

Minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Sports Strategy Working Group meeting held at the Sevenoaks Town Council Chambers on 21st March 2024, 6:00pm.

In attendance:

Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Dr Meryl Canet – Chair of OS&L
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Nick Varley – Vice Chair of Planning Committee
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Dr Peter Dixon
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Granville
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Gustard
Sevenoaks Town Council	Linda Larter MBE – Town Clerk
Sevenoaks Town Council	Georgie Elliston – Planning Committee Clerk
Everyone Active	Robert Hutton
Sevenoaks Vine Cricket Club	Hugo Tudor
Sevenoaks Suns Basketball	Phil Webb
Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Club	Richard Pursell
Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Club	Alan Hogg
West Kent Sport & Wellbeing	Steve Rowley
Sevenoaks School	Steve Brenchley, Director of Sport
Sevenoaks Hockey Club	Susan Acott
Sevenoaks Rugby	Stephen Fitzmaurice
Holmesdale Cricket Club	William McDowell
Sevenoaks Bowling Club	Ray Russell
Sevenoaks Bowling Club	Audrey Franks
Knole Squash, Sevenoaks Padel	Michael Wright

1. Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Dr Canet as Chair opened the meeting and welcomed both new and returning attendees.

2. Apologies for absence

Aaron Wilkinson (Sevenoaks District Council), **Edward Oatley** (Sevenoaks Sports Council), **Derrick Rodger** (Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Club)

3. Minutes

a) The Minutes of the previous STSS meeting held on 4th October 2023 were received.

b) The Planning Committee Clerk noted request from the Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Club to correct the spelling of their Club’s name, to read “Bowls”, not “Bowles”.

c) The Minutes were agreed with the above amendment.

4. Sevenoaks Town Sports Strategy - Results

a) The Group received and discussed the results of the Sports Facility Survey sent to all members on 24th January 2024, summarised by the Town Clerk. The most prevalent needs were noted as capacity issues, desire for Padel, 3G pitches, and basketball facilities.

b) While the feedback received from members was valuable, it was noted that a summary column showing each group’s main priority actions would be useful. It was agreed that the groups would send their **1-3** main priority actions for collating on this list. These to include

how prospective funding organisations can help to deliver these actions, as the Sports Strategy will be used as an evidence basis for future funding requests.

c) Members noted that the following organisations/sports were not represented in the responses, and it was agreed that the survey deadline be extended until 30th April 2024. Sevenoaks Town Council (STC) and other members to reach out to any contacts or groups within Sevenoaks that can be found to cater to these sports:

- Golf, football, swimming, sailing, netball, badminton, lacrosse, triathlon/running, boxing.
- Schools: to ask what facilities they have and an update on what groups they share the spaces with and when, as well as any capacity for additional sharing

d) Also noted that the Rugby Club's dual response would be collated into one, and that any organisation not included in the above list who has not submitted a response yet may also do so.

e) Copy of the Town Council's boundary was requested (see below link, as well as attached), however it was noted that there is scope to work collaboratively with neighbouring parishes to deliver sports provision to their residents. This because some sports facilities within the Town may be used by residents outside of Sevenoaks, and Sevenoaks residents may use sports facilities outside of the Town.

- <https://shared.xmap.cloud/?map=9c669602-a9fb-4e90-ab7e-c52e8c683a61>

f) Members were made aware that Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) hold funding of £150,000 provided by STC via a planning application condition, earmarked strictly for indoor cricket provision. This cannot be repurposed for any other use or sport, and had been held for some time due to not being applied for.

g) It was noted that more dialogue is needed with the District Council to ensure joined up thinking – for instance with repurposing the Leisure Centre into an indoor sports hall should they decide to demolish it.

h) Some members discussed having their contact details shared with all group members, and it was agreed that the STC would email all members for confirmation of consent, before collating and sharing these.

i) Copy of the initial responses to the audit survey will be forwarded to SDC with request that they be considered with their consultant's findings, with the final audit results to be sent again following closure of the survey on 30th April 2024.

5. **Requests from Local Sports Organisations Regarding Town Council Owned Facilities**

a) The Group received and discussed requests received from Sevenoaks Lawn Tennis Club and Sevenoaks Rugby Club, with context that these would impact each other due to sharing a space.

b) It was noted that provision of Padel Courts for the Tennis Club would impact usable space for other groups that use the sports fields. The latest update is that talks are being had with the District Council's Planning team about whether planning permission could be achieved for this, as the site is Green Belt land and had been rejected planning permission for a 3G

pitch previously due to impact to other sports. Pre-planning advice is needed before a decision can be made to invest.

c) The Rugby Club's request for temporary floodlights was noted. The request was due to their usual pitch needing to recuperate, and they had not been able to find an alternative pitch elsewhere having been found. STC had made provision on a different area of the field, however training time for the Club is impacted due to lack of floodlights on this pitch. The latest update is that additional research is required.

6. Update on Sevenoaks District Council's emerging Sports Strategies

a) The Group received and discussed update received from SDC Officer Aaron Wilkinson on the progress of SDC's Indoor and Outdoor Sports Strategy.

b) Members noted with confusion the lack of mention of basketball, bearing in mind the Sevenoaks Suns Basketball Club, which has been known for some time to be deficit of facilities, and which had recently lost a national women's team due to this lack of facility.

c) Members commented that the SDC Sports Strategy appears to be more of an audit of their own facilities, as opposed to a strategy on how to deliver and improve sports provision within the District. It was also commented that a large amount of the District's sports provision relies on schools sharing their facilities, as opposed to creating more spaces.

7. Sevenoaks Bowling Club's support request

a) This request having originated from the Open Spaces & Leisure Committee, the Sevenoaks Bowling Club explained their difficulties in attracting membership numbers high enough to cover their outgoings. Despite applying for grants and holding activity days to attract new members, they reported having lost £5,000 per year for the last two years.

b) Audrey Franks summarised the Club's engagement activities and requested advice from Group members on how to improve their numbers. Their two Open Day events – 6th May and 26th May were noted, with the flyer to be circulated separately.

c) Members contributed thoughts, including an offer from Steve Rowley to discuss advertisement in West Kent Sport & Wellbeing, and the idea to hold multi-sport events with other Group members to encourage people to try new sports and cross-club membership sharing.

8. Dates of future meetings

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place Wednesday 29th May 2024 at 6:30pm. This would discuss the final collated responses from the Sports Facilities audit, including update from members on their main priority actions hoped to be output from this Sports Strategy exercise.

Meeting concluded at 6:45pm.

