

Sevenoaks Town Council's Engagement Community Strategy

Working with the Community to make Sevenoaks a pleasant place to live, work and visit

The aim of the Council will be to offer community leadership to ensure Sevenoaks develops into the best market town in Kent, the objective will be realized in two ways. First, by engagement in local initiatives and forming relationships with other stakeholders. Secondly, by promoting the wellbeing of residents of the town through support for leisure, sporting and cultural activities, by improving the environment and infrastructure of the town and by fostering its commercial prosperity.

1. Sevenoaks Town Council aims to

- i) Provide functions and facilities within the town for the benefit of the local community
- ii) Work alongside other partners and the local community to continue to ensure that Sevenoaks is one of the safest places to live in the UK.
- iii) Supporting and encouraging improvements to enable the Health and Well Being of local residents
- iv) Supporting and promoting the economic viability of the town for a more prosperous community.
- v) Act as an advocate to promote the needs and interests of the local community
- vi) Put in place governance arrangements to manage Sevenoaks Town Council's resources effectively

2. Sevenoaks Town Council's objective is to work alongside the community to make Sevenoaks a pleasant and prosperous place to live, work and visit.

3. Sevenoaks Community

Sevenoaks Town is situated 20 miles South East of London with a population of 18,500 and is primarily a commuter town with good rail links to Central London and the City. The Town is split into six wards namely Eastern, Kippington, Northern, St Johns, Town and Wildernesse and is represented in total by 16 Town Councillors.

Sevenoaks is an affluent town but has pockets of deprivation and the Town Council strives to communicate and represent all of the residents equally. There is low unemployment and it is difficult for low wage earners to live in the town as house prices are high.

4. Provision of Information to the Community

- i) Minutes and Agendas. These will be available in paper form from the Sevenoaks Town Council offices or to download off the Sevenoaks Town Council website.
- ii) Notice of Meetings. Notices will be displayed on the Town Council notice boards and on the Town Council website.
- iii) Accounts – following completion of Audit, accounts will be available for collection from Sevenoaks Town Council offices and from the Town Council website. Regular financial reports are provided within the Finance and General Purposes Committee Agenda supporting paperwork (see i).
- iv) Newsletter – A newsletter ‘Town Crier’ is produced on a quarterly basis providing contact details for Town Councillors and details of Functions and Facilities administered by the Town Council. The Town Crier is made available at pick up points in the town (library, Sevenoaks Town Council offices, Stag Community Arts Centre) and distributed via Resident Associations, a copy of the newsletter is also made available on the Sevenoaks Town Council website.
- v) Specific Information – where appropriate information will be supplied in relation to local issues. Recent examples of this have been information relating to the replacement of the gas pipe through the town and proposals of closure of public toilets by the District Council.
- vi) Charity Fair – Sevenoaks Town Council organises a Charity Fair on the first day of the Summer Festival. For the first time in 2010 Town Councillors manned an information stand and this proved to be most successful and will be considered for future years and at other appropriate events.
- vii) Annual Town Meeting – Sevenoaks Town Council hosts the Annual Town Meeting, at this meeting the Town Council presents a copy of its annual report.
- viii) Freedom of Information – Sevenoaks Town Council complies with all statutory requirements relating to the Freedom of Information Act. Its publication list providing details of available document and where appropriate price list can be obtained from the Town Council offices or from the website.

5. Opportunities for Community Involvement

- i) Meetings – At the beginning of each meeting a time slot of 15 minutes is set aside to enable the public to address the Town Councillors . Notice is not required for this and the time management if several members of the public are present is at the discretion of the Town Council.
- ii) Planning Applications -
Details of all planning applications on which the Town Council is consulted are posted on the Town Council’s website and notice boards giving details of when the applications are to be discussed. All planning meetings are open to the public and individuals can register to speak for or against applications by registering their interest with the Town Council prior to the meeting. Individuals are given a 3 minute time slot in which to voice their concerns.
- iii) Complaints Procedure – the Town Council has a complaints procedure should it be necessary. This is available upon request or from the Town Council’s website
- iv) Sevenoaks Town Council Contact Details.

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Town Council Offices
Bradbourne Vale Road
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Telephone 01732 459953

Fax 01732 742577

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Website www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk

- v) Specific Issues – on certain matters it will be seen in the community interest to arrange for consultation and or information gathering on specific issues. A recent example of this was in relation to the proposal of the closure of the public conveniences.
- vi) Young People – the Town Council supports the provision of a Youth Council which enables young people to debate issues relevant to their peers. The Youth Council has its own budget, administered appropriately by the Town Council offices.

6. Opportunities for Formal Representation to the Council

- i) Local community groups have the same opportunity as members of the public to address Town Councillors at meetings.
- ii) Town Councillors also on occasions invite Community Groups to provide presentations at meetings to provide details of their plans and proposals.
- iii) At the Annual Town Meeting local community groups in receipt of Town Council grants are invited to provide an exhibition and short report on their activities.
- iv) Many local community groups have either the Town Mayor or a Town Councillor appointed as a representative on the group to enable increased liaison.

7. Equal Opportunity

Sevenoaks Town Council believes in Equal Opportunities for the whole community. Every effort will be made to remove any potential barriers for a member of the community to engage with the Town Council. For example disabled access will be provided to meetings, documents increased in size where requested.