

Town Clerk's Update

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

4 September 2026



Fundraising for the freehold of the Stag

www.surveymonkey.com/r/stagfreeholdpledge

Sevenoaks Town Council is proposing to acquire the freehold of the Stag Theatre and Cinema, as a prudent means of securing this important community asset for current and future generations. To make the purchase possible, the Town Council is seeking to raise £100,000 in community donations towards the cost, and is calling on residents, businesses and Stag supporters to contribute to help safeguard the venue's future.

Sevenoaks Town Council is asking anyone interested in pledging a community donation to support the freehold purchase of the Stag to complete the pledge form, available online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/stagfreeholdpledge and at the Sevenoaks Town Council office, by 1 October 2026.

The Stag is a valued community venue that supports the cultural life and local economy of Sevenoaks, as well as providing a home for the youth café. Freehold ownership would offer permanent security, remove exposure to future landlord decisions and provide the confidence needed to attract major, long-term investment to upgrade the venue and for the wider town. The Town Council's [Feasibility Study Summary](#), commissioned in 2025, explores potential redevelopment plans for the Stag.



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The Town Council currently has a lease for the Stag but wants to take over the freehold from Sevenoaks District Council through a Community Asset Transfer, ahead of Local Government Reorganisation and the abolishment of the District Council, and to enable long-term major investment in the future.

Sevenoaks District Council is choosing to charge £650,000 for the freehold of the Stag. In order to purchase the freehold, the Town Council is proposing to cover the £650,000 price by combining a Public Works Loan (£350,000), some of the Town Council's capital reserves (£200,000), alongside a need for community donations with a target of £100,000.

In order to avoid raising the local council tax (precept) to cover the repayments for the Public Work Loan, the Town Council would stop providing the Stag with an annual grant of £27,000 and instead use this money for the loan repayments.

Community donations are an essential part of making the freehold purchase possible. Every donation will help protect the Stag as an important cultural asset in Sevenoaks and ensure it remains a thriving community venue for generations to come.

The local community has previously demonstrated strong support for the Stag's Community Asset Transfer to the Town Council, both through a public survey and a petition. Of the 30 community assets considered in the survey, the transfer of the Stag was voted the highest priority, with 395 respondents in favour and 29 against. This support was further demonstrated by a petition that acquired more than 7,700 signatures.

Leader of Sevenoaks Town Council, Cllr Claire Shea, commented, *"The Town Council remains firmly of the view that the public should not be charged for the transfer of a public asset between local authorities, and we know that there is no requirement for there to be any charge. But, whilst Sevenoaks District Council insists that it will charge a commercial price, we must now act prudently and consider the long-term interests of the town. Securing the freehold should protect the Stag, support future investment and give this valued venue greater certainty for generations to come."*

Chief Executive of the Stag, Tony McEwen, said, *"I am overjoyed at the Town Council's decision to proceed with the purchase of the freehold. We cannot view this victory in a vacuum, of course, as the path ahead will be difficult. I have confidence in the people of the Sevenoaks community and beyond that we can all come together for the upcoming fundraising effort to be able to secure the Stag Theatre for future generations."*

A 30-year lease, another option proposed by Sevenoaks District Council, was considered seriously by Town Councillors. This option would have allowed the current management to continue and permit some minor improvements. But, potential rent reviews, break clauses and no automatic right of renewal of the lease would remove the long-term certainty of ownership and make it harder to secure significant investment. A third option, to let the Stag transfer to the new Unitary Authority, was considered by Town Councillors to be the most unpredictable, with the least security for the town.

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Sevenoaks Town Council has taken a constructive and measured approach throughout this Community Asset Transfer process. Following repeated requests for dialogue, negotiations and formal mediation, all of which were refused, the Town Council obtained specialist legal advice on its options. That Kings Counsel (KC) advice confirmed that there were legal arguments to pursue, however these needed to be balanced against substantial costs and the predicted time frame of Local Government Reorganisation. Although there was confidence in the legal case it is also known that Sevenoaks District Council can still legally choose to charge (or not) for the freehold of the Stag. The Town Council therefore carefully balanced its duty to challenge a decision it considers unfair to residents with its responsibility to protect public funds and secure the best practical, long-term outcome for the Sevenoaks community and wider district.

If anyone would like more information about the Town Council's fundraising appeal, please contact Sevenoaks Town Council at council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk



Free concerts - Music on the Bandstand



It has been a very successful band season on the Vine, mainly due to the exceptional sunny weather.



We are programming in one last event for **25th September** in the evening or as the Americans would write the date 925 with a **Dolly Parton tribute**. We look forward to seeing everyone – feel free to dress up for the event.



War Memorial Restoration

Due to the design of the war memorial and the bronze material leaching onto the main part it has begun to look a bit unkempt, although this is not the case.

During 2026, the Town Council has been following through on a lengthy planning process to restore the important monument.

Planning permission has now been provided, and restoration works will commence during September with the aim of completion prior to Remembrance Day.

The works will include installation of scaffolding which might cause some concern, information posters will be erected near the site.



Volunteers wanted for conservation days at Longspring Wood

Sevenoaks Town Council is looking for volunteers to help with conservation work at Longspring Wood from 10am to 1pm on Friday 13 November and Saturday 14 November.

The Town Council purchased Longspring Wood in 2024 as part of our Green Community Investment Plan, made possible by the generous support of the Sevenoaks community.

Sevenoaks Town Council plans to enhance biodiversity at Longspring Wood and initial work will focus on removing invasive species and carrying out targeted planting.

In November, we're seeking volunteers to assist with the control of invasive rhododendron, and help with 'rhododendron bashing', to protect the woodland. If you would like to get involved, please email communityeng@sevenoakstown.org.uk



My meetings

My meetings since my last update were:

- Extra Ordinary Town Council Meeting*
- Planning & Environment Committee*
- Greatness Community & Football Pavilion snagging meeting
- Town Council Meeting*
- Finance & Delivery Committee*

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

Save the date

Visit our events page for more information: sevenoakstown.gov.uk/events

Date	Event	Venue
Saturday 5 September	Tai Chi fundraiser for Hospice in the Weald at 9:30am - no booking required	Vine Gardens
Friday 25 September	Dolly Parton Tribute Concert	Vine Gardens
Wednesday 30 September	Forget-me-not Cafe: free dementia- friendly event	Bat & Ball Station
Saturday 3 October	Kent Biodiversity & Regenerative Food Festival	Vine
Wednesday 28 October	Forget-me-not Cafe: free dementia- friendly event	Bat & Ball Station
Sunday 8 November	Remembrance Service	War Memorial
Friday 13 November	Longspring Wood - Volunteer Day	Longspring Wood
Saturday 14 November	Longspring Wood - Volunteer Day	Longspring Wood
Friday 20 November	Sevenoaks Business Awards	Bat & Ball Centre
Wednesday 25 November	Forget-me-not Cafe: free dementia- friendly event	Bat & Ball Station
Saturday 28 November	Christmas Lights Switch-On	High Street

Wishing you a good weekend.

Linda

