

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Fifty Second Annual Assembly of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks  
held at Bat & Ball Centre, Crampton’s Road, Sevenoaks, TN14 5DN  
on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026  
7:00 – 8.22pm**

Livestreamed on YouTube: [https://youtube.com/live/6Ja\\_AuLrITY](https://youtube.com/live/6Ja_AuLrITY)

**Chair: Cllr Tony Clayton, Mayor of Sevenoaks**

In attendance: 65 members of the public and the following:

Cllr Libby Ancrum Cllr Sue Camp Cllr Dr Merylyn Canet Cllr Tony Clayton Cllr Dr Peter Dixon Cllr Victoria Granville Cllr Chloe Gustard Cllr Lise Michaelides	Cllr Lionel O’Hara Cllr Claire Shea Cllr David Skinner OBE Cllr Gareth Willis Cllr Nigel Wightman  Cllr Alan Leaman, SDC Cllr Elizabeth Purves, SDC Cllr Richard Streatfeild, SDC & KCC
Linda Larter, MBE Andrew Eyre Tony McEwen Georgina Jackson Lily Goodwin Alison Futtit Georgie Elliston Ieuan Chandler-Wilson Anna Rosińska	Chief Executive/Town Clerk Chief Executive, Stag Theatre Deputy Chief Executive, Stag Theatre Responsible Finance Officer & Deputy Town Clerk Community Engagement Manager Senior Committee Clerk Planning Committee Clerk Youth Services Committee Clerk Open Spaces Clerk

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllr Catherine Daniell, Cllr Sally Layne and Cllr Nick Varley.

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

**1. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR TONY CLAYTON**

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the Fifty Second Sevenoaks Annual Town Public Meeting.

The Mayor thanked the voluntary organisations in attendance for their displays demonstrating the use of their grant awards from the Town Council and for their vital contributions to the Sevenoaks community.

**2. MINUTES OF THE SEVENOAKS ANNUAL TOWN PUBLIC MEETING 2025**

The Minutes of the Fifty First Annual Town Public Meeting of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks held on 17th March 2025 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 2025-2026**

The Mayor introduced the Town Council’s Annual Report April 2025 to March 2026, which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk gave a presentation outlining the Town Council’s achievements during the year, in addition to its usual operations, setting out the activities by month.

Highlights included: election of new Mayor and Deputy Mayor; awarding a grant to the Sevenoaks Bowling Club to support the installation of solar panels; events including vegan markets, Climate Fair, children’s theatre shows, rock painting sessions, Skateness, Family Fun Day, Street Food Festival; VE Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Beacon Lighting and commemorative event; Mayor’s Civic Service; supporting the Sevenoaks Summer festival with a core seeding grant; launch of public consultation for Sevenoaks Town Centre and St John’s Masterplans; Sevenoaks Business Show and Business Awards events; in conjunction with Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees, hosting Desperate Journeys, an immersive experience exploring the refugee crisis; obtaining Community Infrastructure Levy funding from the District Council for the new Greatness Play area and the zebra crossing at Dartford Road; retaining the Green Flag Award and resurfacing the pond and pergola area at Vine Gardens; winning gold awards for South & Southeast In Bloom and gold awards and Young Champions awards for Britain In Bloom; the annual series of Music on the Bandstand concerts; VJ Day flag raising and installation of commemorative plaques, launch of the Chatty Café; start of the building project for the new Greatness Pavilion; launch of Lilia’s Café at the Bat & Ball Station; Remembrance Day & Armistice Day; the election of 80 young people to Sevenoaks Youth Council; and the Christmas Lights Switch On.

**4. KENT FAMILY HUB PRESENTATION**

The Mayor welcomed Ellen Shaw, Family Hub District Manager, Kent County Council, who gave a presentation introducing the Kent Family Hub, where advice, support and services could be found.

Ellen outlined 15 core areas of delivery, processes for accessing support, the digital offer, and plans for engaging widely with the community, working together with voluntary organisations and community groups through the Family Hub Network.

Comments/Questions	Response
What is being provided in Sevenoaks Town?	Kent Family Hubs are based in Edenbridge and Swanley.  After Easter there are plans to launch a satellite programme, using venues around Sevenoaks Town Centre.
How will you publish what is available in Sevenoaks Town?	Using social media and more widely.

The Mayor thanked Ellen for attending the meeting and sharing her presentation.

## 5. SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS TO LOCAL VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

The Mayor was pleased to present grants awards, to the following:

Grants awarded by the Finance & Delivery Committee on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2026 and Youth Services Committee on 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2026			
Art in June	£500	Recovery & Wellbeing College	£810
Baby Umbrella	£1,971	Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival	£600
DAVSS (Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service)	£1,000	Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group	£1,000
D’Vine Singers	£1,350	South East Open Studios	£300
Friends of Rheinbach	£500	We Are Beams	£1,584
The Hygiene Bank Sevenoaks	£2,000	West Kent Mediation	£900
Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra	£500		

Awards had also been made during the year to the following local community organisations, who had attended the meeting to provide displays demonstrating what the funds had been spent on:

Stag Community Arts Centre	£27,000	Sevenoaks Bowling Club	£250
Sevenoaks Summer Festival	£5,000	Sevenoaks Counselling	£1,500
Citizen’s Advice, Kent Advice Hub	£500	Sevenoaks Loaves & Fishes Food Bank	£1000
Eynsford Concert Band	£500	Sevenoaks Sea Cadets	£1,250
Friends of Pontoise	£500	Sevenoaks Three Arts, Young Musician of the Year	£650
Hi Kent	£1,000	Sevenoaks Society	£250
Home Start South West Kent	£500	Spirit of Peace	£300
PHAB Sevenoaks	£400	Stag Youth Theatre	£2,000
PS Breastfeeding CIC	£500	West Kent Mind	£1,500

Displays were also provided by the Kent Police, Kent Family Hub and Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust. A collection of items for Sevenoaks Loaves & Fishes Foodbank was held.

## 6. PRESENTATION OF THE STAG’S ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

Tony McEwen, Deputy Chief Executive of the Stag Community Arts Centre, presented its Annual Report for the financial year 2024-25. He thanked Sevenoaks Town Council and the local community for their support every year since the Stag reopened in 2009.

Tony reported that the Stag:

- continued to fulfil its charitable aims of providing theatre and cinema for the people of Sevenoaks and beyond and had been open every day except Christmas Day
- had shown 100 films and held over 500 events in the theatre and Stag Plaza
- had supported a wide variety of community groups
- continued to be a valuable asset for the town bringing people into the town centre, its shops and especially the restaurants and car parks
- had created more than 147,000 kilowatt hours of energy as a result of the solar panel project, with almost 22% of power usage from the panels in 2025, and 14,000 kilowatts sent back to the national grid.

Tony explained that in 2024-25 community hire represented 25% of events but only 3% of income: commercial hire accounted for 75% of events and 97% of income. Commercial success kept the theatre going and helped the community by enabling the Stag to subsidise their efforts.

Tony drew attention to the petition asking Sevenoaks District Council to keep the Stag in local hands by transferring the freehold to Sevenoaks Town Council at no further cost. He commented that this community asset should belong to the local community rather than a potentially more remote unitary authority.

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

Comments/questions raised at the meeting were:

Comment / Question	Response
<p>Our Beautiful town is decaying slowly and the sense of community is fading.</p> <p>At the same time I see people mobilising in small groups or independently to care for and tidy their locale.</p> <p>Can we find a way to promote unity in the community by starting to mobilise more people to help out (perhaps with an incentive structure)?</p> <p>We can start at the Station and radiate out, clearing the verges and carparks or litter and weeds</p>	<p>The town’s vegetation, weeds, public realm etc has been traditionally addressed by Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council</p> <p>As their resources diminish the Town Council has been addressing this via</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership</li> <li>• Voluntary gardening at the station</li> <li>• Sevenoaks in Bloom – volunteer gardening and weedkilling, including local businesses</li> <li>• Great British Spring Clean</li> </ul> <p>Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 10.30am at Sand quarry face at Pontoise and then 2pm at Millpond Wood</p> <p>all of these welcome volunteers</p>

<p>As well as auditing, potholes, water leaks and broken furniture (street signs).</p> <p>I am not asking for the council to do more, I know you have limited resources.</p> <p>I am asking for the council to try and help organise the willing which I believe to be many, to help bring a sense of unity to our community that after a reset, hopefully we can all grow from</p> <p>I believe that the community will also bring their resources be they labour, capital or otherwise to create a multiplier.</p>	<p>In addition, the Town Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is investing in repainting streetlights, bollards and railings</li> <li>• From new financial year will be employing a new grounds person who will dedicate specific time to addressing vegetation in the town.</li> </ul> <p>KCC has an online system to report any problems with potholes etc. The Town Council will also be able to help process specific issues.</p>
<p>What is the Town Council doing for youth this year?</p>	<p>The Town Council provides play areas for younger children and is working on a quarter of a million-pound redevelopment of the Greatness play area in the coming months.</p> <p>A range of free events are held over the year including children’s theatre shows and Skateness.</p> <p>We also run the House in the Basement Youth Café.</p> <p>The Town Council was very pleased that 80 young people have been elected to the Sevenoaks Youth Council this year and are putting forward ideas.</p> <p>We have recently completed a social value report on our youth provision which exceeds what other towns do, but we are not complacent and are willing to listen to young people and consider their recommendations.</p>
<p>Well done on getting the new zebra crossing installed on Dartford Road, but is it true that it cost £100k?</p>	<p>Yes, that is correct. We were originally quoted £25k but Kent County Council (KCC) doubled the cost due to additional works required such as lowering the pavement. Sevenoaks District Council also required protective measure to be taken for the tree roots within the conservation area. The £100k cost was met by £25k from the Town Council CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), £20k CIL funding from the District Council and KCC obtained £55k via a grant [Active Travel England].</p>
<p>What interest does the Town Council take in the retail mix in the Town? There are concerns about the proliferation of barbers, nail bars and convenience stores which don’t seem to operate to normal retail standards.</p>	<p>The Mayor advised that he chaired the Town Team (a partnership between the Town Council and local businesses) which shared some concerns. The Town Council had no powers in this regard but could direct matters to others.</p> <p>The Town Team aimed to ensure the town continued as a successful retail and business centre, strong enough to attract people in, and was pleased to see the new Mountain Warehouse store opening.</p>

<p>Who are the new owners of Bligh's and will existing shop owners be protected?</p>	<p>It was noted that the government had introduced a new system for Business Rates which was being monitored.</p> <p>The Town Council had met with Estama, the managing agents for the new owners of Bligh's Meadow, who were very positive, and keen to support the retail mix in the town and ensure the success of Bligh's. They were working to let the vacant units in Bligh's.</p> <p>It was noted that occupancy units in the town, as a whole, were higher than average.</p>
<p>The Town Council owns the Rugby and Football pitches and supports sport in this area. This area is one of the best for sport.</p>	
<p>At last year's meeting concerns were raised about the future of adult education provision following the closure of the Adult Education Centre. I wanted to say thank you for enabling some of the adult education courses to continue by using Town Council premises, hopefully a winning situation for both sides.</p>	
<p>Following work 2-3 years back, there are still two temporary manhole covers in St John's Hill. Is it possible to lean on Southern Gas and British Telecom to get them properly reinstated?</p> <p>There are a number of dead lampposts in my road.</p>	<p>Richard Streatfeild, Kent County Councillor present at the meeting, undertook to raise the matter with Kent Highways team.</p> <p>Cllr Streatfeild advised that the reporting system on the KCC website had been refreshed in the last 6 months and was more user friendly and effective. If you have any issues, please report them.</p>
<p>A huge number of new houses are proposed to be built in Buckhurst area, there are concerns about traffic and stress for people living in that area.</p> <p>Don't understand why they are relocating the leisure centre when</p>	<p>The proposed redevelopment of the area (referred to as Land East of High Street) is a District Council project.</p> <p>Local ward members have lots of views on this, one of which is to make sure two things happen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear, effective consultation with those directly affected</li> <li>• good design, via architecture, planning and recognition of character of the area.</li> </ul> <p>This is an important part of the town and the development should be outstanding.</p> <p>Current leisure centre is inefficient, costly to maintain and built to environmental standards of late 1980s.</p>

<p>the existing one is perfectly useable.</p> <p>What about the people who will be living directly facing the new building? It will devalue properties.</p> <p>SDC is going to disappear, to be replaced by a huge unitary authority in the future is this the reason for rushing this?</p> <p>What is the timetable?</p>	<p>The energy and insulation standards of the swimming pool are poor.</p> <p>Relocation will enable the old one to stay open until new one is completed, ensuring that facilities remain open.</p> <p>Clr Streatfeild commented that there was not enough information available at the moment to reassure residents, that SDC was being pushed hard to get information and residents views into the process.</p> <p>Whilst it was a District project on District land, the Town Council would seek to influence, to lobby and talk to colleagues at SDC and KCC to ensure the best outcome for the town centre.</p> <p>It was commented that the plan was to generate enough money from the residential properties to pay for the new leisure centre.</p> <p>It was noted that if a contract was not signed before SDC disappeared in 2028, then the project would pass to the new unitary. SDC felt the need to progress now to ensure the best provision for Sevenoaks.</p> <p>It is not known when the moratorium would come in (preventing SDC signing any new contracts). There was a possibility that the selected developer might be known but not when contract would be signed.</p>
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**8. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The Mayor thanked everybody for attending the meeting, and for their comments and questions.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8:22pm.

Signed .....

Dated .....

The Mayor