

Sevenoaks Town Council
Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Delivery Committee – 8th June 2026
Held in the Council Chamber, Town Council Offices, TN13 3QG

Livestreamed and available to view on YouTube until approved by Council:
https://youtube.com/live/OIQ_7sMlCSs

Meeting commenced: 19:00 Meeting Concluded: 20:11

Present:

Cllr Nigel Wightman, Chair	Present	Cllr Dr Peter Dixon	Present
Cllr Claire Shea, Leader & Vice-Chair	Present	Cllr Victoria Granville, Mayor	Present
Cllr Libby Ancrum	Apologies	Cllr David Skinner OBE	Present
Cllr Catherine Daniell, Deputy Leader	Present		

Cllr Tony Clayton	Substitute for	Cllr Libby Ancrum
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In attendance: Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet, Cllr Chloe Gustard, Cllr Sue Camp (joined the meeting at 7.40pm), Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer and Senior Committee Clerk.

4 members of the public were present: Andrew Eyre, Cllr Richard Streatfeild (SDC & KCC), Work Experience Student, Youth Council member.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Andrew Eyre, Chief Executive of the Stag Community Arts Centre, addressed the meeting:

“Thank you for this opportunity to speak in response to the offer made by Sevenoaks District Council to Sevenoaks Town Council which of course impacts The Stag.

In clause 15 of the report to the District Council’s upcoming FIAC meeting there is a comment that a commercial operator had contacted The Stag alongside an implied criticism that this had not been included in the Town Council’s business case as part of its Community Asset Transfer application. This was a cold-call approach by the operator in 2010, some 16 years ago now and completely irrelevant to the current situation

We met them and listened but:

- *They wanted to run the cinemas and split them off from the community theatre and the Plaza – separate from the community we serve*
- *They wanted to apply higher ticket pricing*
- *They would move away from showing first run blockbuster films*
- *They wanted to re-brand the frontage and the foyer.*
- *They required to completely take over the kiosk and café & bar*

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It was such a departure from the community model we had introduced. We advised the operator in 2010 that we wouldn't be proceeding and did not hear direct from them again although we continually hear of potential plans to open in the area – not least in the new developments in Tunbridge Wells whenever they might proceed.

I did want to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Maskell, the leader of Sevenoaks District Council for initially clarifying and then following through with his promise that The Stag would not be the subject of a commercial sale. This is reflected in these latest papers with its three recommended options. I remain in favour of the option for the freehold of The Stag to be transferred locally to continue the work of The Stag in the local community and I hope a successful agreement can be reached between the two Councils. Only with the freehold in local control can our ambitions be fully realised

– increased capacity to attract bigger shows to Sevenoaks, increased technical service to our hirers and increased service and accessibility to all of our customers.”

Cllr Richard Streatfeild, Sevenoaks District Council & Kent County Council (KCC), advised that:

- *KCC had held its Annual meeting and had appointed a new Chairman, Cllr Eustace, and Vice-Chairman, Cllr Sian, for the 2026/27 civic year*
- *The short focus enquiry on water was delivered. Although the formal response had not been received, KCC was setting up a Water Management Partnership, to be chaired by the Leader of the Council and due to start immediately*
- *The major issue was not the amount of water available but the infrastructure to deliver it, which was under extreme pressure*
- *There had been a change of contract in relation to roads*
- *Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees had been awarded £750 from his Members Grants Budget to support an upgrade to their website*
- *He still had some funds available for grants to community groups*
- *There was no news regarding progress on the sale of the Adult Education Centre*

130 - CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED: To note that at the Annual Council Meeting held on 11th May 2026, the following appointments were made:

- Chair: Cllr Nigel Wightman
- Vice-Chair: Cllr Claire Shea

131 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED: To receive and accept apologies for absence as shown above.

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132 - REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Noted that all Councillors who were also Stag Trustees had a pre-approved dispensation, reference Minute 140 below regarding the Community Asset Transfer request for the Stag freehold.

133 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

134 - MINUTES OF FINANCE & DELIVERY COMMITTEE ON 20TH APRIL 2026

RESOLVED: To receive, adopt and sign the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & Delivery Committee held on 20th April 2026 as a true record.

135 - FINANCE REPORTS – YEAR END

135.1 - Responsible Finance Officer's Reports to 31st March 2026

Statement of Accounts – to 31st March 2026

The Committee received and considered the Statement of Accounts, together with the Finance Officer's report for the month ended 31st March 2026, including Income and Expenditure by cost centre, Variance Analysis, Fund Balances, Statutory Balance Sheet, Earmarked Reserves and Operating Income and Expenditure, together with:

Supplier's Accounts

- 1st to 31st March 2026, total gross invoices £281,927.22

List of Payments

- Sevenoaks Town Council Nat West Account - 1st to 31st March 2026, total £431,322.38
- Mayor's Charity Account - 1st to 31st March - None

Payroll Account

- 1st to 31st March 2026, total £103,511.38

Petty Cash Account

- 1st to 31st March 2026, total payments £384.50

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The 2025/26 budget had been built to deliver a surplus of £20,000 as part of the Town Council's strategy to increase its general reserves. It was noted that the year-end position at the end of March 2026 gave a revenue surplus of £23,593.

The following items were noted:

- Unexpected expenditure totalling £108,882 arose during the year, largely linked to health and safety requirements, fire risk assessments and essential repairs
- Key variances included £38,704 favourable interest, and surplus income from hires at Raley's Field (£4,000), Bat & Ball Community Centre (£24,079), and Council Chamber (£13,474)
- Bat & Ball Station was running at a deficit of £47,520, against the same time last year of £72,425, due to the café concession not starting until October
- The Vine Café deficit was £29,179; plans were in place to address in following financial year
- There were no unrecoverable debts
- There had been significant capital expenditure of £1,320,562
- This had been funded by substantial grant income of £1,910,031 during the year
- General Reserves at the year-end were £537,906

Councillors congratulated the officers on achieving a year end surplus, very close to budget and accommodating additional required expenditure.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Management Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2026 be received and accepted
- 2) £20,000 of the revenue surplus be moved to General Reserves.

135.2 - Hospitality and Gifts Register

RESOLVED: To note that no Hospitality or Gifts had been received by Councillors or staff for the period to 31st March 2026.

135.3 - REVIEW OF INTERNAL CONTROLS

The Committee received and considered:

- i. Internal Audit Report for the Year End Visit 2025/26
- ii. The Statement of the System of Internal Control

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The Committee congratulated the Responsible Finance Officer and finance team on the clean Internal Audit Report, noting one recommendation for 2026/27, and the following comments by the auditor:

“We are pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures currently in place are appropriate and effective. While this report may include recommendations for improvement, these should not be viewed as indicators of significant deficiencies. Rather, they are intended to support the continued development of what is, in our view, a well-managed and robust governance framework.”

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Internal Audit Report for the Year End Visit 2025/26, be received and accepted
- 2) The following recommendation of the Internal Auditor be noted and accepted:

“Future testing for the Governance Assertion¹⁰ may include the GDPR requirement for organisations to have conducted a recent data audit, and if the council has not done this recently, I recommend this is completed during 2026/27.”

- 3) The Statement of the System of Internal Control be approved and signed by the Chair of the Finance & Delivery Committee and the Responsible Finance Officer

136 - ANNUAL RETURN FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2026

The Committee received and considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, comprising:

- Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26
- Annual Governance Statement 2025/26
- Accounting Statements 2025/26
- Supporting papers for submission to the External Auditors, including Notice of Public Rights of Inspection

It was noted that once the Annual Governance and Accountability Return documents had been approved and signed by the Town Council, they would be passed to the External Auditor for review.

The Committee reviewed and confirmed the Annual Governance Statement as follows:

1.	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	Agreed
2.	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	Agreed

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3.	We have assured ourselves that that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	Agreed
4.	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	Agreed
5.	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	Agreed
6.	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	Agreed
7.	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	Agreed
8.	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	Agreed
9.	(Not applicable)	n/a
10.	We have put in place arrangements for effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.	Agreed

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 be approved and RECOMMENDED to the full Council meeting for adoption and signature by the Mayor and the Town Clerk;
- 2) That the Accounting Statements 2025/26, signed by the Responsible Finance Officer, be approved and RECOMMENDED to the full Council meeting for adoption and signature by the Mayor;
- 3) That the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26, including the Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements 2025/26, and supporting papers for submission to the External Auditors, be RECOMMENDED to the full Council meeting for adoption; and
- 4) That the approved accounts be made available for public inspection for 30 working days, from 17th June to 28th July 2026 be RECOMMENDED to the full Council meeting for adoption.

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137 - FINANCE REPORTS - APRIL 2026

137.1 - Statement of Accounts

The Committee received and considered the Statement of Accounts, together with the Responsible Finance Officer's Report for the month ended 30th April 2026, including Income and Expenditure by cost centre, Variance Analysis, Fund Balances, Statutory Balance Sheet, Earmarked Reserves and Operating Income and Expenditure, together with:

Supplier's Accounts

- 1st to 30th April 2026, total gross invoices £270,572.32

List of Payments

- Sevenoaks Town Council Nat West Account - 1st to 30th April 2026, total £440,332.68
- Mayor's Charity Account - 1st to 30th April 2026, total £8,865.39

Payroll Account

- 1st to 30th April 2026, total £93,701.52

Petty Cash Account

- 1st to 30th April 2026, total payments £239.94

It was noted that the year-to-date position at the end of April gave a revenue surplus of £32,151.

RESOLVED: That the Management Accounts for the Year Ended 30th April 2026 be received and accepted

137.2 - Hospitality and Gifts Register

Noted that no Hospitality or Gifts had been received by Councillors or staff for the period 1st to 30th April 2026.

138 - DARTFORD ROAD PEDESTRIAN CROSSING: FINAL COST

RESOLVED: To note that the final cost of the Dartford Road Pedestrian Crossing was £76,132.35.

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139 - ADDITIONAL LAND AT LONGSPRING WOODS

In September 2023, Sevenoaks Town Council successfully nominated two parcels of ancient woodland, collectively known as Longspring Wood, to be registered as Assets of Community Value under the Localism Act's national "Right to Bid" process. The larger parcel of land was put up for sale and following a successful community funding campaign the Town Council purchased it in 2024.

It was noted that the owner has now submitted their intent to sell the second smaller parcel of Longspring Wood, located to the west of the main parcel.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To note that the owner has submitted their intent to sell the second smaller parcel of Longspring Wood, located to the west of the main parcel purchased by the Town Council in 2024;
- 2) To defer consideration of this matter to the next meeting of the Committee.

140 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION, COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER OF THE STAG

The Committee noted the report being considered by Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) at its Finance & Investment Advisory Committee on 9th June 2026 which set out the following options for the future ownership and management of the Stag Community Arts Centre, ahead of Local Government Reorganisation:

"(a) To approve the Community Asset Transfer of the Stag Community Arts Centre to Sevenoaks Town Council for £650,000 based on the Existing Use Value as a community arts centre and theatre, subject to appropriate legal safeguards including asset locks, overage provisions where relevant, and compliance with statutory requirements, in line with the adopted Disposals Policy.

(b) In the event that Sevenoaks Town Council does not wish to proceed on the basis of recommendation (a) above, to approve the disposal of the Stag Community Arts Centre by way of granting a new 30-year lease with Sevenoaks Town Council, on terms to be agreed, with the freehold retained by Sevenoaks District Council.

(c) To accept that if an agreement with the Town Council cannot be reached, given the impending Local Government Reorganisation, the Stag Community Arts Centre and its existing lease will automatically transfer to the Council's successor in title."

Councillors welcomed the option of the potential transfer of the freehold but had concerns regarding the charge of £650,000. The Town Council did not currently have the funds but could explore options. The SDC valuation report had been received yesterday and as it differed from the valuation commissioned by the Town Council, careful consideration would need to be given to the two reports. It was also noted that the residents of Sevenoaks Town

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were being asked to pay for a public asset which served a much wider area. The option of a new 30-year lease option at a peppercorn rent was also noted; there was some concern this gave less certainty than ownership and would make it more difficult to make significant investment in the building.

The Town Council had been asked to respond to the District Council before its Cabinet Meeting on 16th June 2026. Councillors felt pressured by the need to make a decision of this magnitude in such a short time, but it was agreed to hold an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Town Council on 15th June 2026 to consider the matter.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) All relevant information be circulated to all Town Councillors as it was received
- 2) That authority be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance & Delivery Committee, Chief Executive and Responsible Finance Officer to continue ongoing negotiations regarding the Stag Freehold or Lease, including any related expenses required to process matters, and to report back for consideration and verification by the Town Council
- 3) That an Extra Ordinary meeting of Sevenoaks Town Council be held on 15th June 2026 to discuss and, if necessary, to come to a conclusion.

141 - REVIEW OF MATTERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS

The Committee received and noted financial matters in accordance with the Town Council's Standing Orders, adopted at the Annual Council Meeting on 11th May 2026 (*Minute 95 refers*):

141.1 Inventory of Sevenoaks Town Council's Land & Buildings

RESOLVED: that the inventory of land and building assets be received and noted.

141.2 Insurance Cover

RESOLVED: that arrangements for insurance in respect of all insurable risks, as approved at the Finance & Delivery Committee on 20th April 2026 (*Minute 40 refers*), be noted and confirmed.

141.3 Complaints Policy

RESOLVED: That the Town Council's Complaints Policy be received and adopted.

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141.4 Freedom of Information Procedure

RESOLVED that the Town Council procedure for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including NALC Guidelines & Sevenoaks Town Council Publication Scheme, be received and adopted.

141.5 General Data Protection Regulation Policies [GDPR]

RESOLVED: To note that the Town Council continues to adopt GDPR practices as required by statute throughout all its day-to-day business, and readopts the following:

- Information and Data Policy
- Neighbourhood Plan Privacy Notice
- Privacy Notice
- Youth Privacy Notice

141.6 - Social Media & Electronic Communication Policy

RESOLVED: Subject to an amendment showing the X account as dormant, to receive and adopt the Town Council's Social Media & Electronic Communication Policy 2026.

142 - GRANT SUBSIDIES FOR FREE ROOM HIRE

The Committee noted the year-end balance on the Grant Subsidies for Room Hire budget 2025/26, together with the list of organisations approved to receive free room hire.

It was noted that following the dissolution of the Friends of Pontoise, free room hire was no longer required and would be removed from the approved list.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Receive and note grant subsidies for room hire awarded during 2025/26
- 2) Approve the following budget for Grant Subsidies for Room Hire for 2026/27:

Budget	2025/26
Grant Subsidies Bat & Ball Station	2,000
Grant Subsidies Bat & Ball Centre	7,500
Grant Subsidies Council Chamber	400
Total	9,900

- 3) Approve the following organisations to receive grant subsidies for free room hire in 2026/27:

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Friends of Rheinbach	Sevenoaks Greensands Common
Citizens Advice	Dorothy Parrott Trust
Tea Dances at Bat & Ball Centre	KALC
Darenth Valley Community Rail Partnership	New residents' associations - one free room hire at their establishment
Sevenoaks Samaritans	

143 - SEVENOAKS TOWN TEAM

RESOLVED: To receive and note the minutes of the Town Team meeting held on 13th May 2026

144 - CURRENT MATTERS

RESOLVED: To receive and note updates to current matters.

145 - PRESS RELEASES

RESOLVED: That press releases be issued in respect of:

1. The Town Council's end of year financial results, including capital expenditure and grants received
2. The Town Council's consideration of Sevenoaks District Council's published agenda papers for its Finance & Investment Advisory Committee meeting on 9 June 2026, setting out options for the future ownership and management of the Stag Community Arts Centre, ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

There being no further business the Chair closed the Meeting.

Signed
Chair

Dated