

## Sevenoaks Town Team Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting

6:30pm: Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024

Held at

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

Meeting started 6.30 p.m.

Meeting concluded: 8.15pm

### Executive Board

Cllr Chloe Gustard	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	Present
Austin Blackburn	Go Coach	Present
South Eastern	Gemma Louro	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
Maxine Morgan, <b>V Chair</b>	Specsavers	Apologies
Elizabeth Dolding	Warners Solicitors	Apologies
Roberta Ware	Francis Jones Jewellers	Present
Glenn Ball	Local Architect	Absent
Avril Hunter	Redlands RA	Present
Helen O'Sullivan	Eardley Road RA	Apologies
Elizabeth Purves	Hollybush RA	Absent
Byron Brown	Bradbourne RA	Present
Mike Williams	Round Table	Absent
Police	PC Nick Hubbard	Present
Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet	Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum	Present

**In attendance:** Dennis Glasspool, Cllr Peter Dixon, John Levett, Jim Hughes, Nicola Gibbs

**Apologies for Absence:** Helen O'Sullivan, Elizabeth Dolding, Maxine Morgans, Cllr Graham Clack

**1. Apologies for absence**

**2. Declarations of Interest**

None

**3. Minutes**

To receive and approve the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023. There were no amendments or matters arising which would not be covered in this meeting.

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

A Zoom presentation was received from Prof Chris Turner, a director of British Bids and a copy is appended to these minutes.

The presentation was well received and the Board agreed unanimously to proceed with the process to reach a ballot of qualifying business rate payers to decide whether the town will establish a BID.

A discussion ensued about how TT/STC will administer the process and it was agreed, so far as TT can sanction the expenditure, to proceed with the British Bids “BID Buddy” service which accompanies a town on making a successful plan, at the cost of approx. £10,000.

The Chamber will make arrangements for one of their local meetings to be used to make a presentation about the BID proposal.

RECOMMENDED: To Sevenoaks Town Council’s Finance & General Purposes Committee to consider an investment of £10,000 for the services of BID Buddy to progress a Sevenoaks BID, noting that this would be repayable if the BID is successful.

**5. Sevenoaks Business Show**

This will take place on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June.

The confirmed sponsors at time of writing are:

- Main sponsor – Clive Emson Auctioneers
- Sevenoaks District Chamber of Commerce
- Specsavers
- FM Conway
- Sevenoaks Town Council

**6. Business Hub Marketing**

A radio interview organised by TT with Paul Andrews of Biz Radio had just been broadcast. Speakers included Lime Tree Work Shop and Help VA, as we promote the whole town as a co-working venue.

Vicki Thornhill of West Kent Business will be making a familiarisation visit to the Hub, as promoting co-working is one of their remits and so that she can speak knowledgeably about it.

## 7. Public Realm

Warners Solicitors have kindly donated a Coronation memorial bench to the town. It is situated at the entrance to the Post Office in South Park.



The replacement lamp post has now been installed outside Josephs Kitchen in St Johns Hill. This almost completes the refurbishment of the blue street furniture in Sevenoaks, with just the Pembroke Road railings opposite the SDC offices to be painted by KCC, scheduled for April.



## 8. Christmas Lights Switch On

Although a successful event with thousands of people enjoying the Christmas Lights Switch On, the 2023 event was marred by some antisocial behaviour which took place at and around The Vine. This took the form of large numbers of young people misbehaving, many being intoxicated by drink or drugs.

As a result, and in an effort to mitigate the chances of this happening again it is likely that the event in 2024 will take place on a Saturday afternoon, subject to all the necessary arrangements being feasible. The main one of these will be in booking the fairground as it has several such events at this time of year.

## 9. Childrens Christmas High Street Safari

During the presentation of the prize to the Bolton Family there was discussion between Budare and the Mayor about the condition of the Shambles courtyard. As a result, SDC are going to undertake a "deep clean".

Management of the commercial waste bins is difficult to achieve as each occupier has their own contractors. It was suggested that communal Smart bins might be the solution, and this will be investigated.

#### 10. Sevenoaks Best Dressed Christmas Window competition

While most businesses make some effort to dress their windows for Christmas, there are many which go “above and beyond”. Mayor Cllr Claire Shea and Chamber CEO judged the 2023 competition looking for businesses using their imagination, flair and their own “home made” décor rather than something bought. The winners were:

Retail: Leslie Warren



Non retail : joint winners - NFU & Dulces Patisserie



Charity shop: Children’s Trust



### **11. Holly Party**

This took place on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December. The entertainment and catering arrangements were far better than in the inaugural 2022 event. Numbers were fewer than expected, but attendees all had a really great time and word will spread for 2024. It was noticeable that while the target audience was businesses, the event attracted about an equal number of “social club” guests.

### **12. New Town Team website**

At the December meeting it was agreed that the development of a new web-site should be deferred until the BID outcome is known.

It was suggested that we should discuss uploading TT/STC events to SDC’s “Visit Sevenoaks” and “More Sevenoaks” sites. A very positive meeting has been held with SDC and the first event has now been published with more to follow.

### **13. Lighting the Vine**

From the UK Shared Prosperity Fund SDC has been awarded £10,000 for a “public realm” improvement and this is going to be invested in a scheme to light the trees in Vine Gardens. This scheme will not only make them into a night time attraction, complement the future Cultural Quarter but also help to improve security of the location. A consultant has been engaged to work on designing the proposal.

### **14. Clubs and Societies - Volunteers**

This was a very full Board meeting and a detailed conversation on this subject was short. If any member of Town Team knows of a club or society looking for members, officers or volunteers which would benefit from publicity, then please inform [townteam@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:townteam@sevenoakstown.gov.uk)

### **15. Sevenoaks Summer Festival 2024**

This event is going to take place over the period Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June to Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July, organised by Ray Russell & John Levett. Businesses and organisations that would like to be involved, whether as participants or sponsors, were invited to contact: [townteam@sevenoakstown.gov.uk](mailto:townteam@sevenoakstown.gov.uk).

A sponsorship poster is attached to these minutes.

### **16. Members Organisations**

*Police* –PC Nick Hubbard reported that having made concerted efforts in connection with retail crime that clear up rates have now greatly improved and that he feels that “word is getting out there” to other potential thieves that Sevenoaks is no longer an easy target.

Burglaries though have been increasing.

The Police site “My Community Voice” is growing and receiving good feedback. Nick urged that all businesses and residents sign up to this free service.

*Stag* – Andrew Eyre said that the cinema is now relatively busy and that the theatre is doing well with June having shows on 28 out of the 30 days. The Footlights Bar with a capacity of about 55 is becoming a popular venue for small meetings and show. John Levett has a Gypsy Jazz & Swing duo performing on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

*Sevenoaks Society* – Geraldine Tucker reported that the Society has been re-energising its efforts to shame developers into building out their vacant sites. She illustrated this with a recent front page Sevenoaks Chronicle article highlighting the campaign.

*Bradbourne RA* – Byron Brown supported the view that My Community Voice is an excellent tool and said that all his residents have been urged to use it.

A summer sewage discharge at Bradbourne Lakes had been investigated with no source/culprit having been identified. However, it has not re-occurred.

He also advised that the consultation paper has been published on-line and that the consultation period closes on 18<sup>th</sup> March.

*Jim Hughes* feels that motorists are now becoming inured to the pop-up illuminated 30mph signs and asked whether more positive messages could be incorporated – a smiley face perhaps. Cost seems to be a factor in making such changes.

Jim has also undertaken a shops survey couched slightly differently from the one compiled by the Town Team Facilitator in Spring 2023. This second version is attached. The TT survey will be undertaken again during March to make direct comparisons on vacancy rates and any discernible business type trends.

He is also concerned about the proposed cuts to the Citizens Advice service and whether anything can be done to save it.

*Sevenoaks District Chamber of Commerce* – Dawn Blee suggested that if not exhibiting it would be good if TT members could visit the West Kent Expo for inspiration and ideas. It takes place at the River Centre in Tonbridge on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March.

Kent County Council – Richard Streatfield talked about the Councils budget savings and highlights. There are going to be major cuts to Youth Services and road repairs will cost an unfunded £100m pa over the next five years – despite monies from HS2. The Council is going to be part funding social and patient care from capital receipts. Overall, it would appear that the KCC budget is otherwise safe for the next two years.

*Sevenoaks Business Crime Reduction Partnership* – Dennis Glasspool is pleased with the way policing is improving in Sevenoaks the use of the radios by business owners, and performance of the CCTV. Seven recent incidents have been “sorted”.

*Francis Jones* – Roberta Ware is also very happy with the way business crime is being handled and would like the system to become the “Ware” model!



*Sevenoaks District Seniors Forum* – Cllr Canet reports that the Forum is working on ways to make the town more elderly friendly.

*STC* - Linda Larter said that the KCC working group would be meeting on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February to consider the outcome of the 20 mph consultation.

That an amazing £81,000 had been raised towards the £100,000 contribution from the public to acquire land at Longspring Woods. The pledge window closes on 26<sup>th</sup> February. (Post meeting note: The total pledged is £102,000.)

Work on the Bat & Ball railway bridge mural has commenced, though interrupted by the police thinking a graffiti artist was at work.

The toilets at St John's Hill car park are in the process of being refurbished.

A car club, based at Bat & Ball Centre is due to launch soon.

Work on developing the Sevenoaks Town Centre & St Johns Hill area Master Plan will commence in March.

*Go Coach* – Austin reported that since the sale of the business little has changed though he now has less to do with the financial aspects while the bus maintenance side is growing as the Derbyshire based purchaser is now sending their buses to Sevenoaks for servicing. He reported on the usual swings and roundabouts on tendering and service changes. The significant number of road works in the area are causing severe delays and deterring passengers due to unreliability.

*Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association* – Tony Clayton explained that Sevenoaks station has unfortunately been branded worst for commuters after several months where delays and cancellations have hit performance. Combined with high fares the service compares poorly with others on value for money.

Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association is working with other rail user groups to research the fare increases in December which hit Sevenoaks to London services particularly hard. They have discovered systemic problems with the way 'Contactless' is being rolled out, and asked the MP for help in contacting Department for Transport which is responsible.

#### **17. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

Meeting Closed at 8.15pm.