



Town Clerk's Update



Council news and information from Sevenoaks Town Clerk, Linda Larter MBE

24 April 2026

Local Government Reorganisation & Community Asset Transfers



Community Asset Transfers continues to be an important topic and a current priority.



In 2025, Sevenoaks District Council invited town and parish councils in the district to review assets owned by the District Council and put forward business cases for transfer prior to the creation of the expected new Unitary Council.



Sevenoaks Town Council is aware that Sevenoaks District Council will be required to transfer all major commercial assets e.g. large car parks, commercial office buildings, hotel to the new Unitary Authority. For this reason, the Town Council have not been requesting any of the larger commercial assets only those community assets originally donated to the town's people.

It is difficult to see how the two Sevenoaks local authorities will be able to align when they approach the transfer from different aims.

Sevenoaks District Council has stated publicly that it needs under direction of its auditors, Grant Thornton UK, to aim to maximise income and future development opportunities from community assets and charge Existing Use Value / Market Value to town and parish councils for these.

Sevenoaks Town Council's aim is to preserve and enhance current community assets for current and future communities. It is requesting that community assets be transferred at '**Best Value**' which takes into account social, economic and environmental well-being. **Community Assets can legally be transferred at a nominal or nil transfer value if valued under £2m.**

Thousands of pounds have been spent on professional independent Red Book Valuations only for these to be dismissed by District Council Officers who have now provided their own valuations with no supporting evidence.

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Hundreds of hours of officers' professional time have been put into creating Business Cases for the transfer of the assets demonstrating Best Value (social, economic and wellbeing) for these to be verbally overturned in the case of Hollybush Recreation Ground, which has been operated for years in financial deficit. Suddenly, now at Cabinet there is a verbal report that the District Council have a plan for it to make more money and create community enhancements to the open space (some of which are also in the Town Council's Business Case). No details, no business plan, no consultation with Town Council, Residents Association, Sports Clubs / Tenants or general public – and this verbal report was welcomed by the Cabinet.

Prior to the Cabinet Meeting this week, the Town Council requested a liaison meeting on these matters – this was declined.

Please see below updates following the Sevenoaks District Council's Cabinet meeting this week:

Stag Community Arts Centre

The good news is that Sevenoaks District Council has categorically confirmed it will not consider putting the Stag out to open market following the recent commercial interest as per information in meeting with Town Clerk and in its agenda papers.

Sevenoaks District Council has deferred its decision on whether to transfer the asset until June due to seeking additional legal advice. It is not clear what this additional legal advice now relates to as originally it was how to progress in light of the commercial interest.

This recent unexpected drama has only strengthened the Town Council's resolve to seek the transfer of the Freehold of the Stag as per its original petition (currently over 7,000 signed) - see below to avoid such events happening again with Sevenoaks District Council or the future Unitary Authority and enable sustainable investment into the community asset.

Sevenoaks District Council also confirmed its own policy (not in line with legislation for transfer of Community Assets under £2m) that any Community Asset Transfer should take place at Existing Use Value / Market Value, as it is not fair on District residents that an asset is passed to one town or parish council at nil or nominal value. In the case of the Stag this is expected to be £650,000 which would fall to the residents of Sevenoaks town to pay.

SIGN THE PETITION

Petition for Sevenoaks District Council to transfer the freehold of the Stag Community Arts Centre to Sevenoaks Town Council at no further cost



Please sign the petition here:
www.change.org/stagfreehold

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Hollybush Recreation Ground

Sevenoaks District Council has confirmed it does not intend to transfer the recreation ground to Sevenoaks Town Council (*see recommendation below) and therefore it will automatically transfer to the new Unitary Authority when created.

New information was introduced at the Cabinet meeting: Sevenoaks District Council intend to develop the facilities at the recreation ground. Such plans have not been shared with the Town Council who they know has been diligently investing resources into the Community Asset Transfer process, nor Resident Association, sports clubs tenants or local residents. It is unclear how such plans would be achieved prior to creation of a new Unitary Authority.

It is also unclear how such development plans will be paid for. The Town Council hopes it is not as per Sevenoaks District Council agenda papers:

- Existing café and tennis leases are significantly undervalued
- The introduction of padel tennis represents a material commercial opportunity
- Improved café provision has been identified as a key driver of footfall and income
- Enabling residential development has been identified as a mechanism to fund park improvements.

**Sevenoaks District Council Recommendation: Hollybush Park is a large, operational and income producing recreational estate containing leased sports facilities, a café, car parking and an operational depot. The asset has significant income generating and capital optimisation potential and is required to support ongoing service delivery and future investment. Transfer would materially undermine financial resilience and does not meet the requirements of the adopted Disposals Policy. Therefore, it is not supported.*

Note: The Town Council's Business Case includes financials provided direct from the District Council indicating an annual net cost of £3,000 p.a. Provision within the Business Case was suggested for continued free use of the Depot by the District Council and future Unitary Authority. Overage was agreed.



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Land at High Street - Market Rights

Sevenoaks District Council confirmed last night (*see recommendation below) that it would not transfer the Market Rights (5 market stalls) to Sevenoaks Town Council as they state they will be a strategic asset for the new Unitary Authority who will be able to obtain higher rents from other market operators.



Sevenoaks Town Council's licence to operate the market ends 17th April 2027, currently with an option to renew for one year.

**Sevenoaks District Council Recommendation: The High Street Market Rights are a strategic, income generating and culturally significant asset, but not a land interest, integral to wider town centre regeneration. Retention ensures a continued income stream for the Council and future unitary authority as well as coordinated market management and avoids fragmenting control during an active redevelopment phase of the town centre.*

Note: The commercial proposal recommended has been tried and failed and is not considered Best Value for local residents.

Land at Bradbourne Vale Road (Horses field)

Sevenoaks District Council confirmed last night that it would not transfer the Horses Field to Sevenoaks Town Council, as they state it will be a strategic asset for the new Unitary Authority for the following reasons:

The site is located within the Local Plan evidence as having potential to contribute to future housing delivery. Transfer would fetter the Council's ability to meet acute housing need and realise long term economic and infrastructure benefits. Retention is therefore Recommended.



Note: the land's income is currently £750 p.a. leased to the Riding School for the Disabled. Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Development Plan designates the land for allotments should the riding school leave.



Shambles

Sevenoaks District Council confirmed at its meeting on 21st April 2026 to transfer the Shambles to Sevenoaks Town Council, as it would secure long term local stewardship, support town centre vitality and remove a modest net revenue liability from the District Council.

Sevenoaks Town Council looks forward to taking over the site, providing some TLC, and promoting it as part of its Cultural Strategy.



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For further background information about Community Asset Transfers, see our FAQ document at: <https://qrco.de/catfaq>.



Resolution passed at the STC Finance Meeting on 20th April 2026:

Sevenoaks Town Council have serious concerns about Sevenoaks District Council's Recommendations for Community Asset Transfers which are due to be considered at their Cabinet meeting tomorrow evening.

The Town Council had hoped to have had a liaison meeting to discuss these concerns with the District Council.

The Town Council believes that the Recommendations do not reflect Best Value for local residents and what is best for the community in relation to economically, socially and for their wellbeing.

The proposed charges for land arbitrary set at £5 sqm and potentially Market Value for the Stag at £650k is one of the serious concerns, as the funding of these transfers will fall direct to local residents to pay for assets already owned by the public.

It is therefore Recommended that if Sevenoaks District Council does not agree to handing over the following Community Assets (Stag, Hollybush Recreation Ground, Horses Field, Market Rights and Shambles) at nominal value as allowed by legislation, Sevenoaks Town Council will use all avenues and resources available to contest this in the best interest of the current and future generations of Sevenoaks residents.

It is hoped that other parish councils whose residents will be similarly impacted will join us.

Past Mayor Maurice Short

This week, Town Councillors and I attended Maurice Short's Memorial Service. Maurice was a Town Councillor for many years and a Mayor three times. He dedicated his life to public service in various ways, including via the church and as a Rotarian. The memorial service was rightly packed. Our condolences to his wife Gina, family and friends.

Future Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Council?

We were pleased to show Tunbridge Wells Borough Councillors around some of Sevenoaks Town Council's assets including the current building project for the new Greatness Sports Pavilion. We wish them well on their journey to create a new Town Council and look forward to working with them.



My meetings

My meetings since the last update were:

- Finance & Development Committee*
- Town Council *
- SDC Cabinet Meeting
- Maurice Short (former Mayor) Memorial

*All of Sevenoaks Town Council's main meetings are open to the public and available to watch live on YouTube see www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk for details.

Greatness Recreation Ground Pavilion



Last week, the contractors made strong progress. First-fix drainage on the first floor is complete, all screeding works are finished, carpenters have moved from cladding to first-floor and undercroft studwork, and all window frames and glazing are now installed, fully enclosing the building.

This week, the roofers will finish the main roof, the mastic contractor will seal all frames and joints, the plumbers will start first-fix copper pipework on the first floor, and the carpenters will continue internal and undercroft works.

At the Town Council's Finance & Delivery Committee this week, Councillors signed off £159,000 towards the next stage of the project - hard and soft landscaping. This will include improvements to car park, emergency vehicle access ways, new pedestrian and cycle paths, electric vehicle charging, cycle stands trees and hedging.

Keep up to date on the progress of the building by reading weekly updates from the building contractor, Longley, on our website:

[https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Greatness Recreation Ground Community Sports Pavilion_50170.aspx](https://www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk/Greatness_Recreation_Ground_Community_Sports_Pavilion_50170.aspx)



Free theatre show and how to volunteer for Sevenoaks in Bloom

Families are invited to come along to the Vine on Sunday 3rd May for a free theatre show, as part of Sevenoaks in Bloom.

As this year marks David Attenborough's 100th birthday, Sevenoaks in Bloom will be celebrating his work. The campaign will also highlight the importance of bugs, with planting focused on pollinator-friendly flowers.

Creative volunteers are being asked to knit or crochet butterflies and caterpillars for displays around the town. Gardening volunteers are encouraged to help with weeding and tidying. Residents and businesses are also invited to 'Adopt a Planter' to maintain in town. Local schools are getting involved too, with pupils creating David Attenborough-themed sculptures and painting bug-themed rocks to decorate public spaces.

If you would like to get involved, please email communityeng@sevenoakstown.gov.uk



Town Council investing in sports facilities

Sevenoaks Town Council (STC) has approved funding for a significant upgrade to the lighting at Raleys Field, marking an important investment in the town's recreational facilities. At its Finance & Delivery Committee meeting on 20 April, Town Councillors agreed to allocate £60,577.53 from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds (contributions secured from local development) for the installation of a new five-mast LED floodlighting system.

With the funding now approved, Sevenoaks Town Council will proceed with submitting a planning application for the project.

Raleys Field (the northernmost field) and Knole Paddock (the southern field) together form a key hub for local sport. The site is home to Sevenoaks Rugby Football Club and is widely used for rugby, football and cricket training, matches and community sport. The upgraded lighting will enhance year-round use of the facilities.

Cllr Dr Merylyn Canet, Chair of STC's Community Assets (Open Spaces) Committee, commented, "Sevenoaks Town Council continues to support Sevenoaks Rugby Club to enable them to have good facilities for their members. The lights for the pitch support more training in the darker months. We wish them continued success for the next season."

In addition to the permanent floodlights, the Town Council has also approved the purchase of portable floodlights at a cost of £4,449.24. These will provide flexible lighting options across both Raleys Field and Knole Paddock, increasing their usability throughout the year.



Save the date

Visit our events page for more information: www.tinyurl.com/STCNewsEvents

Date	Event	Venue
Saturday 2 May	Climate Fair	Vine
Sunday 3 May	Professor Slug's House of Bugs Theatre Show	Vine
Saturday 30 May	Health & Wellness Fair	Vine
Friday 5 June	Sevenoaks Business Show	Bat & Ball Centre
Friday 12 and Saturday 13 June	Beer on the Vine	Vine
Tuesday 4 August	Family Fun Day	Greatness Recreation Ground
Wednesday 5 August	Skateness	Greatness Recreation Ground
Friday 20 November	Sevenoaks Business Awards	Bat & Ball Centre

Wishing you a good weekend,
Linda

