface

We are pleased with the result of the Vine Gardens surface. For many years, the old crazy paving surface has taken up considerable resources in weeding and maintaining. The new surface was chosen for economic reasons, environmental (using 1 million recycled straws) and safety – being the most non-slip.

We have received many compliments from the public, however perhaps the most poignant was the following from a local resident:

“Who do I say thank you to for resurfacing the vine garden. It's things like this that improve access for my complex needs disabled son who is nonverbal so can't say thank you to you himself. We will now be able to get his wheelchair in there much more easily and he will be able to take his steps holding our hand without tripping. This sort of thing makes such a huge difference to his life. He thoroughly enjoys the music at the vine band stand too”.



## Buckhurst Lane Play Area

Buckhurst Play Area is situated in the Environmental Park. The Environmental Park is land leased from Knole Estates. The lease is due to expire this year and is currently being negotiated for a new lease up to 2034.

In the last couple of weeks, the play area has suffered from considerable vandalism. This has resulted in some areas being closed off which is unfortunate as summer school holidays are about to begin.

The annual ROSPA report has also identified numerous wear and tear issues which need to be replaced as a matter of urgency. Some of the wear and tear relates to the use of wooden equipment in this play area, some wooden timbers sited within metal sleeve have rotted without evidence and then fail suddenly. The wear and tear issues also include substantial repairs required to the safety matting under the popular zip wire. We will be trying to address all of this asap and bearing in mind the forthcoming summer school holidays.



## Local Government Reorganisation & Community Assets

The government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation are moving forward as the government says, 'At Pace'. Sevenoaks Town Council are not involved in the future of KCC or Sevenoaks District Council, this is for them to agree plans with the government. However, the Town Council is very concerned about the future of local community assets which makes living, working and visiting Sevenoaks the town it is.

The Town Council already operates many community facilities but there are some which belong to Sevenoaks District Council and the concern is that when the District Council ceases to exist these assets will automatically move to a new Unitary Authority who will be a considerable distance away and is likely to be overwhelmed with social care responsibilities and unable to have the capacity to worry about local parks or markets etc. in Sevenoaks.

The Town Council was therefore grateful to Cllr Roddy Hogarth, Leader of Sevenoaks District Council offering to meet with them and representatives of Resident Associations. The meeting was an opportunity to have a frank discussion about the hopes and aspirations for the future in relation to these assets. It remains a challenge to negotiate this for all involved, the Town Council are determined to follow up every opportunity to progress this and for assets which were originally donated to the town to remain within the local community control.

The Town Council is seeking feedback in a survey from local residents on this matter. The survey can be found at [www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk) or paper copies can be collected from the Town Council's office on Bradbourne Vale Road.

## Britain in Bloom judging

A really big thank you to everyone who played their part in judging of South & South East in Bloom last Friday. The judge who was very kind to us last year with Gold for all entries, seemed very impressed. Lots to take on board for the national Bloom judging on 12<sup>th</sup> August. And just to make us up our game - I was contacted to say the One Show are interested in filming us as a national finalist. I will let you know if this progresses.

I again make no apology for asking for help as we are now getting close to our second judging date on 12<sup>th</sup> August. A reminder that we welcome any assistance for the following. We have a Community Clear Up day on 5<sup>th</sup> August. Every weed that is removed helps us get nearer to achieving a GOLD award.

- Weeding, watering and looking after plants in individual planting areas – (list can be provided).
- Help removing weeds from pavements along judging route (map can be provided) ideally the weekend prior to judging.

If you or you know of any organisation who can help in any way, we would be very pleased to hear from you.



## International Town Crier Day

It was good to hear our Sevenoaks Town Crier Chris Conlan interviewed on the radio on International Town Crier Day. Chris carries out this voluntary role with such good humour and enthusiasm promoting Sevenoaks and its activities.



## Sevenoaks Town Council projects

### Green Flag Award

We are delighted that we have once again been awarded Green Flag status for the Vine.

The Green Flag Award is the benchmark international standard for publicly accessible parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom and around the world.



### Music on the Bandstand

This week sees the beginning of our free Summer music provided on the Bandstand at the Vine. Every Thursday and Sunday from 20th July to 7th September (except 27th July).

Thursdays 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.  
Sundays 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

- Sunday 20th July – Local Choir Sevenoaks Sings
- Thursday 24th July – The Rock Choir

## Sevenoaks Cricket Week

Sevenoaks Cricket Week, organised by Sevenoaks Vine Cricket Club, starts on Monday. For those who like cricket, lots of matches to watch on one of the oldest cricket pitches in the country.





## Planning matters

Sevenoaks Town Council has the opportunity to comment on all planning applications within the town's boundary. In doing so, it takes into account any representations from residents, policies and aims within the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan and national planning policies. This week we considered 21 planning applications, most for domestic properties. A few were for large, illuminated BT Advertising Hubs throughout the town. Town Councillors were of the opinion that these were not in keeping with a historic market town.

All of Sevenoaks Town Council meetings are open to the public and can be viewed on YouTube – details available via [www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

## Save the date

Visit our events page for more information: [www.tinyurl.com/STCNewsEvents](http://www.tinyurl.com/STCNewsEvents)

Date	Event	Venue
20th July	Bandstand: Sevenoaks Sings	Vine
21st – 25th July	Sevenoaks Cricket Week	Vine
24th July	Bandstand: Rock Choir	Vine
25th July	Skateness Event	Greatness Rec.
27th July	Smash Cricket	Vine
31st July	Bandstand: Soprano Fiona Henry	Vine
2nd August	Bradbourne Lakes Festival	Bradbourne Lakes
3rd August	Bandstand: Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra	Vine
4th August	Family Fun Day	Greatness Rec.
5th August	Bloom Tidy Up Day	Town Centre
7th August	Bandstand: Mainly Sax	Vine
10th August	Bandstand: Duo Miss D & The Loop	Vine
12th August	Britain in Bloom Judging	Town Centre
14th August	Bandstand: Youth Open Mic Night	Vine
15th August	VJ Day 11 a.m. Flag Raising 6 p.m. Bandstand Concert	Vine

