

Sevenoaks Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Sevenoaks Town Council Held on Monday 1st September 2025 in Council Chamber, Town Council Offices, TN13 3QG

Livestreamed and available to view on YouTube until minutes approved by Council:

<https://youtube.com/live/adzBfVcJD5o>

Meeting commenced: 7.05 pm

Meeting Concluded: 7.50 pm

Present:

Cllr Tony Clayton, Mayor	Present	Cllr Sally Layne	Apologies
Cllr Victoria Granville, Deputy Mayor	Present	Cllr Lise Michaelides	Present
Cllr Libby Ancrum	Present	Cllr Lionel O'Hara	Present
Cllr Sue Camp	Present	Cllr Claire Shea, Leader	Present
Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet	Present	Cllr David Skinner OBE	Present
Cllr Catherine Daniell, Deputy Leader	Apologies	Cllr Nick Varley	Apologies
Cllr Dr Peter Dixon	Apologies	Cllr Gareth Willis	Present
Cllr Chloe Gustard	Apologies	Cllr Nigel Wightman	Present

In attendance: Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, and Senior Committee Clerk.

Members of public present: 2

Representations received from members of the public

Prior to the meeting, Michael Richardson from Good News Everyone (formerly Gideons UK) presented the Mayor with a bible for the Town Council and offered all councillors a copy of New Testament Psalms & Proverbs. The Mayor thanked him for the gifts.

Cllr Richard Streatfeild, Sevenoaks District Council & Kent County Council (KCC), gave an update on key matters:

- KCC budget consultation 2026-27 was in process
- £50m savings needed to be found in year
- Regarding Local Government Organisation, KCC Reform UK had put forward a single unitary council for Kent and Medway proposal, whilst the opposition view favoured a three unitary model
- Sevenoaks Primary School had to delay the return to school for Years 3 to 5, following vandalism of a generator and theft of cabling, KCC was working closely with the Headteacher & Trustees to reopen for all pupils
- No update yet available on East West Cycle Route, which was scheduled to finish in the Autumn

287 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted as noted above.

288 - REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

It was noted that all Town Councillors who were also Stag Trustees had a pre-approved dispensation, to enable them to discuss matters relating to the Stag (Minute 292 below).

289 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

290 - MINUTES OF MEETING OF SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON 21ST JULY 2025

RESOLVED: To receive, adopt and sign the Minutes of the Meeting of Sevenoaks Town Council held on 21st July 2025 as a true record.

291 - MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

RESOLVED: To receive and adopt the Minutes of the following Committees, and the Notes of the inquorate meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on 11th August:

Planning & Environment Committee

- 28th July 2025
- 11th August 2025 (Notes)
- 26th August 2025

Finance & Delivery Committee

- 21st July 2025

Community Assets (Open Spaces) Committee

- 4th August 2025

292 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW - SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS

Within the Local Government Review, the Town Council submitted six Expressions of Interest to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) for Tranche 1 of the Community Asset Transfer programme:

1. Stag Community Arts Centre
2. Hollybush Recreation Ground
3. Land at Bradbourne Vale Road – Horses field

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4. Land at High Street / Market Rights
5. St John's Hill Car Park
6. St James Road Car Park

All but the Stag had received 'guidance from SDC' not to pursue but SDC also advised that Town and Parish Councils could continue along the process at their 'own risk'.

Consideration of the transfer of the Stag was to be considered at SDC's Finance & Investment Advisory Committee on 2nd September 2025, with the report recommendation proposing a 100-year lease for the Stag on a peppercorn rent to Sevenoaks Town Council.

Sevenoaks Town Council (STC) had several concerns with taking on a 100-year lease rather than the Freehold of the Stag. The proposal could provide financial disadvantages to the Town Council, and ultimately the Stag charity, for the following reasons:

- current proposals for future significant investment in the Stag would need permission from the new Unitary Authority, as would loans or entering into long-term agreements
- the lease arrangement would likely include regular rent reviews, and the new Unitary Authority could decide to demand a rent that made the Stag unviable operationally
- the proposed lease excluded the current car parking area which was vital for staff, volunteers and show 'load-ins' which often involve large trucks

The SDC report also stated that the Stag could be sold on the open market for £1.5m, however, this is not the case. STC still has a 10-year lease and there are many planning restrictions. An independent professional valuation had provided a current market value of £400k - £750k. Since 2009, when STC took over the Stag with the charity it has enabled £1.5m capital investment via grants etc. into the building. If there were concerns that STC might sell the building in the future, an overage (payment for development) could be applied to the Freehold.

Sevenoaks Town Council hopes the District Council will reconsider and transfer the Freehold of the Stag, ensuring the community retains this cultural facility, enabling continued investment for future generations, and avoiding any opportunity for it to be considered for development.

The Town Council is also at this stage continuing to progress requests for Community Asset Transfers by completing a Business Proposal for Hollybush Recreation Ground, Land at Bradbourne Vale Road (Horses Field) and Land at High Street (Market Rights). These are expected to be considered in Tranche 2.

SDC are inviting further Expression of Interest submissions for Community Asset Transfers for Tranche 2 by 12th September.

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The Town Council's ongoing consultation with residents in the form of a survey asking which community assets should be requested, revealed that as of 26th August the top six were: Stag Theatre & Cinema, Hollybush Recreation Ground, Land at High Street – Market Rights, Bradbourne Lakes, Land at Bradbourne Vale (Horses Field) and The Shambles.

Council received and noted a letter from Bradbourne Residents' Association expressing reservations about the transfer of Bradbourne Lakes to the Town Council due to potential impact on the renovation project, Bradbourne Re-Bourne, and the District Council's commitments to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), including the 10-year management Plan. Due to the lack of firm details at this stage the Residents' Association did not feel able to support the transfer of Bradbourne Lakes to the Town Council at this time.

It is very unfortunate that the timing of the progressing of the Bradbourne Lakes HLF Funding coincides with the Local Government Review. The timing of this could be crucial to delivery and bearing in mind the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government guidance issued in July 2025 about potential financial commitments for the new Unitary Authority. The new shadow and ultimately Unitary Authority may not want to take on such commitments.

Sevenoaks Town Council would be submitting an Expression of Interest for the Community Asset Transfer as an additional "safety net" in case there is a need for a different "successor Council" at the time of the HLF decision in relation to Local Government Review.

Discussion took place about The Shambles and how this cultural area could be maintained by the Town Council.

RESOLVED that Sevenoaks Town Council:

- 1) strongly confirms its preference for the transfer of the Freehold of the Stag rather than a lease
- 2) submits Expressions of Interest for Bradbourne Lakes and The Shambles in SDC Tranche 2
- 3) continues to review appropriate assets which should be transferred to the local council – noting that these negotiations may need to be required to take place with the new shadow Unitary Council.

293 - SEVENOAKS LAWN TENNIS CLUB, LAND REGISTRY DOCUMENT

RESOLVED: That the signing and sealing of Sevenoaks Lawn Tennis Club Land Registry document, removing the charge in relation to the loan discharged by the Club some years ago, be approved.

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294 - FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

RESOLVED: To note the request received under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for details of houses in multiple occupation. The matter was outside the remit of the Town Council and applicant was advised to contact Sevenoaks District Council, the appropriate authority for housing and licensing matters.

295 - COMPLETED MATTERS BY COMMITTEES

RESOLVED: To receive and note schedule of actions completed by Committees since the election of the current Council in May 2023.

296 - REPORTS TO COUNCIL - STC REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Michaelides reported that she was the new representative on the CPRE Sevenoaks Committee and had attended a recent meeting. It was an active group, with one of its tasks being to review planning applications.

297 - MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor and other colleagues for their help in attending events on his behalf when he was unable to.

RESOLVED: To receive and note:

1. Functions attended by the Mayor or his representative up to 24th August 2025
2. Forthcoming Civic Events being organised by the Mayor during 2025/2026

298 - PRESS RELEASE

RESOLVED: that a press release be issued in respect of Sevenoaks District Council's Community Asset Transfer Process and the Town Council's concerns regarding the District's proposal to offer the Town Council a 100- year lease of the Stag rather than transferring the freehold.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the Meeting.

Signed
Mayor

Dated