

## Sevenoaks Town Team Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting

6:30pm: Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Held at

The Council Chamber, Sevenoaks Town Council, Bradbourne Vale Road TN13 3QG

Meeting started 6.30 p.m.

Meeting concluded: 7.55pm

### Executive Board

Cllr Nigel Wightman	Sevenoaks Town Council	Present
Cllr Victoria Granville	Sevenoaks Town Council	Present
Linda Larter MBE	Sevenoaks Town Council	Present
Mike Reid	Town Team Facilitator	Present
Cllr Graham Clack	Sevenoaks District Council	Apologies
Cllr Richard Streatfeild MBE	Kent County Council	Present
Cllr Tony Clayton <b>Chair</b>	Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association	Apologies
Austin Blackburn	Go Coach	Present
South Eastern	Jack Heidry	Absent
Andrew Eyre	Stag	Present
Hannah Kay	Knole	Absent
Dawn Blee	Chamber of Commerce	Present
Steve Butler	Workman (Blighs)	Absent
Sevenoaks Chronicle	Vacant	Absent
Geraldine Tucker	Sevenoaks Society	Present
Shane Smith	Leisure Centre	Absent
Maxine Morgans, <b>V Chair</b>	Specsavers	Present
Elizabeth Dolding	Warners Solicitors	Apologies
Roberta Ware	Francis Jones Jewellers	Present
Avril Hunter	Redlands RA	Present
Elizabeth Purves	Hollybush RA	Apologies
Byron Brown	Bradbourne RA	Present
Mike Williams	Round Table	Absent
PC Nick Hubbard/ PC Tom Costin	Police	Absent
Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet	Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum	Present

**In attendance:** Jim Hughes, Dennis Glasspool, Richard Baxter (representing The Drive RA)

**Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Clayton, Cllr Clack, Elizabeth Purves and Elizabeth Dolding

In the absence of Town Team Chair, Cllr Clayton, the meeting was taken by Vice Chair, Maxine Morgans.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Clayton, Cllr Clack, Elizabeth Purves and Elizabeth Dolding

**2. Declarations of Interest**

None

**3. Minutes**

To receive and approve the minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Team AGM and Executive Board meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024. It was noted that amendments to the draft had been requested by Geraldine Tucker and Dennis Glasspool and included in a revised version. All approved.

**4. Presentation by Kent Police**

On 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023 Acting Assistant Chief Constable (now Chief Inspector) Neil Loudon of the Kent Police Leadership Team gave a presentation relating to policing in Sevenoaks and this included statistics on crime reported and cleared up.

At this 2025 meeting he was joined by Acting Chief Inspector, Mike Alvey, and provided an update presentation which is appended to these minutes. While there is still plenty of scope for improvement the police demonstrated that in broad terms significant progress has been made over the intervening period. The primary reasons for this include the effectiveness of the beat officers in having become far more involved in the community at many levels including school visits, being seen on the streets and in the businesses. Another factor is the DAMS register (*DAMS is a single system for both forces to receive, store, manage and share digital assets in relation to both crime and non-crime matters.*) which is system by which any CCTV system, including household door bells, are registered and used for building evidence and speeding detection rates.

Asked how the public can help, Mr Loudon opined that this is a “team game” and that Sevenoaks is a great example of how the police, businesses, Business Crime Reduction Partnership and District Council work together to counter crime. Specifically, he said that ALL crimes should be reported, that the public should not approach suspected criminals and that all stores should be encouraged to have – and use – radios. In a real emergency calling 999 would result in a Response Vehicle being tasked to give immediate attention in case Beat Officers were engaged or had been posted elsewhere.

Mr Loudon wants to make Sevenoaks “a hostile environment for criminality”.

Though progress has been encouraging the meeting learned from members that plenty of shoplifting is still occurring and examples from just the last few days were quoted.

The Leadership Team were thanked for making their presentation and also an offer to help support the Sevenoaks BID and the preparation of a baseline audit of their services and a “wish list” of how they would like to see some bid money channelled into crime reduction in the town.

#### **5. Constitution of the Town Team Executive Board.**

Due to the time spent on the Police presentation this was deferred to a subsequent meeting.

#### **6. Business Improvement District (BID).**

Following the Board decision of 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and subsequent STC Council meeting to progress with the formation of the BID a Steering Group has been established. Its first meeting was held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January. A list of the members and notes of that meeting are attached.

Because a BID cannot fund existing services and events a baseline audits have to be taken. The audit for STC has been completed and work has commenced at SDC. A similar audit of the KCC services needs to be commenced. An audit of police services will be created too.

Work has started on the design and content of the Business plan.

The 2024 consultation and the steering group have produced a number of projects which could form part of the BID and budget costs for those are being formulated. SDC have already quoted £18,000pa to provide 16 hours additional morning CCTV coverage per week.

#### **7. Volunteer Showcase Proposal**

Cllr Streatfeild has found that many of Sevenoaks voluntary bodies need recruits. The situation will worsen as KCC has to reduce support due its own budget restrictions tightening. There was unanimous support for creating an event for voluntary organisations of all sorts to showcase their activity and recruit volunteers.

It was observed that Town Council employees are fully stretched and that it would be for Town Team Exec to take an active role in this.

National Volunteer Week is April 27<sup>th</sup> – May 3<sup>rd</sup> and it was suggested that this would be a good time to hold the event.

#### *Post meeting note*

Councillors have discussed this topic and decided that it should be combined with plans for the VE Celebrations on 8<sup>th</sup> May afternoon and evening, now being:

- Entertainment on the Band Stand leading up to the Beacon Lighting.
- A Fish & Chips concession.
- Inviting local voluntary organisations to set up a marquee on the Vine Gardens and encourage the public to volunteer with them.

## **8. Mystery Shopping survey**

A survey of 30 Sevenoaks businesses was undertaken in December. The business types included retail, professional services, hospitality & leisure with appropriate criteria for each of them. The overall result was very encouraging with four businesses achieving a perfect 100%. Many were in the 90% range. Each business has its personal and private report informing, where necessary, of improvements which can be made.

The summary findings are in a Powerpoint presentation which is attached.

This is useful benchmark for a future exercise, funding permitting.

## **9. CLSO**

The 2023 event was marred by loutish behaviour involving a few hundred youths and taking place mainly on The Vine. To counter this the 2024 event was moved as an experiment, to a Saturday, and starting earlier in the afternoon. There were no notable disruptions. Feedback from business was encouraging with staff saying they felt safer and one in particular (Nimi Projects) reporting their best trading day ever.

All agreed that from their stand point the new arrangements had been successful and that the same format will be used in future

## **10. Christmas Best Dressed Window**

The event was sponsored by Berry & Lamberts with prizes contributed by the Chamber of Commerce and Marco's.

The retail winner was Sevenoaks Bookshop, Non-retail, No 33 Barbers (in Hollybush Lane) and the charity category was won by the London Road branch of Hospice in the Weald.

## **11. Business Show 2025**

Booked to take place on Friday June 13<sup>th</sup> at the Bat & Ball Centre. The main sponsors are, once again, Clive Emson Auctioneers.

## **12. Holly Party**

The 2025 Holly Party, featuring an Abba tribute band, was enjoyed by all who attended. Despite the inexpensive ticket price of just £25, we struggled once again to achieve numbers with just 65 (including organisers) attending.

A brief discussion took place, and the Party will be held one more time to see if numbers improve.

### **13. New Bench**

A dilapidated wooden bench has been removed from between HSBC and The Chequers and a replacement funded by Savills has been installed.

### **14. Reports from Member's Organisations**

#### **Redlands RA**

The mess arising from the Britains Lane roadwork remains and is an eyesore. The Association is concerned that Croudace are still working towards a residential scheme and that due to Government planning relaxations a second application might be successful.

#### **Go Coach**

There will be no service changes over the next 2 years and KCC tenders have been extended for one year. The Go 2 service is now five years old and is to be used as a model for a new service in Ebsfleet.

#### **Bradbourne RA**

A written report was tabled and is attached to these minutes.

#### **Chamber of Commerce**

All going well with record number of members now joining

#### **Business Crime Reduction Partnership**

Sevenoaks BCRP reported that shoplifting continues in our town member businesses, however, last calendar year the scheme recorded 31 shopsafe radio CCTV assisted arrests for shoplifting.

A brief intro to the Community Safety Unit:

The Sevenoaks District Community Safety Unit is run by Sevenoaks District Council's Community Safety team working with West Kent Police and is based in Sevenoaks District Council's offices.

Use it to report various community safety issues such as anti-social behaviour, graffiti, fly-tipping, drug problems, intimidation, hate crime, noise nuisance, rowdy behaviour, issues about licensed premises, abandoned vehicles and environmental nuisance.

#### **Roberta Ware**

Business at Christmas was really good. More commentary about shoplifting.

#### **KCC**

Kent has not been included in the initial devolution tranch. The 20mph speed limit is being monitored.

There is to be a meeting with Thames Water to discuss the local system which has failed a number of times in Sevenoaks resulting in poor supplies. Much of the problem arises from so many homes now being extended without drainage attenuation.

#### **Jim Hughes**

Concerned that hedge cutting arisings are not being cleared and causing potential danger through being blown across roads.

*Post Meeting:* Instances of such issues can be reported here:

[Report a problem on a road or pavement - Kent County Council](#)

#### **Sevenoaks District Council**

Land east of the High Street. KCC has pulled out of discussions relating to the future of the library.

#### **Seniors Action Forum**

25% of the local population is over 65. The Forum is campaigning for older people's services such as wellbeing, health and social care. They are especially concerned about suitable housing

#### **Sevenoaks Town Council – Nigel Wightman**

Devolution has been delayed. One live concern is the future of the Adult Education Centre. The two Masterplans are developing well, and consultation will be started soon. STC will be hit with the same NI charges as all employers. The STC precept for 2025/6 has been set, with an increase of 5.9% which now equates to £2.96 per week.

#### **Stag**

The theatre enjoyed a record-breaking pantomime season, and the cinema is now doing well. The Footlights Bar is being refurbished and a new sound system installed. Small scale comedy nights are being introduced.

#### **Sevenoaks Town Council – Linda Larter**

The town has been invited to compete in the Britain in Bloom National Finals. That means lots more effort from everyone. There are three other entrants sharing our category. Planning VE day events for 8<sup>th</sup> May. Reminding people to buy tickets for the International Women's Day lunch on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March.

#### **Specsavers**

Very busy and also noticeable that Sundays are just as busy as Saturdays. While businesses complain about car parking charges and restrictions, that does not deter shoppers as they are pretty well full to capacity.

#### **15. Date of Next Meetings**

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025  
Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2025