



SEVENOAKS TOWN TEAM

SEVENOAKS TOWN TEAM TENTH ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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An introduction by Cllr Andrew Eyre, Chairman of the Sevenoaks Town Team



Andrew Eyre, Chief Executive of The Stag Theatre

As we all emerge from the commercial and personal effects of the commercial shutdowns we have increasingly turned outwards to our customers and clients trying to increase the numbers of both in pursuit of what we all aim to achieve. Excellent service, excellent product and at the end of it, hopefully a living.

We have worked hard so that your Town Team has emerged from its pandemic chrysalis with enthusiasm, organisation and events. This has been helped by the addition of Mike Reid who has provided additional capacity and a marvellous enthusiasm adding to that of Linda Larter MBE and myself as Chairman.

We have returned to our pre-pandemic set of planned events as well as a brilliant Town Team led scheme alongside Sevenoaks Town Council, Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council to upgrade and refurbish the town centre public realm. At the beginning of this year your Town Team set out to spearhead work to improve how our Town looks refurbishing rubbish bins, lamp posts and pavement bollards. We have also begun working on renewing the listed building historic plaques.

On behalf of the Town Team I want to extend our thanks to members and officers in all the local Councils and to many volunteers for their support for the Town Team, for Sevenoaks

and for our entry into Britain In Bloom which has produced such excellent results. We continue to develop plans to improve the wayfaring signage around our town.

At this year's sold out Business Show, we heard from the new Police District Commander how safe overall our town remains and heard her commitment to work against the serious and serial offenders who so visibly and financially affect our businesses through retail theft.

As part of our normal efforts our members and board have been able to provide support to the Town Council in its projects such as the successful annual Christmas Lights and support from board member Warners providing parklet greenery and seats. The Town Team information screens have new software and are working again and the website has been refreshed and updated.

The Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan is currently with the Government Inspector and we shall begin to look again at the state and status of Business Improvement Districts around the country and whether such a development remains suitable for Sevenoaks.

I was proud to welcome our new Patron, Laura Trott MBE MP at both the Business Awards and the recent Business Show. She tells me she thoroughly enjoyed her visits and talking to both the Business Awards winners and exhibitors at the Business Show. It is great to have her support in our town and throughout the area. I also want to congratulate the awards winners and our sponsors on the evening – local people and local businesses supporting the people of Sevenoaks.

And finally, the Town Team is a collection of successful businesses and it is excellent to report that the Town Team itself continues to operate both commercially and successfully. Please do contact us to join in our activities, provide support to others or with ideas to improve our town.

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Sevenoaks: the best place to shop, live and do business.

1. Sevenoaks Town Team – Strategic Aims

Since 2011 the Executive Board have been working to develop the following key strategic aims:

1. Increasing visitors to Sevenoaks Town
2. Branding Sevenoaks
3. Investigating and investing in different forms of digital marketing
4. Developing a branded Town Team website
5. Providing a calendar of events
6. Marketing the town as a clean and safe place to live and visit
7. Produce initiatives to address the empty shop issue (in 2022 the vacancy rate in Sevenoaks is considerably lower than the national average)
8. Improve engagement between public, private, and economic sector partners in order to use this combined expertise to improve the town
9. Encourage inward investment into the town and make Sevenoaks attractive for businesses looking to start up
10. Improving the accessibility and environment of Sevenoaks town

2. Sevenoaks Town Partnership – Executive Board

The Executive Board consists of the following members:

Representing	Number	Current Member	Current Organisation
Sevenoaks Town Council	4	Cllr Simon Raikes Cllr Victoria Granville-Baxter Linda Larter MBE Mike Reid	CEO / Town Clerk Town Team Facilitator
Sevenoaks District Council	1	Cllr Avril Hunter	
Kent County Council	1	Cllr Richard Streatfeild MBE	
Transport	3	Cllr Tony Clayton Austin Blackburn Vacant pending new appointment	Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association Go Coach Southeastern
Leisure Facilities	3	Jane Parish CEO Cllr Andrew Eyre (Chairman) Hannah Kay	Sencio Stag Knole
Chamber of Commerce	1	Dawn Blee CEO	
Blighs Meadow	1	Stephen Butler	Workman plc
Sevenoaks Chronicle	1	None available	
Sevenoaks Society	1	Roger Walshe	
Large Business	2	Maxine Morgan (Vice-Chairman) Elizabeth Dolding	Specsavers Warners Solicitors

Representing	Number	Current Member	Current Organisation
Small Independent Business	2	Roberta Ware Glenn Ball	Francis Jones Jewellers Local Architect
Residents Associations	4	Jim Hughes Elizabeth Purves Helen O'Sullivan Byron Brown	Hollybush RA Eardley Road RA Bradbourne RA
Round Table	1	Vacant	
Police	1	Vacant	Kent Police
	26		

3. Digital Projects

3.1 Information Screens

The Town Team currently manages four information screens:

- At Sevenoaks Mainline Station
- At the Stag Community Arts Centre
- At Bat & Ball Station
- At the Bat & Ball Centre.

During the summer new software was installed allowing easy remote editing and for different stories to be run on each screen if required. In addition to static images the screens can also display video. There are opportunities for the screens to be used for “paid for” advertising.

3.2 Info Pods

These were removed during the pandemic and are presently unused except for two which have been repurposed at Sevenoaks and Swanley stations for processing integrated bus travelling.

3.3 Website

The URL for the Town Team website has been changed from being in the partnership name to www.sevenoakstownteam.org. Much of the content has been changed and updated and continues to be work in progress.

3.4 Facebook & LinkedIn

The new Town Team Facebook and LinkedIn pages are functioning

4. Sevenoaks BID Proposal



Plans to introduce a BID for Sevenoaks were stalled by the pandemic. It has been agreed that this will be reviewed after the Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum to avoid confusion over two referendums potentially happening at the same time. The BID process is also currently being reviewed nationally.

5. Vegan Markets



These are proving to be popular events. Two markets were held in 2022 and each attracted 30 or more stalls. They are held in Vine Gardens which provide the opportunity for live music to be played on the bandstand. Performers are arranged by The Listening Room Music Agency.

It is intended to run two markets a year and in 2023 markets have been booked for 1st April and 23rd September.

6. Sevenoaks Business Hub



**sevenoaks
business
hub**

HIGH QUALITY OFFICES TO LET · HIRES FROM HALF A DAY UPWARDS
PRIVATE OFFICES · OPEN PLAN OFFICES · MEETING ROOM · KITCHEN
FREE PARKING · CHARGING POINT · SHOWERS

COME IN TO VIEW

sevenoakstowncouncil.spaces.nexus.com  e:townteam@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

Take-up of the five private office pods has been very successful, and when they become vacant, they are nearly always hired out to a new user within a week. There is a slow build for the hot desks with a handful of people using them on a regular basis, and 2-3 new enquiries or users per week. The hub is now making a slight profit.

A new aluminium sign (as above) has been installed at the entrance to the Council Offices.

7. Plastic Free Sevenoaks

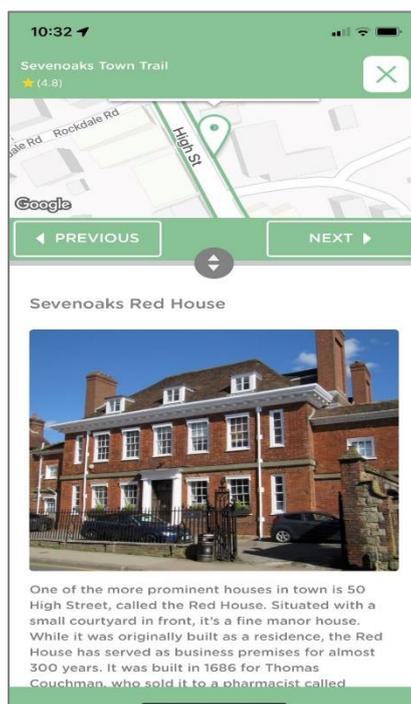
Whereas the Town Team was the original supporter of this project, this year the Town Council appointed a Climate Change Officer who is now working on this programme and more widely, is working to implement the Council's Green Community Investment Plan. A Climate Fair will be held on theVine on 29th April 2023

8. High Street Safaris



Two trails have been run over the last 12 months, for Christmas and for the Platinum Jubilee. Both were sponsored by Warners Solicitors. About 250 people took part in both events. Another is planned for this Christmas.

9. Sevenoaks Town Trail



The town now has a historic trail accessed through the "Trail Tale" app. It takes users on a tour of many of the historic sites and buildings in Sevenoaks providing background on each one.

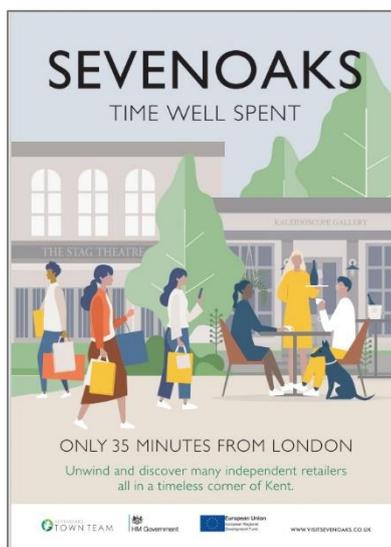
10. Bus back advertising



To encourage people, post pandemic to come into the town again, three different designs were used on a total of 12 Go Coach buses which could be seen all around the area covered by the company. In October these adverts were refreshed and now six buses can be seen promoting the three Sevenoaks markets.

There are also other buses promoting the business hub.

11. London advertising



To promote the town further afield a campaign was run at Charing Cross underground station using this image.

12. Sevenoaks Business Awards

There were plenty of smiles at the Sevenoaks Business Awards held on 10th June at the magnificent Bat & Ball Centre. The event opened with an introduction from Town Team Chairman, Andrew Eyre who then introduced the Town Team's new patron Laura Trott MBE MP. Thanks were also expressed to the former patron, Sir Michael Fallon for many years' service.



Following a motivational speech by international chef, Stuart Gillies, the owner of No 8, the newest restaurant in Sevenoaks, and a two course meal the Awards presentations took place.

The winners were

Independent Business with less than 50 employees

Event Main Sponsor – Manak Solicitors

Winner – Sevenoaks Sport & Wellbeing

Second – Prime Aesthetics

Third – Connectagroup

Larger Business with more than 50 employees

Sponsor – Go Coach

Winner – COOK

Second – Rockdale

Third – Paydens

Green Business

Sponsor – Sevenoaks District Council

Winner – Mount Vineyard

Second – TN Card

Joint Third – Aquaoaks & Eat for Energy

New Business – less than 5 years old

Sponsor – Kent County Council

Winner - Sevenoaks Sport & Wellbeing

Second – TN Card

Joint Third – Eat for Energy & Aquaoaks

Micro Enterprise

Sponsor – Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce

Winner – Red Pizza Van

Second – Sevenoaks Sport & Wellbeing

Third – Connectagroup

Customer Choice
Sponsor - Specsavers
Winner – TN Card
Second - Aquaoaks
Third – Crop Hair

Judges Choice – for significant contribution to economic development and local community

Sponsor – Warners Solicitors

Bill Terry of Wealden Properties

13. Best dressed window



Competitions were held at Christmas 2021 and for the Platinum Jubilee. On both occasions a bottle of English sparkling wine was presented to the winner by Dawn Blee, CEO of Sevenoaks District Chamber of Commerce with certificates for first to third places in retail and non-retail categories.

14. Public Realm Improvements

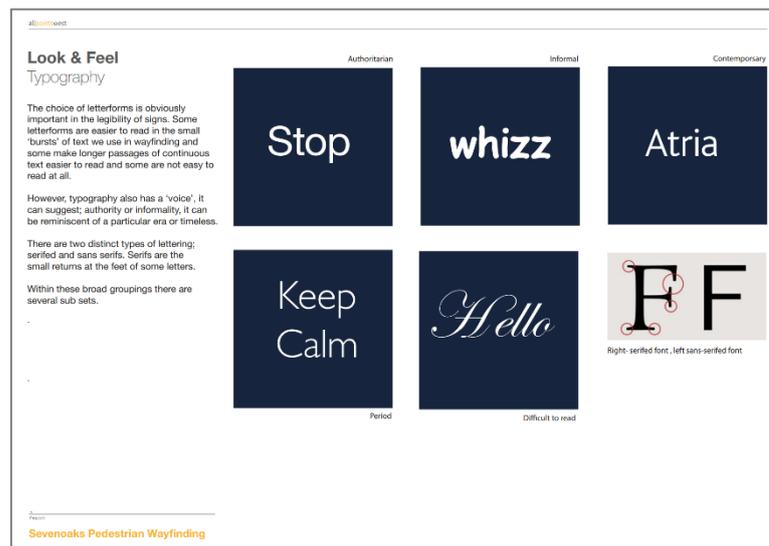


A preliminary survey of the town centre showed that there was much to be gained by refreshing the towns public realm assets. This prompted a grant from Kent County Council to undertake a detailed audit of these items. Within the subject area more than 400 items were identified. These ranged through bins, bollards, railings, lamp posts, belisha beacons, traffic signs, road markings and the listed buildings plaques.

Funded mostly by Sevenoaks Town Council with contributions in kind from the District Council and the County, a major overhaul was undertaken with more than 80 lamp posts, belisha beacons and traffic signs being painted, 50 black bollards being painted, the white railings and lampposts being washed, the HSBC fountain and a drinking trough being stone cleaned, some bins being renewed, 6 road name signs refurbished and some road markings being refreshed. Of the 22 privately owned historic plaques 7 have now been repainted too.

The scheme completed, on target, in the week before the judging of the Britain in Bloom competition 2022.

15. Wayfinding scheme



The directional signage in Sevenoaks is almost non-existent or very poor. The Town Team is leading a project to address that. The broad parameters and matters to consider have been identified and a detailed scheme is now being designed – even down to font choices. This project will be costly and funded through CIL receipts.

16. Britain in Bloom

Sevenoaks was entered into both South East Britain in Bloom, and for the first time, in the National competition 2022. The judging criteria are not the same for each competition, but both look for community “buy in”, green credentials and volunteering. So, it was a huge team effort by many of the people and businesses of the town in achieving the South East results below and a Silver Gilt Award at National level.



Sevenoaks Town Council was delighted with the results and gave special thanks to all the local businesses, organisations and volunteers who help and make the town such a success, including Sevenoaks Soroptimists, Sevenoaks Living Landscapes, Southeastern Trains, the Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership, West Kent Housing, Go Coach, Warners Solicitors, Academy Consulting, Rockdale, Thackray Williams Solicitors, Sevenoaks District Council, the young people at HOUSE in the Basement, schools, community volunteers and members of Town Team.

	Location	Category	Award
1	Sevenoaks Town Centre	Town Centre	Gold
2	Vine Gardens	Park	Gold
3	Upper High Street Gardens	Small Park	Gold
4	Sevenoaks Station	It's Your Neighbourhood	Outstanding
5	Sensory Bed at Vine Gardens	It's Your Neighbourhood	Outstanding
6	Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership	It's Your Neighbourhood	Thriving
7	HOUSE in the Basement	It's Your Neighbourhood	Thriving

17. Sevenoaks Business Show 2022



The 2022 show was held on 14th October at the Bat & Ball Centre. This is the second time that the Centre had been used for the show and changes were introduced as a result of the earlier experience. It was decided to open up both halls for the exhibition and to use the main stage for presentations.

The Town Team Patron, Laura Trott MBE MP opened the show and during the day Tom Simmonds of Gretel gave a presentation on Gretel, a system for easily tracing money in forgotten bank accounts, investments, pensions etc. This was followed by newly appointed District Commander Ch Insp Elizabeth Jones discussing how she will be focussing on business related crime – mostly in dealing with serious and serial shop-lifters.

There were 28 exhibitors and subsequent to the show responses are being collected to a survey on how they felt about it. At the time of writing they are generally very positive. The main negative relates to the amount of car parking at the Centre. While there is very good provision for most events, the Chamber holds an early morning meeting at the Station encouraging its members to visit the show, and combined with parents dropping off at the nursery and exhibitors own parking there just isn't enough space.

18. Sponsorship / Grant Funding

Sevenoaks Town Council supported the creation of the Sevenoaks Town Partnership, now known as Sevenoaks Town Team, and continues to do this by providing facilities and staff resources. In addition, the Town Council provides funding of £5,000 for each financial year. This however is subject to matching sponsorship either in cash or 'in kind' services. At October 2022, the Town Team is in a healthy profit position.

19. Events Committee

The aim of the events committee is to share experiences, resources, and volunteers among those who arrange events in the town. At the meetings there is also the opportunity to provide talks on relevant topics.

The Events Committee has not met during or since the pandemic.

20. The future of the Sevenoaks Town Team

The primary aims of the Town Team remains the same, to support each other and local businesses to make Sevenoaks the best place to live, shop and do business.