

**Minutes of Sevenoaks Town Partnership Meeting held at Sevenoaks Town Council  
on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at 6.30pm.**

**Executive Board**

Representing	Number	Current Member	Current Organisation	
Sevenoaks Town Council	3	CEO / Town Clerk		Present
		Cllr Victoria Granville-Baxter		Present
		Cllr Simon Raikes		Present
Sevenoaks District Council	1	Cllr Avril Hunter		Present
Transport	2	Tony Clayton	Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association	Present
		Austin Blackburn	Go Coach	Present
Leisure Facilities	3	Jane Parish CEO	Sencio	Apologies
		Andrew Eyre (Chairman)	Stag	Present
		Mary Hayward	Knole	Present
Chamber of Commerce	1	Julie Phillips	CEO Sevenoaks & District Chamber of Commerce	Present
Bligh's Meadow	1		Savills, agent for Bligh's owners Standard Life Investments	Apologies
Sevenoaks Chronicle	1			Apologies
Sevenoaks Society	1	Roger Walshe		Present
Large Business	2	Maxine Morgans (Vice Chairman)	Specsavers	Present
		Elizabeth Dolding	Warners Solicitors	Present
Small Independent Business	2	Roberta Ware	Francis Jones Jewellers	Present
		Glenn Ball	Local Architect	Apologies
Resident Association	1			
Round Table	1			Apologies
Police	1			Apologies
	20			

**Also, in Attendance:**

Stephanie Harrison – Committee Clerk & Pink Week

Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet – Sevenoaks Town Council & Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum

Cllr R Parry – Sevenoaks Town Council

Ray Russell – Sevenoaks Summer Festival

John Levett – Sevenoaks Summer Festival

Lisa Marley – Berry & Lambert

Cllr Sue Camp – Sevenoaks Town Council

## **Presentation on the Business Awards 2020**

A presentation was given regarding possible changes to the 2020 Business Awards. The Board discussed many options, including some cost reducing initiatives such as reducing the size of the programme and changing from a two-course meal, to drinks and canapes. Other suggestions were to make it more of a cabaret style event by changing the compere, looking for an inspirational speaker and incorporating new categories to the already existing ones which would make for a more varied and inclusive business presence. Categories mentioned for discussion were:

- Creative Enterprise
- Professional Services
- Customer Service
- Hospitality Businesses
- Independent Businesses

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

As noted above.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Partnership meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019 were received and agreed.

### **4. Sevenoaks Town Partnership Projects**

Update on recent projects.

- **Small Business Saturday**  
Recommendations for 2020 were to liaise with Sevenoaks District Council on free parking on the day, as well as how we can make it more inclusive. Researching other towns commitments to the day, as well as advertising, were also discussed. This will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- **Hygiene Bank Collection**  
We had a very successful collection for the Hygiene Bank's Christmas initiative, with a huge amount of hygiene products brought to the Sevenoaks Town Council Offices. The Town Council offices will soon have a year-round collection bucket and look forward to this year's Christmas appeal.
- **Refill Scheme**  
The scheme was going well, with lots more businesses joining-in. Sevenoaks Book Shop was the latest to join and Sevenoaks Town Council would be doing more to promote the scheme in the Spring.

## Update on future projects

- **Business Show**  
This year's show will be held at The Stag Plaza on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April from 10am-2pm. Sponsorship has already been sourced and work has started on booking businesses for the event.
- **Wellbeing Show**  
This year's show will be held at The Stag Plaza on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May from 10am-2pm. Sponsorship has already been sourced for this event and work has started on booking therapists for the event.
- **Business Awards**  
This year's awards will be held at the Bat and Ball Community Centre on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, starting at 7pm.

## 5. Member Organisations

**Specsavers** – Business is busy after Christmas.

**Sevenoaks District Council** – Awaiting Planning Inspector's decision regarding The Local Plan.

**Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association** – Provided a submission relating to the Transport South East Strategy (copy attached).

### Go-Coach

- Buses running as usual.
- Safety concerns were raised over buses reversing at the bus park at Trinity School. There are 30 buses reversing at the present time, with numbers increasing to 50 in the future.
- The CIL application for the taxi project was successful, with a new app available for bookings. Go-Coach will link this with Age Concern, helping with mobility and access.

**Senior Actions Forum** – Very active now. Membership is now at 1200. Working with Go-Coach to reduce isolation by enabling members greater access to travel facilities.

**Knole** – The shuttle bus service worked well over November and December. The Tiger Who Came to Tea initiative brought in 17,000 visitors to Knole.

**Berry & Lambert** – Are experiencing a busy time with conveyancing.

**Sevenoaks Society** – Nothing to report and no update on the Farmers site petition.

**Chamber of Commerce** – Recently held a member review to help develop their strategy moving forward. There is a vacancy for a board member on both the Chamber board and the board of the Next Generation.

**Francis Jones** – Roberta was disappointed that she had not been informed regarding potential problems at the Christmas Lights Switch-on. Requested information on the follow-up from the Police and Crime Commissioner who attended previous meeting.

**Sevenoaks 20-20 Photography**

This is going well, with over 80 photographs already completed.

**Sevenoaks Summer Festival**

- This year is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the festival, which will take place from the 20<sup>th</sup> June to the 5<sup>th</sup> July.
- Elkie Brookes has been confirmed for this year’s event.
- John recommended the On Screen magazine, which is organised by The Stag.

**Sevenoaks Town Council**

- The Bat and Ball Centre is progressing well.
- Dates for the Neighbourhood Development Plan consultation are as follows:

10am-3pm	Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> January	Sevenoaks Kaleidoscope Library
10am-3pm	Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> February	Sevenoaks Kaleidoscope Library
10am-3pm	Friday 14 <sup>th</sup> February	Sevenoaks Town Council
10am-3pm	Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> February	Sevenoaks Town Council
10am-4.45pm	Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> March (excluding 18 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> Feb)	Stag Theatre Cafe
Station Opening Times	Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> February -13 <sup>th</sup> March	Sevenoaks Railway Station

- The Cultural Quarter Strategy meeting will be held at 7pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> January at the Stag Plaza.
- Despite being turned down for CIL funding, planning for the Business Hub will continue.

**Stag**

- Was pleased to announce that this year’s panto Aladdin was record breaking in regards ticket sales and are looking forward to some innovative technological treats for Alice in Wonderland this year. A further two pantos will be showing over the coming few weeks.
- Stag Select was showing Little Women and 1917, both of which were doing well.

**6. Date of next meeting**

The next STP meeting scheduled for 2020 are:

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February. (Amended date)

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June  
Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> Aug  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October AGM  
Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December

**7. Press Release**

None requested.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20pm.

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# Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association

## Future Rail Services in Kent

The Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association (SRTA) represents rail users from stations around Sevenoaks including Dunton Green, up the Darent Valley line as far as Eynsford and east to Kemsing.

Sevenoaks is one of the busiest commuter stations in Kent with a footfall of over 4.1 million people each year. The existing fast services to London, our main work destination, are full and standing in the peak. Services via Bat & Ball and the Darent Valley are slow, calling at all stations.

The passenger demand from West Kent is a “hot spot” with three major stations along just 11 route miles (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells) having an aggregate footfall of over 12 million each year and over 15 million if the neighbouring smaller stations are included.

A fast, reliable train service is essential to maintain the vitality and prosperity of the community as well as providing vital links for employment, education and tourism.

### Executive Summary

Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association (SRTA) represents the local area around one of Kent's busiest stations with a footfall in excess of 4million journeys per year. It is in an area with very high levels of housing growth and of commuting rates.

#### Objective 1 - *Addressing Capacity Shortfall*

- Network Rail (NR) predict a morning peak period shortfall of 4 train paths on the Kent mainline through Sevenoaks from 2022. NR state that, since mainline capacity cannot be economically further increased, this can **ONLY** be met by introducing the Maidstone East – Cambridge Thameslink service. The rolling stock for the service has been delivered but completion of new infrastructure work is currently preventing any decision on a date for its introduction. **SRTA asks TfSE to make its early implementation a regional priority** (Obj 1.1)
- Kent is the only county in the TfSE region without direct train access to Gatwick Airport. SRTA strongly supports the introduction of an Ashford-Gatwick service. In conjunction with North Downs line **such a service could provide a potent rail backbone linking the whole TfSE region from Reading to Ashford, opening up a wide variety of new journey opportunities.** (Obj 1.2)

#### Objective 2 – *Franchising*

- SRTA continue to argue strongly for the **acceptance of TfL's proposal for the transfer of responsibility for all SER Metro services to them** under its London Overground brand, providing greater accountability to rail users and improved quality of service. (Obj 2.1)
- The 2022 Kent Franchise, if relaunched, needs to include **provision for improved journey times and more equitable fare structures than currently prevail.** (Obj 2.2)

#### Objective 3 - *Simplifying fare structure*

- SRTA would welcome proposals from the Williams report to **simplify the present fare system for rail users.** (Obj 3.1)

- TVM and online ticket sales should be required to offer the cheapest available ticket for any journey as booking offices are. (Obj 3.2)
- The growing plethora of overlapping smart cards for rail travel should be ended with a **single universal card for the TfSE region able to operate across all rail and TfL services.** (Obj 3.3)

#### Objective 4 - *Multi modal integration*

- SRTA urges TfSE to **promote closer multi modal integration of travel in its region thus promoting sustainable travel and a cleaner environment.** (Obj 4.1)

#### Objective 5 – *Accessible travel and student travel*

- SRTA are firmly committed to working to make all modes of public transport accessible to all and ensuring that information is available in suitable formats for all users.(Obj 5.1)

## Strategic Objectives

### Objective 1 - Addressing Capacity Shortfall

#### 1. Maidstone East – Cambridge Thameslink service

The latest Network Rail study of Kent rail services reports that the peak period capacity of the mainline through Sevenoaks is fully utilized each working day. The report forecasts a need for one additional peak period train path by 2022 and a need for a further 4 train paths between 2022 and 2044.

However, Network Rail's report states that the 4 additional paths needed from 2022 onwards CANNOT be delivered on the existing route via Sevenoaks due to very severe infrastructure constraints. Their only solution is the new additional fast service from Maidstone East via Otford and Swanley to London Bridge and the Thameslink core.

This service when fully implemented will energise an existing underused route and enhance lives in rapidly growing areas such as Kings Hill and West Malling as well as transforming service options along the Darent Valley.

The Class 700 rolling stock to provide this service has already been delivered. It is now clear that the steps to start the service, including a new depot, automatic train operation, and completion of automated train path setting on the line into London Bridge could take until 2022

This route is the last stage of the full Thameslink core implementation. Many industry observers believe it is seriously at risk from possible capacity limits through the Thameslink core in London and potentially from competition from other routes for its paths.

It is vital that delivery of this additional capacity for Kent is achieved in the shortest possible time, especially given the substantial new housing planned along its route.

#### 2. Ashford – Gatwick link

Kent is the only county in all of SE England without direct access to London Gatwick (or any other) major airport. Historically train services have run from Kent to Gatwick by reversing at Redhill. In recent times, a change of trains has been needed which can sometimes include moving heavy luggage between platforms.



The result is that travellers today face an unhappy choice of a time consuming and expensive rail journey up to London, changing at London Bridge to travel back to Gatwick or as is usually the case they use road transport adding to congestion on the M25 and M23.

SRTA are convinced that it is important - for Kent as well as for TfSE - to get re-establish the link between Ashford and Reading as a viable service. The train or a portion of it would continue to serve Gatwick Airport. This would provide Kent passengers with a through service without the necessity of needing additional paths between Redhill and Gatwick. This could be the 'poster child' of a TfSE strategy, using rail links to establish a genuine SE network, rather than a set of radial links to London.

### 3. Re-signalling Tonbridge to Orpington

The Kent mainline Between Tonbridge and Orpington was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a twin track railway. With the massive growth in population in west Kent and beyond, this section of track has become a major bottleneck. The severe infrastructure constraints caused by the need to cross the North Downs rules out quadrupling the route.

At present the signalling on the line provides just 18 paths per hour which, due to the need to serve small intermediate stations, provides just 15 trains per hour for rail users.

Sevenoaks RTA strongly urges consideration to be given to a programme of upgrading the signalling with the objective of achieving 24 paths per hour delivering 21 trains per hour.

### 4. Hayes line transfer to TfL

Although outside the regional boundary of TfSE, the transfer of the Hayes branch to TfL and its subsequent connection to the Bakerloo line has been recognized by Network Rail as the only way to free paths into the London termini from Metro to mainline use.

Sevenoaks RTA strongly encourages TfSE to support plans for the transfer as paths from Lewisham inwards to the London termini are fully utilized and prevent any growth in long distance services to the existing termini.

### 5. Integration of non-electrified routes

Across the TfSE region there are a number of examples of stretches of track which have still not been electrified. These include parts of the North Downs line from Reading , Marshlink from Ashford to Hastings and the Uckfield line. The decision of the DfT to resist any extension of third rail electrification has put plans to enhance all these routes under a form of "planning blight". This results in underuse of existing assets due to limitations on service options and causes overloading on other parts of the network due to passengers choosing alternative routes.

Sevenoaks RTA urges TfSE to press for early resolution of these problems either by a change of policy on third rail or the early introduction of bi-mode rolling stock.

## **Objective 2 – Franchising**

1. Metro services to Sevenoaks – Sevenoaks RTA strongly believes that provision of SER's current metro services should be transferred as soon as possible to TfL to be operated under the London Overground brand. We would welcome a strong input from TfSE to

the running of the remaining mainline services in Kent and East Sussex possibly combined with the mainline portion of the current Southern franchise.

2. 2022 Franchise specification - SRTA strongly believes that there must be democratic accountability involved in any future franchises. We recognize the important input that will be provided by the Williams report and we shall continue to press for greater regional input to the setting of franchise terms and to creating a process providing democratic accountability to rail users.

On the specifics of the 2022 franchise SRTA's major concerns are to see greater equity amongst rail users. West Kent pays amongst the most expensive fares per mile while suffering from some of the slowest average end to end speeds in any commuter area of the UK. A return to performance levels last seen in the 1980s would produce a significant daily saving in travel times for all those participating in the 15 million rail journeys from the west Kent stations each year.

### **Objective 3 - Simplifying fare structure**

1. Fare structure – SRTA looks forward to examining the proposal expected to be included in the Williams report to simplify fares for the rail user. The integrated nature of ticketing across the UK with the ability to buy a ticket from any station to any other means that the industry needs to act as one. However, SRTA will wish to scrutinize any proposals made in the report to ensure that the interests of rail users are properly reflected.
2. TVM and online ticket sales - SRTA members and many others continue to discover anomalies in the existing fare system when booking online or using TVMs. These can add significant amounts to the fare offered in comparison to the cheapest available fares.

SRTA strongly believes that there should be a legal requirement for TVMs and online websites operated by TOCs, as well as booking offices, to offer the cheapest available fare. To be effective this must be backed up by a delay-repay type reimbursement of overcharged passengers possibly involving a reimbursement of more than the amount overcharged as an incentive to TOCs to take this issue seriously.

3. Smart cards - Sevenoaks RTA welcomes the introduction of smart card travel. However, we urge TfSE to examine options for a single card to cover the whole region including the many journeys made by residents which pass through central London and connect with other trains for onward travel.

The growing plethora of overlapping smart cards for rail travel should be ended and we would urge TfSE to introduce a single universal card able to operate across all rail and TfL services within its region.

### **Objective 4 - Multi modal integration**

1. Sustainable transport strategy – SRTA endorses TfSE's ambition to getting more of the growth in passenger - and freight - traffic off the roads in SE England as a vital part of the government's zero carbon programme. The capacity limits of the M25 mean that orbital rail routes are needed round London to improve the environment in many areas closer to London such as Sevenoaks.

2. Sustainable access to local stations - Both our stations in Sevenoaks are close to congestion bottlenecks and pollution hotspots at Riverhead, Bat & Ball and in Sevenoaks town centre. For some this makes using rail services slow and unhealthy.

SRTA strongly supports the development of an integrated approach to public transport with suitable measures to promote use of local environmentally friendly travel options to relieve daily congestion and the resulting pollution in the peak approaching our local stations. For example, linking buses and trains, using joined up live running information, and making buses available when commuters need them – all currently lacking in Sevenoaks - would help reduce local congestion and pollution.

We believe that TfSE has a vital role to promote best practice in environmentally friendly, integrated public transport across all parts of its region, both urban and rural.

3. Community Rail Partnerships – SRTA wishes to encourage TfSE to engage actively with the Community Rail Partnerships across its region. These can provide a practical way to encourage rail use by allowing groups of local residents to improve the travelling experience by improving stations and their neighborhoods together with promoting local travel options, tourism etc.

## **Objective 5 – Accessible travel and student travel**

1. Accessible travel

Public transport has a growing role in enabling our aging communities to remain mobile. A key element is ensuring that all stations offer step-free access from street to train.

SRTA urges TfSE to adopt a policy of achieving step-free access from street to train across its region. Recognising the problems of existing rolling stock a policy of step-free access from street to platform may be needed as an interim measure. Much progress has been made at introducing better information services for people with sight and hearing disabilities nonetheless much more remains to be done.

2. School student travel

In common with many other parts of the TfSE region school travel twice a day is an important part of the public transport network. SRTA supports the continuation of the 16-17 Saver Card giving 50% off all fares at an annual cost of £30.