

Sevenoaks Town Council
Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 20th January 2025
Held in the Council Chamber, Town Council offices, TN13 3QG

Livestreamed and available to view on YouTube until approved by Council:
<https://youtube.com/live/JYdNgcXy0dQ>

Meeting Commenced: 8.05 p.m.

Meeting Concluded: 8.37 p.m.

Cllr Libby Ancrum, Mayor	Present	Cllr Sally Layne	Apologies
Cllr Sue Camp	Present	Cllr Lise Michaelides	Present
Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet	Present	Cllr Lionel O'Hara	Apologies
Cllr Tony Clayton, Deputy Mayor	Present	Cllr David Skinner OBE	Present
Cllr Catherine Daniell, Deputy Leader	Apologies	Cllr Claire Shea	Present
Cllr Dr Peter Dixon	Present	Cllr Nick Varley	Apologies
Cllr Victoria Granville	Apologies	Cllr Gareth Willis	Apologies
Cllr Chloe Gustard	Apologies	Cllr Nigel Wightman, Leader	Apologies

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer, and Senior Committee Clerk

Members of the Public in Attendance: 0

Representations received from Members of the Public: None

516 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received and accepted as shown above.

517 Requests for Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensation received.

518 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

519 Minutes of the Meeting of Sevenoaks Town Council held on 9th December 2024

RESOLVED: to accept and sign the minutes of the Meeting of Sevenoaks Town Council held on 9th December 2024 as a true record.

520 Minutes of Committees

Planning & Environment Committee

RESOLVED: To receive and adopt the minutes of the meetings of the Planning & Environment Committee held on 16th December 2024, 23rd December 2024 and 13th January 2025 as true records.

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521 Sevenoaks Town Council Precept Recommendation for 2025-2026

The Town Council received and noted the recommendation unanimously agreed at the meeting of the Finance & Delivery Committee meeting held immediately prior to this Council meeting [*Minute 512, F&D 20.01.25 refers*].

It was noted that the proposed Precept retained all current and some new Town Council services and functions, included additional compulsory NI increases equating to approximately 2% and substantially increased the budget for grants to voluntary organisations.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council approves the precept of £1,545,147 for 2025-2026 which is a 5.7% increase to the 2024-25 Band D equivalent resulting in a Band D equivalent household rate of £153.67 per year, which equates to £2.96 per week and a 17p increase per week.

522 Hatton House, Adult Education Centre

It was noted that on 9th December 2024 Sevenoaks District Council received notification from Kent County Council, the owner of Sevenoaks Adult Education Centre, Bradbourne Road, Sevenoaks, that they intended to dispose of the asset. On 12th December 2024, the District received an email to withdraw the notification of disposal.

RESOLVED: Sevenoaks Town Council to express a formal intention to bid to KCC for the Hatton House (Adult Education Centre) for community and education use should the property come up for sale, thereby initiating the six-month process for Assets of Community Value disposal.

523 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government: English Devolution White Paper – December 2024

The Council received a paper prepared by the Town Clerk which included some welcomed proposals for the local government sector:

- Provision for remote meetings access
- Civility and Respect proposals e.g. introduction of Sanctions (separate consultation paper)
- Enhancement to Community Right to Bid / Assets of Community Value
- Recommendations for improved working relationships with town and parish councils.

The paper also considered the potential impact and challenges for Parish and Town Councils, outlining: the value of and case for strengthening Parish and Town Councils; local issues and the struggle for representation; the issue of service overlap and accountability often vocalised as “double taxation”; the importance of Community Infrastructure Levy to Parish and Town Councils; the issue of private management companies for new housing developments; local community ownership of local assets; and the value of a fully parished country ensuring that every community has access to representation, accountability and local focus.

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Town Councillors noted that the process so far had not included any input from the public and it was agreed that the response should emphasise that all levels of government should seek to engage the public in the process of change and the ambitions for their councils.

The Town Council would itself seek to engage with local residents to raise awareness and consult on practical matters such as taking on assets and the consequences thereof.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the addition outlined above, the Town Clerk's report be endorsed as the Town Council's response to the English Devolution White Paper – December 2024, to be submitted to the Government and the local Member of Parliament.

524 Government Consultation: 'Strengthening The Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities In England'

The Town Council noted that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was consulting on proposals to introduce measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime for local authorities in England, and that the consultation would close on 26th February 2025.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That councillors be encouraged to submit a response individually and that a response on behalf of the Town Council also be submitted
- 2) That Cllrs Dr Canet, Clayton, Shea and Skinner form a working party to draft the response on behalf of the Town Council.

525 Councillor Reports: Town Council Representatives on External Organisations: None

526 Mayor's Engagements

RESOLVED: To note and accept the reports relating to Mayoral activities:

- a) functions attended by the Mayor or her representative up to 14th January 2025; and
- b) forthcoming Civic Events being organised by the Mayor during 2024-25.

527 Press Releases

RESOLVED: That press releases be issued in respect of the 2025-2026 Precept Recommendation and the Town Council's response to the Devolution White Paper.

It was also agreed that if Hatton House, Adult Education Centre was subject to a notification to dispose of the asset in future, that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to issue a press release regarding the Town Council's intention to bid.

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There being no further business, the Mayor closed the meeting.

Signed
Mayor

Dated

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