

Minutes of a Meeting of the Forty First Annual Assembly of the Townspeople of the Town of Sevenoaks held in the Plaza Suite at the Stag Community Arts Centre, Sevenoaks on Monday 24 March 2014 at 7:00 pm.

R M C Hogarth – Mayor

C L L Baker	M A London
J M Canet	R J Parry
N J L Busvine OBE	R L Piper
A S Clayton	S G Raikes
M E Crabtree	P C Walshe
A Eyre	(12)

Also Present:

J F London, Freeman of the Town of Sevenoaks
 Chief Executive / Town Clerk
 Deputy Town Clerk
 2 Committee Clerks
 56 Members of the Public

Apologies for absence: S L Arnold, G R S Clack and P E Towell

The Mayor, Mr R M C Hogarth, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Fortieth Annual Parish Meeting of the Townspeople of Sevenoaks held on 12 March 2012 were adopted and it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that

the Mayor sign the Minutes of that meeting as a true record.

2 ANNUAL REPORT SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL 2013/2014

The Mayor presented the Annual Report of the Town Council and invited the Town Clerk to summarise the Town Council's achievements to date for the period 2013/2014.

The Chief Executive/Town Clerk, Mrs Linda Larter MBE, summarised the Town Council's achievements:

- the takeover of the two markets on Saturdays and Wednesdays in April 2013
- the "Towns Alive 2013 South Zone Winner"
- in current negotiations to start up Blighs Market on Saturdays
- work has started on the Neighbourhood Development Plan
- reaccredited with Investors in People
- the Vintage Bus was launched during summer 2013 and will run again in 2014
- Info pods are now sited around the town of Sevenoaks
- helped with Fireworks Night
- ran several other new events
- held a successful Business Awards evening, which will take place again in 2014

The Town Clerk invited questions and welcomed the public to email at a later date with any questions.

3 SEVENOAKS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Following the unanimous resolution at last year's annual meeting to investigate the feasibility of the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Sevenoaks, the Town Clerk informed the audience of how this initiative had progressed.

Workshops had been held, a Steering Committee and Sub-Committees formed with a wide participation from local people. A questionnaire has been collated by the Committees which would shortly be circulated to all households in Sevenoaks, together with an on-line version. The Neighbourhood Plan will provide guidance for the development of Sevenoaks for the next 15-20 years.

Areas covered within the Neighbourhood Plan include:-

- New Signage Strategy
- Regeneration of the Bat & Ball Area
- Protection of Buildings of Merit
- Future of Markets
- Future of Tourism
- Retention of Sevenoaks' identity separate from London
- Arts Quarter
- Regeneration of Gateways to the Town
- Pedestrian Access Traffic Flow
- Development of Major Sites
- Cycling Strategy
- Park & Ride
- Sports Strategy
- Starter Homes
- Hotel
- Offices for SME Businesses
- Improving pedestrian access between Hollybush Recreation Ground and Knole Paddock
- Allotment Provision

Within the slide presentation was a short film of pedestrian access traffic flow in Poynton highlighting the benefits of shared space within the town. Mr Eyre identified three areas within Sevenoaks as likely locations which may benefit from shared space:

- i. the High Street junction with Pembroke Road
- ii. Sevenoaks Railway station
- iii. Bat and Ball junctions

A Children's competition is running to the end of March 2014 to enable 5 to 18 year olds to submit a design, drawing or picture of what they would want to build/protect or see different in Sevenoaks. This will enable their views to also be included in the consultation for the future of the town.

QUESTIONS ARISING FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PRESENTATION

Mr John Humphrey raised the regeneration of the Bat & Ball area and was concerned that when Sainsbury's Local goes ahead it would have a negative impact on the Co-Operative shop on St Johns Hill and the One Stop in Seal Road and leading to more empty business premises

He queried why only hot food businesses are taking up empty shops on St Johns Hill? He stated that 95 and 97 St John's Hill had been empty for over a decade and should be compulsory purchased.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council is seeking to try and address these points and progressing with the regeneration of the Bat & Ball area within the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Mayor confirmed that the bottom of St John's ward be a very lively area and that the two shops identified are grot spots, identified as such, and that work is being undertaken to mitigate their appearance, if not compulsory purchase.

Another member of the audience asked what Sevenoaks Town Council's official line had been regarding the pedestrian crossing scheme at the High Street junction with Suffolk Way and Pembroke Road.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council was aware of the campaign for need for safer crossing facilities at this junction.

Cllr Mrs Crabtree, as a recently elected Kent County Councillor, advised that the Joint Transportation Board had been requested to monitor improvements made. At the present time there is a fault in the link assessing the traffic flow.

A member of the public referred to KCC officials recommending that the scheme should not to ahead as it would lead to congestion and environmental damage.

Cllr Parry, spoke against the scheme in his capacity as Chairman of the Joint Transportation Board, and confirmed that SDC & KCC officials had said that the increase in road safety was marginal, however the Board had voted in favour of the scheme and as Chairman he had not voted.

Cllr Mrs Crabtree asked for a copy of the video concerning shared space to pass to KCC Highways

4 MAYOR'S PRESENTATION OF GRANT CHEQUES TO LOCAL VOLUNTARY GROUPS

The Mayor presented cheques to the following organisations:-

- Mr Chris Holgate representing the Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group, to help keep costs low for elderly on low incomes using the service
- Ms Jill Webster representing the Sevenoaks Literary Celebration, to run an annual event free for local school children
- Mrs Angela Newey representing the Sevenoaks & Swanley Citizen Advice Bureau, to with furnishings and purchase of new PC
- Mr John Ingram on behalf of the Friends of Pontoise to support twinning activities [France]
- Ms Sue Day representing the Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival for the hire of a concert piano
- Mr Alex Elmer representing Sevenoaks Home Library Service for the running costs towards the vehicle
- Ms Margaret Willis on behalf of the Friends of Rheinbach to support twinning [Germany]
- Mr Andrew Eyre and representatives of the Sevenoaks Stag Youth Theatre to support Youth Outreach for children

- Ms Sarah Bourne representing the South East Open Studios to assist with advertising costs
- Ms Karen Buisseret representing Sevenoaks Art Club to assist with advertising costs
- Ms Gill Brewster representing West Kent Mediation to provide confidential and impartial mediation
- A representative of Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra to provide a free Youth Jazz Workshop to local young musicians on the evening of 24 June 2014
- Mr Ray Russell representing Sevenoaks Summer Festival funding towards 2014 Summer Festival
- Mr Mel Ridout representing Sevenoaks Amherst Rotary funding towards the Young Achiever Sevenoaks Primary School Children award.

GENERAL QUESTIONS FROM LOCAL PEOPLE

Mr Roger Walshe, speaking in his capacity as a Sevenoaks District Councillor, raised the proposed multi storey car park in Buckhurst/Suffolk Way and asked that Sevenoaks Town Council look at this proposal for parking for an additional 300 cars as there is already severe traffic congestion at 5pm in Suffolk Way.

Mr John Virgo asked who is proposing to build a multi storey car park and who would approve the planning application. He had contacted the District Council but was unable to glean any answers.

The Mayor advised that he would ask SDC to contact him.

Mr Mark Koslowski raised concern about the lack playground facilities for his young children.

Ms Sarah Bourne would also like more playgrounds and asked when the Environmental Park would be re-opened.

Mr Gareth Atkinson of Clarendon Road, advised that to walk to Hollybush playground with a child takes about half an hour and that is the closest play area to where he lives.

Mr Piper, speaking as Sevenoaks Town and Sevenoaks District Councillor advised that there are many playgrounds in Sevenoaks, namely, Pontoise Close, Mount Close, the Skateboard Park in Greatness for older children, Hillingdon Rise and Julians Meadow.

On the subject of car parking, Cllr Piper advised that the people he has spoken to are desperate for more car parking. He suggested that it was necessary to talk to the people who do not visit Sevenoaks because of the parking issue. He stated that if people wish to have a vibrant town, one cannot survive on people walking. The Town depends on its local residents as well as those from outside. The Stag attracts visitors from further afield and depends on those driving into Sevenoaks as does the town in general.

Mrs Penny Morrison stated that multi storey car parks are old fashioned with many being pulled down.

Neelam Russell, Hollybush resident, stated that traffic congestion and commuter parking is a problem in the Quakers Hall Lane area and suggested additional parking should be situated wherever it is proposed to provide new allotments not on existing. People from outside the district should be stopped from parking in the town

Mr Mel Ridout suggested underground car parks.

Mr Gareth Atkinson said Sevenoaks Town is an historic town with only a certain amount of capacity. Local employees should use park and ride facilities and park on the outside of town and not in the town centre. Speaking as an engineer, it is five times more expensive to build underground car parks.

Mrs London mentioned that The Times had reported that Sevenoaks is the 24th most glamorous place to live in the UK.

Mrs Cherry Moss asked that people look at the article in the Sevenoaks Chronicle by a local architect and that the stupidity of the proposed multi-storey car park be stopped. A holistic approach to the town needed to be taken.

Mrs Avril Hunter, speaking as a Sevenoaks District Councillor agreed that there had been some wonderful ideas but asked where the money would come from to carry out the suggestions.

A member of the public responded by asking where the District Council was getting money from to build the multi-storey car parks.

A Quakers Hall Resident stated that not everyone was against the proposed for parking at Quakers Hall Allotments, but did not understand the rationale. He stated that more explanation were needed to make an informed decision.

Mr Rindy Baker advised that there are many large vehicles and if everyone had smaller cars, there would be more space.

The Mayor thanked everyone for the useful comments and stated that he encouraged public participation particularly welcoming local knowledge and expertise being provided as part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:05 pm

MAYOR

