

Council Offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 1HG



Published: 06.11.23

I hereby summon you to attend the meeting of the Sevenoaks District Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks commencing at 7.00 pm on 14 November 2023 to transact the under-mentioned business.

Chief Executive

AGENDA

There are no fire drills planned. If the fire alarm is activated, which is a continuous siren with a flashing red light, please leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs.

Apologies for absence

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 18 July 2023 and Extraordinary Council held on 17 October 2023 (Pages 1 - 16)
2. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting.
3. Chairman's Announcements.
4. To receive any questions from members of the public under paragraph 17 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.
5. To receive any petitions submitted by members of the public under paragraph 18 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.
6. Matters considered by the Cabinet and/or Scrutiny Committee:
 - a) Draft Council Plan (Pages 17 - 44)
7. To consider the following reports from the Chief Executive or other Chief Officers on matters requiring the attention of Council:

- a) Draft Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 (Pages 45 - 48)
 - b) Appointments to Outside Organisations 2023/24 (Pages 49 - 50)
8. To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.
 9. To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given. (Pages 51 - 58)
 10. To receive the report of the Leader of the Council on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting. (Pages 59 - 62)

EXEMPT ITEMS

At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.

To assist in the speedy and efficient despatch of business, Members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the appropriate Contact Officer named on a report prior to the day of the meeting.

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Layland (Chairman)

Cllr. Ball (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Alger, Barker, Barnes, Barnett, Bayley, Bulford, Camp, Penny Cole, Perry Cole, G. Darrington, P. Darrington, Dyball, Edwards-Winsor, Ferrari, Granville, Grint, Gustard, Harrison, Haslam, Horwood, Leaman, Lindop, Malone, Manamperi, Manston, Maskell, McArthur, Purves, Reay, Robinson, Roy, Scott, Shea, Silander, Skinner, Streatfeild, Thornton, Varley, Waterton, White and Williams

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Baker, C.Morgan, Clack, Clayton, Esler, Hogarth, Hudson, J.Morgan, Kitchener and Williamson

Cllr. Williamson was present via a virtual media platform which did not constitute attendance under the LGA 1972.

18. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23 May 2023

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 23 May 2023, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

19. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting.

No additional declarations of interest, were received.

20. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman started his announcements by thanking everyone for the opportunity to serve as Chairman for the year.

On 19 June, Cllr Ball hosted a Flag Raising ceremony to mark Armed Forces Day. It was a pleasure to be joined by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, the Mayors and Chairmen of the Towns, the Royal British Legion, the Westerham Sea Cadets, the Year 3 class from St. John's Primary School, and many fellow Councillors and staff in celebrating the excellent service the Armed Forces provided.

The Chairman announced that there were a number of free events organised by the Council this summer. This included the annual Family Fun Days which would begin on Monday 24 July in Seal and would run every weekday until 18 August. Free walking rugby sessions, run by Edenbridge Rugby Club, were being held 6-7pm every Monday at Edenbridge Recreation Ground. There were also free Skateboarding lessons for boys and girls aged 7 – 16 in Swanley, every Monday until 11 September. There are still spaces remaining for the 12-16 year old sessions, which could be booked on the Council's website.

The Chairman informed Members that the Council had recently launched its Hello Lamp Post project in Swanley. The service allowed residents and visitors to “talk” with certain objects around Swanley, and express their thoughts and concerns on the area. The objects would also update users on local information and events, and would give advice on dealing with the cost of living crisis.

The Council had again received a £25,000 grant from the Chewing Gum Task Force to aid in cleaning gum, and reducing gum littering. This project will build upon last year's successful campaign in Edenbridge and Sevenoaks, and will be focused on tackling the issue in Swanley and Westerham. The difference it had made in Sevenoaks and Edenbridge had been amazing, and it would be great to see the improvements in Swanley and Westerham, as well.

Following the Government's Rural England Prosperity fund, the West Kent Rural Grants scheme opened for applications on 4 July, until 15 August. These grants aim to support rural jobs and improve local facilities, and can range from £2,000 to £25,000. It would be administered by the West Kent Partnership on a local level, to build on the successful delivery of the West Kent LEADER scheme. Councillors and rural businesses were encouraged to examine the detailed information available on the Council's website.

Finally, the Chairman requested all Councillors to make a note in their diary for the 22nd September, when the Chairman would be hosting his first Chairman's event – a tour of the Eden Valley Museum, followed by drinks and canapés. Further information and formal invitations would be issued closer to the event.

21. To receive any questions from members of the public under paragraph 17 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

No questions had been received.

22. To receive any petitions submitted by members of the public under paragraph 18 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

No petitions had been received.

23. Matters considered by the Cabinet and/or Scrutiny Committee:

a) Conservation Area Appraisal

Cllr. Thornton moved and Cllr. Perry Cole seconded the recommendation from Cabinet. The report sought adoption of three updated conservation area appraisals, designates the proposed boundary amendments and agrees to making a focused Article 4 direction.

Resolved: That

- a) the three updated conservation area appraisals for Eynsford, Farningham and Kemsing, be adopted;
- b) the proposed boundary amendments to each of the above conservation areas, be designated and;
- c) a focused Article 4 direction to remove limited permitted development rights, that protects boundary treatments and front gardens in the Kemsing Conservation area; be agreed.

24. To consider the following reports from the Chief Executive or other Chief Officers on matters requiring the attention of Council:

a) **Appointments to Other Organisations 23/24 – non executive**

Cllr. Thornton moved and Cllr. Perry Cole seconded the recommendation for the appointment to the Outside Organisation Compassion Sevenoaks.

Resolved: That Cllr. Leaman be appointed, as the Council's representative on the Outside Organisation Compassion Sevenoaks for the municipal year 2023/24.

25. To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

Two questions had been received from Members in accordance with paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

Question 1: Cllr Leaman

“Following the commitment of considerable public money, what arrangements has or will the Council put in place to ensure that it monitors and reports regularly to all Councillors on the levels of use and the financial performance of the District's leisure centres and golf course, now operated by Everyone Active?”

Response: Leader of the Council

“Thank you Councillor for your question. I’m very pleased to reassure you that Officers are monitoring the performance of Everyone Active closely across all the sites that they operate on our behalf. Each quarter meetings are in place to ensure that all performance and financial information is shared and scrutinised. And to that regard it is pleasing to report that Everyone Active and our leisure facilities are performing strongly. In the month of June some 23,000 people used the facilities at the three sites which were previously managed by Sencio and in the last two months of their operation at these three sites, Everyone Active have managed to gain back 73% of the previous membership levels for their fitness offering, 74% of swimming lessons and 78% of the golf user-ships from an absolutely outstanding start.

At the next meeting of People & Places Advisory Committee on 30 November there will be a report on the interim contract arrangements and I’m sure that all members will have a keen interest in that report. Financial information is also included in the regular financial monitoring reports which go to Finance & Investment Advisory Committee and then to cabinet. Furthermore, I understand that the Scrutiny Committee will be inviting Everyone Active to attend a future meeting to present and take further questions from Members.”

Supplementary question: Cllr Leaman

What confidence does the Council have, that there is proper accountability for this expenditure, if we’re not kept informed, month by month in a fast moving situation upon the return of this investment of financial position and the use of these facilities?

Response: Portfolio Holder for People & Places

Cllr Dyball replied stating that Everyone active was a very different organisation to Sencio. There was an open dialogue between Officers and Everyone Active and performance monitoring and financial information was regularly fed back. Currently they were very happy with the contract arrangements with Everyone Active and it was appreciated that it was a lot of money but that there was no other option at the time. Shortly, future contractual arrangements would be commenced for a permanent operator for the Sevenoaks, Edenbridge and Lullingstone golf course as Everyone Active’s contract for those sites was for only two years. The performance monitoring and financial information provided was scrutinised to ensure that there was value for money.

In accordance with the Constitution, no further discussion was allowed.

Question 2: Cllr Gustard

“High land costs make new affordable homes hard to build in Sevenoaks District. Will the council agree that in future any land it sells for development, or any development undertaken by the Council itself, should be conditional on meeting its own policy requirement of 40% affordable homes?”

Response: Leader of the Council

“The Council has a statutory requirement to seek best price for its assets under S.123 of the Local Government Act and should not fetter any sale by making conditions or requirements about the future use of that land after sale, beyond those set out in existing constraints or planning policies.

The amount of affordable housing provided on any site would be determined through the planning process and the Council’s planning policies.

The District-wide Affordable Housing policy is set out in Policy SP3 of the Core Strategy Policy and accompanying Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, most recently updated through an Addendum in March 2023.

The Council’s policies require that developments should include between 0 to 40 per cent, i.e. up to 40% of affordable homes dependent on the total number of homes being provided and these policies would apply to any site seeking planning permission including any land owned, or previously owned by the Council.

In bringing forward its own development proposals the Council will always seek to be policy compliant where it is viable to do so and these schemes are only progressed on the approval of Members and the Development Management Committee.”

No supplementary question was asked.

26. To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

Cllr. Purves proposed the following motion, which was seconded by Cllr. Granville:

“The Council make a Compulsory Purchase Order to acquire the site of the former Farmers public house so as to bring it into productive use at an early date.”

Speaking to the motion Cllr. Purves set out that a petition and motion by the Sevenoaks Society had previously been received by the Council for a compulsory purchase order (CPO) of the site. Following its approval for planning permission at appeal, the site had remained derelict for 17 years and minimal development had taken place. It was stated that by a CPO, the Council could bring the site back into productive use and could bring forward a better development plan with more affordable housing by working with developers or housing associations to crease the Council’s housing stock.

Members debated the motion noting the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Development Plan focused on redevelopment of sustainable sites and the Farmers Site central location and a site which was not located within the Green Belt. It was stated that

work was ongoing looking at the wider area and the emerging local plan, which would secure the policy framework and compliment the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Town Plan.

Concerns were expressed that to CPO the site, would come at considerable expense to taxpayers money. Over the years Officers have spoken to developers and housing providers to look at the viability and options of working together to take it forward. It was unfortunate that no one had seen the site as a viable option and the expenditure could not be justified to secure a CPO. Further concerns were raised that no detailed financial analysis had taken place. Members noted that the budget setting process would be starting shortly, and if Members felt strongly about a CPO for it the monies to be identified through the process. Members were reminded that many attempts had been made by officers for a timetable of development from the site owners and CIL payments had been made to the Council.

Cllr. Purves exercised her right of reply. A vote was taken on the motion as set out above, and was lost.

Cllr. Streatfeild proposed the following motion, which was duly seconded by Cllr. Shea.

“Sevenoaks District Council supports the five outcomes of the Care Leavers Covenant.

Sevenoaks District Council agrees to become signatories to the Care Leavers Covenant.

The Council notes the four stages to becoming signatories to the covenant.”

Speaking to the motion, Cllr Streatfeild set out that by following a campaign for the care leavers covenant, the outward signal it demonstrates to those leaving care is important. Stories heard in wards – with resilience and great hardship which they bear no responsibility but impact. National campaign to be on the side of the vulnerable.

Members debated the motion giving consideration to the statistics surrounding care leavers and the anticipated difference it could make to the care leavers lives, by building opportunities. It was noted that Kent County Council (KCC) were the corporate parent and therefore were responsible. The Council’s Hero team worked closely with KCC. Members debated the responsibility of the covenant and what it demonstrated. It was mooted whether an amendment could be put forward for consideration for referring to the Advisory Committee.

Cllr. Streatfeild exercised his right of reply. A vote was taken on the motion as set out above, and was lost.

27. To receive the report of the Leader of the Council on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting.

The Leader of the Council reported on the work that she and the Cabinet had undertaken since Annual Council held on 23 May 2023. The Leader took the opportunity to highlight that the Council had achieved the highest level of Platinum Investors in People Accreditation earlier this year. It was the fifth time in a row that Council had achieved the highest rating from IIP, and she applauded staff for the outstanding achievement.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.15 PM

CHAIRMAN

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Council

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Layland (Chairman)

Cllr. Ball (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham Alger, Baker, Barnes, Barnett, Bayley, Clack, Clayton, Penny Cole, Perry Cole, G. Darrington, P. Darrington, Dyball, Edwards-Winsler, Grint, Harrison, Hogarth, Hudson, Kitchener, Layland, Maskell, McArthur, Purves, Reay, Roy, Streatfeild, Thornton, Williams, Williamson, Bulford, , Camp, Haslam, Lindop, Manamperi, Manston, Robinson, Shea, Silander, White, Skinner, Ferrari, Gustard, Leaman, Malone, Cathy Morgan, James Morgan and Scott

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Waterton, Granville, Horwood, Varley and Barker

28. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting.

Cllr Jim Morgan declared for transparency that he was one of the Local Ward Members for the Farmstead Drive Development.

29. Matters also considered by the Cabinet

a) Farmstead Drive, Spitals Cross, Edenbridge – Development

Cllr. Thornton moved and Cllr. Maskell seconded the recommendation from Cabinet. The report sought that the total project budget be increased by £2,741,785 to £10,351,405 in the Capital Programme to deliver the scheme which would be funded as detailed in the financial implications.

Cllr. Thornton spoke to the motion giving an update to the project which was previously approved by Full Council in November 2021. Since then economic and market related factors had impacted the previously agreed budget and a increase in the budget was required to deliver the scheme. Detailed consideration had been given to the report by Finance & Investment Advisory Committee (FIAC) on 5 September 2023 and by Cabinet on 19 September 2023. It was noted that the scheme was marginally viable but provided much needed housing and significant community benefits, including a new community hall, play area, landscaping and additional parking. These changes had been brought about through extensive public consultation, including through the planning permission process and land

appropriation. Stakeholders views had been heard and changes made to the plans recognising the significant benefits to the local residents.

She further spoke to the motion stating that she was reassured that answers had been provided to previously asked questions regarding, viability, affordable housing, and the procurement process undertaken for the appointment of the contractor. Due diligence had been appropriately considered and dealt with and there was an additional funding of £375,000 from the brownfield land release fund. Stringent financial due diligence checks had been carried out on the contractor during the procurement process and there were further assurances by the fixed construction lump sum price, insurance cover and additional safeguards within the contract arrangements.

The Leader advised that due to the recent global and economic market events, and scheme design changes following stakeholder involvement, this had eroded the contingency and profit conditions resulting in the delivery of affordable housing becoming unavailable. Amendments to the scheme had ensured the project was marginally financially viable. She was pleased to learn that Quercus Housing were considering the purchase of two units for affordable housing. Due to the changes it was important to note that the cost of the scheme would be prohibitive for private developers and therefore the Council was able to develop it for the benefit of the local community. It would ensure sustainability, local housing needs, accessible spaces, as well as a parking scheme for the wider estate and this was all provided by the Council's own finances. The development would have significant community and social benefits which overall outweighed the weakness of the financial viability.

Members discussed the motion and some Members expressed their support for the scheme noting the community benefits with parking, open spaces and new community hall and welcomed the news that Quercus were considering two units for affordable housing. Other Members expressed their concern at the lack of affordable housing, and in response other Members questioned where the additional money would come from to cover the additional costs of providing affordable housing when it had been stated that it would not be a viable scheme with affordable housing.

Cllr Skinner moved an amendment to the motion which was duly seconded to add "and, in view of the rapid increase in costs, uncertainty about the level of receipts and lack of affordable housing and other concerns, agrees that the Cabinet be mandated to table a report to the Full Council at least once every 6 months with an account of progress made and its considered analysis of the likely financial out-turns and risks associated with this project."

Cllr Skinner spoke to the motion stating that when the proposal had first been agreed 10 units out of the 33 were to be affordable housing and since then a number of changes had been made and the scheme was now for 23 units with no affordable housing, and these changes were said to be based on consultation and market related events. The Council was the developer and would recoup monies through the sale of units and it was reassuring to note that the Council would have control over the speed of works. He expressed his concern at the market related values and if costs

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increased again, the impact this would have on the Councils budget, and by regular monitoring to Full Council process, success and risks would be able to be taken into account.

Members debated the amendment, with some support expressed for additional oversight and reports. Other comments raised included affordable housing and sustainability. In response to some of the points raised it was highlighted that FIAC and Cabinet had oversight through reports already submitted to the Committee. A project team was in place to also provide additional monthly monitoring of finances and progress. It was questioned how the reporting to Council would work in practice with regular monitoring already taking place.

In his reply Cllr Skinner advised that he was delighted to hear that FIAC would be continuing their monitoring, however he believed that as the project was significant in its size and budget, all Members should have oversight and understanding. He further stated that although it was welcomed to hear a team of professionals were undertaking regular monitoring, it should be reported to Council to note the progress, whether it was on or off track and be able to consider the implications of any development issues, which was important.

In Cllr Thornton’s right of reply, she stated that the market values in the report were more specific to the characteristics of Sevenoaks. It was unfortunate that the scheme would not provide any affordable housing but this was due to the viability and pressures from KCC regarding the S106. She further raised that as with other projects the Council had undertaken with the Sevenoaks Town Car park and White Oak Leisure Centre both of those projects delivered significant community infrastructure which could not have happened in any other way and so with these types of projects the viability was lower and affordable housing could not be provided on top of the other significant benefits to communities. If the additional money was agreed, the financial monitoring would be part of the budget framework and therefore monitored through FIAC and Cabinet and it was not possible to debate the micro details of the project within the Chamber. FIAC and Cabinet were public meetings and she and the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment were also regularly updated with progress and costs to plan. Additional reporting to Council was surplus to requirement and would put additional unnecessary pressures on Officers for additional reports.

As there was no further debate the Chairman moved to take the vote. In accordance with the Council’s Constitution, Part 2 paragraph 24.4, five Members of the Council stood and demanded a recorded vote on the amendment.

The amendment was put to the vote.

For	Against	Abstention
	Abraham	

Alger		
	Baker	
	Ball	
	Barnes	
	Barnett	
	Bayley	
	Bulford	
Camp		
	Clack	
Clayton		
	Penny Cole	
	Perry Cole	
	G. Darrington	
	P. Darrington	
	Dyball	
	Edwards-Winser	
	Ferrari	

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	Grint	
Gustard		
	Harrison	
	Haslam	
	Hogarth	
	Hudson	
	Kitchener	
	Layland	
Leaman		
Lindop		
	Malone	
Manamperi		
Manston		
	Maskell	
	McArthur	
	C.Morgan	
J.Morgan		

Purves		
	Reay	
Robinson		
	Roy	
	Scott	
Shea		
Silander		
Skinner		
Streatfeild		
	Thornton	
	White	
	Williams	
	Williamson	
15	33	0

The amendment was lost.

The motion remained unchanged and no further debate took place. Cllr Thornton in summary spoke to the original motion reminding Members of the importance of the scheme to the Edenbridge Community.

The motion was put to the vote and it was:

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Resolved: that the total project budget be increased by £2,741,785 to £10,351,405 in the Capital Programme to deliver the scheme, to be funded as noted, in the Financial implications below, be agreed.

Financial implications:

Council approved the provision of £7,609,620 in the Capital Programme to deliver the scheme back in November 2021. Due to the reasons set out in this report there is now a requirement for additional funding of £2,741,785 to cover the total project costs.

The scheme is intended to be funded (ultimately) from capital receipts and from the sale of the residential units and rental income from the commercial buildings (see Appendix B for more information).

The table below shows the expected expenditure over the duration of the project.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	50,418	285,705	2,291,123	5,763,417	1,960,742	10,351,405

The 23 residential units will be disposed of in the open market and price points have been recommended by the Council's property consultant.

At today current sales values (Quarter 1 2023) for both the residential homes and rental values of the commercial units would be approximately £9,948,059. By applying a modest growth and including the £375,000 BLRF Grant this would see the GDV increasing to £10,379,809 yielding a small surplus of £28,404.

As the Council is not selling and is retaining the commercial buildings the rental would recoup the rest of the scheme costs. The rental unit values total £57,948 (pa).

Until the receipts from the sales of the residential units are received, short-term borrowing will be used to fund the scheme. The potential financing costs are outlined in Appendix B.

Consideration will need to be given to the VAT implications of the project. Dependent on the use of some of the elements of the project it may require specific VAT treatment. Further VAT advice will be sought.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.57 pm

CHAIRMAN

Item 6 (a) - Draft Council Plan

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet on 9 November 2023, and the relevant minute extract was therefore not available prior to printing of these papers and will follow when available.

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DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN

Council – 14 November 2023

Report of: Chief Executive

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by:

- Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee – 26 September 2023
- Cabinet – 9 November 2023

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Julia Thornton

Contact Officer: Lee Banks, Ext. 7161

Recommendation to Cabinet:

That, subject to final design and associated amendments, that Council is recommended to adopt the Council Plan

Recommendation to Council:

That, subject to final design and associated amendments, the Council Plan is adopted.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure Members' views on the Council Plan are sought and considered before it is recommended for adoption by Council.

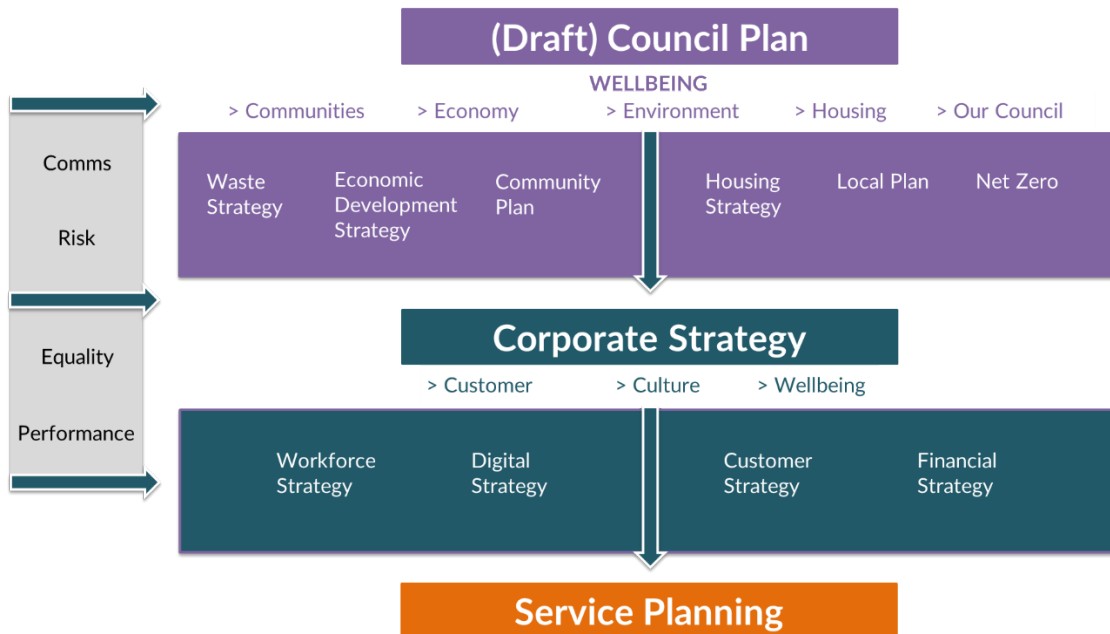
Introduction and Background

- 1 As part of the council's policy framework, the Council Plan aims to provide clarity about the council's priorities and what it will aim to deliver for its residents, businesses and local communities.
- 2 Following the May 2023 elections, the Leader of the Council and her Cabinet have worked to draft the Council Plan setting out their priorities for the coming years. At draft stage, Members consideration of the draft Council Plan and their comments and contributions were welcomed through the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee.

The Draft Council Plan

- 3 The Council Plan is a key document in directing the work and resources of the Council. Once adopted, it is the commitments in the Council Plan that other strategies, policies and initiatives are aligned with as far as possible, to ensure that the priorities that Members determine for the District are at the forefront of the council's work. This is illustrated in the image below.

Council Planning Framework



- 4 The draft Council Plan is provided as Appendix A in plain text form for Member's consideration.
- 5 Following an introduction from the Leader of the Council, the draft Plan highlights the importance of wellbeing and its influence over the council's approach to its work, before taking a brief look back. The look back explains some of the council's achievements during a challenging period which included the height of the Covid pandemic, national and international political challenges and challenges within the UK economy.

- 6 This is followed by a short section, 'looking ahead', which highlights some of the challenges facing local government and Sevenoaks District Council.
- 7 Through the work of the Leader and her Cabinet, the proposed priorities for the Council are explained. In alphabetical order these priorities are:
 - Communities
 - Economy
 - Environment
 - Housing
 - Our Council
- 8 On the pages that follow, each Portfolio Holder sets out the services within their portfolio and the contribution they make to deliver the priorities set out above. Within each of the Portfolio Holder sections promises are made. These are proposed actions that the council should seek to deliver.
- 9 The draft Council Plan concludes by committing to annual progress reports, including a review of the council's priorities and promises to ensure that they remain the right ones as the needs of our residents and businesses change.
- 10 Member's views, comments and contributions on the draft Council Plan are welcomed.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

None. The Council Plan forms a part of the council's Policy Framework and is required in order to set and give clarity about the priorities, actions and initiatives that Members wish to deliver for the District.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations associated with this report. The resources required to deliver the promises and actions arising from the Council Plan are established through the annual budget setting process.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications or risk arising from the recommendations for this report.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this report have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users. Any equalities impacts arising from the promises or actions set out in the Council Plan will be evaluated in full as part of the decision making processes for individual proposals.

Agenda Item 6a

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Any net zero implications arising from the promises or actions set out in the Council Plan will be evaluated in full as part of the decision making processes for individual proposals.

Conclusions

Following the May 2023 elections, the Leader of the Council and her Cabinet have worked to draft the Council Plan setting out their priorities for the coming years.

As the Plan is developed, Members' views have been welcomed on the content to inform both further review of the Plan and the decisions of Cabinet and Council as the Council Plan progresses to adoption.

Appendices

Appendix A - Draft Council Plan

Background Papers

Previous Council Plan - www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/548/council_plan

Dr Pav Ramewal

Chief Executive

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

'Delivering together' our Council Plan

Introduction from Cllr Julia Thornton, Leader of the Council

I am delighted to introduce our new Council Plan which sets out our commitments to you; our residents, businesses and communities.

This plan builds upon the foundations we have laid to make Sevenoaks a district which is ambitious and confident about its future.

Our Plan is being introduced at a challenging time. As our communities and our local economy continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic, we have also seen the cost of many of the things we rely upon rise sharply. The cost of living is high and the effects of climate change are impacting the environment that we cherish.

We have risen to challenges before, and we will do so again.

It is important to me that the Council remains focused on its residents and their wellbeing. That businesses have confidence and our local economy grows. And that we protect our environment and lead locally on addressing the climate change challenge.

We will remain a caring Council, one that has wellbeing running through everything that it does. We will continue to be managed efficiently and be responsible with the money that we have to spend on our services and in our communities.

We will be our most effective by *delivering together*. Listening to what is needed, empowering communities to act, and working with the people and organisations across our District that share our values and ambitions to make the place we live, work or visit the very best it can be, for the wellbeing of all.

This Council Plan sets out our priorities and will help us to keep our focus on the health and wellbeing of our communities, the strength of our local economy and the future of our environment.

Julia

Cllr Julia Thornton,
Leader of the Council

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Wellbeing

Wellbeing runs through everything we do.

Wellbeing isn't just about access to health services. It's about quality of life: doing all we can to provide suitable homes for people to live in, supporting people to live independently for longer, creating a safe, healthy and protected environment and a strong local economy that provides the jobs and services we need.

It's about our lifestyle choices and opportunities to plan for our future, cherishing our natural environment and responding to climate change.

Driven by a desire to improve wellbeing, a focus on good financial management and exceptional customer service we have achieved some great outcomes for our District.

Our **Here to Help** scheme has been supporting residents with the impact of the cost of living. Through the Household Support Fund we distributed £800,000 to help low-income households with essential costs such as food and utilities, as well as supporting food bank provision across the District. There was also practical support provided through our Warm Spaces initiative. Supported by local community venues, people were provided with community support, housing, financial and employment advice, alongside a Family Cooking Programme.

Working with Police and partners through the **Community Safety** Unit, our District has the lowest levels of anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, drug misuse, robbery, shoplifting & sexual offences in the county, making it the second safest place to live in Kent.

The Council's **Better Together** initiative builds on the legacy and projects that people created during the pandemic in their own neighbourhoods and is helping to provide practical support, skills development and capacity building to individuals and community groups to enable new initiatives and groups.

Through work undertaken by the Council and its affordable housing company, Quercus Housing, we have provided 24 **affordable homes** for the District's residents and worked with partners, including West Kent Housing and the charity Hft, to deliver a further 17 homes since 2020. A further 17 new homes will be delivered by Quercus Housing in 2023.

In 2022 we also opened a brand new **leisure centre** at White Oak in Swanley; secured funding of £1.5m to deliver a programme of **energy efficiency** upgrades to low-income households who live off of the gas grid and were awarded £1.5m of funding to invest in **local businesses** through the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Funding schemes.

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

A look back

Sevenoaks District Council was the first council in the country to become self-sufficient of central government funding. We are almost unique in planning our finances over 10 years to give us a stable financial footing and are one of very few public sector organisations to hold Platinum status for Investors in People, the fifth time in a row we have achieved the highest accreditation available.

The years immediately before this plan have been unique in our lifetimes. A pandemic that radically changed how we lived, worked and looked after our health and our neighbours. The pandemic has left lasting change in people's lives and the way in which people and our economy work.

National and international factors have created further uncertainty and challenge. Political change, conflict in Ukraine, heightened energy costs, increased cost of living and high rates of inflation are all impacting communities and businesses as we write this plan.

Local communities and businesses have responded. 1,500 volunteers joined the Care for our Community scheme during the pandemic. Homes have been offered to people seeking safety from the war in Ukraine and for refugees. Community groups have sprung in to action and sustained their efforts to support people locally. Their efforts have been supported and celebrated through events including Run, Walk, Push for Dementia, the Big Sing and the Making It Happen Community Awards.

Local businesses have diversified, sustained their presence in our towns and villages and this has encouraged new businesses in to our local economy. To support our local businesses we have secured funding, prepared our economic development strategy, launched the Sevenoaks So Much More campaign and invested in the Visit Sevenoaks tourism website.

The Council has remained steadfast with a focus on what is needed locally. Services continued throughout the pandemic with Councillors and staff making sure residents had the food and supplies they need, and ensuring tens of millions of pounds of grant funding was distributed to businesses.

We have launched two companies that deliver new income to support our services and make sure more of the affordable homes that the District needs are being built.

When the operator of our leisure centres in Sevenoaks and Edenbridge abruptly ceased trading, we were prepared and ready to act quickly with a new operator to re-open the centres and the health and leisure facilities that our communities value.

And we have made a commitment to Net Zero and addressing the effects of climate change within the district. We have made great strides already, which we report back on annually.

Much progress has been made, but there is always more to do.

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Looking ahead

The years ahead are likely to present us with some difficult challenges.

Over the last decade the Council has worked hard to deliver a strong and sustainable financial position, finding £8.4 million of savings whilst continuing to provide the services that our communities rely upon.

However, the scale of the challenge to our budgets is at its highest level for many years. This is caused by high inflation, large increases in utility costs, wages and the price of fuel for our refuse freighters. We have also seen an increased demand for our services since the start of the pandemic, for example, Christmas week levels of household refuse and recycling has become the norm every week, with more home working and a greater reliance on home deliveries. Securing new contracts for the operation of our leisure centres also came at a cost.

Providing good value for council services, and continuing to collect rubbish and recycling every week, means that there have been managed rises in council tax. From April 2023, the average household payment towards District Council services is £237 per year, just £4.55 per week.

The pressure to provide the housing that people need in a district that is 93% Green Belt means some difficult decisions may need to be taken. At the same time, there are further reforms to the planning system expected from Government and the potential for national standards to be set that could change the way rubbish and recycling is collected.

The climate challenge is one that is upon us and amongst our highest priorities. Our emerging Local Plan, the framework for what can be built where in our district for the next two decades, presents an opportunity to make sustainability a key focus in our planning decisions. This will allow us to manage the inevitable growth of our district in a way that will help local efforts to counter the effects of climate change.

Sevenoaks District Council has a strong financial footing, a track record of delivering and confidence that, by delivering together, we can continue to overcome the many varied and complex challenges that are faced by local government and public services.

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Our Priorities

▪ Communities

We are fortunate to live in one of the safest places in the country, but we understand we will need to continue to work with our communities and partners to maintain this.

We will continue to nurture safe, supportive, and inclusive communities, taking a 'delivering together' approach to keep communities safe.

Empowering local people and supporting our outstanding voluntary and community groups in their work with the most isolated and vulnerable residents in the District will continue to be a priority.

We also have the tools and partnerships in place to support happier and healthier communities. By linking our leisure facilities, housing, open spaces, planning and environmental health work together we can improve health and wellbeing across our district.

Focus areas:

Community empowerment & engagement, health & wellbeing, leisure & active lifestyles, community safety and a strong voluntary & community sector

▪ Economy

The District's economy is greatly influenced by our proximity to London. As the economy changes new jobs will be created and new skills will be required. We will support businesses and residents through the transition ahead, with tailored support programmes, a focus on our towns and rural economies and new opportunities for training.

The rural nature of our district and the post-pandemic shift to home based working further creates demand for high quality broadband and mobile phone reception to be available across the whole district.

With such high visitor numbers to our historic homes and buildings, incredible landscapes and visitor attractions, tourism makes a significant contribution to our local economy and is an area we will continue to highlight, promote and support.

Focus areas:

Skills and opportunity, business growth, improving infrastructure (employment land, broadband, 4G & 5G, transport links), rural economy, green economy, visitor economy & the arts, town centres

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

▪ Environment

Our District's high quality natural environment plays a pivotal role in the wellbeing of our residents. Our focus remains on protecting this very special asset.

The number of homes we should be building to meet future demand is a huge challenge in an area that is 93% Green Belt. 60% of the District also falls into recognised and protected Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The district is also fortunate to have a rich historic environment including a significant number of listed buildings, conservation areas and registered parks and gardens. Yet we know there are many families, young people and key workers who need an affordable home of their own or more space to grow.

Adapting to the impact of climate change; reducing our carbon emissions and improving biodiversity are critical both now and for future generations.

Focus areas:

Climate change, Local Plan, natural environment, sustainable travel, biodiversity and waste & recycling

▪ Housing

Having a safe and secure place to live is one of the most critical factors to a person's wellbeing. With the link between housing and health well known, the need to provide the right homes for the future of the District has never been greater.

Available land for new homes is limited by the high quality natural environment that blankets our district. This means that land values locally are some of the highest in the country, making it more expensive than most areas outside of London to build new homes. And when homes are built, their prices for sale or rent are often out of reach of our local residents.

This contributes to making the availability of affordable housing a huge issue facing the future of the district. Through our emerging Local Plan, taking the actions set out in our Housing Strategy and building new homes ourselves we can continue to address the need for more affordable homes across our district.

Focus areas:

To deliver a new Local Plan, deliver more affordable homes, rural housing, housing standards, housing options – right homes in the right places, homes for older people and supported housing and continuing our work to prevent homelessness

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

▪ Our Council

Ensuring the Council remains on a sound financial footing, is managed effectively, focused on the customer, provides value for money and seeks continuous improvement will help us to achieve the priorities we have for our communities.

A well run, well managed, open and transparent council provides reassurance and we are determined to remain a fiscally sound organisation that is trusted and relied upon.

It is not only about getting the basics right and delivering excellent statutory services, it's about acting on the things that our residents have told us are most important to them. Providing those discretionary services that make our district a great place to live and work. With budgets continually stretched and savings needed, it is protecting these discretionary services that will challenge us the most.

Despite the current challenges to our budgets, we will continue to work in partnership and seek to secure the funding required to deliver bold and visionary regeneration plans for our own land and assets.

Through our established Advisory Committee structure, new projects and policies are fully and transparently considered and assessed by our Councillors before any recommendations are put forward to Cabinet or Council for adoption.

Focus areas:

Financial responsibility, long-term stability, investments, customer focus, continuous service improvement, regeneration and capital projects

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Delivering our Council Plan

Photo to be added

Councillor Margot McArthur

Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener

My portfolio...

The services I am responsible for include street cleaning, waste & recycling, Net Zero action plan, CCTV, environmental health, parking, licensing, air quality and emergency planning

▪ Delivering together...

Direct contribution to our Council Plan priorities for our Communities, the Economy and the Environment.

The services in my Portfolio are also important to ensuring that the Council is able to achieve its priorities for Housing and Our Council.

▪ Track Record

Maintained a weekly collection of all rubbish and recycling

91% resident satisfaction with refuse and recycling services (national average 79%)

20% increase in customers using the fortnightly green waste collection service

Reduced the council's carbon emissions by replacing vehicles and reviewing our collection rounds, resulting in reduction of over 30%

Electric vehicle charging points installed in car parks and for taxis

Introduced the additional option of cashless parking payment in our council owned car parks

Investment in our fly-tipping enforcement team has led to a number of successful prosecutions of offenders in court

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

▪ **Our Challenges**

The Environment Act 2021 could introduce statutory collections of weekly food and glass waste, standardised containers and significant changes to garden waste

Continuing to collect the high levels of waste and recycling in the most efficient way

Meeting new targets for air quality

Tackling the challenge of climate change with our residents and businesses

▪ **Promises:**

To maintain weekly rubbish & recycling collections

To keep our streets clean and seek to tackle those that break the law by fly-tipping in our District

To continue to reduce our carbon emissions, including making our vehicle fleet more energy efficient

Improving wellbeing by maintaining high standards through our environmental health, animal welfare and licensing services

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Delivering our Council Plan

Photo to be added

Councillor Simon Reay

Portfolio Holder for Development & Conservation

My portfolio...

The services I am responsible for include the Local Plan, development management, conservation, contributions from developers, building control, transport policy and planning enforcement.

▪ Delivering together...

Direct contribution to our Council Plan priorities for the Environment, the Economy and Housing.

The services in my Portfolio are also important to ensuring that the Council is able to achieve its priorities for our Communities and Our Council.

▪ Track Record

Delivery of the emerging Local Plan remains on course. Our consultations focus on securing district wide engagement, including with traditionally hard to reach groups

Our Development Management team has long been the busiest in Kent, processing more planning applications each year than any other District or Borough Council in the county

Investing heavily in planning enforcement, ensuring it underpins the integrity of our planning function

Our highly respected Building Control Service oversees more than two out of every three building projects within the district

More than £14m secured for the district from developer contributions through the Community Infrastructure Levy, of which £4.2m has been distributed directly to Town & Parish Councils for local projects and facilities

Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan - £1.2m secured to deliver Sevenoaks East to West cycle route. A further £45k secured to plan and design routes from Sevenoaks to Otford, Sevenoaks to Seal to Otford & to develop a Swanley Urban Area Cycling & Walking Plan

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

▪ **Our Challenges**

Delivering housing and economic growth through our Local Plan, whilst protecting our high quality natural environment, the Green Belt and our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Government reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework

Securing the funding necessary for strategic infrastructure

Implementation of the Building Safety Act

▪ **Promises:**

To deliver a new Local Plan for the District, that has a positive impact on the number of new homes, addressing climate change and promoting wellbeing

To protect our historic environment, high quality natural environment and improve biodiversity

To adopt planning policies that secure necessary contributions towards affordable housing and infrastructure from developers

To implement new cycling and walking routes and progress the Council's Movement Strategy

Ensure the health and safety of people, and to help conserve fuel and power through the application and enforcement of the Building Regulations and associated legislation

Improving wellbeing by promoting high quality design and environmental improvements in new developments

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Delivering our Council Plan

Photo to be added

Councillor Kevin Maskell

Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment

My portfolio...

The services I am responsible for include financial strategy, assets, investments, business rates, council tax, benefits and council tax support and fraud prevention

▪ Delivering together...

Direct contribution to our Council Plan priorities for the Economy, Housing and Our Council.

The services in my Portfolio are also important to ensuring that the Council is able to achieve its priorities for our Communities and the Environment.

▪ Track Record

Continuing to set a balanced 10-year budget to help plan for a fiscally strong long-term future

Secured property investments returning £1.5m a year to Council budgets

Reviewed our Treasury Management policies and achieved improved interest returns on Council money held in the bank and other investments

Supported business through the pandemic and beyond, ensuring more than £40m of grant support was distributed to qualifying businesses in the Sevenoaks District since 2020

Supported residents by ensuring benefits and council tax support to the value of £20m are paid annually

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

▪ **Our Challenges**

Increasing demand for council services

Continued reductions in funding to maintain council services

Reducing number of grant funding schemes to meet the costs of services and deliver investment schemes

High inflation and interest rates

High land and property values and increased building costs impacting investment in capital schemes

Staff recruitment and wage pressures

Reducing the environmental impact of council activities

▪ **Promises:**

Continue to deliver a long-term balanced budget and maintain our position as one of the most fiscally strong councils in the country

Manage the council's assets and investments effectively to maximise income to support the delivery of Council services

Ensure that council services are resilient by exploring innovative and alternative approaches to service delivery that improve cost effectiveness and quality of provision

Monitor the quality of service delivery to residents and ensure value for money

Improving wellbeing by supporting residents faced with increased cost of living and reducing the environmental impact of council services

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Delivering our Council Plan

Photo to be added

Councillor Perry Cole

Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health

My portfolio...

In addition to being the Deputy Leader of the Council I am responsible for services including housing strategy, housing standards, housing advice & homelessness prevention, rough sleeping, empty homes, health & wellbeing, energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

▪ Delivering together...

Direct contribution to our Council Plan priorities for our Communities, the Environment and Housing.

The services in my Portfolio are also important to ensuring that the Council is able to deliver our priorities for the Economy and Our Council.

▪ Track Record

Provided 24 affordable homes through Quercus Housing, the Council's affordable housing company. Working with our partners we have delivered 17 further supported housing schemes together

Secured funding of nearly £700,000 over three years to support single homeless and rough sleepers with housing and support

Secured funding of £1.5m to deliver a programme of energy efficiency upgrades and low-carbon heating solutions to low-income households living off the gas grid

Our HERO service has supported residents to manage their household bills and debt, access local support and seek training and employment opportunities

Supported the Homes for Ukraine scheme, ensuring more than 200 privately owned homes were ready to be shared with those seeking safety in our District

Our dedicated One You Team works directly with local residents to improve their health

Reopened Edenbridge and Sevenoaks leisure centres and Lullingstone Park Golf Course following the abrupt closure of the operator. Ready-made plans allowed an interim operator, Everyone Active, to re-open the centres in just six weeks

▪ **Our Challenges**

High land and property values

Delivering more homes, including affordable homes

Reducing homelessness

Addressing climate change and fuel poverty

Supporting residents impacted by increases in the cost of living

Improving wellbeing and reducing health inequalities

Supporting those seeking asylum through UK Government programmes

▪ **Promises:**

To provide a range of affordable homes to meet the housing needs of our communities including the needs of specific groups

Working with partners to deliver the housing needed to meet local needs, the right homes in the right places

To reduce homelessness and improve routes into permanent accommodation by delivering the Housing and Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies

To promote high quality homes and optimise the range and suitability of new and existing homes in both the public and private sector

To provide grant funding to adapt homes and reduce the number of empty homes

To deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan, including the provision of the Council's One You Healthy Lifestyles service

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Delivering our Council Plan

Photo to be added

Councillor Julia Thornton

Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Improvement & Innovation

My portfolio...

In addition to being the Leader of the Council I am responsible for services including equalities, customer service, service improvement, performance management, communications and the projects we undertake for economic development & regeneration.

▪ Delivering together...

Direct contribution to our Council Plan priorities for the Economy and Our Council.

The services in my Portfolio are also important to ensuring that the Council is able to deliver our priorities for our Communities, the Environment and Housing.

▪ Track Record

Our 2021 resident survey told us that:

81% resident satisfaction with the way the Council runs things (national average 56%)

86% of residents trust Sevenoaks District Council (national average 53%)

82% satisfaction with keeping residents informed

81% resident satisfaction with helpfulness of staff

Provided 17 flats for key workers & the Meeting Point business hub through the redevelopment of 27-37 High Street, Swanley

Secured planning permission for approximately 100 new residential units at Council owned developments across Edenbridge and Swanley, with retail units and a new community hall included within those proposals

Secured over £1.5m funding to invest in local businesses via the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Funds

▪ **Our Challenges**

Sustained increase in customer demand for council services

Lack of available funding from a national level to invest in locally important public services and local regeneration projects

Difficult market and economic conditions from high inflation and higher cost of living on the Council and local businesses

High land values, borrowing costs and cost of materials required to deliver plans for regeneration

▪ **Promises:**

To provide high quality, customer focused services

To keep levels of resident satisfaction and sense of wellbeing high

To deliver the Economic Development Strategy; supporting businesses to come to the District and to grow

To progress and deliver regeneration plans, like those already underway at the Stangrove Estate and Spitals Cross in Edenbridge and White Oak in Swanley

Improving wellbeing through council services, supporting the economy and well-designed regeneration schemes

To ensure Sevenoaks District remains a special place to live, work and enjoy

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

Delivering our Council Plan

Photo to be added

Councillor Lesley Dyball

Portfolio Holder for People & Places

My portfolio...

The services I am responsible for include the Community Plan, community safety, town centres, tourism, community grants, safeguarding, youth services and leisure activities

▪ **Delivering together...**

Direct contribution to our Council Plan priorities for our Communities, the Economy and Health.

The services in my Portfolio are also important to ensuring that the Council is able to deliver our priorities for the Environment and Our Council.

▪ **Track Record**

Here to Help scheme launched, supporting residents with the impact of the cost of living

Household Support Fund – over £800,000 to help households with food & utility costs, alongside support for food banks

Community grants scheme - £253,000 awarded to local groups supporting people across our District

[Community Plan](#) refreshed in 2022 and supported by new funding through the Local Strategic Partnership Community Wellbeing Fund

Community Safety - In the top 2 safest places to live and work in Kent, with the lowest levels of anti-social behaviour

Opened the new White Oak Leisure Centre in 2022 – Everyone Active outperformed all membership targets

A varied communities programme delivered each year including Family Fun Days, Silver Sunday, Run, walk or push for Dementia event, The Big Sing and the Community Awards

Launched the 'So Much More' place campaign and Visit Sevenoaks website, promoting the Sevenoaks District as a great place to live, work, visit and invest

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

▪ **Our Challenges**

Reduction in funding available to provide services in our communities

Impact of cost of living, including higher demand for our community services

Resilience of the voluntary sector, following the impact and greater customer demand from the pandemic and more recently, the cost of living

Understanding the changing skills and employment needs of our District

▪ **Promises:**

To work with the District's Local Strategic Partnership to deliver the 'Better Together' Community Plan, empowering communities to come together to improve their local community

To ensure the District remains a safe place to live and visit by delivering the Community Safety Strategy with our partners

To provide a support programme for households experiencing financial hardship

To support a growing tourism offer in the District through the Sevenoaks So Much More and Visit Sevenoaks campaigns, alongside the Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership

COUNCIL PLAN DRAFT

The next steps

Our Council Plan has set out our promises to you.

Each year we will monitor our progress and report how we are doing publicly.

Undoubtedly things will change that we cannot forecast today. New laws and regulations, changes that effect our economy and changes in the funding we receive to deliver our services are just a few examples. Importantly, our residents and local businesses may tell us that their needs have changed and, as we have in the past, we will be ready to adapt.

Each year, we will take the opportunity to review our progress and ensure our priorities and promises to you remain the right ones.

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DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

Council – 14 November 2023

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer Customer & Resources

Status: for consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Julia Thornton

Contact Officer: Charlie Sinclair, Ext. 7165

Recommendation to Council:

That the calendar of meetings for 24/25 be approved subject to formal adoption at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 14 May 2024.

Reason for recommendation: To enable preparation of committee work plans.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The draft calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2024/25 is attached for consideration. All Members and Senior Officers have been consulted on the draft dates.
- 2 Following feedback small amendments have been made.
- 3 The draft calendar tried to avoid meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays and school holidays, as much as possible. Best endeavours have been made to avoid evening meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays. If additional meetings are required, it may be necessary to look at these days. All additional meetings dates and times are set up in consultation with the relevant Chairman.
- 4 Development Management Committee, is also programmed to take place on a three weekly basis. There are occasions where a four weekly basis is necessary.
- 5 The Community Infrastructure Levy Spending Board has been scheduled but will only take place if required.
- 6 Licensing Hearings are only scheduled when required.
- 7 In its current form, the proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2024/25 attached at appendix A covers a total of 78 formal committee meetings across the municipal year.

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- 8 It is the responsibility of the Annual Meeting of the Council to confirm the Council's calendar of meetings for oncoming year. However, it is considered prudent to put it before this meeting of the Council to allow more time for forward planning by Officers and Members and booking of meeting rooms etc.

Key Implications

Financial

None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Council is under a legal duty to hold an Annual Council meeting during a particular period and to set a Council Tax by a specific date. The calendar proposed here meets those requirements.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

Members are requested to consider the attached draft Calendar of Meetings and recommend it to the meeting of Annual Council for formal adoption.

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2024/25

Background Papers

None

Jim Carrington-West

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Customer & Resources

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL - CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25

	APRIL 2024			MAY 2024				JUNE 2024					JULY 2024			
MONDAY	15	22	29	6 PUBLIC HOLIDAY	13	20	27 PUBLIC HOLIDAY	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	
TUESDAY	16 Audit	23 Council	30	7	14 Annual Council Sp. Cabinet Sp. Licensing Sp. Audit	21 Finance & Investment Advisory Cttee	28 PUBLIC HOLIDAY	4 Housing & Health Advisory Cttee	11 Seveoaks JTB	18 Improvement & Innovation AC	25 Governance	2 Scrutiny	9 Audit Cttee	16 Council	23	
WEDNESDAY	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	5 Health Liaison Board (2pm)	12 Licensing Cttee	19	26	3	10	17	24	
THURSDAY	18 Cabinet	25 DMC	2 PCC elections	9	16	23 DMC	30	6 Cleaner & Greener Advisory Cttee	13 Cabinet	20 DMC	27 PPAC	4 D&CAC	11 Cabinet	18 DMC	25	
FRIDAY	19	26	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	

	AUGUST 2024					SEPTEMBER 2024					OCTOBER 2024				NOVEMBER 2024	
MONDAY	29	5	12	19	26 PUBLIC HOLIDAY	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	
TUESDAY	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17 Finance & Investment Advisory Cttee	24	1 Housing & Health Advisory Cttee	8 Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee	15 Improvement & Innovation Advisory Cttee	22 People & Places Advisory Committee	29 Audit Cttee	5 Housing & Health Advisory Cttee	
WEDNESDAY	31	7	14	21	28	4	11	18 Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	
THURSDAY	1	8	15 DMC	22	29	5 DMC	12 Licensing Cttee	19 Cabinet	26 DMC	3 Development & Conservation Advisory Cttee	10 Cabinet	17 DMC	24 Finance & Investment Advisory Cttee	31	7 DMC	
FRIDAY	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	

(Most meetings start at 7pm UNLESS indicated otherwise and are held at the Council Offices in Argyle Road - please check the Council website for details.)

- Key**
- Council
 - Development Mangement Committee (DMC)
 - Licensing Committee
 - Audit Committee
 - Scrutiny Committee
 - Governance Committee
 - Standards Committee
 - Cabinet
 - Finance & Investment Advisory Committee
 - Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee
 - Housing & Health Advisory Committee
 - People & Places Advisory Committee
 - Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee
 - Development & Conservation Advisory Committee
 - Joint Transportation board
 - Health Liaison Board - 2pm

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SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL - CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25

As at

NOVEMBER 2024				Dec-24				JANUARY 2025					FEBRUARY 2025		
MONDAY	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	
TUESDAY	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	4	11	
	Cleaner & Greener Advisory Cttee	Council	Improvement & Innovation Advisory Cttee		People & Places Advisory Committee	JTB			Finance & Investment Advisory Cttee	Licensing Cttee	Housing & Health Advisory Cttee	Governance Committee	Standards	Scrutiny Cttee	
WEDNESDAY	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	
				CIL Spending Board			Public Holiday	Public Holiday		Health Liaison Board (2pm)					
THURSDAY	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	
	Cabinet	Scrutiny Cttee	DMC	Development & Conservation Advisory Cttee	Cabinet	DMC	Public Holiday		DMC	Cabinet	audit		DMC	C&GAC	Cabinet
FRIDAY	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	
FEBRUARY 2025		MARCH 2025						APRIL 2025			MAY 2025				
MONDAY	17	24	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	
										Public Holiday		PUBLIC HOLIDAY			
TUESDAY	18	25	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	
		Council (budget)	People & Places Advisory Cttee	Licensing Cttee	Scrutiny Cttee	JTB	Development & Conservation Advisory Cttee			Cabinet	Council		Annual Council Sp. Cabinet Sp. Licensing Sp. Audit		
WEDNESDAY	19	26	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	
THURSDAY	20	27	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	
	DMC	Improvement & Innovation Advisory Cttee	Audit	DMC	Cabinet	Finance & Investment Advisory Cttee	DMC			DMC	KCC elections			DMC	
FRIDAY	21	28	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	
									Public Holiday						

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Key (Most meetings start at 7pm and are held at the Council Offices in Argyle Road - please check the Council website for details.)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Council | Cabinet | Development & Conservation Advisory Committee |
| Development Mangement Committee (DMC) | Finance & Investment Advisory Committee | Joint Transportation board |
| Licensing Committee | Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee | Health Liaison Board - 2pm |
| Audit Committee | Housing & Health Advisory Committee | |
| Scrutiny Committee | People & Places Advisory Committee | |
| Governance Committee | Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee | |
| Standards Committee | | |

APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS 2023/24 – NON-EXECUTIVE

Council – 14 November 2022

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer Corporate Services

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Contact Officer: Charlotte Sinclair Ext. 7165

Recommendation to Council: That

- a) Cllr Cathy Morgan be appointed as the Council’s representative on the Outside Organisation - The Council for the Voluntary Service North West Kent (CVSNWK) for the municipal year 2023/24.
- b) Cllr Hogarth be appointed as the Council’s representative on the Outside Organisation - Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Action Group.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council makes certain appointments to Outside Organisations.
- 2 At Annual Council in May 2023, a number of appointments were made, although some positions were vacant or there have been changes to the organisations.

The Council for the Voluntary Service North West Kent

- 3 Members are asked to agree the appointment of Cllr Cathy Morgan as the Council’s representative for the CVSNWK.

Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Action Group

- 4 Following the appointment made at Annual Council, the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Committee has been repurposed. As the Terms of Reference are different to the previous group a formal reappointment is required.
- 5 Members are asked to agree the appointment of Cllr Hogarth as the Council’s representative.

Next Steps

- 6 If agreed this will form part of Appendix H of the Council’s Constitution.

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Key Implications

Financial

Attendance at meetings of Outside Bodies to which an Elected Member has been appointed by the Council constitutes an approved duty and there are costs involved.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Appointments to represent the Council on outside bodies are made in accordance with s.111 Local Government Act 1972 where the Council is satisfied that such appointments are necessary to, conducive to, or calculated to facilitate the discharge of their statutory functions. In not appointing to those Outside Bodies listed within the Appendix, there is a risk that the Council's designated representation on such organisations would not be fulfilled.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero 2030

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

Members are requested to consider and approve the attached appointments.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Jim Carrington – West

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Customer & Resources

Item 9 - To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

1. Motion from Cllr Skinner (Sevenoaks Town and St. John's)

"This Council notes:

- The need for increased affordable housing that has been identified in the Housing Strategy: and
- The consistent failure of the Council to meet that need over a number of years, including repeated failure to utilise the Council's own land to meet this need.

The Council therefore resolves:

- To make an urgent step change in its commitment to the supply of affordable housing in order to sustain a vibrant and prosperous community in Sevenoaks District, particularly in light of cost of living crisis facing many local families: and
- To set a positive example to all developers, by using its own land for the development of affordable housing"

2. Motion from Cllr Manston (Ash and New Ash Green)

"This Council wholeheartedly supports the Local Government Association's "Debate not Hate" campaign and pledges to:

- Sign up to the Debate Not Hate campaign on the LGA website
- Write to the MPs for Sevenoaks District to ask them to support the campaign
- Write to the Government to ask them to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians
- Ensure that every Member of this Council receives a copy of the Debate Not Hate campaign report
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers
- Ensure the council has a clear reporting mechanism which councillors can use to monitor and record incidents of harassment and abuse of councillors and officers
- Regularly review the support available to councillors and officers in relation to abuse, intimidation and personal safety
- Work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families and discuss the need to take a preventative approach that accounts for

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the specific risks that councillors face, as they do with other high-risk individuals like MPs.

Background -

Debating and disagreeing with one another has always been, and will continue to be, a healthy part of democracy. However, the right engagement matters and abuse and intimidation crosses the line into dangerous territory and has no place in politics.

Seven in 10 councillors in England reported experiencing abuse and intimidation over the last 12 months and councillors reported feeling that abuse, both in person and on-line, is becoming more common and increasing in severity.

The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; it can prevent elected members from representing the communities they serve, deter individuals from standing for election and undermines public trust in the democratic process.

The increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure that councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

The motion will commit this council to challenge the normalisation of abuse against councillors and officers and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does. It is non-political and will be equally beneficial to all Members of this council.

Sevenoaks District Council has long supported good standards and has a strong code of conduct and is already very much aligned with the LGAs national campaign, "Debate not Hate". Working cross-party, our Council will be encouraging respect and good debate on issues that matter to our residents both in and outside the Council.

See: [Debate Not Hate | Local Government Association](#)

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/debate-not-hate>"

3. Motion from Cllr Robinson (Brasted, Chevening and Sundridge)

"This Council believes its proceedings should be transparent and that Councillors should be accountable to the residents whom they represent.

This Council therefore resolves that as soon as possible:

- All public meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees will be recorded on video, this record will be made immediately available, and will be saved on a publicly available website.
- A system of electronic voting will be installed to make it straightforward and efficient to record the votes of individual Councillors.”

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A system of electronic voting will be installed to make it straightforward and efficient to record the votes of individual Councillors.”

4. Motion from Cllr Streatfeild (Penshurst, Fordcombe and Chiddingstone)

“This Council notes that:

- Small Business Saturday 2023 is coming up on 25 November. Small Business Saturday has grown into a significant event – with £1.1 billion spent at small businesses during the 2020 event alone.
- This is an excellent opportunity to promote small businesses across Sevenoaks District and to celebrate the contribution smaller businesses make.

This Council therefore resolves:

- To ask the Chief Executive and Heads of Service to ensure that the Council participates fully in Small Business Saturday on 25 November 2023.
- To request that officers work closely with local business organisations and smaller enterprises across the District to make them aware of the day and encourage them to sign up.
- To ensure that Small Business Saturday is promoted thoroughly and prominently on the Council’s website, social media channels and other external communications.
- To make parking free in all District Council car parks on 25 November 2023 and on the following three Saturdays in the lead up to Christmas.”

5. Motion from Cllr Lindop (Ash & New Ash Green)

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“This council recognises the scale and magnitude of the climate and nature emergency and pledges to:

- Publicly declare a Climate and Nature Emergency
- Reduce emissions from the Council’s estate to net zero by 2030
- Do all we can to reduce carbon emissions from Sevenoaks District to net zero by 2050
- Take these steps to achieve net zero for the council and district:
 - a) Develop a Climate Change Strategy
 - b) Establish a Climate Change Panel
 - c) Convene a Climate Change Community Forum
 - d) Report on progress via FIAC and Cabinet
 - e) Provide a detailed Climate Change Assessment on all new undertakings
 - f) Ensure that annual budgeting allows for the above Net Zero goals
 - g) Write to Government to call for the powers, resources and funding to achieve Net Zero

Climate Change Strategy - we will develop a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy within 12 months that addresses all inward and outward-facing Council functions, ensures that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning are in line with net zero commitments, ensures that appropriate resources and capacity are in place to address the climate emergency effectively, supports and works with relevant agencies and stakeholders to facilitate a net zero and climate resilient district by 2050 and incorporates LGA guidance on what to do once a council has declared a climate emergency.

Climate Change Panel - council to establish this panel to champion the Net Zero Strategy and invite appropriate experts to support our climate change actions.

Climate Change Community Forum - for representation and participation from across the district including, but not be limited to, representatives from local communities, children and young people, parish and town councils, organisations, business, education, nature groups, agricultural, food, health and transport groups.

Reporting - to take place annually via the council’s advisory process in order to show our progress towards net zero, the impact on the council and the level of our investment in the fossil fuel industry.

Assessments - all new undertakings will include a detailed assessment of the impact on Climate Change and our net zero commitments.

Budgeting - annual budgeting to prioritise action on the climate and nature emergency.

UK Government - the Portfolio Holder will write to central Government to set out the Council's intentions and call for provision of the powers, resources and funding required to achieve them.

Additional notes

We are facing an unprecedented, anthropogenic climate and nature emergency and need to take collective responsibility for preserving the planet for future generations. The Climate and Nature Emergency is the most serious and urgent challenge facing communities across the World as well as Sevenoaks District. Whilst facing this emergency will be difficult, it is essential to protect the planet for future generations and to avoid the worst effects of climate change. We need a significant step change from local, national and international leaders to limit the most threatening effects of climate change such as disruption to the food chain and mass displacement.

“The pace and scale of climate action are insufficient to tackle climate change. Accelerated action is required.” - IPCC** 2023

In October 2018 a ‘Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C’ was published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which described the enormous harm that a 2°C average rise in global temperatures is likely to cause compared with a 1.5°C rise and confirmed that limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and local authorities, society and the private sector.

“The position of councils as place-shapers, convenors of communities and local partners, asset-owners, problem solvers and significant purchasers puts them at the forefront of delivering real, tangible changes in the transition to net zero.” - LGA***

The need for a new plan

Under the current Net Zero Plan, Sevenoaks Council is unlikely to reach net zero by 2030. The people of Sevenoaks want us to act decisively on climate change and we owe it to them to protect their future with a much more comprehensive plan and bolder commitment for which they can hold us to account.

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Furthermore, we need to take some responsibility for the county reaching net zero by 2050. Shifting the onus to other councils or residents and businesses will only result in missing all of our goals. Once we all accept responsibility, we can work together and achieve so much more.

The most efficient and effective way for us to achieve net zero is to make use of the existing framework that other councils have adopted which starts with a public acknowledgement of the dire situation we face and a commitment to prioritising it.

Some of the work in this motion has already been started but this motion consolidates it, demonstrates leadership to business and individuals across the District and forms the basis of a new direction where we formally establish the climate and nature emergency as our most pressing concern and shift our workload towards addressing it in every way we can.

Public declaration

In order to galvanise the collaborative efforts needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change, the following bodies have declared a climate and nature emergency which speaks to the power and leverage of a collective movement.

- 18 National Governments and the EU ****
- The UK Government
- Kent County Council
- Canterbury, Dover, Dartford, Folkestone and Hythe, Gravesham, Medway, Thanet, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling and Swale Councils
- 325 out of 393 UK councils *****

Sevenoaks and Ashford are the only councils in Kent that have not yet declared a climate and nature emergency. Given that so much of Sevenoaks district is a natural carbon sink and the council's own emissions contribute such a small amount to climate change, it would seem a simple and proactive step for the council to join forces with the rest of the county and support the collective effort.

Cleaner and Greener Committee

This matter has been discussed at the Cleaner and Greener Committee and with the Leader of the Council.

On 13th June 2023, the following question was asked at the Cleaner and Greener Committee: "The fact that Sevenoaks Council has a Net Zero policy speaks to the dedication of all members and officers to limiting the harmful effects of climate change. But does the Cleaner and Greener Committee feel that our Net Zero policy goes far enough towards addressing the climate and nature crisis or should we be considering an official declaration of a climate emergency, like 325 of the 393 other councils in the UK (many of which are Conservative-led)? For example, given the possibility that we may in fact miss our Net Zero targets, in part due to financial constraints, would collaborating for collective success strengthen our work and open a wider range of opportunities?"

On 10th October 2023, the Cleaner and Greener Committee received an update on the Council's Net Zero target. The committee was told that the Council is only responsible for 0.36% of the district's emissions and is working to reduce those. A question was asked as to whose responsibility it was to deliver Kent County Council's and the UK Government's target of Net Zero by 2050. The committee was told that Sevenoaks Council has little influence over this. However, both Kent County Council and the UK Government could both say the same.

The time has come for us to take control of our destiny, take responsibility for our district and demonstrate leadership and innovation as we strive to hit net zero and limit the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

"The UK's first 40°C day, in summer 2022, was the clearest indication that climate change has arrived in this country. Last year's record breaking temperatures brought unprecedented heat-related deaths, wildfire incidents and significant infrastructure disruption. The impacts of climate change will intensify over coming decades, leaving the UK vulnerable without better resilience planning and preparation." - CCC***** March 2023

*<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/ARUP-Climate-Emergency-What-Next.pdf>

**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

***Local Government Association

****<https://cape.mysociety.org/councils/>

*****<https://climateemergencydeclaration.org>

*****Climate Change Committee"

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Meeting of Council on 14 November 2023

Leader's Report on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting

This report covers the period since the last Council meeting held on Tuesday 18 July.

Meetings attended by the Leader of the Council & Cabinet Members

- Kent & Medway Economic Partnership on 19 July
- Family Fun Day - Seal on 24 July
- Meeting of Kent Leaders on 26 July
- Heritage Planning training on 26 July
- Meeting with Millwall Football Club on 31 July
- DLUHC Local Audit Webinar on 1 August
- Visit to Dunbrik Depot on 2 August
- Meeting with Visit Kent on 2 August
- Visit to Swanley on 3 August
- Family Fun Day – Swanley on 3 August
- Meeting with West Kent Housing Association on 9 August
- Visit to modular homes at Kitchener Barracks on 17 August
- Visit to Edenbridge on 24 August
- Fly the Flag for Merchant Navy Day on 1 September
- Member Training - Emergency Planning on 4 September
- Meeting of Finance & Investment Advisory Committee on 5 September
- Kent & Medway Economic Partnership Meeting on 6 September
- Meeting with Sevenoaks Suns basketball club on 7 September
- Fly the Flag for 999 Day on 8 September
- Meeting with Laura Trott MP on 8 September
- Meeting with National Rail on 11 September
- Member Training – Housing Allocations on 12 September
- Meeting of Housing & Health Advisory Committee on 12 September
- Meeting of West Kent Leaders on 13 September
- Kent Council Leaders' Meeting on 13 September
- Meeting with Federation of Small Business on 19 September
- Quercus 7 Trading Board & Quercus Housing Guarantor Board on 19 September

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- Meeting of Cabinet held on 19 September
- Online meeting with District Councils Network on 20 September
- Member Training – Code of Conduct on 21 September
- Member Training – Communications & Social Media on 26 September
- Meeting of Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee on 26 September
- Meeting of Rural Landowners' on 27 September
- Special Meeting of Scrutiny on 27 September
- Member training - Safeguarding on 3 October
- Meeting of People & Places Advisory Committee on 3 October
- Member Training – Budgets on 9 October
- Meeting of Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee on 10 October
- Member Training - Budgets on 12 October
- Meeting of Cabinet on 12 October
- Planning Policy training on 16 October
- Meeting of PATROL (Parking & Traffic Regulations Outside London) on 17 October
- Extraordinary meeting of Council on 17 October
- Move Together meeting at KCC on 18 October
- Kent County Council Rail Summit on 18 October
- Kent & Medway health and care symposium on 20 October
- Member Training - Budgets on 23 October
- Meeting with the Leader of Kent County Council on 24 October
- Kent County Leaders' Meeting on 25 October
- Sevenoaks Town Council Annual Liaison Meeting on 26 October
- Meeting of Development & Conservation Advisory Committee on 31 October

Updates from Cabinet since the last meeting of Council

Solar Together

- The District Council is working with Kent County Council and Solar Together to offer residents the opportunity to purchase solar panels.
- With energy prices high and concern about the impact of climate change, the Solar Together scheme offers residents the opportunity to reduce their carbon emissions, save on their energy bills and increase their independence from the grid.

Community Grants Scheme

- On 13 September the Council launched its Community Grants scheme to support the work of voluntary and charitable organisations across the District, with the aim of providing much needed funding to volunteer-led services within the District that help the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Community groups, whether newly formed or long-standing, could apply for a grant of up to £5,000 to support their important work. Successful applicants will receive their funding in April 2024.

Mill Pond, Sevenoaks

- Following the work of Greatness Residents' Association, who secured funding to transform the pond into a nature reserve, the District Council started work on £60,000 of improvements in March 2023 in support of the Association's ambitions.
- Specialist contractors were brought in to desilt the pond and additional wildlife friendly greenery was planted. New silt traps, nature and wildlife friendly plants and benches were installed and the wooden boardwalk was replaced with a new, accessible cinder concrete path and wooden railings, allowing better access so that the pond.
- Thanks to the work of Greatness Residents' Association and the Council, Mill Pond has been completely transformed

Car idling – air quality campaign

- Artwork produced by a local school pupil has been put on display outside local schools to encourage motorists to turn off their engines when parked.
- Children from across the Sevenoaks District were invited to enter a poster competition to raise awareness of vehicle idling and help improve air quality around schools. The winning entry has formed the basis of banners and posters that are now on display outside many local schools.
- The average parked car left running for ten minutes pumps out the same amount of CO₂ as driving a three mile journey as well as other toxic pollutants. This is damaging to the environment, people's health, expensive and could land drivers with a fine.

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