

Sevenoaks TOWN council



Annual Report

2014 / 2015



Sevenoaks Town Council
Council Offices
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is proud to be a Quality Council. During 2013 it was reaccredited by Investors in People reflecting its professional leadership, management and delivery of services. The Town Council continues to be committed to providing the finest services and best value for money for residents in spite of the challenges posed by the current economic climate. IT holds Investor in People Statues reflecting services and has the NALC Quality Mark.

The Town Council has active partnerships with the District and County Councils and lobbies central government through the National Association of Local Councils for the benefit of local electors and businesses.

The Town Council monitors Government legislation being passed which directly affects the third tier of Government and local communities and will adopt any new policies and powers available for the enhancement of Sevenoaks Town.

The Town Council will continue to work with the community to increase service delivery. The Council holds weekly meetings at the Town Council offices in Bradbourne Vale Road to which the public are warmly invited to attend to ensure the Council is performing to its optimum. These meetings are advertised on the Town Council's website and in the public notices section of the Sevenoaks Chronicle.

1. The Mayoral Year

During the first 9 months of his civic year the Mayor, Councillor Simon Raikes, represented the Town Council on 170 occasions and a further 33 events have been attended by the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Stephen Arnold, or other Councillors representing the Town Council.

The annual Armed Forces Day concert at the Community Centre was hosted by the Mayor in June, this was well attended and raised a substantial sum for the Help for Heroes Charity. This year the Kent Police Band performed at the concert.



On 15th August 2014 the Mayor hosted a Cocktail Party in the Green Court and Orangery at Knole House, which was a resounding success and raised considerable funds for his tow charities.

The Town remembered and prayed for the brave men and women of our Armed Forces and supporting Services on Remembrance Sunday and the Mayor took the salute with the President of the British Legion during the march past at the Vine War Memorial.

During his year of office the Mayor chose two organisations as his charities, namely Mencap Sevenoaks and Royal British Legion Sevenoaks.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor also have an informal way for people to meet them by holding regular breakfasts at the many restaurants around the town. The Mayor's twitter account has nearly 887 followers and there have been over 1171 tweets.

2. Community Investment Plan

Sevenoaks Town Council has released details of how it intends to invest approximately £4million into community assets and facilities. Plans are set out in the 'Community Investment Plan 2014' available from the Strategic Documents page on the Sevenoaks Town Council Website (sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

These ambitious plans include:

- The previously announced redevelopment of the Bat & Ball Community Centre
- Replacement provision for both Raleys Gym and the Indoor Cricket School
- A large children's play area close to the Town Centre & additional 'free play' facilities in various locations throughout the Town
- The conversion of the band practice on the Vine into a community cafe
- A multi-use games surface and additional sporting and leisure facilities identified in the recent Sports Strategy project
- Improvement work at the Stag Community Arts Centre
- Setting aside funds to help achieve objectives identified in the emerging Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan

These investment plans have been made possible due to management and plans for consolidation of Sevenoaks Town Council assets.

While the Community Investment Plan 2014 is the culmination of many years' worth of community engagement, the implementation and specifics of individual projects will be the subject to further consultation.

3. Finance Committee

In 2014/15 the Council's budget for net expenditure was £791,736 (2013/14 £723,047) with general reserves brought forward of £372,175 (2013/14 £366,825) and earmarked reserves for future expenditure of £359,458 (2013/14 £303,960).

Over the past two years the Council has continued to tightly control its finances, so as to maintain the level of service provision and to fund future plans. The precept for 2014/15 was £791,736.

The Council continued to develop its plans for an exciting future and to find innovative ways of working. During 2014/15 the Council increased the scope of its activities, taking on responsibility for the successful Sevenoaks markets. Approximately £30,000 funding was

provided for the Neighbourhood Plan project, which commenced in 2014/15 with an extensive canvassing of residents' views, and continues into 2015/16. The Council has continued to follow its policy of investing in its general and earmarked reserves, and to provide a contingency provision to meet any unexpected costs, and is therefore well placed to continue to support the Council's revenue needs.

In 2013/14 a surplus resulted of £5,350, and results for 2014/15 to date indicate that a small surplus will once again be generated.

At the Council meeting held 19 February 2015 Town Councillors approved a precept of £803,102, for 2015/2016. This reflects a Band D Council Tax equivalent to £88.69, the same level as the previous year, with a 0% increase.

4. Sevenoaks Community Centre

The Community Centre has three varied size rooms, the large hall, small hall and bar room offering hirers the choice of comfortable accommodation to suit their event, large or small, with kitchen facilities if required. There is a large free car park, which provides ample parking for hirers. The Community Centre continues to host a varied group of regular hirers, including dance classes, tea dance, professional business meetings, family history group, friendship group, exercise classes and children's playgroup.



Week-end events at the Community Centre include private parties, wedding receptions, children's parties, and picture framing once a month. Children's parties are very popular using the Large Hall as this is an excellent size for entertainment and setting up party tables.

User Group Meetings are continuing at the Community Centre and contact with the hirers has been very helpful and informative.

At the end of 2014, the history of the Community Centre entered a new phase with a RIBA Competition being launched to design a new centre for the future. Conceptual designs will be on display at the Community Centre on 15th and 16th May 2015.

5. Sevenoaks Town Council's Grants to voluntary organisations

Sevenoaks Town Council continues to provide grants to local groups, it is also a major sponsor of the Stag Community Arts Centre and Sevenoaks Summer Festival.

Groups who have benefited from Town Council grants during the year 2014/2015 include:

Sevenoaks Summer Festival, Bullfrog Productions, Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival, The Sevenoaks Society, Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group, Sevenoaks Literary Celebration, Friends of Pontoise, Friends of Rheinbach, Sevenoaks Home Library Service, Sevenoaks Art Club, South East Open Studios and Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra [KYJO], Sevenoaks Citizens Advice Bureau, Sevenoaks Christian Counselling Service, Sevenoaks Young Musician of the Year.

6. Events

Sevenoaks Town Council works in conjunction with Sevenoaks Town Partnership to provide an annual calendar of events creating additional vibrancy for encouraging community interaction and economic benefits.

To assist with this, Sevenoaks Town Partnership has created an Events Committee. The aim of the Events Committee is to enable Sevenoaks organisations to consider methods to share resources, experience, and knowledge for the benefit of all who are holding events in the town. The Events Committee is chaired by Cllr Graham Clack.

As in previous years, during 2014 Sevenoaks Town Council held a successful Christmas Light Switch-On Ceremony attracting thousands of people to the event. The Town Council also purchased and installed new Christmas Lights throughout the town centre and received many compliments from members of the public and retailers for this.

Christmas Lights November 2014 – Sevenoaks High Street



During 2014 assistance was provided for other events:-

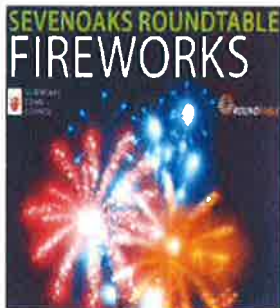
Sevenoaks Pink Street Party



Sevenoaks Town Council has arranged for a permanent Premises Licence on London Road to enable community events to take place in this location. During October 2014 London Road was shut for a second time to enable a Pink Street Party to take place. This event was made possible by the generosity of Specsavers in Sevenoaks. Approximately 3,500 attended the street party and many commented on its pleasant cosmopolitan feel to the evening. Proceeds from the evening were donated to Breast Cancer Care.

Sevenoaks Torchlight Parade

The annual Torchlight Parade and Fireworks, attracting over 7,000 visitors and raising considerable funds for Sevenoaks charities has been successfully managed by the Round Table within Sevenoaks School's facilities for many years



Sevenoaks Town Council assisted by addressing the requirements of the Premises Licence in the High Street to enable a capacity of up to 10,000 and also assisted with practical support for the pre event and entertainment in the High Street prior to the Torchlight Parade moving off for the fireworks.

7. Twinning

Sevenoaks is twinned with Pontoise in France and Rheinbach in Germany. Both twinning Associations continue to be supported by Sevenoaks Town Council. The Friends of Pontoise and the Friends of Rheinbach promote cultural understanding and exchanges, particularly between cultural and supporting organisations and schools.

8. Council Chamber

The Council Chamber is regularly used by Councillors on Monday evenings for Council meetings at which the public are welcome to attend. The meetings are listed on the Town Council website and advertised regularly in the local paper. The venue is also available for hire by community organisations.

9. Raleys Gym

Gymnastics

Numbers have decreased for most classes but the current numbers remain constant until the end of the term.

The Annual Internal Display at Christmas proved to be thoroughly enjoyed by children and parents especially with the additional performances by the Instructors themselves! Raleys staff worked very hard and it was considered a great success.

Hall Hirers

Tae Kwando have ceased hiring the hall but will return in April to run their Easter half term camps.

Chalk box/Cross Fit have found alternative premises but will remain at Raleys until May.

The Archery Club have also began hiring the hall on a weekly basis with bookings until April/May

Redevelopment

The land on which Raleys Gym is situated is due to be sold and redeveloped soon for residential housing.

Raleys Gym will officially close on 31st May 2015. £95,000 of Capital Receipts are being reinvested into Sencio who are extending its facilities to accommodate gymnastics.

10. Youth Council

Sevenoaks Youth Council held it's AGM in November 2014 and Tanjinna Miah was elected Chairman, Alexander Dunn was elected Vice Chairman and Taraminna Miah elected Treasurer.

Youth Council meetings are held approximately every 6 weeks in the Town Council Chamber. Since its conception in 2009 the Youth Council has become increasingly involved in initiating and developing events for young people.

Soundwaves, a Youth Band Night is held on a monthly basis and Youth Councillors are at hand to help out and answer any questions from their peers about the Youth Council.

Members of the Youth Council have also been instrumental in the development of the Youth Café.

11. House in the Basement Youth Cafe



The Youth Services Sub Committee chaired by Cllr Pam Walshe oversees the management and development of the youth café. The Sevenoaks Youth Council continues to be involved in the development of events, behavioural rules, menus etc.

The Youth Café has now been open for approx. 2 ½ years. The Youth Café receives funding via KCC Commissioning which ends in March 2016. The Town Council will be applying for a further three years of funding.



On Tuesday evenings the youth café is open for children with special needs sponsored by the St James Wealth Foundation and VAWK. This evening not only provides them with somewhere safe and comfortable to go, but also provides them with the confidence in the venue to attend at other times and integrate with the other young people, which has proved to be immensely popular.

Wednesdays Safe Steering Group

Every Wednesday from 5pm-6pm a group of sixth form students meet at the café to talk through how they can support, mentor and connect with other teenagers about mental health issues. This time is known as a Safe Space where it is advertised that any young people that would like to talk about mental health issues, can come and chat to train a youth-worker and team of sixth form volunteers. It is out of this weekly meeting that the idea of a launch event came.

OPENING HOURS the Youth Café is open at the following times:-

March 2015	Tuesday	18.00 - 21.00
	Wednesday	16.00 - 21.00
	Thursday	16.00 - 21.00
	Friday	16.00 - 21.00
	Saturday	12:00 – 14:00 14.00 – 21.00

The facilities within the youth café for ages 11 – 18 include:-

Free Wi Fi	Pool Table
Food & Drinks	Information & Support
Chill Out Area	Events
Special Needs evening	Chess Club
Informal Music Lessons	VOICE

CONTACT DETAILS

Tel: 01732 466593
Twitter: @houseinbasement

Email: info@houseinthebasement.co.uk
Facebook: /houseinthebasement

The venue is often used by others to discuss matters the young people are interested in and as such surveys and consultations take place there during opening hours.

12.Planning Committee

12 PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Planning Committee meets every 2 weeks to discuss planning applications submitted within the Sevenoaks Town area, and a wide array of associated planning matters.

The Committee actively seeks to maintain and enhance the positive features of Sevenoaks Town, while promoting sustainable growth to help maintain the long term economic and social stability of the Town.

12.1 Planning Applications

During 2014/2015 the Town Council will have commented on circa 540 planning applications submitted within the Sevenoaks Town Council area, and has supported Sevenoaks District Council in their refusal of applications via number of written appeals

The Town Council continues to monitor tree work applications in the area despite not being a consultee and will make representation when applications of concern are submitted.

12.2 Major Development sites

Former Farmers site

The Town Council put pressure on developers to continue with the development of the derelict former Farmers Public House site.

However when a subsequent application was submitted seeking to vastly increase the bulk and scale of the previously proposed scheme the Town Council objected to the modification due to the detrimental impact such a building would have on a key gateway into Sevenoaks.

This applications was refused by Sevenoaks District Council, and appeal was subsequently made against this refusal and the Town Council supported Sevenoaks District Council's refusal by written statement.

Unfortunately despite local opposition the application was approved by the Planning Inspector.

12.3 Planning Documents

Over the course of the year so far the Town Council has participated in the consultation process for several draft Local and National planning documents, carefully tailoring responses to safeguard the interests of local residents.

Some of the key documents have included consultations on:

- Sevenoaks District Council's Statement of Community Involvement in Planning
- Gypsy and Traveller Plan Site Options
- Kent County Council's Minerals and Waste Local Plan

In addition the Town Council worked with Sevenoaks District Council on an audit of local services and amenities as part of the annual 'Authority Monitoring Report' which measures progress against the targets set out in Sevenoaks District Council's Local Plan.

12.4 Development Control Meetings

The Town Council is frequently represented at Sevenoaks District Council Development Control meetings when there is a contentious planning issue.

12.5 Kent County Council Highways and Transportation [H&T]

The Town Council actively supported local residents and made representations to Kent County Council Highways and Transportation on several road safety issues. The Town Council regularly reports damaged highway surfaces and faulty street lights to KCC H&T.

12.6 Licensing

The Town Council continues to review and comment on licensing applications submitted within the town, in an attempt to safeguard the amenities of local residents.

12.7 Public Transport

The Town Council continue to lobby wherever possible to ensure that an adequate public transport infrastructure is maintained, and has responded to several public transport consultations over the course of the year. Including the supporting of proposals seeking to extend Oyster Card zones to both Bat and Ball and Sevenoaks Mainline Station.

13. Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Development Plan

Since the initiation of work on the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Plan at the 2013 Annual Town Meeting the Town Council has been working with local stakeholders, residents, other Councils, and service providers to shape the plan.

This included the distribution of a 90 question questionnaire to every house within the Parish area. The response rate for this was in line with nationally expected figures and provided a very strong basis to begin drawing themes and aspirations from which will form part of the final plan.

An online information resource for the Neighbourhood Plan has been created at STNP.co.uk which includes past agendas and minutes, newsletters, and analysis of the Questionnaire responses as and when they are published.

If you wish to be involved in the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Plan or would like to join the emailing list please contact Hugh D'Alton via planning@sevenoakstown.gov.uk or telephone 01732 459953

14. Sevenoaks Town Partnership

Established in 2011, the Partnership is a Sevenoaks Town Council initiative bringing together a wide range of people from the local community to establish Sevenoaks as a prosperous, vibrant and attractive place to visit, shop and do business.

Sevenoaks has a variety of magnificent attractions, leisure facilities, unique retail shops and well established community organisations. The Partnership's aims are ambitious but with its existing and planned initiatives, are well positioned to spread the message both to the wider local community and beyond by providing initiatives that increase footfall and the number of visitors to the town centre.

With an Executive Board meeting approximately every six weeks and with a developing partnership of existing and new organisations and individual members, the 'brand' of Sevenoaks is moving forward at pace.

During 2014 the partnership created two new groups (a) Events Committee (b) Friends of Bat & Ball station.

A copy of the Sevenoaks Town Partnership's Annual Report is available separately @ <http://sevenoakspartnership.org/businesses/sevenoaks-town-partnership>

During 2014 The Town Council is delighted to report that the Sevenoaks Town Partnership won the accolade of Town Team of the Year from the Association of Town & City Management.

For further details of Sevenoaks Town Partnership, please contact Bonnie Tarling at Sevenoaks Town Council: admin.tp@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

15. Open Spaces Committee

Vine Area

Summer Concerts on the bandstand were held regularly through the summer from the Summer Festival on Sundays and Thursdays until August bank holiday. Again proving very popular and will be provided again this year by Sevenoaks Town Council.

During 2013 the town Council implemented a Premises Licence for the Vine Gardens to enable community events to take place on this site.

A grant of £9,000 was obtained from Istock Cory Environmental Trust towards the refurbishment of the Band Stand which was completed in the summer of 2014.



Town Centre

Hanging baskets were displayed in the town centre and local businesses continued to show support by making donations towards the cost of the baskets and the floral displays were appreciated by residents and visitors to the town.

Greatness Recreation Ground

The recreation ground is well used with skateboarders and bike riders enjoying the site alongside the active football club and children and parents in the playground.

Sevenoaks Town Junior Football Club secured a grant that had new drainage installation on the pitch allowing for the teams to play more games during the winter.

In April 2014 an outdoor gym was installed and has proved very popular.



Roadside Advertising and Highway Banners

The Town Council agreed to take over the responsibility for regulating road side advertising within the town, which was previously a Kent County Council function.

It now regulates the installation of posters advertising local events at six sites, three of which are on Town Council land. Local interest groups pay a small fee to help cover the cost of administration of the scheme.

The Town Council now enable locals to advertise a highway banner subject to terms and conditions for a maximum period of two weeks, to allow more local community members to advertise their events during the course of the year.

Knole Paddock and Raleys Field

The annual schools tag rugby festival continues to be well attended, with teams of boys and girls from many local schools participating for an activity afternoon in May. Further rugby coaching courses were organised for late August and the autumn half term week in October.

The popular Kwik Cricket tournament for children taking part in June with local and district wide competitions taking place over the two subsequent Fridays.

The Town Council has worked with the Sevenoaks Rugby Football Club to provide improvements to this land. The project will see a wheelchair-accessible covered balcony for spectators and coaches built onto the existing clubhouse, an extension added to the overflow car park and ground drainage installed on the club's three pitches.

As part of the works, pitches one and two will be remarked to place pitch one in front of the clubhouse.

The facilities upgrade, planned in partnership with Sevenoaks Town Council, has been made possible thanks to a £50,000 CETB grant and £20,000 funding from ICET through the Landfill Communities Fund (LCF).

Woodlands

Despite extremely challenging conditions over the winter months, the Council continues to invest time and resources in planning the future management of its woodlands over the medium term and to carry out the tasks identified as necessary or desirable.

The woodlands inherited from SDC in 2007-08 have all now seen significant works to protect, enhance and make safer over the coming years with an area of coppicing at Pontoise woodland completed this year.

Greatness Cemetery

The cemetery continues to provide a popular and peaceful refuge for the bereaved. Work has concentrated on the restoration of hedges and shrub borders with moderate replanting in some borders.

Mayor's Sponsored Green Walk

At the past Mayor's suggestion a walk around Sevenoaks linking many open spaces together has been devised. It visits 18 different Town Council sites avoiding road walking as much as possible by following footpaths and green links and noting interesting features along the way.

16. Sevenoaks Sports Strategy

Sevenoaks Town Council had taken the decision to put in place long term plans for the redevelopment of the Raleys site including the future provision of the Raleys Gym and the Indoor Cricket School. In considering the replacement of the same or similar facilities it seemed sensible to consider the potential for shared use of facilities.

It has also been noted that some sports organisations were either struggling with current facilities and or had ambitious plans for the future which needed to be sustainable.

During 2013 Sevenoaks Town Council facilitated the bringing together of as many sports organisations (including schools) as possible to work together and to consider all of the following aims:-

1. To carry out an audit of current sports provision and activities within Sevenoaks
2. To prepare in consultation with sports organisations and the local community a long term Sevenoaks Sports Strategy including aspirations and blue skies thinking, noting flexibility and trends, for future sports provision.
3. To consider how sports organisations can work together to ensure the long term sustainability of current and future sports provision.
4. Research the feasibility (including funding, land allocation, shared usage and planning requirements) of achieving the sports provisions identified within the Sports Strategy for Sevenoaks.
5. To produce a timetable for delivery – subject to other points identified.

17. The Stag Community Arts Centre

In 2009 Sevenoaks Town Council took over the running of Sevenoaks Community Arts Centre and since then its success has gone from strength to strength. It obtained charitable status in 2010 and now produces its own report and accounts which are available to view on www.stagsevenoaks.co.uk.

The Trustees, who are Town Councillors, have garnered the support of local people and are grateful to the many local organisations who use the facilities.

18. Sevenoaks Markets

In 2013 Sevenoaks Town Council started to manage two markets. 1) Saturdays in the High Street and 2) Wednesdays in Buckhurst Lane behind the bus station. In April 2014 Sevenoaks Town Council took over the management of a third market on Saturdays in Blighs due to it being threatened with closure, which is developing into a Farmers Market.

Each year there is a national Love Your Local Market campaign to highlight markets throughout the country. Sevenoaks Town Council took part in this during 2014 arranging events, competitions and prizes and entertainment at the three markets. This will be repeated during 2015 between 13 and 27 May.

19. The Future

Sevenoaks Town Council working with many community organisations and local businesses is setting its sights high for the future with some ambitious plans including rebuilding of the community centre, improved sports facilities, strategic plans for economic growth, and not least putting in place a long term Neighbourhood Development Plan for the future of the town. There are many opportunities for residents to be involved in what the Town Council does. All you need to do is to get in touch with us.

SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCILLORS

EASTERN WARD

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WILDERNESSE WARD

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Responsible Finance Officer –	Julie Lobley	julie.lobley@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

The Town Council or its Committees meet on most Monday evenings at 7 pm and members of the public are welcome to attend. For further details of the meetings please contact the Town Council Offices - 01732 459953.
council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk