



SEVENOAKS  
TOWN TEAM

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SEVENOAKS TOWN TEAM  
13<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL REPORT  
2025

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***An introduction by Cllr Tony Clayton, Chairman of the Sevenoaks Town Team***



I'd like to thank all those involved in the Town Team - business leaders, residents associations, community groups and councillors - for all they have contributed to Sevenoaks over the last year.

The most spectacular success was last month's crop of prizes at the national final of Britain in Bloom where we scooped four National awards (for involving community groups and young people in improving the town) and a Gold award for the overall result. So many people contributed to this - of all ages and so many different groups.

Thanks too to the local police representatives, especially Nick Hubbard and colleagues, who are making progress in deterring retail crime in our town. There's more to do, and it will take more resources to make Sevenoaks a really unattractive target for organised crime; that's one of the key aims of the Business Improvement District.

The draft Business Plan for the BID is on its second or third iteration - aiming to give a clear story on how businesses - and their customers - will gain from a relatively small, shared investment in marketing and managing the Town. This year's survey of town centre commercial property occupancy shows that we're continuing to attract new businesses to replace those who leave, even though the national business climate has been more difficult in 2025. The BID will aim to build on this success.

The key aim of the Town Team is to make Sevenoaks the best place to live, work, visit and do business. According to a recent estate agents poll we won the 'best place to live in Kent' title, visitor numbers at our main attractions are doing well and businesses are investing. The 'Health and Wellness' initiative outlined later in this report could further improve our position as a place to work.

Thanks again to all those who have contributed so much.

*Tony Clayton*

## Sevenoaks Town Team – The Strategic Aims

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

- a. Increasing visitors to Sevenoaks Town
- b. Branding Sevenoaks
- c. Investigating and investing in different forms of digital marketing
- d. Developing a branded Town Team website
- e. Providing a calendar of events
- f. Marketing the town as a clean and safe place to live and visit
- g. Produce initiatives to address the empty shop issue
- h. Improve engagement between public, private, and economic sector partners in order to use this combined expertise to improve the town
- i. Encourage inward investment into the town and make Sevenoaks attractive for businesses looking to start up
- j. Improving the accessibility and environment of Sevenoaks town
- k.

## Sevenoaks Town Team – Executive Board

The Executive Board consists of the following members:

Representing	Number	Current Member	Current Organisation
Sevenoaks Town Council	4	Cllr Nigel Whiteman Cllr Victoria Granville-Baxter Cllr Libby Ancrum Linda Larter MBE Mike Reid	CEO / Town Clerk Town Team Facilitator
Sevenoaks District Council	1	Cllr Graham Clack	
Kent County Council	1	Cllr Streatfeild MBE	
Transport	3	Cllr Tony Clayton <b>(Chair)</b>  Austin Blackburn Jack Heidry	Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association Go Coach Southeastern
Leisure Facilities	3	Shane Smith Andrew Eyre Rebecca Ibbotson	Leisure Centre Stag Knole
Chamber of Commerce	1	Dawn Blee CEO	
Blighs Meadow	1	Stephen Butler	Workman plc
Sevenoaks Chronicle	1	None available	
Sevenoaks Society	1	Richard Baxter	
Large Business	2	Maxine Morgan <b>(Vice-Chair)</b> Elizabeth Dolding	Specsavers Warners Solicitors
Small Independent Business	2	Roberta Ware Vacant	Francis Jones Jewellers

Representing	Number	Current Member	Current Organisation
Residents Associations	4	Elizabeth Purves Vacant Byron Brown Avril Hunter	Hollybush RA Eardley Road RA Bradbourne RA Redlands RA
Round Table	1	Vacant	
Police	1	Nick Hubbard/Tom Costin	Kent Police
Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum	1	Cllr Marilyn Canet	
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## 1. Digital Projects

### Information Screens

The Town Team currently manages four information screens:

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

Of these, the screen at the Bat & Ball Centre is the most effective due to its location and size. The Town Team is waiting for a response from Network Rail regarding the plan to replace the screen at the mainline railway station as it is very dated and found to have been disconnected.

The screens are used primarily to promote Town Team, STC and charity events.

### Website

Pending the outcome of the BID process and the future inter-action of the BID and Town Team the Board has put on hold any further investment in the Town Team website.

## 2. Sevenoaks BID Proposal



A Steering Group comprised of a mix of businesses and interest groups has been formed to develop the BID proposal. The main task of the Group is to create the Business Plan on which qualifying businesses will vote on whether Sevenoaks should create a BID.

The Group has met five times, and the broad parameters of the Plan have been settled and a draft budget formulated. A draft version of the plan has been designed, and while factual it has been decided to make it more of a “selling tool” along the theme “What’s in it for me”.

### 3. Vegan Market

The April market was held successfully, but the October market had to be cancelled due to bad weather. The next market is set for 4<sup>th</sup> April 2026

### 4. Sevenoaks Bike Festival

Building on the success of the inaugural event in 2024, a further event was scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> September 2025. The main organiser of the event is Sevenoaks Bikes. Unfortunately, Sevenoaks Bikes had a spate of staff illness to the point where they could not run the Festival, and last minute it had to be cancelled.

### 5. Sevenoaks Street Food Festival



This event too was in its second year, and it proved to be a resounding success. The Festival combines a whole range of street food catering with an afternoon of music and dance entertainment. The attraction was such that many visitors also took the opportunity to watch a cricket match which was being played on The Vine. The primary organiser is Caroline Druce-Smith of Heart of Sevenoaks.

### 6. 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**

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The Hub continues to run profitably, though income has recently been down due to one of the pods being unlet. Whereas a vacant pod is normally filled with a matter of days, this time it is still empty after about two months.

Whereas initially the role of hub manager was filled by the Town Team Facilitator, that has now gravitated to the Responsible Finance Officer.

## **7. Ground floor commercial occupancy survey**

A repeat of the annual surveys was undertaken in March 2025. This covers the whole of Sevenoaks Town and the result was very pleasing. The national vacancy rate was approximately 13.9% at the time, while in Sevenoaks the 2023 figure of 6.1% reduced to 3.4% in 2024 and increased marginally to 4.3% in 2025. However most of those shops vacant in March are now occupied and others which became vacant in the interim are mostly let too.

## **8. High Street Safaris**

We have been unable to secure any sponsors this year, and the events have not been run. The trails are popular and given a successful BID outcome, could probably be re-introduced.

## **9. Sponsorship**

Town Team and Town Council Projects rely on sponsorship income, primarily to keep event ticket prices down and to ensure good quality throughout the various projects.

This year the level of support from businesses has been significant, and for the Christmas Lights Switch On, FM Conway are providing all the street closure works free of charge while eleven businesses have kindly donated.

Income from sponsorship during 2025 is just short of £22,000 so far.

One unusual contribution to the town was when Savills noticed the bench by The Chequers collapsing and then paying for its replacement.

## **10. Sevenoaks Business Show 2025**



This took place on Friday 13th June when once again Clive Emson Auctioneers were the main sponsor. Stands at the show were sold out. The show was attended by Town Team patron Laura Trott MBE MP, Town Team members and representatives of many local businesses.



Mike Alvey of Kent Police gave a very positive update on policing in the town, and The Sevenoaks BID Ambassadors, Nicki Rundle and Jason Crow explained progress and the next steps to creating the BID

## 11. Sevenoaks Business Awards 2025

These will take place on 14<sup>th</sup> November, two days after the Town Team AGM.

The first step in the Awards process is to invite the public to nominate businesses. Though more were nominated, 20 completed their entry.

The Awards Gala Dinner will be held at the Bat & Ball Centre where Jenny Ryan (The Vixen) will be the speaker and magician Bob Pound will be up to his tricks. Jamie Wilson, the producer of the Sevenoaks panto for the last 15 years will give an insight into its development and importance to the town.

The public have again engaged heavily with the process, firstly in nominating businesses and then secondly in voting for their favourites. Each person can only vote once, and 2760 votes were cast this year.

## 12. Britain in Bloom



In 2025 Sevenoaks enjoyed great success at both the regional and national levels. While most would naturally associate the competition with nature, the judging includes sections on the appearance of a town and furthermore the engagement of business in that town. Judging also considers the development of such factors from year to year.

So, the improvements to the public realm since the pandemic have been acknowledged and the number of businesses contributing through donations, through staff volunteering and through dressing windows etc have all played their part in the Gold Awards achieved.

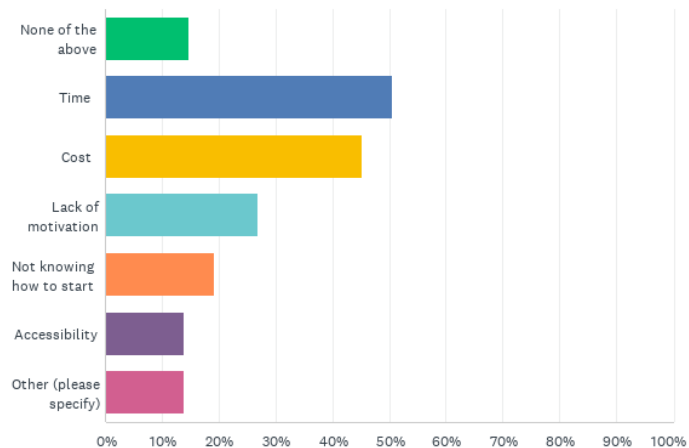
### 13. Sevenoaks Health & Wellness Initiative.



The Town Team is developing a major new project partnered with The Better Body Group. The purpose of the initiative is to work on improving the general health and wellbeing of residents. The idea is to assist people in making modest changes which will benefit them. While this could be to do with their diet, their participation in exercise and having health checks, it is also geared to improving social lives and generally “joining in”.

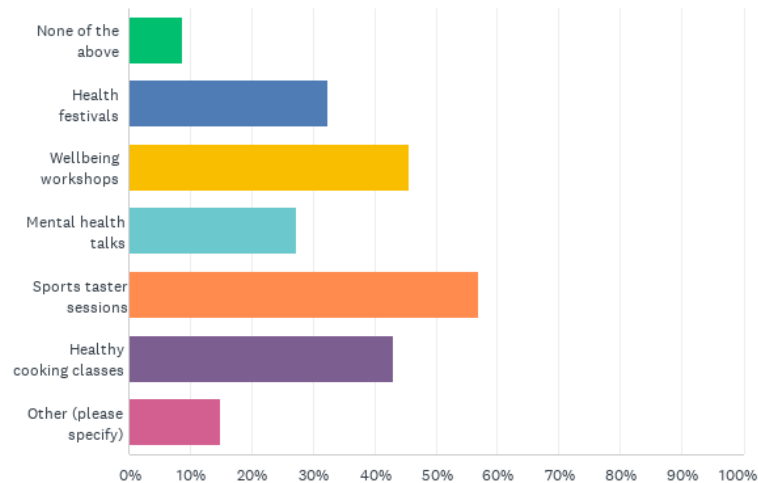
A survey is running and here are two of the results graphs which will guide development

Q5 What stops you from being more active or improving your health right now?





#### Q4 What types of health and wellness events or services would you like to see?



A second survey is about to be launched. This one will be gathering data from a huge range of sports clubs, associations such as the Scouts, and interest groups such as the Sevenoaks Society, chess club and bridge club. The aim of that will be to establish ways for new members/participants etc to become involved. From that, a new Health & Wellness section is planned for the Town Council website. It will include a comprehensive directory of such providers in Sevenoaks.

While it is intended that this initiative will be ongoing, the focus for 2026 will be a Health & Wellness Festival which is planned for the 30<sup>th</sup> May in Vine Gardens.

#### 14. Christmas Lights Switch On



Pretty well all Town Council staff together with Town Team volunteers and others become involved in the organisation and running of this event. The Town Team liaises with retailers and especially Blighs to ensure awareness and co-ordination.

In 2023 rowdy behaviour, mainly at the Vine, caused a re-think on how to mitigate the problem. That resulted in the Switch-on being moved from a Friday evening to a Saturday afternoon. This turned out to be a good decision with no reported trouble during the event and many responses from the public saying that it felt far more “family friendly”

### **15. Best Dressed Window Competitions**

The Easter competition was sponsored by Berry & Lamberts while the Chamber will be providing bottles of bubbly for the winners of the forthcoming Christmas competition.

### **16. Public Realm Improvements**

Given the amount of work undertaken in the last two-three years the town is looking fairly smart, though it will need to be maintained.

So, the works this year have not been quite so obvious but have included:

- The painting of the tea hut on The Vine
- Washing down the white lampposts at The Vine and bollards and railing in Upper High Street
- Painting the railings and step nosings on Upper High Street Gardens
- Washing down the steps at the House in the Basement.
- Three visits to give the fountain and direction signs by HSBC a very thorough clean
- Cleaning the round bollards in Blighs car park – thank you Barclays Bank staff

### **17. Holly Party**



The third “affordable shared Christmas staff party” was held at the Bat & Ball Centre in 2024 when an Abba tribute band and June B provided the entertainment.

The concept is to create an event for businesses and social clubs to enjoy celebrations together at minimal cost. In 2025 local favourites, Jonah’s Wail will be performing and Perfect Cuisine will be providing another of their sumptuous buffets. Tickets are just £27.50 which includes food.

**Check the menu and book your 2025 tickets here!**



#### **16. Funding of the Town Team**

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.

#### **17. 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.

If the Business Improvement District is formed, the Town Council will still guarantee to support the activities it currently undertakes - the Town Team programme, Christmas Lights, flower baskets and the rest. So, the Town Team should still have an important role, organising community events and promoting new ideas. How it will work with the BID board, and other business organisations, is something we'll need to work on in the future.