**Sevenoaks Town Team**

**Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting**

**6:30pm: Wednesday 2nd April 2025**

**Held at**

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

 **Meeting started 6.30 p.m. Meeting concluded: 8.05pm**

**Executive Board**

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

**In attendance:** Dennis Glasspool

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Granville, Linda Larter, John Levett, Andrew Eyre, Nick Hubbard/Tom Costin.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

None

1. **Minutes**

To receive and approve the minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Team Executive Board meeting of 5th February 2025. All agreed, with no changes.

1. **Constitution of the Town Team Executive Board.**

Sevenoaks Round Table has not attended for at least four years and by a unanimous vote they were removed from the Board.

Having made known his interest in joining the Board, Richard Baxter representing Drive RA has become a member.

Other Residents Associations will be personally invited by some of the existing Board Members and efforts to find a couple more business representatives, including one from the hospitality industry, will be sought.

1. **Sevenoaks ground floor commercial occupancy survey.**

A copy of the 2025 survey had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting.

It was noted that the occupancy rate in Sevenoaks remains strong with just 14 units, representing 4.3% of the stock, being vacant. It was noted that when premises do become vacant they rarely stay available for long, and that some of them are re-let without even being marketed.

A general discussion ensued about the changes that have occurred over the last twelve months. It was noted that while occupancy levels are good, most of the newcomers were providing a service rather than being a pure retailer. Once again shoe shops were mentioned as being desirable new additions.

1. **Business Improvement District (BID).**

Cllr Clayton gave an update.

The pace of development has been deliberately slowed due to increased costs to businesses arising from the new National Insurance criteria and the increase in business rates. Another factor is uncertainty arising from the Local Government Review and where responsibilities will lie.

Notwithstanding that the Steering Group has met three times and the Business Plan is taking shape. It has become obvious that because the Sevenoaks BID is planned to encompass the whole town, rather than just the town centre, that measures will need to be incorporated to provide benefit especially to the business parks and office users too. Two BID Champions have been appointed being Nicki Rundle of Thackray Williams Solicitors, and Jason Crow, owner of the Better Body Group.

1. **Britain in Bloom and public realm works**

The regional competition will be judged in June or July and the National Competition on 12th August.

It was noted that Blighs and The Sennockian have agreed to use the same planting specification as STC, being blue/purple/yellow/white, and that fortunately all three use the same contractor to supply and maintain the plants.

Various works are planned to enhance the town with painting of the railings at Upper High Street Gardens and lamp posts at the Vine, with other street furniture being washed down. Barclays Bank volunteers will be helping with this.

1. **St John’s Hill Masterplan Public Consultation**

Cllr Clayton said that engagement in the consultation had started very slowly but with the assistance of Wealden Properties in hosting posters and displays this is now improving. Just prior to the meeting there had been 100 responses and more were expected.

1. **Business Show 2025**

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

The event is fully sponsored and one addition to the day will be a videographer providing material for TT to use to market the 2026 event, and for each business to have a free 5-10 minute interview for their own marketing purposes.

1. **Blighs’cameras/police**

Following a call for help in dealing with someone firing an air rifle at shop windows, it was good to see a combined approach from the Police, Moat Housing, SDC, STC and the Business Crime Reduction Partnership working together to tackle the issue. The offender is well known to most parties and steps have been taken to hopefully stop future occurrences.

Not related to this incident, but Bligh’s are now looking to increase camera coverage in the development.

1. **Vegan Market**

To be held on the Vine on Saturday 5th April. All members were invited to attend.

1. **Sponsorships for 2025**

A brief verbal report was given. It is good to see two new sponsors for this year being NFU Mutual and Purelake. Savills were also thanked for the donation of a new bench replacing a dilapidated one which was by The Chequers.

Sponsorship income to date was £7,826.

1. **Reports from Member’s Organisations**

**Specsavers**

Business is quiet at the moment.

**Hollybush RA**

The Association would like the Hollybush Recreation Ground to be acquired. This property is included in Phase One of the Town Council’s proposals for acquisitions from the District Council during the Local Government Review process.

**Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum**

Members of the Forum are unhappy about the condition of some of Sevenoaks’ footpaths. They are concerned about tripping hazards created by uneven and loose surfaces.

It was agreed that the Forum would provide details of problem locations so that the Town Team could make representation to KCC to seek improvements.

**Cllr Wightman**

The acquisition of SDC assets (such as the Recreation Ground) was considered at the last Planning Committee meeting (24th March). The acquisition process is in two phases with Expressions of Interest for the first tranche of possible transfers to be made by June 2025.

In order for the District Council to consider transferring an asset to the local Town or Parish Council, there must be a clearly defined reason - being economic, social or environmental benefit to the local community - which demonstrates the benefit of the asset's service being transferred to the Town or Parish Council as opposed to being retained by the District Council and its successor. The interested party must also demonstrate its ability to manage the new assets sustainably and maintain their affordability to residents

Hollybush Recreation Ground, as is the Stag, is included in the first phase of Expressions of Interest.

There is a meeting of Residents Associations to discuss lists 1 & 2 is to take place on 28th April.

**Bradbourne RA**

Report received by email, and in person:

1. **Bradbourne Re-borne Progress**
* Project Manager Lina Madsen has held 2 Question and answer sessions + Coffee. One session was held on the Lakes Site and a second by a Zoom connection. Both were well attended, particularly the one held on the Lakes Site. These sessions were designed to make Sevenoaks Residents' views known about the project.
* Land Use Consultants (LUC) have been appointed to manage the Bradbourne Re-borne project.
* LUC have previously been involved in the early days of the project planning process with the SDC and the BRA. The BRA is particularly pleased with this appointment since we have worked with LUC positively and got to know their practices and the skills on working on environmental projects
* A Park landscape design for the future of the Lakes is in progress with an emphasis on Historic, Ecological and Cultural value.
* Lake 4 (Known as the model boating lake) is the subject of proposals to make it more amenable and safe for the launching and retrieval of model boats. It is a key aim to restore this lake to a former condition where model boating was a regular event attended by children and model boat enthusiasts. This part of the project is intended to make Bradbourne Lakes a Sevenoaks destination for all to enjoy. The assistance of the Crowborough Model Boat Club has been sought in setting up a Sevenoaks Model Boat Club.

**2.  Amalgamation of the BRA and the Bradbourne Vale Road Residents Association (BVRRA) and other matters.**

* Steps are underway to amalgamate the two RA's. This will involve a democratic process together with the establishment of a Terms of reference, a revised Constitution and associated rules of procedure. The consent of both RA members will be sought in this process.
* Along with other RA.s the BRA has been invited to attend a Sevenoaks Society Event at the Stag Plaza Suite.
* The BRA will be attending the LGR meeting on the 28th of April.

**Sevenoaks Society**

On Saturday 28th June a “Community Open Day” will be held at the Stag. This free event includes a presentation about “Life at Knole in 2025” from Lord Sackville and another about “improving home energy efficiency and reducing its carbon footprint” from the Sevenoaks Climate Action Group.

**Warners Solicitors**

A new and very original marketing campaign has just been launched. It features a series of cartoon style videos following the Ray family as it considers all aspects of the kind of services offered by the firm

**Cllr Clack**

The final paper to KCC from SDC regarding the Local Government Review is to be submitted by November 2025.

One of SDC’s main ambitions is for the development of the “Land East of the High Street” to be advanced quickly in order for it to escape the unknowns of the Local Government Review. Whereas it was intended for the development to proceed as a public/private partnership, the plan is that it should be an outright private developer scheme.

**Go-Coach**

Austin has re-acquired the business. It employs 65 people and transports about 2500 people each day. The new NI thresholds mean that the wage bill increases by about £60,000 pa. There will be fare increases on 27th April.

There is real concern that there is no provision for buses or a bus station in the SDC proposals for the Land East of the High Street.

Recognising the National Britain in Bloom competition, Go-Coach will work on visual improvements to the current bus station.

**Redlands RA**

Nothing to report.

**Francis Jones**

All good

**Business Crime Reduction Partnership**

There have been seven new “exclusions” since the last Board meeting. There were also seven domestic burglaries “this weekend”.

**John Levett**

In absentia he sent this report:

1. Vegan Market: FACEBOOK EVENT set up for Live Music

 [https://facebook.com/events/s/music-at-sevenoaks-vegan-marke/976322961370151/](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ffacebook.com%2Fevents%2Fs%2Fmusic-at-sevenoaks-vegan-marke%2F976322961370151%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ctownteam%40sevenoakstown.gov.uk%7Ceb27a653adb04411565208dd71f9c4ae%7C4cfcabae7d014873890b808ecfd9949c%7C1%7C0%7C638792039743238925%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=U14xEn%2FvJlF3O1SxG56Ecm1yklVniTYPOuy9Gfpy9GY%3D&reserved=0)

1. ANCHOR pub. Live music every Wednesday evening AND every Sunday evening as well as Record Club events and Craft Fairs.
2. STAG FOOTLIGHTS BAR established as another viable Town Venue.
3. Sevenoaks Summer Festival taking place 21 June - 6 July. Sponsorship Opportunities available -see separate email

He also asked for Summer Festival information to be circularised and this has been attached to the covering email.

**Meeting closed at 8.05pm**

**Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 28th May 2025

**Post Meeting Update**

During the meeting a discussion had been held about the sale of Blighs Meadow. This has been purchased by Ignis UK Property Fund, which paid £27,850,000 for the long leasehold and a number of freeholds.