

**Notes of Sevenoaks Town Partnership Meeting held at Sevenoaks Town Council
on Wednesday 17th June 2020 at 6.30pm.**

Executive Board

Representing	Number	Current Member	Current Organisation	
Sevenoaks Town Council	3	CEO / Town Clerk		Present
		Cllr Victoria Granville-Baxter		Present
		Cllr Simon Raikes		Present
Sevenoaks District Council	1	Cllr Avril Hunter		Present
Transport	2	Tony Clayton	Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association	Present
		Austin Blackburn	Go Coach	Present
Leisure Facilities	3	Jane Parish CEO	Sencio	Apologies
		Andrew Eyre (Chairman)	Stag	Present
		Rebecca Ibbotson	Knole	Present
Chamber of Commerce	1	Julie Phillips	CEO Sevenoaks & District Chamber of Commerce	Apologies
Bligh's Meadow	1		Savills, agent for Bligh's owners Standard Life Investments	Apologies
Sevenoaks Chronicle	1			Apologies
South Eastern	1	Elliott Waters	Station Manager	Present
Sevenoaks Society	1	Roger Walshe		Present
Large Business	2	Maxine Morgans (Vice Chairman)	Specsavers	Present
		Elizabeth Dolding	Warners Solicitors	Present
Small Independent Business	2	Roberta Ware	Francis Jones Jewellers	Present
		Glenn Ball	Local Architect	Apologies
Resident Association	1	Elizabeth Purves	Hollybush Residents Association	Present
Round Table	1			Apologies
Police	1			Apologies
	20			

Also, in Attendance:

Stephanie Harrison – Committee Clerk & Pink Week

Cllr Dr Merilyn Canet – Sevenoaks Town Council & Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum

John Levett – Sevenoaks Summer Festival

Richard Baxter- Sevenoaks Society

Cllr Parry – Sevenoaks District Council

Cllr Busvine – Mayor & Sevenoaks Town Council

Cllr Shea – Sevenoaks Town Council

Cllr Michaelides – Sevenoaks Town Council

Emily Haswell – Sevenoaks District Council
Jim Hughes – Local Resident
Paul Lansdale – Sevenoaks Town Football Club

1. Apologies for Absence

As noted above.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Partnership meeting held on 30th April 2020 and 4th June 2020 were received and agreed.

3. Sevenoaks Recovery Plan

i) **Consultation Responses:**

Following a meeting of interested parties held on the 30th April 2020 a Sevenoaks Draft Recovery Plan was distributed for feedback on proposals at the meeting and to help form an action plan for the future. It was agreed that we were on the right track and the Town Team in partnership with others should develop ideas including marketing and advertising. Also favoured was the use of digital media within the recovery plan. Use of a digital town and business guide was considered a positive way to move forward. Costs to be investigated. Concerns over the availability of public toilets were raised, it was confirmed that Sevenoaks Town Council and Sevenoaks District Council toilets were operating and had been from the start. Adding toilets to the digital map was a priority, especially as long queues could make them needed more than ever, especially for the elderly. Knole will be trialling opening their toilets soon.

ii) **Highways & Social Distancing**

Cllr Eyre informed us that Tim Read had released a statement regarding KCC proposals, stating that consultations were ongoing. The board requested that a letter be sent to the MP indicating the urgent need for the proposal to be addressed.

Tim Read:

“The submission made by Kent County Council for Emergency Active Travel funding is not a definitive list of specific schemes. It is a broad set of provisional financial allocations against the following six categories:

- 1. Carriageway repurposing for cycling and pedestrian capacity - £550,000**
- 2. Safer journeys to school programme - £200,000**
- 3. Town wide 20mph zones - £200,000**
- 4. Modal Filters and Liveable neighbourhoods - £200,000**
- 5. Recreational cycle and walking schemes including Public Rights of Way - £240,000**
- 6. Contingency/emergency allocation - £210,000**

There are examples within each category of the types of schemes we hope to implement which Officers have collected by looking at previously received ideas, suggestions and proposals made by Members, District Councils, Parish Councils and the public over the past few years that could fit into these groups. This whole collection, when roughly costed, exceeds well over £10m. Once the Department for Transport (DfT) confirms that they are happy with the proportions and they allocate the funding we will need to identify which proposals can be implemented within eight weeks to gain access to the remaining £6.4m.

DfT have indicated that they are likely to respond to us by the “end of June”. I understand the sense of urgency amongst the public and Town Council to see measures in place and the strong opinions as to what these measures should be however, until we hear from the DfT there is no specific funding available to us to act immediately.

I think we will be able to assist in the town in the short term with things like temporary widening of footways, but the more radical suggestion of making the roads one way will take longer and is a more likely candidate for the second tranche.”

iii) **Consistent and Strong campaign To promote sevenoaks As A Safe Place To Shop and Do Business.**

Kall Kwik had been working on a branding scheme to promote Sevenoaks and encourage people into the town. The Love Sevenoaks Campaign word ‘Use it or lose it’ posters and flags were considered a bright and attractive way of promoting the Town. (See attached) Advertising posters could be put up on buses, shop windows and various forms of media. The Board was in favour of proceeding with the initiative.

iv) **Supporting Key Attractions – Stag and Knole**

Knole advised that it’s carpark was now open on a pre-booking system, which was working well. The carpark was fully booked and increasing numbers can only happen in line with the guidance they receive. Litter was a major problem, especially on The Gallops, where visitors congregate. There had also been issues with visitors feeding the deer, despite the advice around the park. However, they now have extra patrols for their protection. Communication to non-members can be a problem. Some regular users of the park were concerned at the lack of social distancing. More signage around town regarding the Sevenoaks Car Park being free could help reduce the stress of the bad parking around residential areas of people looking to visit the park.

The Stag had reached a critical financial position and stated a ‘Save the Stag’ campaign requesting financial contributions and letter of support to be sent to sevenoaks Town Council who would be making a decision on grant assistance on 29th June 2020.

v) **Town Trail:**

Sevenoaks Town was one of 100 selected by the Association of Town and City Management for this town trail scheme, which would be bespoke for our town. There was a cost of £2 for participants to use the app, which goes to the NHS. However, the Town Team agreed to investigate the concept of developing its own trail which could

benefit local businesses and clubs and be more bespoke to Sevenoaks. It was advised however that these apps could be expensive to develop and take-up could be sporadic.

vi) **Proposals for Cultural Quarter:**

The Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum originally planned for the autumn, had now been delayed until May 2021. Consideration was given to start initiating some of the plans now, namely street entertainers, artwork, which could help to wake-up the town. An area to be identified, like the Wednesday marketplace, for temporary initiatives.

vii) **Events:**

With events being unable to go ahead in their usual form, many people are looking at new ideas, open-air cinemas, outside events and interactive entertainment. Sevenoaks Town Council had been approached to hold cinema events at Knole Paddock. The consensus was that open-air cinemas probably would not work well for family groups, but in general were a great idea. Consideration to be given to whether parts of the town could be used for outside entertainment, for example Bank and Dorset Streets. Could the Vine Bandstand be used at some point, enabling social distancing?

viii) **Utilising Public Open Spaces – Weekly Newsletter and Press Advert:**

It was queried whether Buckhurst 1 Car Park and the Vine Gardens could be used for events, making it easier to socially distance. Cllr Hunter advised that Buckhurst 1 could only be used on a temporary basis as Sevenoaks District Council had plans for the space. Suggestions for an open-air seating area to be used by local businesses was discussed. How can we use what open spaces we must support those businesses struggling to facilitate their customers? This idea was to be put to cafe and restaurant owners for their feedback. It was noted that the Vine Gardens could be used for open air markets, including the use of the bandstand in the future for entertainment, subject to public health guidelines.

ix) **Markets:**

The market at Blighs was limited to 6 stalls trading at one time. Space had been given to use the space below the clock tower. Sevenoaks Town Council had offered the use of Vine Gardens should the need arise. Traders were saying trade was strong and they had all been working hard to adhere to all guidelines regarding Covid-19.

Discussion took place about the action plan

x) **Promoting Businesses:**

The Town Team Newsletter had been running from the beginning of lockdown and had become a useful tool for lots of people. Cllr Canet asked for a 'Welcome back' section to go into the next newsletter. A social media campaign, as well as the Sevenoaks Chronicle could help with this. Sevenoaks District Council's 'Back to Business Guide' will contribute to the recovery plan. Andrew Eyre praised Sevenoaks District Council on the work they had done so far.

xi) **Back to Business Guide:**

Sevenoaks District Council's 'Back to Business Guide' has been widely welcomed and praised and was contributing to the recovery plan. The packs could be obtained by going to: www.business@sevenoaks.co.uk.

xii) **Offers of Support from Local Businesses:**

Cllr Eyre asked for suggestions for ways of getting help and funding from local businesses and requested offers be fed through to the Town Clerk.

xiii) **Sevenoaks Town Action Recovery Plan**

Discussion took place about the action plan attached.

4. Members Organisations

Knole: Lots to be discussed in the next few weeks regarding opening the catering and retail outlets which could happen in early July. Re-opening of toilets also to be discussed.

South Eastern: Passenger numbers have reached 350 and were rising slowly. Sanitisation units had been added over the station areas. They were currently operating an essential journey only policy and masks must be worn. Estimates were that it will be a few years before commuter train travel returns to normal.

Go-Coach: Recent DRT service had been going very well and was receiving praise for punctuality and service. The average wait for the bus was 12.4 minutes. Most travellers were wearing masks, although company policy was to let customers choose for themselves whether to do so. Drivers were not wearing masks due to inhibiting driving. Buses were being thoroughly cleaned regularly. The bus station had undergone refurbishment and customers could track their bus on state-of-the-art screens. The taxi-bus service being operated now was certainly the only one in the country. So far 3,700 journeys had been taken.

Warners: There would be a return of some staff on the 1st July. There would be restrictions on how many staff return, which had been made easier by some staff saying they preferred to work from home. A deep clean would be carried out by local company Wettons before the return.

Francis Jones: Had been waiting to see how it would work with other shops working. Aiming for a 1st July opening, but concerned about the social distancing in the town and the signage giving instructions regarding the return. Felt that the highway changes were happening too slowly and suggested MP Laura Trott could help speed up the process.

Sevenoaks Summer Festival: This year's festival had been cancelled, although a few events, i.e. the Three Arts Festival was able to go ahead virtually. Next year's event would be dependent on the COVID-19 situation. They would be interested to know when they could use the Vine for musical events. John Levett thanked Linda and Sevenoaks Town Council for rolling their festival grant over to 2021.

Specsavers: Getting busier now eye tests were allowed. Staff were always wearing PPE, despite some customers saying it was not needed when treating them. Concerned that social distancing was not always being used on the High Street.

Seniors Action Forum: There was some worry about digital exclusion for seniors. Pleased to report Eliza Ecclestone would be chairing a Volunteer Legacy Committee meeting to continue the good work already done by so many volunteers. Very pleased that several clubs were now open, enabling their members to return.

Mayor: The Mayor had held his first official Mayoral role since lockdown when he opened the new Ferrari Garage in London Rd. He also gave a BBC Radio Kent interview regarding the children's edible flower initiative, started by the Sevenoaks Town Clerk.

Sevenoaks Society: Nothing to report but looking forward to seeing what happens in the town.

Emily Haswell: Numbers were increasing in the offices; however, the District Council had been functioning fully since lockdown. Cllr Eyre acknowledged the staff, especially the refuse department who had worked under extremely difficult circumstances. Sevenoaks District Council was helping businesses to survive during lockdown and get them up and running again with their Grants to Business. They are in the top five in the country for providing grants to those in need.

Stag: The Stag was operating with only 2-3 members of staff at the moment and was awaiting information on when and how they could re-open. There was ongoing consultation with local MP Laura Trott. The Stag website now had a donate button on the front page to help with their fundraising, which had reached £6,000 so far.

Sevenoaks Town Council: The parks, open spaces and cemetery were busier than ever. The Bat & Ball Centre was in the finishing stages and work was ongoing with the Community Rail Partnership. Demands had been greater on sections of the organisation. Public toilets had been operating from the beginning of lockdown, with regular cleaning taking place. The Business Hub was still looking for funding, but this would be needed more than ever, with businesses wanting to lower their costs, so renting at the hub would help with that.

Sevenoaks Town FC: Will be returning on the 6th July, with junior members and coaches, totalling 24 people, for training. A strict cleansing routine would be in place for the return.

Cllr Raikes commented that he was really pleased to see the Vine being used in a positive way, although there had been a litter problem, and thanked the Town Clerk and Open Spaces team for their hard work in dealing with a difficult situation.

Cllr Parry: Commented that the meeting had produced some useful information.

Local resident, Jim Hughes: Commented that he was very pleased with the positivity he was hearing.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.38pm.