

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Forty Ninth Annual Assembly of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks
held at Bat & Ball Centre, Crampton’s Road, Sevenoaks, TN14 5DN
on Monday 13th March 2023
7:00 – 7.47pm**

Livestreamed on YouTube: <https://youtube.com/live/rUQiwVRBF5U?feature=share>

Chair: Cllr Mrs Rachel Parry – Mayor of Sevenoaks

In attendance: 66 members of the public and the following:

Cllr Libby Ancrum Cllr Nick Busvine Cllr Tony Clayton Cllr Granville-Baxter Cllr Richard Parry Cllr Claire Shea	Cllr Keith Bonin Cllr Merylyn Canet Cllr Andrew Eyre Cllr Roderick Hogarth Cllr Simon Raikes Cllr Avril Hunter (SDC) Cllr Richard Streatfeild (SDC & KCC)
Linda Larter, MBE Jude Thompson Tony McEwen Alison Futtit Ben Thornewell Georgie Elliston Ieuan Chandler-Wilson	Chief Executive/Town Clerk Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees Deputy Chief Executive, Stag Theatre Senior Committee Clerk Social Media & Events Assistant Planning Committee Clerk Committee Clerk, Youth Work

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 MRS RACHEL PARRY

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the Forty Ninth Sevenoaks Annual Town Meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE SEVENOAKS ANNUAL TOWN PUBLIC MEETING 2022

The Minutes of the Forty Eighth Annual Town Public Meeting of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks held on 14th March 2022 were received and 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 2022-2023

The Mayor introduced the Town Council’s Annual Report April 2022 to March 2023, which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk gave a presentation outlining the Town Council’s achievements during the year, additional to regular functions and facilities, setting out activities each month.

The Mayor advised of forthcoming events:

- Tour of Knole House, Wednesday 29th March at 10.15am (Tickets available from the Town Council)
- The Big Coronation Celebration Afternoon Tea, Sunday 7th May 2023 from 2.00 – 4.00pm, High Street, Sevenoaks (Free community event)
- An Evening with Gloria Hunniford, Wednesday 10th May at 7.00pm, Stag Plaza (Tickets available from Stag Theatre)

4. PRESENTATION BY SEVENOAKS WELCOMES REFUGEES

Jude Thompson from Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees thanked the Town Council for its support for the application for Sevenoaks to become a Town of Sanctuary, recognising the importance of being welcoming to refugees.

She outlined the founding of the charity and the work undertaken to support families resettling in the district from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. She emphasised that the charity was run by volunteers and relied on fundraising. Jude thanked the people of Sevenoaks for their generosity.

The following fundraising events were noted:

- Cultures Together in Harmony, A Celebration of Music & Dance, Saturday 20th May 2023, 7.00pm (Tickets available via website: <https://www.sevenoakswelcomesrefugees.org/>)
- Dragon Boat Race, Tonbridge – date to be confirmed

It was noted that further rental properties were needed and anyone with a property to offer or contacts was asked to get in touch.

Cllr Busvine commented on the excellent support provided by Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees to the person his family was hosting.

5. SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The Mayor thanked all the local organisations supporting the town in so many different ways. Awards had been made during the year, under the Town Council's Grants Scheme, to the following local community organisations, who had attended the meeting to provide a display demonstrating what the funds had been spent on:

Sevenoaks Summer Festival 2022	£5,000	Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra	£600
Sevenoaks Society	£500	Art in June	£250
Sevenoaks Voluntary Transport Group	£750	Sevenoaks Literary Festival	£500
West Kent Mediation	£750	Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival, Young Musician of the Year	£600
Baby Umbrella	£500 & £1,380	Sevenoaks History Hub	£500
Friends of Rheinbach	£250	Sevenoaks Counselling	£1,500
Friends of Pontoise	£250	West Kent Mind	£1,000
Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival	£600	D'Vine Singers	£500

Further Grants were also agreed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 27th February 2023, and the awards presented by the Mayor to:

Hi Kent	£1,000	South East Open Studios	£250
Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group	£750	Art in June	£250
West Kent Mediation	£800	Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra	£500
Friends of Pontoise	£350	Youth Resilience UK	£1,600
Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival	£600	Sevenoaks PHAB	£450
Sevenoaks Literary Festival	£500	The Children's Workshop	£540

6. SEVENOAKS TOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND REFERENDUM UPDATE

The Town Clerk advised that the culmination of the hard work by the Town Council and many volunteers on the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan (STNP), was the Referendum which would be held on Thursday 4th May 2023, alongside the local elections. Residents would have the opportunity to vote on the future of the town.

The full Plan, and a summary document were available on the STNP website:

<https://sevenoaksndp.wordpress.com/>

7. PRESENTATION OF THE STAG'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

Tony McEwen, Deputy Chief Executive of the Stag Community Arts Centre, presented its Annual Report for the financial year 2021-22. Tony advised that this had been a year of consolidation and recovery following the previous year and the impact of the pandemic.

The Stag team had worked very hard to recover audiences for both live events and cinema. The age demographic of those who had returned to cinemas post-pandemic remains the same as pre-pandemic just currently 30% lower.

Tony outlined the activities at The Stag during the year:

- 80 titles in the cinema
- 250 stage performances
- 300 Plaza events and meetings
- Events and support for community groups
- Craft Fairs
- Pantos
- Private events

Current planned improvements to the building were the installation of solar panels and battery storage, cleaning the theatre roof for the first time in 30 years, and resurfacing and redecorating part of the Stag Plaza roof.

The Mayor congratulated the Stag team on providing such a marvellous cultural centre for the town.

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

Comments/questions raised at the meeting were:

Concern regarding the condition of the grass at The Vine	The Town Clerk advised that this had been discussed recently and would be addressed in the coming months
Can the toilets at the Bus Station be improved?	The Town Clerk advised that the Bus Station toilets were not the responsibility of the Town Council, but that the Town Council would continue to lobby the District Council about this.

9. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Mayor thanked everybody for attending the meeting.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7:47pm.

Signed

Dated

The Mayor