



Sevenoaks Town Council



Annual Report 2024-5

Our year in the community

www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk



BRITAIN IN BLOOM UK FINALIST 2025
with the RHS

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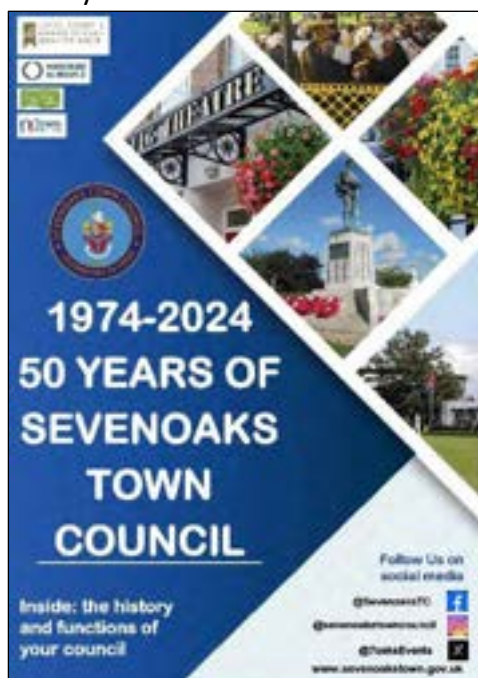
Summary

1. Introduction

50 Years of Sevenoaks Town Council 1974-2024

During the last year Sevenoaks Town Council has recognised its 50th year of providing community services and the many Councillors who do this now and in the past in an unpaid role, giving up many hours of their personal time.

A Commemorative booklet was produced and printed as part of the Summer issue of the Town Crier newsletter to depict the history of the Town Council. It is also available to pick up at the council offices.



50 Years in Paintings booklet

As part of the Sevenoaks Town Council 50th anniversary celebrations, a booklet of the artworks given by Sevenoaks Mayors over the 50 years was produced. Free copies were circulated at events, and a free copy can be picked up from the council offices.

The Town Council is very grateful to Cllr Victoria Granville, Lesley and Roger Lee for producing this record.



50th Anniversary party for the Town Council

On 22nd September the Mayor hosted an Afternoon Tea Party to celebrate the inception of the Town Council in 1974. Former Mayors of Sevenoaks and Town Councillors gathered to share memories and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Town Council.



Projects over the last year

The Town Council has also progressed some ambitious projects during the last year including the introduction of 20mph, the purchase of 14 acres of ancient woodland for community use as a 50th year legacy (see section 2 on **Longspring Wood**), progressing two area Masterplans and much more, all of which is detailed in this report.

Alongside new ambitious projects the Town Council has continued to maintain and provide all its community facilities and functions which ensure that Sevenoaks is a vibrant and happy place to live, work and visit. Again, this report sets out details of how this has been achieved.

Local Government Devolution and Reorganisation proposals

As we prepare this report the government has announced Local Government Devolution and Reorganisation proposals. This will ultimately at some point see the removal of Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council, replaced by a Kent Strategic Authority with elected Mayor and a combined Unitary authority. The proposals have many implications for local residents, in particular relating to democratic representation and management of local functions and assets. Sevenoaks Town Council will be consulting with residents on how it may address some of these challenges

2. Climate Change Initiatives

In June 2024 the Town Council renewed and updated its 2021 Green Community Investment Plan which can be seen via the following link: [STC Green Community Investment Plan 2024 ADOPTED.pdf](#)

or on www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk

The Green Community Investment Plan consists of the following themes:

- Buildings
- Transport & Movement
- Making Sevenoaks Greener
- Consumption
- Information and Access to Information

Key new projects during the last year include:

20 mph

Following considerable public consultation Sevenoaks Town Council led and paid for the project for the implementation of a 20mph signage scheme for Sevenoaks town.

The Mayor, Cllr Libby Ancrum said:

“As Town Councillors, we are delighted to be implementing a 20mph scheme for our town. Across the country, communities like ours are putting pedestrians and active travel to the fore with schemes like this. There is a great deal of evidence that, in urban settings, lower vehicle speeds significantly reduce accidents, improve air quality and make the community a better place to be. Perhaps contrary to expectation, there is also evidence that traffic flows are improved, too. We are very pleased that residents of the town supported the project, and we are looking forward to delivering a safer, greener Sevenoaks.”

Longspring Wood

An important feature of Sevenoaks is its trees. Sevenoaks is famed for its oaks but there are many other species and individual trees that are important to the character and ecology of the town.

Following a very successful public campaign and the enormous generosity of the public, the Town Council took the decision to purchase 14 acres of ancient woodland which is over 400 years old, the majority of which is also identified as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area – meaning these woods present one of the best opportunities for enhancing biodiversity.

The purpose of the purchase was to protect this important asset and enable community use for generations to come, supporting the retention of local wildlife and biodiversity and helping mitigate the effects of the climate change.



The conveyance was completed in July 2024 and a community event to thank donors arranged for September 2024. It was thought that this was a fitting project to commemorate 50 years of Sevenoaks Town Council.

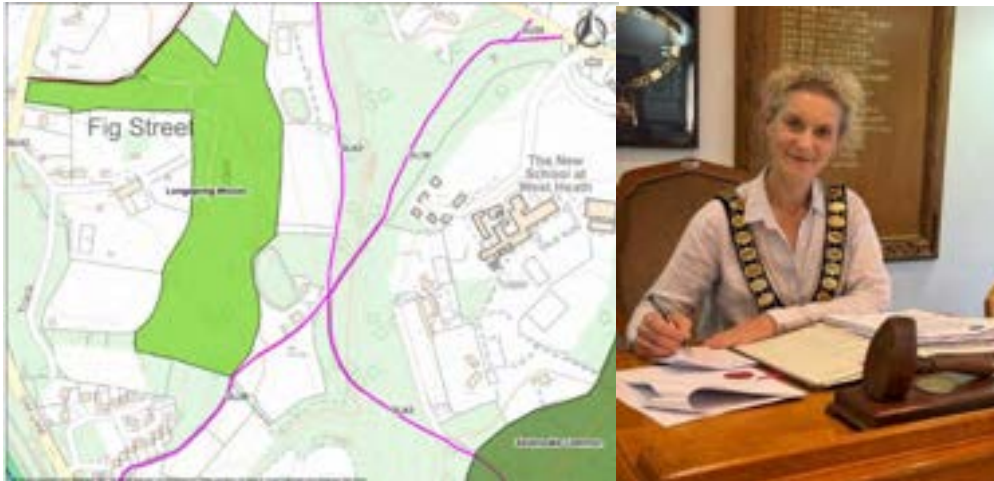
The successful campaign for Longspring Wood received a surprise message of congratulations - from His Majesty King Charles III.

Sevenoaks Town Council received the message from His Majesty the King ahead of the celebration.

The King, who is known for his support of environmental issues, sent the Royal greeting on headed paper from Buckingham Palace. It said:

"His Majesty was deeply touched to hear of the community effort involved in preserving this ancient woodland for public use and hopes that you will be so kind as to convey The King's warmest thanks and good wishes to everyone who was part of this important initiative. His Majesty, trusts that you, the Town Councillors, and residents of Sevenoaks, will enjoy a most memorable celebration."





The map above shows the location of the woodland which the Mayor signed the conveyancing papers on in July 2024 (see picture).

See Open Spaces section for more on the management plan for the woodlands.

Adopt a Tree

This project continues to be popular with residents wanting to remember a loved one or celebrate a significant event e.g. special birthday or anniversary or a birth. Further details of the project can be seen via this link [Adopt a Tree Scheme - Sevenoaks Town Council](#) or on the Town Council's website www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk

Climate Fair

Working with SCAN (Sevenoaks Climate Action Network) the Town Council enabled a second Climate Fair event to be held in May. The event was very popular and attracted a large number of the public interested in learning more about various climate improvement projects.



Thermal Imaging Camera

In May 2024 the Town Council launched a thermal imaging camera loan scheme to enable Sevenoaks town residents to give their homes a thermal MOT. The cameras help identify cold and damp spots and where heat may be lost within a home.

As thermal imaging accuracy is dependent on weather conditions with dark, colder days being most useful to identify problem areas, Autumn saw an upsurge in bookings with November to February being fully booked. To date 37 households have borrowed the cameras. Feedback has been very positive:

“I think it is a brilliant Council Initiative.”

“Excellent Resource, Thank you for making it available.”

“I could tell which parts are low temp in our house, entry of cold air/ damp ... It's great I could borrow this and great service, Thank you very much.”

“We've just made improvements, and the images were helpful to validate”.

If you wish to borrow the Thermal Imaging Camera please check our Terms and Conditions on our website: [Borrow a Thermal Imaging Camera - Sevenoaks Town Council](#)

For more information contact: Youthwork@sevenoakstown.gov.uk



Car Club

The Enterprise Car Club was launched in Sevenoaks at the Climate Fair in May 2024.

The Town Council is partnering with Enterprise which offers residents the opportunity of an hourly or daily vehicle self-service hire, via an app, as and when needed. Two hybrid vehicles, based at Bat and Ball Centre car park, are in the scheme.

Special joining discounts for Sevenoaks residents are offered and hirers only pay for any fuel they actually use. The scheme is available 24/7.

Information on the Car Club can be found on :
[Sevenoaks Automated Daily & Hourly Car & Van Hire | Enterprise Car Club](#)



3. Community Investment Plan

[STC Comm Investment Plan 2023 2027.pdf](#)

Community Investment Plan 2023 – 2027

Sevenoaks Town Council does not receive any government grants or business rates. The Town Council relies on CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and successful external funding to progress capital projects. The current Community Investment Plan projects are

1	Masterplans for Town Centre & St John's Hill	Stakeholder workshops completed. Draft recommendations for public consultation Spring 2025.
2	Green Link Feasibility Study – cycling and walking route linking Sevenoaks and Dunton Green	Liaising with landowners.
3	20 mph Signage Scheme implementation	Completed and funded by Sevenoaks Town Council (note to areas agreed by the Joint Transport Board)
4	Pedestrian Crossing at Dartford Road near Vine	Engineering design commissioned
5	Pedestrian Crossing at Seal Hollow Road	Identified in the Highway Improvement Plan
6	Electrifying the No 8 Bus	CIL application was not successful however recommended to reapply in the future.
7	Wayfinding Signage	Project being worked up. CIL application unsuccessful, will consider other ways of funding within developments.
8	Business Improvement District (BID) development	Initial consultation with businesses taken place. Steering Group formed, progressing Business Plan to be put forward for referendum.
9	Greatness Recreation Ground – review of survey results	Greatness Recreation Ground Working Group formed. Further consultation on key projects taking place. Inviting residents to form Friends of Greatness Recreation Ground to assist with progressing projects.
10	Greatness Sports & Community Pavilion	Football Foundation application submitted January 2025; results expected April 2025
11	Refurbish St John's Hill Car Park Public Toilets	Refurbishment completed and toilets reopened April 2024.
12	Redevelop Oast House for Community Use	Feasibility Study being completed. Working with Tarmac for building to be made structurally sound. Public consultation to take place towards end of 2026, refurbishment works expected to commence 2027.



4. The Mayoral Year & Civic Events

Mayoral Year 2024-2025



The Mayor, Councillor Libby Ancrum, was elected at the Annual Town Council meeting in May 2024.

Councillor Tony Clayton was appointed as Deputy Mayor.

At the same meeting Able Cadet Roy Newman, Westerham Sea Cadets, was appointed as the Mayor's Cadet for the 2024-2025 Civic Year.

The Charities the Mayor has chosen to support during her mayoral year are:

- Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees
- Bradbourne Riding for the Disabled Association

The Mayor has attended 101 events so far this year and the Deputy Mayor has represented her on 24 occasions.

D-Day 80th Anniversary Celebrations

To mark the 80th Anniversary of D-Day on the 6th June there was a concert of 40's tunes on the Bandstand attended by around 500 people after which the Mayor and other dignitaries led the procession to the war memorial for the wreath laying and then continued to the Vine Waste for the Beacon lighting.





The Mayor, Town Crier and other dignitaries attended the Beacon Lighting

Civic Service

The Mayor attended the Civic Service at St Luke's Church on Sunday, 23rd June 2024 and Rev. Anne Bourne officiated. The Service was attended by fellow councillors, past councillors and dignitaries from around the County. Following the Service refreshments were served in the Church Hall.



Peppercorn Rent Ceremony

On 29th July the Mayor attended the historic Peppercorn Rent Ceremony at The Vine.

The Vine Cricket Ground is one of the oldest cricket grounds in England. It was given to the town in 1773 by John, 3rd Duke of Dorset, owner of Knole House.

In line with tradition, each year the Vine Cricket Club pay Sevenoaks Town Council rent of one peppercorn for use of the ground and the Town Council, in turn, pay Lord Sackville one cricket ball.



Autumn Colours

The Mayor of Sevenoaks, in collaboration with the Mayor of Swanley, hosted an "Autumn Colours" event on 17th October. This event brought together numerous civic representatives to showcase the railway route connecting Bat & Ball and Swanley. The tour included a talk on the restoration of the Bat & Ball Station and a talk and tour of Swanley Park. It served as an opportunity to highlight the history and significance of the local rail network while fostering civic engagement among the attendees.



Remembrance Day



On Sunday 10th November 2024, the Mayor and Town Councillors attended the Remembrance Day Service and Parade at The Vine War Memorial. Members of the local cadet forces were present, together with a large contingent of scouts and guides from several local groups.

Many community organisations laid wreaths on the memorial watched by approximately a thousand people who gathered to join in the remembrance service.

Also present were Laura Trott MP, HM Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, the Lord Colgrain, Cllr Richard Streatfeild, Kent County Council representative, and Sir David Wootton, Freeman of Sevenoaks.

The Service was led by The Revd Canon Angus MacLeay of St Nicholas Church assisted by Rev Dermot Thornberry representing the free churches in Sevenoaks.



Armistice Day

On Armistice Day, Monday 11th November 2024, the Mayor laid crosses on the War Graves at Greatness Park Cemetery and prayers were said by Fr Robin, Vicar of St John the Baptist Church.



International Women's Day

On 7th March the Mayor hosted an event at the Bat & Ball Centre to mark International Women's Day, an annual global event which aims to celebrate the cultural, political and social achievements of women everywhere.

The event, consisting of a lunch and talks from inspirational speakers, was attended by local businesswomen who also sponsored young women from local schools to attend.



Our thanks to the following for their generous sponsorship of this event:

- Specsavers
- FM Conway
- Warners Solicitors

Presentation of Mayoral Painting

In line with Town Council tradition, the Mayor presented a painting to add to the Town Council's Community Art Collection of local scenes by local artists which create a visual social history of Sevenoaks.

Mayor of Sevenoaks Cllr Libby Ancrum presented the picture of cricket on the Vine by Melvyn Evans at the Christmas Council Meeting on 9th December.

The painting collection from the mayors of the town includes scenes of historic venues and buildings, including buildings now demolished or greatly changed.



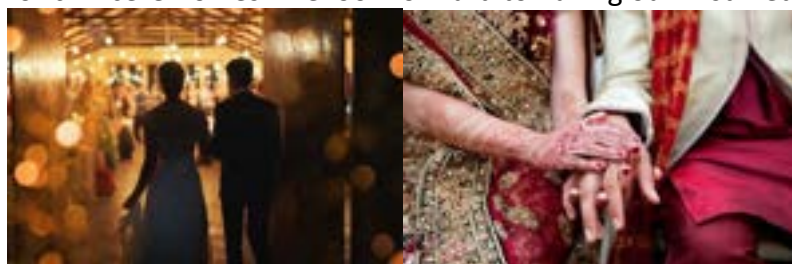
5. Bat & Ball Centre



Since its reopening in 2021 following extensive refurbishment, the new Bat & Ball Centre has flourished with both regular hirers and bookings for other events. This year we have hosted a wide range of activities including wedding receptions, business conferences, training courses, meetings, support groups, faith groups, birthday and other celebration parties, children's theatre, musical events, fitness groups, and family fun activities. The weekly Tea Dance continues to thrive.

Licensed for weddings

In July 2024 the Centre attained a licence from Kent County Council as Approved Premises for civil ceremonies. We look forward to having our first wedding ceremony at the Centre.



We continue to receive positive feedback from hirers:

"...thank you so much for the use of the Bat & Ball John London Room on Saturday. It really is a very lovely location and several of the participants commented on that." (Go Wild! event June 2024)

"The centre was very clean and tidy easy access and lots of parking" (July 2024)

"Really lovely venue. Hosted my son's 1st birthday party here and everyone who came commented on how lovely it was! We had the bigger room which had access to the gardens which were beautiful. Everything is there as and when you need it." (August 2024)

"Great space for events. Very convenient access to the train station." (October 2024)

"Amazing atmosphere, beautiful scenery, excellent customer service and a great value for money. Highly recommend." (December 2024)

The Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) has been widely used throughout the year for various sports and sports practice sessions and has also been hired for children's sports birthday parties.

Harry Garrett Hall



John London Hall



Multi Use Games Area



Rear Garden



For further information on the Centre and other room hire available, please visit our website: [https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Room & Hall Hire](https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Room%20&%20Hall%20Hire) or contact: hallhire@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

6. Bat & Ball Station Building

Following the restoration of the Bat & Ball Station building, Sevenoaks Town Council has developed the building as a community facility with a range of activities for local residents and volunteers, as well as providing a beautiful heritage venue for hire.



To make enquiries about hiring the facilities at Bat & Ball Station please email: hallhire@sevenoakstown.gov.uk



The Forget- Me- Not-Café

The Station hosts a free dementia-friendly Forget Me-Not Café, on every last Wednesday of the month. The Forget-me-not Café is a place where anyone with some memory loss or early-stage dementia, their carers or family, may find friendship with like-minded people.

There is always a speaker or activity, refreshments and cakes, and a friendly welcome. Over the year we've had a great selection of speakers from the historical to the entertaining. Recently the Pearly King of Bromley paid a visit to talk about the history of Pearly Kings and Queens. Each session has been supported by our brilliant Forget-me-not

café volunteers Hazel, Abbi, and Nicola who have been volunteering at the café since it began. The turnout is consistently good, with around 35 people enjoying the event on average, and more coming along for certain events. Many people come every time but there are always new people joining also which is very pleasing to see.



Gary Poleykett visited recently to talk about his life as a children's entertainer, with magic tricks and balloon modelling!

Here is the programme up to June 2025:

Forget-me-not Cafés

Companionship over a cuppa

Dementia-friendly cafe at Bat & Ball Station
TN14 5AP
10:30am - 12noon

Every last Wednesday of the month. Enjoy a warm welcome plus interesting talks and activities with refreshments. Free event.

DATES TO JUNE 2025

<u>26th February</u>	Gary Poleykett - My Life in Entertainment
<u>26th March</u>	The story of Bradbourne Lakes, John Ingram, Residents' Association
<u>30th April</u>	The History of our Sevenoaks Markets, a presentation by Cllr Tony Clayton
<u>28th May</u>	Bob Ogley - When Sevenoaks Was Bombed
<u>25th June</u>	Cafe open - Speaker to be announced soon

Parking:
There is free parking at Bat & Ball Centre or free
Blue Badge parking in the Station carpark.

Any queries please contact Helen Cook
Comms@sevenoakstown.gov.uk 01732 459953

For more information please contact comms@sevenoakstown.gov.uk or call 01732 459953 and ask for the Community Engagement Manager.

7. Finance

The Town Council approved a budget of £1,907,304 for 2024-25. General reserves brought forward were £514,992 (2023-24 £459,542) and earmarked reserves were £1,141,329 (2023-24 £1,112,276).

The 2024-25 Town Council budget includes income of:

- £1,437,614 from the precept paid for by Sevenoaks domestic ratepayers (council tax).
- £428,800 from fees and charges on facilities and services such as hire of community halls, Business Hub, sports pitches, markets, cemetery, Café on the Vine, rents and leases, and allotments.
- £40,890 from Council reserves (reserves allocated from the Heritage Lottery Fund to support Bat & Ball Station during initial years of opening).

The Council does not receive money from central government. As a result, it continues to be creative in the way that it funds and delivers services to the community. Capital projects for new and improved community facilities are funded from capital receipts, earmarked reserves, and grants, where possible. Earmarked reserves brought forward included £575,603 capital receipts and £160,342 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), income received for specific activities and projects. This money goes towards the funding of approved capital projects including the refurbishment of St John's Hill toilets, development of masterplans for the Town Centre and St Johns Hill area and lighting at the Vine area.

The Council's income streams are positive, and the Bat & Ball Centre, markets and Business Hub are seeing a growing customer base.

Inflation is impacting on the cost of services and café income; however, we do not anticipate the Council's finances to be in a deficit position at the end of the financial year. It has also been agreed to offer a concession for the Bat & Ball Station Café and The Vine Café.

At the Council meeting held on 20th January 2024, Council approved a budget of £1,997,096 for 2025-2026. This will be funded by fees and charges of £451,949 (22%) and a precept levy of £1,545,147 (77%). For an average Band D house in Sevenoaks, the precept equates to £153.67 per year or £2.96 per week (an increase of £8.34 per year or 17p per week on 2024-25).

8. Sevenoaks Town Council's Grants to Community Organisations

Sevenoaks Town Council continues to provide grants to local groups, who are invited to submit applications in July and December for consideration. The Council is also a major sponsor of the Stag Community Arts Centre and Sevenoaks Summer Festival.

In 2024 / 2025, the Town Council increased its budget for this to ensure that voluntary groups and organisations within the town, which provide such valuable services, were still

able to access grant funding. In setting its budget for 2025/26 the Town Council further increased its grants budget.

Cllr Tony Clayton, Chair of the Finance & Delivery Committee commented:

“We recognise that voluntary organisations which are vital to the success of Sevenoaks as a community are under increasing pressure, and the new budget makes allowance for a bit more help for their continued services. ”

Groups which have benefited from the Town Council Grants during the year 2024-25 include:			
Sevenoaks Summer Festival	£5,000	Sevenoaks PHAB	£400
Art in June Open Studios	£250	Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra	£500
Baby Umbrella 1	£400	Baby Umbrella 2	£1,500
Friends of Pontoise	£500	Hi Kent	£1000
Friends of Rheinbach	£450	Sevenoaks Counselling	£2000
Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival	£600	Sevenoaks Three Arts, Young Musician of the Year	£650
Sevenoaks Society	£250	West Kent Mind 1	£2,500
South East Open Studios	£250	West Kent Mind 2	£1,500
Sevenoaks Bowling Club	£250	Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group	£1,000
West Kent Mediation	£900	MX Fencing	£1,000
We are Beams 1 (free room hire)	£1,440	We are Beams 2	£1,500
West Kent Housing Youth Services	£15,000	Spirit of Peace	£300
Sevenoaks Unit of the Sea Cadet Corps	£1,250		

Application forms and guidance notes can be found on the Town Council's [Grant Information webpage](#), with completed forms to be sent to council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk



9. Council Meetings

In May 2024 the Town Council revised its committee structure and moved from the traditional system of functional committees entirely composed of councillors to a structure of: four standing committees (in addition to the full Town Council meetings) which would make the decisions which councillors were legally accountable for, and nine working groups which would be able to develop ideas involving members of the community and stakeholders with oversight from the committees.



Most Council and Committee meetings take place on Monday evenings, occasionally on other days, and are listed on the Town Council's [Committees and Meetings webpage](#).

Agendas for meetings are available to view on the website from the Tuesday prior to the meeting. Members of the public wishing to address a committee should notify the Town Council by 12 noon on the day of the meeting.

The Town Council continues to livestream its Council and Committee meetings on [YouTube](#): recordings are retained until the minutes are adopted at the next full Town Council meeting.

The following meetings took place during 2024-25:

Date	Committee/Working Group	Date	Committee/Working Group
13.05.24	Annual Town Council	16.10.24	Greatness Recreation Ground Working Group
15.05.24	Youth Council	21.10.24	Planning & Environment
20.05.24	Planning & Environment	30.10.24	Personnel
22.05.24	Youth Services Working Group	04.11.24	Planning & Environment
29.05.24	Sports Strategy Working Group	06.11.24	Community Asset Working Group
03.06.24	Movement & Net Zero Working Group	11.11.24	Youth Services
03.06.24	Planning & Environment	13.11.24	Youth Council at HitB
05.06.24	Town Team	18.11.24	Planning & Environment

10.06.24	Finance & Delivery Committee	20.11.24	Town Team AGM
10.06.24	Town Council	25.11.24	Town Council
12.06.24	Communications Working Group	25.11.24	Finance & Delivery
17.06.24	Planning & Environment	27.11.24	Communications Working Group
19.06.24	Arts and Culture Working Group	02.12.24	Planning & Environment
24.06.24	Community and Wellbeing	04.12.24	Sports Strategy Working Group
26.06.24	Greatness Recreation Ground Working Group	09.12.24	Town Council - Christmas
01.07.24	STNP	11.12.24	Arts and Culture Working Group
01.07.24	Planning & Environment	16.12.24	Planning & Environment
10.07.24	Youth Council	18.12.24	Greatness Recreation Ground Working Group
10.07.24	Youth Services Working Group	23.12.24	Planning & Environment
15.07.24		13.01.25	Movement and Net Zero Working Group
17.07.24	Community Asset Working Group	13.01.25	Planning & Environment
22.07.24	Finance and Delivery	15.01.25	Youth Council
22.07.24	Town Council	15.01.25	Youth Services Working Group
24.07.24	Communications Working Group	20.01.25	Finance and Delivery
29.07.24	Movement & Net Zero Working Group	20.01.25	Town Council
29.07.24	Planning & Environment		
31.07.24	Town Team	22.01.25	Community Asset Working Group
07.08.24	Sports Strategy Working Group	27.01.25	Planning & Environment
12.08.24	Planning & Environment	03.02.25	Community & Wellbeing
14.08.24	Arts and Culture Working Group	05.02.25	Communications Working Group
19.08.24	Greatness Recreation Ground Working Group	05.02.25	Town Team
27.08.24	STNP	10.02.25	STNP
27.08.24	Planning & Environment	10.02.25	Planning & Environment
02.09.24	Town Council	12.02.25	Sports Strategy Working Group
02.09.24	Finance and Delivery	17.02.25	Arts and Culture Working Group
04.09.24	Community Asset Working Group	24.02.25	Planning & Environment
09.09.24	Planning & Environment	26.02.25	Greatness Recreation Ground Working Group
11.09.24	Youth Council	03.03.25	Town Council
11.09.24	Youth Services Working Group	03.03.25	Finance and Delivery
16.09.24	Community and Wellbeing	05.03.25	Youth Council at HitB
18.09.24	Communications Working Group	10.03.25	Movement and Net Zero Working Group
23.09.24	Movement and Net Zero Working Group	10.03.25	Planning & Environment
23.09.24	Planning & Environment	12.03.25	Youth Services Working Group
25.09.24	Town Team	17.03.25	Annual Town Public Meeting
30.09.24	Sports Strategy Working Group	19.03.25	Personnel
07.10.24	Planning & Environment	24.03.25	Planning & Environment
09.10.24	Arts and Culture Working Group	26.03.25	Community Asset Working Group
14.10.24	Town Council	31.03.24	Community and Wellbeing
14.10.24	Finance and Delivery		

10. Sevenoaks Business Hub



The Hub provides five private, lockable, office pods and a single two-person office which means that hirers can operate as if they have their own premises, leaving their IT and business papers etc. on site at all times. In the open plan area, there are 13 hot desks, which, as the name implies, means that hirers leave a clear desk each evening.

The facilities include:

- A meeting room for up to eight people
- High speed internet access
- Showers
- Kitchen/café area
- Informal lounge
- Free parking and an EV charger

Booking is extremely flexible with options from just half a day to a full month, and all bookings are renewable.

The office pods continue to be very popular. Whenever one becomes vacant then it is usually a matter of just a few days before it is re-let. There is still plenty of scope to build on the hot desk business.

The concept is to provide small businesses with good quality accommodation at low cost, and while achieving this, to make just a modest profit, and that is being achieved.



For further information, hire rates and to make a booking online visit:

https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Sevenoaks_Business_Hub_40590.aspx

11. Open Spaces

The Town Council is responsible for maintaining a diverse portfolio of open spaces and facilities, including public open spaces such as Greatness Recreation Ground, Vine Gardens and Sevenoaks Common; play areas at Pontoise Close, Hillingdon Rise, and Mount Close; rugby and cricket pitches at Knole Paddock and Raleys Field; the War Memorial; Greatness

Cemetery; Allotments; Sevenoaks Markets; and public toilets at Vine Gardens, St Johns Hill and Greatness. More details available on the [Services webpage](#) of the Town Council's website.

The Vine

Vine Gardens continue to host a range of events in the heart of the Town. In 2024 we hosted the 2nd Sevenoaks Climate Fair, bringing together parties interested in a sustainable future for our town and planet; an example of the exhibitors was a repair workshop for small electricals and electronics such as games consoles.

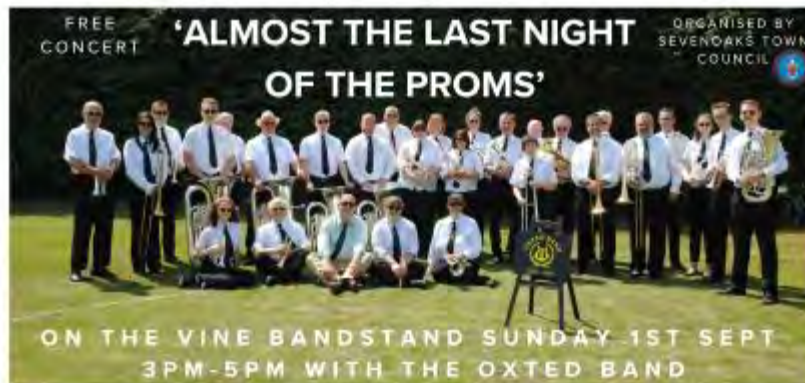
Other regular events are two Vegan Markets a year, the Sevenoaks Beer Festival, children's theatre shows, community choirs, the annual art display on the railings by Sevenoaks Art Club, Sevenoaks Summer Festival activities, Christmas Carols on the bandstand, and our usual programme of free Music on the Bandstand during the Summer.

Music on the Bandstand

The traditional series of free music at the Bandstand continued with three Sunday performances as part of the Sevenoaks Summer Festival in June/July, and a further 12 during the school summer holidays (Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons). A wide range of music included concert bands, classical quartet, soul music, saxophone band, dance band, local choirs and solo singers.



The series culminated with a rousing performance from the Oxted Band



Vine Green Flag Award



In 2024, The Vine was re-accredited its Green Flag status for its 8th consecutive year. The park was amongst 184 parks and green spaces across the South East to receive this prestigious recognition.



Raleys Field and Knole Paddock

Both fields continue to be used by the Sevenoaks Rugby Club, two football clubs and various cricket clubs.

The Raleys Field training pitch had to be taken out of use for one season to allow enhanced renovation.

New Open Space: Longspring Wood

The purchase of this addition to the Open Spaces portfolio was the result of an appeal for funds, launched in January 2024, which had a magnificent response from the Sevenoaks community. Pledges came in from £5 upwards, many at £100, £1000, and larger pledges of £5,000, £10,000 and £50,000.

Local residents pledged more than £100,000 in 23 days! The Town Council matched this with £100,000 from its funds from a previous sale of land, which needed to be spent on Capital Projects including acquisition of land.

The Town Council is preparing a Management Plan for the ongoing sustainability of the woodland, and a community engagement plan.

The long-term goal is to improve links between Longspring Wood and Sevenoaks Common and to extend walking and cycling routes and trails around the town. The land could be used to increase biodiversity and protect the landscape in this area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Sevenoaks Common

A final capital project paid for by the Greensands Project, where two areas were identified for drainage works, was completed improving access on footpaths.

Greatness Recreation Ground

2024 saw the establishment of the Greatness Recreation Ground Working Group comprising Town Councillors, stakeholders, and residents. The group's aim allows for discussion regarding the results of the Greatness Recreation Ground Survey and potential improvements such as the new Football Pavilion and possible relocation of the play area and outdoor gym.

Friends of Greatness Recreation Ground

Due to the renewed investment in the Greatness Recreation Ground in the next few years, the Town Council also created the Friends of Greatness Recreation Ground to invite contributions and ideas from residents on matters such as community events, tree planting and sports facilities.

If you are a resident or part of a local relevant organisation with a material interest in the proposals for Greatness Recreation Ground, and you would like to be included in the Working Group or the Friends of Greatness, please contact: osl@sevenoakstown.gov.uk or call 01732 459953.

Sevenoaks Town Football Club – New Football Pavilion

The initial plans for the New Football Pavilion have been value engineered to reach an achievable budget. A grant application has been submitted to the Football Foundation and a decision is expected in April 2025. Confirmation of project start date is pending.

Tree Planting

Sevenoaks Town Council has a policy to plant trees throughout the town and to include fruit and nut trees where possible. Examples of trees planted this year include a Rowan at Pontoise Close, a Cherry in the Vine Gardens and a Crab Apple on the Vine Waste.

Adopt a Tree

The Council runs the Adopt a Tree programme which encourages people to purchase or adopt a tree as a gift for a significant occasion or as a memorial for a loved one. Trees can be planted on over 15 Council owned sites including Raleys Field, Sevenoaks Common and Julians Meadow.

For more information, please see our [Adopt a Tree Scheme webpage](#) or email: osl@sevenoakstown.gov.uk call 01732 459953.



Tree Health and Safety

The year saw a further increase of dead wood and dead/dying trees which needed to be attended to, this was partially caused by a greater occurrence and strength of storms as well as tree disease.

Allotments

Sevenoaks Town Council currently manages two allotment sites: Bradbourne Vale and Quakers Hall. Both sites offer plots of varying sizes, ranging from quarter plots to whole plots of approximately 250 square metres which have been historically designed to feed a family of 4 for a year. Bradbourne Vale allotments has about 35 plots whereas Quakers Hall allotments site is considerably larger and offers seven times more plots at a whopping total of 250.





The Sevenoaks Allotment Holder's Association is the heart of the Quakers Hall Allotments with the trading centre being a longstanding hub for cooperation and friendly advice.

The community has enjoyed and continues to participate in numerous events such as the monthly 'Mug and Muffin' and the popular 'Apple Pressing Sunday' held every year in Autumn.

Due to the increasing challenges facing us from climate change and inflation, having an allotment can play a significant role in the fight to preserve our environment and allows us to become more cost-effective. Being in the outdoors is also vital for our mental health; it can be a source of solace in times of stress - so the benefits don't stop!

In September 2024 we welcomed the Community Payback team who had been tasked with clearing and preparing vacant plots for potential tenants. Approximately 10 plots have been cleared by the team so far and all cleared plots have been rented.

The team's weekly visits to the Quakers Hall site has been a great success and an extension of the scheme to cover the Bradbourne Vale allotment site has been requested.

Both allotment sites currently have a waiting list, and waiting times vary throughout the year. If you or anyone you know is interested in taking on an allotment, please contact the Allotments Officer at allotments@sevenoakstown.gov.uk or call 01732 459953.

Happy Gardening!

Greatness Cemetery

Greatness Cemetery continues to provide a popular and peaceful refuge for the bereaved of all faiths and denominations. The site has a fine collection of mature trees from the old parkland estate and the Grade II listed Kraftmeier Mausoleum. In May 2024, Memorial Stability Testing was carried out which identified that 109 headstones needed repairs. The Council has contacted the Grave Right's holders of these headstones and asks that more relatives get in contact with the Council to discuss the process.





South & South East In Bloom Awards 2024



Sevenoaks Wins Gold! Again!

It has been another spectacular year for Sevenoaks in the South & Southeast in Bloom awards. The town has received Gold Awards for the Town Centre, The Vine, and Upper High Street Gardens and for the first time The Vine won the accolade of **Best in Class** for parks in the region.

HOUSE in the Basement Youth Café was also recognised and awarded 'Thriving' once again in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' entry.





In January 2025 it was officially announced that Sevenoaks has been chosen to represent the South & South East region in the 2025 RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals in the Town Centre category.

Britain in Bloom 2025



Sevenoaks is one of just four finalists in its category.

Our entry for Britain in Bloom 2025 is themed 'Celebrating Bugs'. The signature colours for Sevenoaks this year will be purple and blue, with flashes of white and yellow, and the theme is Celebrating Bugs. Edible plants and herbs will be planted, and flowers for pollinators.

Britain in Bloom judges will visit in the summer of 2025 with the winners of each category announced at an awards ceremony in October.



So far volunteers are already knitting and crocheting bees and bugs for display, schools have been invited to paint ladybird rocks and to produce outdoors artworks or sculptures.

The Town Council is asking for volunteers to weed and water planters in the town centre, and to help with Tidy Up days.

For more information or to get involved, visit the Britain in Bloom page on our website www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk or email the Community Engagement Manager on comms@sevenoakstown.gov.uk or call 01732 459953.

Sevenoaks Town Council is thankful for the continued invaluable contribution of volunteers and members of the community in creating and maintaining an environment for all to enjoy in the heart of Sevenoaks.

Roadside Advertising and Highway Banners

The Town Council enables local community organisations to advertise events in the town via a highway banner or roadside boards, subject to terms and conditions, for a maximum period of two weeks. This restriction enables more local community members to advertise their events during the year. For more information contact: council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

12. Sevenoaks Markets

Sevenoaks Town Council manages the following Sevenoaks Markets:

- Wednesday High Street Market - 8am to 2pm
- Saturday High Street Market - 9am to 4pm
- Saturday Bligh's Market - 9am to 4pm
- Bligh's Christmas Market - 9am to 4pm (every day for the two weeks prior to Christmas)

In December 2024, the Wednesday traders welcomed a trial relocation of the market from Buckhurst Lane Car Park to the High Street. The move has freed approximately 70 parking spaces in the town and will hopefully increase the market's visibility.

Coverage in ITV Meridian News

On 12th January 2025 Sevenoaks celebrated the milestone of 100 years since the citizens of Sevenoaks Town bought the rights to their market, along with the Market Place where the Saturday and Wednesday High Street markets take place. On January 7th ITV Meridian visited to film a piece which went out on the news on January 8th, interviewing market traders who had been at Sevenoaks market for more than 40 years!



The Town Council is committed to maintaining and developing the markets in Sevenoaks Town, reflecting its Market Town status.



13. Community Events

Christmas Lights Switch On

The Town Council was pleased to hold its traditional Christmas Lights Switch On event on 30th November. This year the event was moved from a Friday evening to a family-friendly daytime Saturday afternoon slot from 3pm to 5.30pm, proving popular with families and businesses.

One resident expressed their appreciation of the change:

"I would like to just say how great the Christmas light switch on was yesterday... The timing was ideal as the little ones could enjoy the event before it got too dark and busy with adults/older children. It also really gave the local shops a fantastic opportunity to be seen by everyone. I'm really glad we have such lovely events in Sevenoaks that bring all the families together, thank you!"



A spokesperson for Bligh's Meadow posted: *"How magical was the Sevenoaks Light Switch On? It was wonderful to see the community come together to celebrate."*



Around 6,000 people came to enjoy the live entertainment on stage which included schoolchildren singing carols, Elsa, Anna & Olaf from Frozen, cast members from the Snow White Panto at the Stag Theatre, Old School Samba Drummers & local favourite, singer Robbie White.

Other activities included fairground rides and games, food and charity stalls, a free Santas' Grotto with tap dancing elves, a Christmas nativity character trail, a fire engine – and even some baby dinosaurs!

The Lights were switched on at 4.30pm by the Mayor with the help of the Panto cast.



We would like to thank all the volunteers who gave their time to help us deliver this very special event.

Our thanks to the following sponsors for their generous contributions:

- Specsavers
- Bluebird Care
- Manak Solicitors
- Bligh's Meadow

Thanks also to Berry & Lambert Solicitors for their donation towards the Christmas Lights.

14. No.8 Bus

In September 2020 KCC agreed to provide two years' funding and operate the No 8 bus. The purchase of an electric No 8 bus is within the Town Council's Number 1 Priority of addressing climate change. The Town Council has campaigned for the continuation of this and other bus services. In November 2023 the Town Council submitted a bid for funding to the District Council's Community Infrastructure Levy Board for the purchase of an electric bus. The bid wasn't successful however the Town Council was invited to re-apply with some modifications to its application.

15. Town Twinning

Sevenoaks is twinned with Pontoise in France and Rheinbach in Germany. The Town Council continues to support both town twinning associations. The Friends of Pontoise and the Friends of Rheinbach promote cultural understanding and exchange visits, and welcome new members. For more information, please visit their websites:

www.friends-of-rheinbach.org.uk
www.friendsofpontoise.com

There has also been some interest in developing a twinning with Ceto in Italy and this is currently being researched. If you would like to get involved with a new Twinning Association for Ceto, please contact the Community Engagement Manager at comms@sevenoakstown.gov.uk or call 01732 45

16. Youth Provision



The Youth Services Working Group oversees the management and development of the HOUSE in the Basement Youth Café (known as HitB). It is a safe space for young people to relax, meet with their friends, make new friends, get information and

advice and support with homework, and take part in a range of activities including music, art projects, chess, pool, board games and video games. Low-cost hot meals are available. For more information on House in the Basement check out our website: House in the Basement Youth Cafe

The Youth Café is open:

Tuesday 1:30- 3:30 pm (Moving Forward Project)

Tuesday 5.00 - 8.00 pm (SEN Club)

Wednesday & Friday 4.00 – 8.00 pm

Saturday 2.00 – 8.00 pm.

The manager, Daren Mountain, is supported by youth workers and volunteers from Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust. During the last year HitB has seen a steady increase in attendees. November and December proved to be the busiest months of 2024, with over 200 young people visiting.

HitB is very grateful to the following organisations for grants received in 2024:

Organisation	Reason for Grant:	Grant Award
National Lottery Awards for All	Staff salaries at HITB	£10,000
Helping Hands	SEN evenings	£2,000
DVCRP - Rail Safety	HITB for delivering rail safety sessions	£2,000
SDC - Cultural Grant	To fund photograph lessons at HitB (camera and external instructor)	£1,000
Kent Youth Trust	Contribution towards three new gaming computers	£1,000

Over the course of the year, a wide range of events, activities and trips were held, including:

- Talks by some amazing organisations, such as:
 - Andy Watson, Kenwood Trust,
 - PCSO Tim Darling, Kent Police
 - Sarah & Ceri, West Kent Mind
- Regular arts and crafts, rock painting, nail art nights, Designing Your Perfect Planet competition, and monthly Pool and Darts Competitions.
- The launch of the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Project
- Joint detached work with West Kent Housing Youth Services
- Attendance at International Women's Day Lunch on 8th March
- Girls' skateboarding sessions provided by Samsara Sport and funded by Sevenoaks Town Council.
- BBQ with food provided by the wonderful team at Perfect Cuisine
- HitB inflatable dartboard at Greatness Family Fun Day
- Joint dance classes with West Kent Housing at the Stag Plaza suite
- Visit and photography session at the Kent Wildlife Reserve
- Trip to Broadstairs attended by 40 young people, accompanied by both HitB and West Kent Housing youth workers
- Skateness Skate Jam in August
- Outreach work to local schools and detached youth work at the Sevenoaks Climate Fair, Sevenoaks Bike Festival, Childrens' Robin Hood theatre show, skateboard events and Christmas Lights Switch On
- Return of Open Mic Nights at House in the Basement
- Very popular Christmas Party, with food being provided by Perfect Cuisine.

During 2024 several young people completed their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Volunteering sections with HitB and students from local schools took part in work experience placements.



Finally, HitB entered the ***"It's Your Neighbourhood"*** category for South East in Bloom 2024 and was delighted to receive the Level 4 Thriving award!!



Sevenoaks Youth Council

Sevenoaks Youth Council meetings are held approximately every six weeks in either the Town Council Offices or the HOUSE in the Basement Youth Café. Since its inception in 2009, the Youth Council has been a valuable forum for initiating and developing ideas and events and raising awareness of issues of concern for young people in Sevenoaks. All young people aged 11 to 17 who live or attend school within a 5-mile radius of Sevenoaks Town are welcome to attend. Meetings are generally held at 6 pm on Wednesdays.



On the 21st of September three Youth Councillors attended the Sevenoaks Bike Festival holding a bake sale to raise money for their nominated charity “Friends for Families.” Friends for Families is a local organisation that works with Children’s Services to support families facing financial hardship within the community.

Being a Youth Councillor is an opportunity to gain an insight into local democracy, to provide a voice for young people in our town, and to work

together and make a real contribution to your local community. If you are interested in joining please visit our [Sevenoaks Youth Council website](https://www.sevenoakstowncouncil.gov.uk/youthwork) or contact: youthwork@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

Other Youth Activities

Skateboarding Sessions for Girls

The Town Council arranged for Samsara Sport to provide a series of girls' skateboarding sessions that took place every Thursday over 6 weeks in April/May. Each Thursday had two sessions for different ages (7-12 and 12-17). All ten of the spaces for these sessions were completely booked along with the waiting lists for the sessions.



Robin Hood Rescues the Forest



On the 5th of May 2024 as part of Sevenoaks Town Council’s 50-year celebrations, a children’s theatre production of “*Robin Hood Rescues the Forest*” was performed by Aesop’s Theatre Company at Vine Gardens. The pending purchase of Longspring Wood by Sevenoaks Town Council and the residents of Sevenoaks was masterfully woven into the story to make it more relevant to current events within Sevenoaks Town.

Play Provision

Over the Summer Holidays, Sevenoaks Town Council hosted a range of different free summer activities for young people of various ages at a variety of locations around the town.

Family Fun Day

The Town Council hosted a Sevenoaks District Council funded Family Fun Day at Greatness Recreation Ground in August and added a number of additional attractions including baby dinosaurs, a variety of fairground attractions like Hook a Duck and Coconut Shy provided by West Kent Housing, and an inflatable dart board provided by the House in the Basement Youth Café. Around two hundred people flocked to the event in brilliant sunshine with slushies and candy floss on hand for refreshments.



Children's Theatre Shows

We were pleased to provide our popular free children's theatre shows again during August at: Bat & Ball Centre, Pontoise Close Play Area, Greatness Recreational Ground and Vine Gardens. This year's production was Wind in the Willows performed by the talented Cats Grin Theatre Company.

Despite one wet weather day, the shows were well attended with approximately 350 people attending over the course of the week.



Sevenoaks Skate Jam - 23rd August

We were delighted to receive sponsorship from Kent County Council, Sevenoaks District Council and West Kent Housing to fund a skateboard, BMX, and scooter event at Greatness Skate Park this year.

The event was provided by King Ramps who provided pro-skaters, BMX riders and TJ and Austin Terry, who had been seen on Britain's Got Talent, demonstrating their daring scooter tricks. The Kent Fire and Rescue Service was in attendance talking to young people about careers within the Fire Service along with Andy from Kenwood Trust talking to young people about making the right life choices regarding substance abuse and other issues that can negatively affect their quality of life. House in the Basement youth workers engaged with young people throughout the event. Over 100 young people attended.



Skateness - 1st November



Further skateboarding activity took place during the Autumn Half-term as Sevenoaks Town Council and Sevenoaks District Council funded Samsara Sport to once again take to the slopes of Greatness Skate Park and provide three sessions over the course of one day with the help of House in the Basement staff.

The two mixed sessions for 8-12s and 11-17s and the girls' session for 11-17s were all fully booked.

17. Planning

Planning & Environment Committee

Sevenoaks Town Council is a Statutory Consultee to the Local Planning Authority, Sevenoaks District Council, on planning applications received within Sevenoaks Town area. As such, it is consulted for its **recommendation** on most types of planning applications, which primarily consist of Full, Householder, Listed Building Consent, Advertising, Minor Material Amendments and Variation of Conditions. The Planning & Environment Committee's recommendations help to inform the District Council's decision on whether to approve or refuse a planning application by adding a local perspective.

The Planning & Environment Committee meets every two 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.

Meetings are open to the public, who are able to register to speak on either an item or planning application on the Agenda, or on any other related planning matter.

Planning & Environment Committees are held primarily at the Town Council Chambers, although the Bat & Ball Centre may be used as an alternative for meetings when a larger number of public is expected to attend. The venue will always be announced on the Planning & Environment Committee Agenda, which is published on the Tuesday preceding each meeting.

Meetings are live-streamed and uploaded onto YouTube, where they remain available for public to watch until the Minutes of that meeting have been ratified by the next meeting of the Town Council. This audio-visual feature also allows for hybrid meetings, so Committee members or registered speakers and/or presenters may attend virtually. Members of the Committee attending via Zoom may take part in discussions but are not permitted to vote on matters under consideration, as they do not legally constitute as being 'present' at the meeting.

Planning Applications

During 2024/2025, the Town Council will have commented on circa 335 planning applications submitted within the Sevenoaks Town Council area. It has supported Sevenoaks District Council in its refusal of applications via a number of virtual and in-person representations at the Development Management Committee.

Public Consultations

In addition to its role as a Statutory Consultee on planning applications within the Town, Sevenoaks Town Council also considered and made representation on the following key public consultations:

- The Government's proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and planning system
- Sevenoaks District Council's proposed early design concepts for Land East of High Street, Sevenoaks Town Centre
- Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council's amended joint proposals for an East to West Walking, Wheeling and Cycling route
- Transport for South East survey on the future of transport needs for the region
- Kent County Council's draft Local Transport Plan
- Kent County Council's draft Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- Sevenoaks District Council's revised planning validation requirements list
- Sevenoaks District Council's early ideas for a small business park at Otford Road, including four small industrial units and a drive-through café
- Sevenoaks District Council's proposals for the future of household waste collections

Assets of Community Value

The Right to Bid is a national process which allows voluntary and community groups as well as town/parish councils the opportunity to nominate local land and buildings to be included on a list of "assets of community value". The purpose of this is to give local community groups the opportunity to purchase the land by delaying its publication on the open market via a "moratorium". It was via this process that Longspring Wood was acquired by the Town Council, following its registration as a Community Asset in September 2023 and raising of funds during the moratorium period.

Sevenoaks Town Council has submitted a number of Community Asset nominations over the years, with the following additional applications having been pursued during the last year. Each successful listing will last 5 years from the date of its approval:

- Bradbourne Vale Road horses field – successful as of 10th October 2024
- Adult Education Centre – successful as of 25th September 2024
- Scouts 3rd Scout hut (Heathfield Road) – successful as of 17th September 2024
- Heathfield Road allotments – successful as of 4th September 2024
- Watercress Drive play space – successful as of 15th May 2024
- Otford Road Council bin depot – unsuccessful as of 31st July 2024
- Bus Station building – pending nomination
- Scouts 1st Scout hut (Oakhill Road) – pending nomination
- Sevenoaks Hospital – pending nomination
- Post Office / Sorting Office – pending nomination
- Sevenoaks Bus Station, Café and Public Toilets – pending nomination
- Sevenoaks Leisure Centre – pending nomination

- The Shambles – pending nomination
- Woodland opposite No's 36-74 Hillingdon Avenue – pending nomination
- Mill Pond – pending nomination
- West Kent Mind premises at 28-34 St John's Road – pending nomination

For an asset to be listed, it must be demonstrated that its main use now, or in recent past, contributes to the social wellbeing or cultural, recreational or sporting interests of the local community – and that this use will continue.

The listing of an Asset does not oblige the owners to sell only to local groups or those that submit an offer, nor does it prevent the asset from being purchased by private owners on the open market after the moratorium period. It also does not prevent the asset from being redeveloped by the existing landowner, as there is no requirement under government legislation for Local Planning Authorities to give an asset's listing material weight.

Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan (STNP)

The Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan (STNP) is a local planning policy document created by Sevenoaks Town Council in collaboration with local organisations, businesses, and residents, and was adopted, or “made” by the Local Planning Authority (Sevenoaks District Council) in May 2023. It now forms part of the local development framework and is used by Sevenoaks District Council's Planning Officers in their appraisal of planning applications in Sevenoaks Town. It has also helped Planning Inspectors to decide the outcome of various local appeals, adding weight to the local development framework.

Monitoring of the STNP is done via the STNP / Masterplan Working Group, which receives reports on how the STNP's Aims and Policies have been applied to planning applications within the Town. Also within this Group's remit is to review actions and future projects identified within the STNP or the Town Council's Masterplans and make recommendation on how these should be prioritised by the Town Council.

Membership is fluid and open to any local business or organisation within Sevenoaks Town who wish to be represented and have a say in future projects to improve Sevenoaks.

The STNP will be kept up to date via a Review, to take place 5 years from the date of its adoption (23rd May 2023). This will be fed into by Annual Reports, the first of which was published in May 2024, following approval of the STNP / Masterplan Working Group and the Planning & Environment Committee. Copy of the first Annual Report, which includes recommended actions and 5-year-review amendments proposed by the Working Group is available via [this link](#).

Further information, as well as Agendas and Minutes of the STNP / Masterplan Working Group can be found via [this link](#).

Masterplanning

In early 2024, Sevenoaks Town Council commissioned Urban Initiatives in collaboration with Urban Movement to produce two spatial vision documents to explore key development and improvement opportunities for the two key neighbourhood centres of Sevenoaks Town Centre and the St John's Area. Once completed and approved, these proposed Masterplan documents can be used by the Local Planning Authorities as well as developers to guide where and what development should take place in order to maximise spatial and public benefit.

Building upon work previously completed in the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan, the two Masterplans will identify key opportunities for future development – including design guidance, enhancements to cultural attractions, improvements to the pedestrian environment, any potential traffic mitigation measures and opportunities for greener infrastructure to enhance the biodiversity of the areas. The key purpose is to set out a clear vision - informed and endorsed by local people - for what future development should look like within the Town.

Public Consultation exercises for the draft St John's Hill Area Masterplan is due to take place throughout March 2025, including a survey, consultation boards at key locations, and an information stand at the Annual Town Public meeting on 17th March 2025.

This is separate to the still pending consultation on the draft Town Centre Masterplan, which has been temporarily delayed due to potential impact of the Local Government Reorganisation on the ownership of significant Town Centre assets. Consultation on the Town Centre Masterplan is expected Summer 2025.

Following each respective consultation, our consultants will then prepare the final Masterplans, taking into consideration responses received during the consultation.



New 20MPH Speed Limits in Sevenoaks Town

Delivery of the Sevenoaks Town 20mph signage-only scheme was completed September 2024, with installation works by Kent County Council and funding from Sevenoaks Town Council. The scheme was funded via Community Infrastructure Levy payments received by the Town Council from local developers.

This was the culmination of a lengthy process, whereby initial consultation on a wider scheme was held by Kent County Council in September 2022, revision of the original scheme was completed by a Working Group made up Sevenoaks District Council's Joint Transportation Board, and consultation on the resulting scheme was conducted by Sevenoaks Town Council as scheme promoter. On receipt of a vote in favour of the 20mph proposals, Sevenoaks Town Council recommended to the Joint Transportation Board, as well as Kent County Council's Portfolio Holder that it be approved in full, with site visits also having been attended with County Council staff to discuss measures which could increase compliance.

Final decision as to the extent of the scheme and its approval was made by the Portfolio Holder for Kent County Council, who deferred to the Joint Transportation Board's recommendation to remove St John's Hill / Dartford Road, Mount Harry Road, Hitchen Hatch Lane, and St Botolph's Road from the scheme. Sevenoaks Town Council has since requested inclusion of these roads as well as an extension on Seal Hollow Road and Tonbridge Road via a second phase of the 20mph speed limit project to its Highway Improvement Plan.

Sports Strategy Review

In 2015, Sevenoaks Town Council published its Sevenoaks Town Sports Strategy, which was created as part of the evidence base for the STNP and made recommendations on key projects to improve sports provision within Sevenoaks Town. This document has since resulted in over £1.2 million being invested into sports provision for the Town, with most of the priority projects having since been delivered.

In October 2023, Sevenoaks Town Council created a Sports Strategy Working Group comprising representatives of local sports clubs, organisations and groups to review and update this document in collaboration with the Town Council. Work on this document continued throughout 2024, and the draft second Sevenoaks Town Sports Strategy is currently being processed through Sevenoaks Town Council's Working Group and Committee system in order to approve and adopt the document. Once this process is complete, the final published document can be used by local sporting clubs, organisations and groups to support grant funding applications for improved and new sports provision within the Town.

Further information, as well as Agendas and Minutes of Sevenoaks Town Sports Strategy Group can be found on the [Working Group's webpage](#).

Highway Improvement Plan

Kent County Council's Highway Improvement Plan scheme provides local town and parish councils the opportunity to request and receive support in progressing their top priorities for highway improvements. Sevenoaks Town Council continues to work with Kent County Council staff as well as Local Member Kent Councillor Richard Streatfeild on its Highway Improvement Plan, with a revised Plan having been submitted to Kent County Council in August 2024.

Investigation as to which priorities could be delivered, as well as how, remains in progress by Kent County Council staff, with any updates on this to be published via the Planning & Environment Committee Agendas.

Copy of the most recent version of STC's Highway Improvement Plan is available to view via the link at the bottom of the [Planning & Environment Committee's webpage](#), with any updated versions to be uploaded underneath.

Speed Indicator Device

In February 2023, Sevenoaks Town Council invested in a Speed Indicator Device (SID) to be installed and periodically moved between the below three locations within Sevenoaks Town. The purpose of this device is to reinforce the 30mph speed limit in roads near schools which had been identified by the previous term's (2019-2023) Town Councillors as being especially prone to speeding:

- Bradbourne Vale Road near the entrance to the riding school (facing West)
- St Johns Hill near the Church (bidirectional)
- Brittains Lane near Beaconfields (bidirectional)

The equipment remains in each of its five allocated positions for 8 weeks each before being moved to the next location. This is in order to comply with traffic sign regulations, with the added benefit that it limits the effects of "sign blindness". Also known as "inattentive blindness", this can occur when a driver sees the same traffic signs every day, and therefore stops being as aware of and adhering to them.

The following schedule for when and where the SID will be located is outlined below, and will be reviewed again in May 2026:

St Johns Hill near Holly Bush Lane SOUTH (affecting North-bound traffic)	18 th December 2024 – 12 th February 2025
Brittains Lane by Beaconfields facing NORTH (affecting South-bound traffic)	12 th February 2025 – 8 th April 2025
Brittains Lane by Beaconfields facing SOUTH (affecting North-bound traffic)	8 th April 2025 – 4 th June 2025
Bradbourne Vale Road facing WEST (affecting East-bound traffic)	4 th June 2025 – 30 th July 2025

St Johns Hill near Holly Bush Lane NORTH (affecting South-bound traffic)	30 th July 2025 – 24 th September 2025
St Johns Hill near Holly Bush Lane SOUTH (affecting North-bound traffic)	24 th September 2025 – 19 th November 2025
Brittains Lane by Beaconfields facing NORTH (affecting South-bound traffic)	19 th November 2025 – 14 th January 2026
Brittains Lane by Beaconfields facing SOUTH (affecting North-bound traffic)	14 th January 2026 – 11 th March 2026
Bradbourne Vale Road facing WEST (affecting East-bound traffic)	11 th March 2026 – 6 th May 2026

18. Sevenoaks Town Team



Established in 2011, Sevenoaks Town Team is a Sevenoaks Town Council initiative bringing together a wide range of people

from the local community to establish Sevenoaks as a prosperous and vibrant place to visit, shop, and do business. Cllr Tony Clayton is Chair, and Maxine Morgans of Specsavers is Vice Chair.

Contact townteam@sevenoakstown.gov.uk for further information and details of events.

Town Team Projects in 2024

Public Realm Improvements

During 2022 a major scheme was undertaken to refresh the public realm in the town centre. This included painting 80 lamp posts, 55 bollards, belisha beacons and some of the waste bins. During 2023 the highway railings at Seal Hollow Road/High Street were painted and in 2024 the railings at Pembroke Road/London Road were done.

In 2023 a secondary scheme was undertaken to similarly treat the street furniture in St Johns Hill, Wickenden Road and St James Road.

Completing the project, the highway railings at the Sevenoaks Rail Station bridge were also painted in 2024.

This is an ongoing project, and the Town Team will be looking to refresh these works in future years.



Flags in St John Hills & Hollybush

For many years flags have been displayed on the town centre shops for events such as Britain in Bloom, the panto and royal occasions.

In 2024 the sites have been extended with thanks to the assistance of Wealden Properties which worked with the Town Team on the project. 17 new flag holders have been installed on some of their properties in Hollybush and St Johns Hill.



Lighting the Vine

Adding colour and interest to Vine Gardens, five of the trees are now illuminated at night.

The default colour is white, though the lighting runs through a spectrum and can be altered to suit an occasion.

The first such occasion was Remembrance Day when red was used.



Sevenoaks Town Trail

In 2021 the Town Team launched a self-guided walking trail taking in 23 historic sites and buildings, mostly in the town centre.

The trail is on the TrailTale app which is a free to use attraction. As at December 2024 the trail had been downloaded 607 times.



Shop Survey

A survey of all the ground floor “shop” properties in Sevenoaks was first undertaken in March 2023. This included businesses such as dentists, Stag, car dealership etc. Of the 313 premises identified just 6.1% were vacant at that time. This was against a national average of 14.1%. In 2024 the survey was repeated to find that just 3.4% were vacant compared with the national average at 13.8%.

Sevenoaks Mystery Shopper

A Mystery Shopper survey has been undertaken to explore the performance of a range of 30 Sevenoaks businesses and then for those businesses to benchmark themselves against the average for their sector: Retail, hospitality, professional services etc.



The overall result has been very pleasing with high scores for the majority of businesses. Sevenoaks can be proud! Each business has privately received its own report from which it can learn where there are opportunities for improvement. If funding permits the exercise will be repeated in 2025.

Sevenoaks Business Show

This is an annual event which is held at the Bat & Ball Centre. Around 30 businesses take part and the majority plan to return in 2025.

Our thanks to Clive Emson Auctioneers who were the main sponsors for the fourth year.

The highlight of the 2024 show was the announcement that Sevenoaks is considering the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID). More on this below.



Vegan Markets



In addition to Sevenoaks' three traditional town centre weekly markets, Vegan markets have been introduced. Each event attracts about 30 stalls. They are held in Vine Gardens, which provides the opportunity for live music to be played on the bandstand.

These markets are held on the first Saturday of April and October.

Sevenoaks Street Food and Bike Festivals



Though not strictly Town Team events, The Team facilitated both these highly popular events through liaison with the organisers, facilitating the venue, services and undertaking promotion. They will both be returning to The Vine in 2025 with the Street Food Festival being on 6th September and the Bike Festival on the 20th September.

Sevenoaks Business Awards

Sevenoaks hosts an annual Business Awards celebration at the Bat & Ball Centre. It is the centrepiece of the business year in the town and well supported by both sponsors and competing businesses.

This year the speaker was Lennox Cato and local magician, Bob Pound, entertained too.



Our thanks to the following sponsors for their generous contributions:

- Warners Solicitors
- Specsavers Sevenoaks
- Sevenoaks Town Council
- Kent County Council
- Knocker and Foskett Solicitors
- Sevenoaks District Chamber of Commerce
- Kallkwik

Best Dressed Christmas Wwindow



This popular event never fails to delight. There are three categories, being retail, non-retail and charity shop. The retail windows are perhaps the hardest to judge with a handful of specialist shops vying each year to take top slot. This year Sevenoaks Bookshop took the honours. The non-retail category throws up different contenders each year and in 2024 it was a very clever town scene at No 33 Hairdressers in Hollybush Lane which succeeded. The charity shops often rely on items donated through the year to dress their windows, so to an

extent it is pot-luck how they are dressed. The London Road branch of Hospice in the Weald came top this time.

The event was kindly sponsored by Berry & Lamberts Solicitors and the Chamber of Commerce with Marco's donating one of the three winners gift vouchers.

Holly Party

Recognising that not every business can afford typical staff Christmas party costs of perhaps £60-80 per person, the Town Team has created an event which is far more manageable.

In 2024 at just £25, partygoers enjoyed an evening with an Abba tribute band and June B entertaining. A superb seasonal buffet was provided by Perfect Cuisine.



Sevenoaks BID



Over 330 UK towns and cities operate a BID – a Business Improvement District. Starting at the 2024 Business Show the Team introduced the concept of the Sevenoaks BID, a vehicle funded by businesses to enhance and build the economy of the town, putting it on an even footing with neighbours such as Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and Orpington with which we compete for business and both resident & visitor satisfaction.

A BID is a private company with a board made up of businesspeople. It is independent of any council, though as its work will augment existing council services it is likely that one or two council representatives will sit on it.

After lengthy consultation with a broad degree of business agreement, a steering committee has been formed to develop the Business Plan. This will be put to a ballot of qualifying businesses and if successful the BID will come into being, pumping around £250,000 each year into projects in Sevenoaks all aimed to make the place more vibrant and boost its economy.

19. Town of Sanctuary



In June 2023, Sevenoaks Town Council and Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees were pleased to be accredited with the first Town of Sanctuary award for the town of Sevenoaks. The City of Sanctuary movement encourages a more welcoming UK for people forced to flee their homes, encouraging inclusivity, solidarity, and compassion for people from a forced displacement background.

The Mayor nominated Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees as one of the charities she would be fundraising for during her year of office 2024/25. A fundraising concert hosted by the Mayor at the Stag theatre took place in April.

From 13th to 21st June the Town Council hosted an experience at the Bradbourne Vale Road site called **Desperate Journeys**, provided by two charities Empathy Action and Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees: <https://www.empathyaction.org/desperate-journeys>

This was an immersive refugee crisis workshop, exploring the global refugee crisis by tracking the journey of a family forced from their home in a war-torn country: based firmly on facts, first-hand accounts and case studies the workshop brought home the human stories behind the headlines. Local community and school groups attended, as well as Town Councillors and staff. The Mayor accompanied two local schools and the Sea Cadets on their visits.

The Town of Sanctuary flag was flown at the Vine during Refugee Week in June.

20. Community Engagement & Communications

The Town Council continued to seek to inform and engage residents through print publications, social media and online information via the website www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk

The Town Crier Quarterly Publication

Recognising that many people do not go online, or do not have access to the internet, the Town Council continues to give importance to the quarterly Town Crier magazine which is delivered via Royal Mail to homes in the Sevenoaks Town boundaries.



This is a valuable resource to deliver information about consultations, council activities, events and developments in the town and to encourage participation in the life of the town.

Posters, banners and flyers are also used to inform residents about events, consultations or services.

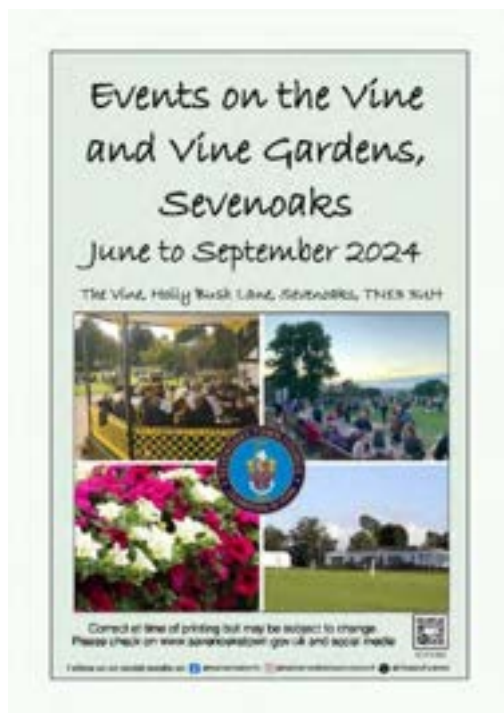
Online sign-up to The Town Crier

Anyone can now sign up to receive the electronic version of the Town Crier direct to their email inbox – go to www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk and there is a sign-up link on the home page.

Social media

Social media platforms Facebook, Instagram and X are continuing to develop a good following.

New Vine Events brochure



A new brochure bringing together all the events on the Vine and Vine Gardens was produced for the first time in 2024.

This incorporated a listing of events from the Sevenoaks Summer Festival, the Music on the Bandstand events and children's theatre performances organised by the Town Council.

In addition, it included events from the Vine Cricket Club, fairs on the Vine such as the Climate Fair, food fairs and other events with the aim of informing residents of what was going on, and of encouraging visitors to the town.

Brochures were widely distributed and available to pick up in hotspots and community centres throughout the area.

21. Summary

As we prepare this report Kent is at the beginning of a landmark change to local government due to the reorganisation proposed by government. Sevenoaks residents since 1974 have had Kent County Council, Sevenoaks District Council and Sevenoaks Town Council.

The proposed structure will consist of a county Kent Mayor, potentially four combined Unitary Authorities and town and parish councils.

Sevenoaks District Council would potentially be amalgamated with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council.

This will create many local challenges and opportunities for Sevenoaks Town Council as it seeks to provide the best possible representation and managing of local facilities for residents when Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council are removed and reorganised.

Functions & Facilities provided by Sevenoaks Town Council

Precept

Sevenoaks Town Council's total annual revenue budget for the 2025/26 financial year is £1,997,096. The average Band D household would pay £153.67 per year, equating to £2.96 per week.

OPEN SPACES & LEISURE

- ALLOTMENTS:
Bradbourne Vale Road
Quaker's Hall Lane
- BETHEL ROAD BURIAL GROUND
- BRITTAINS COMMON
- BRITTAINS LANE WOOD
- GREATNESS RECREATION GROUND
- THE GREEN, HILLINGDON RISE
- HANGING BASKETS
- HORSE TROUGHS (*Old Police Station, Rheinbach Gardens, St Botolph's Road*)
- JUDD'S PIECE
- LAND AT:
Letterbox Lane
Littlewood
Tonbridge Road
- LONGSPRING WOOD
- MUGA (Multi Use Games Area)
- MIDDLEINGS WOOD
- MILLPOND WOOD
- PLANTERS (*The Shambles, Dorset Street, Pembroke Road, London Road, Buckhurst Lane*)
- THE POUND, POUND LANE
- RALEY'S FIELD & KNOLE PADDOCK
- RHEINBACH GARDENS
- SEVENOAKS COMMON
- SPORTS PITCHES
- UPPER HIGH STREET GARDENS
- VINE CRICKET GROUND & PAVILION
- VINE GARDENS
Public toilet, telephone kiosk with defibrillator

- WAR MEMORIAL
- WHITE HART BEECHES
- WOODSIDE ROAD OPEN SPACE

CAR PARKS

- RALEYS CAR PARK

PLAY AREAS

- BUCKHURST LANE PLAY AREA
- GREATNESS RECREATION GROUND & PLAYGROUND
- HILLINGDON RISE PLAY AREA
- JULIANS MEADOW & PLAYGROUND
- KIPPINGTON MEADOW
- MOUNT CLOSE OPEN SPACE & PLAYGROUND
- PONTOISE CLOSE OPEN SPACE & PLAYGROUND

SERVICES

- BAT & BALL CENTRE
(formerly Sevenoaks Community Centre)
Available for hire: meetings, conferences etc.
- BAT & BALL STATION BUILDING (*including Café and rooms available to hire*)
batandballstation.com
- BUSINESS HUB
- BUS SHELTERS (*Dartford Road x1, Bradbourne Vale Road x2, London Road x2, Tonbridge Road x1*)
- CAFÉ ON THE VINE cafeonthevine.com
- CONSULTEES (*Planning, Highways, etc.*)
- GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS
- GREATNESS PARK CEMETERY

- HOUSE IN THE BASEMENT (HITB) YOUTH CAFÉ (*available for hire*)
houseinthebasement.weebly.com
- INFO-PODS & DIGITAL DISPLAY SCREENS
- LITTER BINS AND GRIT BINS
- MARKETS (*Wednesday and Saturday*)
- MASTERPLAN FOR NORTHERN SEVENOAKS
- NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
- ORBITAL NO 8 BUS
- PUBLIC CLOCKS (*Jubilee Clock Old Market House and Warren Clock above Brewers*)
- PUBLIC SEATS IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS
- PUBLIC TOILETS (*The Stag, The Vine, Lower St Johns, Greatness Recreation Ground*)
- SEVENOAKS TOWN TEAM
sevenoakspartnership.org
- STAG COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE
Defibrillator in foyer
stagsevenoaks.co.uk
- STREET LIGHTS IN SOME UNADOPTED ROADS
- TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES/CHAMBER
Available for hire: meetings, conferences etc.
- TWINNING WITH PONTOISE AND RHEINBACH
- YOUTH COUNCIL
sevenoaksyouthcouncil.weebly.com

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS IN TOWN
- CIVIC FUNCTIONS
- VINE BANDSTAND/FREE SUMMER CONCERTS

Town Councillors 2023-2027

NAME	PARTY	NAME	PARTY
EASTERN WARD		ST JOHNS WARD	
Cllr L Ancrum	Liberal Democrat	Cllr S Camp	Liberal Democrat
Cllr A S Clayton	Liberal Democrat	Cllr Dr P Dixon	Liberal Democrat
Cllr S Layne	Liberal Democrat	Cllr D Skinner OBE	Liberal Democrat
KIPPINGTON WARD		TOWN WARD	
Cllr C Daniell	Liberal Democrat	Cllr V Granville	Liberal Democrat
Cllr C Gustard	Liberal Democrat	Cllr L Michaelides	Liberal Democrat
Cllr N Varley	Liberal Democrat	Cllr G Willis	Liberal Democrat
NORTHERN WARD		WILDERNESSE WARD	
Cllr Dr M Canet	Liberal Democrat	Cllr N Wightman	Liberal Democrat
Cllr L O'Hara	Liberal Democrat	To contact a Sevenoaks Town Councillor, please use the following email format: Cllr.surname@sevenoakstown.gov.uk eg. to contact Councillor Ancrum, the email address would be: Cllr.Ancrum@sevenoakstown.gov.uk	
Cllr C Shea	Liberal Democrat		



Town Clerk/Chief Executive:

Linda Larter MBE

townclerk@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

RFO/Deputy Town Clerk:

Georgina Jackson

rfo@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

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

council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk



