

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Forty Seventh Annual Assembly of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks
held via Zoom and livestreamed on YouTube on Monday 15th March 2021 at 7:00 pm.**

Cllr N J L Busvine OBE – Mayor of Sevenoaks

Also Present:

Cllr K P Bonin	Cllr Mrs R E Parry
Cllr Dr J M Canet	Cllr R J Parry
Cllr S Camp	Cllr R L Piper
Cllr A S Clayton	Cllr S G Raikes
Cllr A W Eyre	Cllr C E Shea
Cllr V Granville-Baxter	Cllr E T Waite
Cllr R Hogarth	

Chief Executive / Town Clerk, Linda Larter MBE
Lisa Whitbread, Business Development and Marketing Manager, Stag Theatre
Senior Committee Clerk, Alison Futtit
Social Media & Events Assistant, Ben Thornewell

Apologies for absence:

Cllr Irene Collins, Chair of Riverhead Parish Council
Cllr L S Michaelides, Sevenoaks Town Council

1. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR, CLLR N J L BUSVINE OBE

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting, commenting that it was unusual not to be able to meet in person. Last year the Annual Town meeting had unfortunately been cancelled at the very last minute due to Government guidelines issued that very evening.

It was noted that some local councils had decided not to hold an Annual Meeting this year, but Sevenoaks Town Council felt it was important to communicate with the local community and had therefore decided to hold a meeting which could be livestreamed.

The Mayor thanked the Town Clerk, Linda Larter, and her team on their incredible work in the past year; he paid tribute to his fellow Town Councillors for all they had done; and thanked local residents who had soldiered on during the pandemic, organised charity action groups and rallied to save the Stag Theatre.

2. MINUTES OF THE SEVENOAKS ANNUAL TOWN PUBLIC MEETING 2019

Due to the cancellation of last year's meeting, the minutes under consideration were those of the Forty Sixth Annual Town Public Meeting of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks held on 18th March 2019.

The Mayor took the minutes as read but advised that they would be submitted for formal approval at a future meeting when it was possible to meet face-to-face.

3. PRESENTATION OF SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

The Mayor introduced the Town Council's Annual Report April 2020 to March 2021, commenting that it was a fantastic tribute to the residents and the Town Council.

The Town Clerk provided a presentation outlining the Town Council's achievements during this period.

4. PRESENTATION OF BAT & BALL CENTRE PROJECT

The Town Clerk provided a presentation on the progress through the year of the refurbishment and extension of the Bat & Ball Centre.

The Mayor commented that this had been a substantial project which had produced a building to be proud of, that would see a lot of use in the years to come. Its first use as an asymptomatic Covid testing centre could not have been anticipated.

5. REPORT ON SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The Town Clerk reported that awards under the Town Council's Grants Scheme had been made to the following local community organisations during the year:

- PS Breastfeeding CIC - £1,000
- Sevenoaks Counselling - £1,500
- Bradbourne Residents Association - £250
- Sevenoaks Vine Cricket Club - £16,000
- Friends of Pontoise - £250
- Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group - £750
- West Kent Mediation - £800
- Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival - £600
- Care for Our Community – Cleanup Sevenoaks - £1,543

Grants were also awarded from the Community Resilience Fund created in March 2020 to support those putting in place voluntary arrangements to help those in need during the pandemic, as follows:

- Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge - £2,000
- PS Breastfeeding CIC - £780
- Citizens Advice North & West Kent - £611
- The Hygiene Bank - £1,500
- Care for our Community – Lockdown Larder - £1,000
- West Kent Mind - £900
- Sevenoaks Larder - £993
- Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group - £500

The Mayor commented on the amazing community response to the Covid crisis with lot of organisations pulling together. He thanked all those working hard to support the community.

6. UPDATE ON SEVENOAKS NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Town Clerk provided an update on progress with the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Development Plan, referring to the complexity of the strategic process and delays experienced that were beyond the Town Council's control, including the pandemic.

It was noted that a number of items in the Plan had been progressed, including: Bat & Ball Centre; Bat & Ball Station ramp; Multi Use Games Area (MUGA); Business Hub; and circular walk at the Wildlife Reserve. Outline proposals for the Bat & Ball junction and the Cultural Quarter proposal were being progressed.

The updated timetable is set out below:

Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Development Plan	
Process	Revised Timetable
Prepare Final (Regulation 16) Plan for initial submission to SDC.	By 31 st March 2021
Seek SEA scoping opinion from SDC.	early April 2021
Sign off Final (Regulation 16) Plan with NP Steering Group / Planning Committee	April 2021
Prepare Consultation Statement and Basic Conditions Statement	April 2021
<p>Submit the Neighbourhood Plan formally to SDC. (assuming that an SEA is not required) Once the plan is submitted to SDC (with the Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Statement) they will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) publicising the plan for a six-week period (Regulation 16). b) notifying anyone referred to in the consultation statement that the plan has been received; and c) appointing an independent examiner. <p>Any representations received on the plan during the 6-week consultation period will be passed to the independent examiner for consideration. At this stage, the examiner will only be concerned about whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions (i.e., is in conformity with planning policy) not any other comments about its contents.</p>	May 2021
<p>Examiner's report At the end of the 6-week period the independent examiner will issue a report to the SDC and the Town Council and may make recommendations on modifications required to the plan prior to going to referendum.</p>	July / August 2021
Modify Neighbourhood Plan in response to Examiner's recommendations (if required)	August / September 2021
<p>Referendum - Autumn 2021 Assuming that the plan is found to be satisfactory then SDC will organise a referendum. They will need to publicise these 28 working days before the referendum is held. If more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote yes to support the plan, then it becomes a part of the statutory development plan.</p>	Autumn 2021

7. PRESENTATION OF THE STAG’S ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Lisa Whitbread, Business Development and Marketing Manager of the Stag Theatre, presented the Stag’s Annual Report for 2019-20. She thanked the Town Council and local residents for their enthusiasm and dedication to the Stag which had helped make it so successful.

Lisa reported that The Town Council’s grant funding of £65k plus match funding up to £60k for the Stag’s fundraising appeal, together with donations from the public of £70k, had been a real lifeline for the theatre. The team had refunded more than £250k of ticket money but was dedicated to rescheduling events. The opportunity had been taken whilst the theatre was closed to carry out refurbishment works.

Lisa thanked all those that had come forward to help in so many ways and also paid tribute to the team at the Stag: The Stag would survive thanks to the support of the local community and the Town Council.

The Stag was looking forward to a better and brighter future when people could return and was looking forward to reopening on 17th May 2021.

8. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM LOCAL PEOPLE ON MATTERS RELATING TO SEVENOAKS

The questions and comments received in advance of the meeting are attached as APPENDIX A. The Mayor read them out at the meeting, together with the responses thereon.

9. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Mayor thanked everybody for attending the meeting and congratulated everyone on the way the community had pulled together so effectively during the last year.

The Mayor advised that he was nearing the end of his Mayoral term and wished Cllr Dr Canet every success when she became Mayor in May.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7:49pm.

Signed

Dated

The Mayor

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS SUBMITTED FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – 15th March 2021

	From	Question/Comment	Town Council's Response
1.	Cllr Irene Collins, Chairman Riverhead Parish Council	<p>I am sending my apologies. I am unable to attend the Town Council AGM as I am chairing Riverhead Parish Councils monthly full council meeting.</p> <p>I have read the report and would like to congratulate you, your team and the Town Councillors for the amount of projects they have undertaken during the past year as well as the excellent general running of our town.</p>	<p>Cllr Irene Collins' kind words will be recorded.</p>
2.	Mr W A Cross	<p>At your forthcoming Town Council meeting on March 15th could you please consider the emptying of public waste bins on a more regular basis.</p> <p>Since the NT are limiting facilities at Knole Park, the public are now parking on streets and roads in the locality and are filling up bins with takeaway food wrappings, plastic bottles and dog waste etc at an alarming rate.</p> <p>You cannot blame the public, as they are dutifully putting their rubbish in the bins provided, but if they are not emptied at the same rate then they will inevitably overflow thus causing a health hazard.</p> <p>So please either increase bin capacity at certain sites or have the existing bins emptied every day, including weekends. The public are doing their bit, so let's see the Council doing theirs to keep Sevenoaks litter free!</p>	<p>Litter has been a considerable problem during lockdowns and restrictions.</p> <p>Sevenoaks Town Council is responsible for the litter bins on its public open spaces and emptied daily. In some places such as the vine commercial dumper bins on wheels have been installed to try and accommodate additional rubbish.</p> <p>Other litter bins are the responsibility of Sevenoaks District Council and these concerns will be passed on to them.</p> <p>Sevenoaks Town Council and Sevenoaks District Council are working together to try and combat the ongoing litter issue.</p>
3.	Jonathan Drury	<p>I cannot see the copy of the Stag's Annual Report, allegedly attached. There has been significant subsidy out of the public purse for this valuable resource; it is important that the use to which taxpayers' money has been, and is to be, put, is open to and passes public scrutiny. When and how will this be made available and how will questions and suggestions from Sennockians on the missing report be accommodated after the deadline for this meeting?</p>	<p>Apologies that the Stag attachment was missed off the email – it was circulated as soon as it was brought to our attention. It had been added to STC website with the agenda.</p> <p>The Annual Town Meeting unfortunately has to be different this year, however has been well publicised including in the</p>

4.		<p>Friday noon allows less than 44 hours turnaround for questions, even for those directly supplied by you.</p> <p>Disappointing to see no mention of the lottery funded Heritage project regarding Sevenoaks Common in the Open Spaces report.</p> <p>Some residents ask why is Sevenoaks Common being turned into an urban park?</p>	<p>Town Crier which was delivered to each household at the beginning of February which included details about how to submit questions. There has also been an advertisement in the Sevenoaks Chronicle, posters in the town and social media.</p> <p>It has been included in the weekly Town Team Newsletter for the last 4 weeks which is sent to all Resident Associations including Mr Drury.</p> <p>It is the normal practice to circulate agenda papers on the Wednesday preceding the meeting and place on the website. Additional stakeholders including Resident Associations were circulated on Thursday preceding the meeting.</p> <p>Regarding comments on deadline for questions. We extended to this Friday noon. We had asked for questions by 8th March previously.</p> <p>Sevenoaks Greensands Project is managed by Sevenoaks District Council and Kent Wildlife Trust. The project is supported by Sevenoaks Town Council. The aim of the project is to engage local people and support a shared effort to restore, protect and manage the Commons along the Greensand Ridge. Detailed information can be obtained from www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk There</p>
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5.		<p>When will the programme to eliminate Japanese Knotweed from Sevenoaks Common be completed? (It was initiated, I believe, under the auspices of a previous Town Clerk and Open Spaces Manager.)</p>	<p>was no mention in the report as the project has not achieved any new work during lockdown, but we have been assured that other projects will be completed within the next year.</p> <p>The Japanese Knotweed was successfully treated on 4 August 2020, with a follow up visit in September 2020. The Town Council's Open Spaces team will be vigilant this spring for any regrowth.</p> <p>We will treat Japanese knotweed as and when it is found, It is known to be extremely persistent in the soil and can reoccur many years after previous treatments, particularly after major ground disturbance. We are always grateful to the public alerting us to new outbreaks or recurrences.</p>
6.		<p>Does the agreement with KCC regarding roadside advertising legitimise the existing practice? Please will STC ensure that such advertising is safely installed and does not obstruct sightlines at junctions? There have been noticeably fewer such incidents since this matter was last raised, but there is still room for improvement.</p>	<p>STC's agreement with KCC for roadside advertising is for assisting local voluntary organisations to promote their events and activities. Every effort is made to ensure that they conform with a standard approach, to date we have not had any incidents reported to STC.</p>
7.		<p>Congratulations are in order for the current resurgence of the Wednesday Market with some new more varied stalls matching the few remaining excellent longstanding stalwarts. Footfall has increased during lockdowns: how can this be maintained?</p>	<p>STC will continue to promote the market and activities for local traders.</p>
8.		<p>Why does STC persist in referring to a "Charter" market in this report when it is well known that the Sevenoaks Market, which predates the existence of a town here, is far too old to have a Charter?</p>	<p>We note Mr Drury's comments and will refer to it as 'The Saturday High Street Market in the future.</p>

<p>9.</p> <p>10.</p>		<p>(The following is pertinent to the efforts to relocate the Wednesday Market: SDC owns The Market Place which was purchased by SUDC together with the right to hold a Saturday Market there and in no other location. The Market Place comprises the entire width of the High Street between its junctions with London Road and Lock's Yard with Market Rights older than and taking precedence over the Highway, as recognised by Sevenoaks Board and SUDC. The current market uses only "The Market Square".)</p> <p>The 2019 minutes refer to Peter Fleming advising on behalf of SDC, the Parking Authority, that "within the first six months of the 2019/20 year there would be an holistic review of the parking within the district". There has been a tightly targeted review of "on street parking" but only in selected parts of the Town. There has not been an overall "holistic review". What are STC's Councillors, especially for those wards with voters most vexed by the ensuing problems, doing on behalf of those they represent, to ensure that this matter, fundamentally blighting the residents and commerce of Sevenoaks, is properly addressed?</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>STC will ask SDC for an update on the progress of the holistic car parking review.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Henry Pound</p>	<p>The Town Council's number one priority, according to the Annual Report is Climate Change / Carbon Neutral. Point 3 states "existing buildings to be more sustainable with reduced carbon footprint where practicable". I would hope this applies to all facilities on council land.</p> <p>The Rugby club wish to add mobile floodlights without improving the existing lighting in Knole Paddock. The existing floodlights provide an excellent opportunity to achieve a reduction in carbon footprint. This is demonstrated in the report attached to the recent application for the 3G pitch. This highlighted "<i>the existing floodlights are extremely inefficient, producing only 10% of the illuminance levels expected from modern lighting systems</i>". Also, they do not comply with modern standards, for either an environmental zone E2 or E3. I have attached extracts from the report below.</p> <p>Could I request that the council does what it can to ensure the existing lights are upgraded before installing more floodlights. Kent Wildlife Trust expressed their concern about floodlighting in their recent submission on the application for the 3G pitch, as the facilities adjoin a SSSI. I attach their letter highlighting their concern on the impact of floodlights on Knole Park.</p>	<p>STC have raised residents' concerns with the Rugby Club about proposals for additional and different floodlights.</p> <p>The proposal had been put on hold until a planning appeal had been determined which has now happened.</p> <p>STC had £230k set aside for a 3G pitch (the rest to be obtained from external financing). £30k is being considered for pitch improvements.</p> <p>STC Councillors will be asked about the potential for upgrading the floodlighting as mentioned.</p>

		It is clear from the Rugby Club's recent comments, there is no intention to upgrade the lights. As the £500,000 funds allocated have not been used on the 3G Pitch, some of this money could be used to upgrade the lights if the Rugby Club cannot afford it.	
12.	Elizabeth Purves	Looking at the YouTube viewing figures, it is encouraging to see that so many Sevenoaks residents are interested in what is discussed at Town Council meetings. Over 120 people watched a Planning meeting in the past three months. YouTube has allowed residents greater access to meetings. They can watch a YouTube from home, but far less likely to turn up at the Council Chamber. Have 120 people ever been physically present at a meeting? Once meetings can be held again in the Council Chamber, could the meetings be recorded live and put on YouTube so that there is greater inclusivity and residents have the opportunity to observe local government in action?	STC has installed the technical equipment into the Chamber to enable this to happen.