

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Forty Eighth Annual Assembly of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks
held at Bat & Ball Centre, Crampton's Road, Sevenoaks, TN14 5DN
on Monday 14th March 2022
7:00 – 9.00pm**

Livestreamed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/3McBu6lgeOk>

Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet – Mayor of Sevenoaks

Also Present:

Cllr A S Clayton	Cllr Mrs R E Parry
Cllr A W Eyre	Cllr R J Parry
Cllr V Granville-Baxter	Cllr S G Raikes
Cllr R Hogarth	Cllr C E Shea

Linda Larter, MBE	Chief Executive/Town Clerk
Hugo Nowell	Director of Urban Initiatives Studio
Rachel Coxcoon	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning at Cotswold District Council and Director of Climate Guide Ltd (via Zoom)
Tony McEwen	Deputy Chief Executive, Stag Theatre
Alison Futtit	Senior Committee Clerk
Ben Thornewell	Social Media & Events Assistant
Georgie Elliston	Planning Committee Clerk
Mike Read	Sevenoaks Town Team Facilitator

Prior to the commencement of the meeting members of the public had the opportunity to visit an exhibition of stands provided by local voluntary groups who had received grants from Sevenoaks Town Council and to meet local Town Councillors.

1. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR, CLLR DR MERILYN CANET

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting, explaining that this was an opportunity for local residents to express their views and ask questions of the Town Council.

2. MINUTES OF THE SEVENOAKS ANNUAL TOWN PUBLIC MEETING 2021

The Minutes of the Forty Seventh Annual Town Public Meeting of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks held on 15th March 2021 were adopted and it was RESOLVED that the Mayor sign the Minutes of that meeting as a true record.

3. PRESENTATION OF SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

The Mayor introduced the Town Council's Annual Report April 2021 to March 2022, which had been circulated with the agenda.

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

Cllr Parry advised the meeting that the Town Clerk had received an award in October 2021 from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) “In recognition of exceptional service to SLCC and the Clerk's Profession.”

4. UPDATE ON SEVENOAKS NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP)

Hugo Nowell, Director of Urban Initiatives Studio and Sevenoaks Town Council's Consultant for the NDP, provided an update on progress with the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Development Plan, and the next steps in its progression towards Referendum. The aim was to hold a Referendum of local residents in Autumn 2022. If 50% of those voting in the Referendum vote to support the Plan, it will then become part of the Statutory Development Plan. The NDP would be an important material consideration to be taken into account by Sevenoaks District Council as the planning authority.

In response to queries from the audience, the Town Clerk confirmed:

- that the Town Council would take climate change into consideration in its role as a statutory consultee on planning applications, but reminded the meeting that the District Council was the local planning authority
- in reference to the Green Investment Plan, that targets for reducing carbon emissions would be considered against individual projects

5. PRESENTATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Rachel Coxcoon, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning at Cotswold District Council and Founder and Director of Climate Guide Ltd, joined the meeting via Zoom and gave a presentation on local Councils' action on climate change. Rachel emphasised the importance of grassroots action; understanding where you could have most impact; the difference between territorial and consumption carbon footprints; communicating with residents; and using planning powers.

In response to questions from the audience, Rachel commented as follows:

- The carbon footprints of servers supporting the increased use of online platforms was a subject of research. Some companies, such as Google, had significant commitments to renewable energy whilst other used coal power to run data centres. She suggested the following websites as a source of information:
<https://ourworldindata.org/>
<https://www.carbonbrief.org/>
- There were national building standards for insulation and double glazing, but they were not good enough and not always implemented. Some new houses were still being built/sold that would need retro fitting
- Regarding a plan referred to at Chevening which involved moving a lot of earth, Rachel felt there was a concern about the carbon released from the disturbed soil. She added that there was a lack of joined up thinking about legacy and landscape. It was noted however that this was outside the parish of Sevenoaks and the scope of the meeting.

- The Green Homes Grant scheme had not been successful. The role of Town Councils was to work with the local market, and to lobby members of Parliament.

6. REPORT ON SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The Mayor thanked all the local organisations supporting the town in so many different ways.

Awards under the Town Council's Grants Scheme had been made to the following local community organisations during the year:

- Clean Up Sevenoaks Campaign - £639
- Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival, Young Musician of the Year - £1,000
- Sevenoaks Literary Festival - £500
- Citizens Advice, North West Kent - £500
- Hi Kent - £1,000
- Sevenoaks Counselling - £1,500
- Baby Umbrella - £500
- PS Breastfeeding - £450
- South East Open Studios - £250
- Stag Community Arts Centre - £5,000
- We Are Beams - £600

Further Grants were also awarded by the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 28th February, and cheques presented by the Mayor to:

- Sevenoaks Summer Festival - £5,000
- Sevenoaks Society - £500
- Sevenoaks Samaritans - £1,000
- Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group - £750
- West Kent Mediation - £750
- Baby Umbrella - £500
- Friends of Rheinbach - £250
- Friends of Pontoise - £250
- Sevenoaks Repair Café - £1,620
- Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival - £600
- Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra - £500
- Art in June - £250
- Sevenoaks Literary Festival - £500

7. PRESENTATION OF THE STAG'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

Tony McEwen, Deputy Chief Executive of the Stag Community Arts Centre, presented its Annual Report for the financial year 2020-21. Tony detailed the impact of the Covid-19

pandemic, the support received, how grant income was spent, the improvements and refurbishment of the theatre during the closure periods, and the events that were held.

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

The questions and comments received in advance of the meeting, together with responses thereto, were read out by the Mayor and are set out in the Appendix attached.

Other comments/questions raised at the meeting were:

<p>Concerns about access in town centre with its narrow pavements, uneven paving and traffic</p> <p>More cars parking on the pavements</p>	<p>Cllr Streatfeild, KCC, advised that this issue was on the radar and being worked on as part of a Movement Strategy and the Public Realm Audit currently being undertaken.</p> <p>At the moment this was difficult to enforce. The Town Council was asked for its views as part of a national consultation and had stated clearly that this should be stopped in most cases.</p> <p>It was noted that the District Council could be contacted on this issue.</p>
<p>Were there any plans to help refugees from the Ukraine?</p>	<p>The Town Council would follow national guidance, which was still being worked on, and would try to offer practical help where it could. It was noted that Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees was holding a public meeting next week.</p> <p>Citizens Advice North West Kent would support local Ukrainian people with immigration advice and completing forms regarding family members.</p>

9. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Mayor thanked everybody for attending the meeting and commented that if we all did something small to change our behaviours in relation to climate change, then it would add up to something large.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:00pm.

Signed

Dated

The Mayor

Questions/comments submitted for Annual Town Meeting – 14th March 2022

Ref	From	Question	Reply
1	John Fry	<p>Can the Council do anything about the following areas of blight in the town?</p> <p>The Oak Hotel and adjacent properties</p> <p>The site of what was The Farmers P H, as this is opposite the station this is the first thing that many visitors will see</p> <p>The site that was a group of shops including Edwards at the north east end of the High Street</p>	<p>Enforcement planning action is a responsibility of SDC</p> <p>SDC will do what they can, but they cannot make developers build on their own land.</p> <p>STC is trying to work with the developers to ensure that the hoardings are as tidy as possible with the potential of some attractive aesthetics later this year</p>
2	Ian Menage	<p>On the whole page in the Town Crier advertising the Annual Public meeting there is no mention whatsoever of being able to join the meeting remotely, as is done for Planning Meetings etc. Will there be a link for this, please?</p>	<p>There will be a YouTube link on the agenda when published.</p>
3	Andrew Pring	<p>Hello, I'd be grateful if the Town Council could consider an issue that is increasingly irritating - and I would hope, come up with a solution.</p> <p>Light aircraft, which have taken off from Biggin Hill, are flying low over the town centre far more than I've ever noticed before in my 21 years as a Sevenoaks resident. At least six of these planes a day fly over us, some of them very low indeed. Last summer there were up to 20 low-level excursions each day.</p> <p>The problem has arisen because an entrepreneur last year started offering flights in restored Spitfires over the Weald of Kent. They have proved sufficiently popular to present a real noise issue for people in our town; a number of local people I know are similarly disgruntled.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, the Town Council has no control over air space.</p> <p>We would recommend if there is a complaint that this is forwarded to the appropriate Noise and Safety Committee – we will try to obtain contact details.</p> <p>Those present at the meeting stated that they welcomed the Spitfires flying over Sevenoaks.</p>

		<p>These planes really are extremely loud and intrusive - they disturb the peace and quiet Sevenoaks residents have traditionally enjoyed. I feel it is quite unacceptable that we should have to endure this day after day.</p> <p>I complained to both the Biggin Hill management and the Flyaspitfire.com owners last November - and have been told by FlyaSpitfire's boss Darren Dray that they understand and will try avoid the town centre.</p> <p>However, I've seen little improvement since then.</p> <p>I've subsequently learnt, that legally, according to the Civil Aviation Authority, aircraft must avoid flying low over any conurbation.</p> <p>If STC felt sympathetic to my concerns, it would be very helpful if it were able to register its unhappiness with FlyaSpitfire about these joy riders and bring about a re-route for Spitfire flights that avoided Sevenoaks town. I, and many others, would be extremely pleased and grateful.</p>	
4	Kathy Walshe	<p>I greatly enjoyed being at the International Women's Day luncheon yesterday and thank you for all the effort that went into organizing that!</p> <p>The speakers were inspiring and hearing Suzannah Clarke, talking about the High Street, encourages me to put forward this question for the meeting. Thank you so much</p> <p>There are undoubtedly issues in Sevenoaks town relating to access and disability. Yesterday some of the young students were so aware of this too!</p> <p>As someone with MS, I know how frustrating it is when I want to do my shopping in town, There are places where it is so difficult to pass on pavements, whether I am using my Rollator, wheelchair or scooter, because it is very narrow; there are some places where it the paving is uneven, and therefore dangerous, and the traffic can be unaware of folks like myself wanting to cross roads, even at the zebra crossings.</p>	<p>STC agrees that the town centre needs to be accessible to all and wherever it can will promote this at the same time, bearing in mind the historic restrictions of the town e.g. narrow pavements.</p> <p>A Public Realm audit is currently underway looking at signage etc.</p> <p>There is also an Access Group arranged by SDC and this information can be forwarded to them for consideration.</p>

		<p>Elderly folk often struggle to manage safely, there are a limited number of shops which are accessible to wheelchairs or pushchairs, and but for the good nature of many Sevenoaks people, I would often consider it too difficult to manoeuvre. I know that mothers with pushchairs find it so much easier in out-of-town shopping centres.</p> <p>I am so grateful for all that IS done to improve the High Street, but as we heard yesterday, we women are responsible for 85% of the High Shop spend, and often it is women who cannot access the shops.</p> <p>I am just askingIs this on the radar of the planners as we go forward post Covid?</p>	
--	--	--	--