

Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum

Appendix A2

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

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Response to Consultation on Sevenoaks District Council's Community Plan Priorities 2019-2023

Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum Committee would like the Council to consider the following comments and feedback on the Public Consultation Draft. These observations are made in the spirit of constructive collaboration in order that the Council may consider a more rounded Plan which will ensure that the needs and wishes of the older residents in the Sevenoaks District are taken into consideration when formulating longer term plans.

LAYOUT

From a 'green environment' perspective much of the content in this 30 colour draft comprises large graphics and the Council might be better advised to reduce the length of the document by half, in these cash-strapped times, whilst retaining the factual content. For example, the illustration on page 4 might have been better used to show a detailed map of the Sevenoaks District as opposed to its links to the Continent which have little or no bearing on the services the Council provides to its residents.

Page 6: The second bullet point relates to a Digital Marketing campaign targeting young people and people under 40 years of age and we wonder whether this was rather 'ageist' and would like to know how people over 40 were 'targeted' and what the results of that targeting were, to ensure that your research reflected the thoughts and wishes of the whole population.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

Priority 2

Would the Council consider including under We will:

Initiate and fund a programme to educate the public to help them to reduce the possibility of them becoming a victim of crime (thus freeing up police resources for other duties).

Priority 3

Much is said about the online safety of Children but there is little or no mention of any initiative to ensure the elderly, who are also at a very high risk around online safety, to be helped to avoid becoming victims, and for the sake of equality it would be helpful if the Council and its partners could embrace this older demographic in their services as well.

Priority 5

Improving road safety...

Many elderly people experience difficulty in crossing roads, particularly where vehicles are travelling at high speed and where there is increasing traffic density. We feel that it would be helpful if SDC and its partners supported residents' requests for crossing points, either traffic islands or lights (as many motorists seem prone to ignore zebra crossings) in areas where issues have been raised, e.g.

on the A25 between Riverhead and Bat & Ball where there are no designated places for pedestrians to cross.

CARING COMMUNITIES

With regard to the third paragraph, we appreciate the lack of income is making it difficult for families. However the increased cost of living, the lack of meaningful interest on savings and the cost of care is also having a negative impact on the lives of many older people on limited means, and it is regrettable that this group are not mentioned in this section.

Priority 1

Support people to lead safe, independent and fulfilling lives

The third bullet point is hard to understand and it is not clear what the Council and its partners will do.

There is no mention of the provision of public toilets in this section, the lack of which prevents many people (not only the elderly, but those with special needs) from leading independent and fulfilling lives and it would be reassuring to know that this is on the Council's agenda.

Did you know... on Page 15

Refers to "Kent's Accommodation Strategy for Adult Social Care estimates that 30% of beds in care homes are occupied by people who could be better treated in their own homes or supported", yet there is no mention of what SDC and/or its partners intend to do to ameliorate this situation. Could the Plan include mention of how this could be achieved, as it would then free up 30% of scarce care home capacity?

GREEN ENVIRONMENT

Mention is made of Gatwick Airport expansion, however no mention is made of Biggin Hill airport which does cause noise and air pollution to many in the flightpath over Sevenoaks.

Priority 3

Following discussions with the Planning Team about the overall target for 14,000 new homes for the District and the distinct lack of 'ring fenced' developments of a right size for downsizers, it would appear that SDC very little power to insist that developers build what the community needs rather than what the developer wants to build, and feel that more robust measures need to be adopted which would help older residents downsize, freeing up larger properties for growing families.

SDSAF feels that there should be more detail about its intentions to improve the quality and use of the existing housing stock which would not only improve the health of resident whilst at the same time reducing the use of medical facilities but also help them financially by reducing fuel bills.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Priority 2

Page 22: 4th Bullet Point

SDSAF responded in detail to the draft Local Plan and was concerned that there appeared to be a distinct lack of detail around plans to 'support new housing designed for older people, and for people with physical disabilities, including specialist retirement accommodation and register(ed) care homes'. It would seem therefore that the contents of the Community Plan are not being extrapolated into the Council's other plans.

Priority 3

Page 23: 4th Bullet point

With regard to a wider range of services such as leisure linking to the health prevention agenda in order to have a good impact on health and wellbeing the cost of access to these services is a barrier to some people in their participation and perhaps SDC could liaise with SENCIO to encourage increased discounts for those on pension credit or benefits so that they could access the facilities less expensively say at 'off peak' or times of low usage in the leisure centres. This would be of benefit to all parties.

DYNAMIC ECONOMY

Page 26

Priority 1

With regard to using Planning Policies to restrict the scope of permitted development rights on all office accommodation it seems perverse that on the one hand the Government has imposed ambitious housing targets on all local authorities, the buildings in Tubs Hill had been underoccupied for many years, as has the BT building, yet the Community Plan will prevent conversion of these apparently 'unleasable' buildings.

Priority 2

The content of the draft Local Plan seemed to overlook the provision of social and affordable housing in the District. As Priority 3 in Caring Communities in this Plan highlights there is a lack of provision for those on lower incomes and it would be helpful if SDC's Community Plan could include in this section 'Ensure provision of social affordable housing' to enable the NEETs, interns and apprentices in the area to be able to afford to live and remain here, as this demographic could be the workers on whom others depend to provide vital services.

Priority 4

Page 27

SDC could perhaps add to this section 'Encourage and support the installation of electric charging points in the Sevenoaks District which would enable local and also those visiting or passing through the area to recharge their cars' (which whilst doing so they might boost the local economy).

The Did You Know? comment at the foot of page 27 is rather a concerning, random generalisation and it is not clear what relationship this has to the section on a Dynamic Economy.

Namely that between 2018-2036 there will be a 0.7% reduction in the working age population at a time when we have an increasing STRAIN on our economy from adult social care due to an ageing population.

It is disappointing that the the Plan has expressed the presence of older people in the District as a 'strain'. If this statement is to remain in the Plan it would be appreciated if you could explain why this statistic was placed in this section, detail the actual costings of the 'strain', who will be paying for this strain, and specify:

- a) How many of the ageing population actually pay for their own care
- b) The proportion of Council Tax receipts which older people pay
- c) How the employment of gardeners, painters, cleaners, etc., contributes to the local economy
- d) How much older people spend in the local economy supporting local business
- e) The value of the volunteer work the ageing population carry out and its contribution to society
- f) How much older people pay in tax, VAT, water rates and lastly inheritance tax.

It is without doubt that increasing age brings health challenges, but it should be borne in mind that every one of the residents of Sevenoaks, should they be lucky enough to enjoy a long life, will one day become a member of the ageing or aged population with equal rights.

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Page 30

Priority 1

SDSAF were involved with the Big Conversation and were sadly unimpressed with the proposals in it, namely a new pilot service between Stansted and Sevenoaks, the details of which are still awaited. The poor yet expensive bus services around the area cause isolation and hardship to both the elderly and the low paid and work in partnership with KCC' does not seem to be producing the result of reducing car use and new initiatives.

With regard to providing community grant funding to promote voluntary and community transport schemes, SDC needs to work with communities and parishes to enable them to formulate bids to access these grants.

Priority 2

Provide a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures

'Ensure that new housing creates mixed, balanced and inclusive communities, including housing for older people and people with physical disabilities, through the emerging Local Plan'.

Again, there was little evidence of how the Council are ensuring this as the draft Local Plan specified hardly any bespoke housing for older people.

General Comment

The Community Plan lacks detail of timetable by which these priorities will be achieved and goes into insufficient details about how they will be achieved and how success or failure will be measured and reported. We feel that this essential so that any achievements can be carried through and replicated into future plans and conversely any areas of failure can be investigated and a different strategy adopted in future.