

## **Local economic development, growth and skills**

### **Examples of initiatives by parish and town councils to support and drive local economic development, local growth and develop skills and employment**

#### **Sevenoaks Town Council, Kent (and attached)**

- corporate priority to support all sectors of community including businesses and take more responsibility for economic development;
- taking on the Stag Community Arts Centre which comprises 450 seat theatre, two screen cinema and function suite;
- STAG operates as a charity using over 200 volunteers, attracts over 300,000 visitors and major factor in economic development of town;
- initiated a job club;
- started a business show in 2010 in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce;
- created employment opportunities for 26 young people through Future Jobs Fund and now supports Modern Apprenticeship Programme;
- introduction of Business Awards;
- Christmas lights and events increasing visitors from 300 to 7000;
- Installation of info pods in place of Tourist Information Centre to provide information on local businesses;
- taken on running of two markets;
- created the Sevenoaks Town Partnership which is one of DCLG's Town Teams.

#### **Shrewsbury Town Council, Shropshire**

- part-funded a Business Development Manager post to support the establishment of a BID and provides officer support to the development of a BID;
- facilitates a Tourism Partnership with the Business Chamber and Retail Forum;
- provides officer support of the Business Chamber;
- new Mayor's priority for 2013/14 to promote business, initially hosting a Business Breakfast Meeting;
- part-funded a three year marketing campaign to promote the town centre;
- invests £40k and £100k a year respectively for Christmas Lighting on floral features in the town centre;
- Mayor's Business Awards to promote local businesses.

#### **Stone Parish Council, Kent**

- providing training for job seekers in association with local businesses and other partners;
- developing a new parish council website featuring free advertising for local businesses;
- free money advice workshops for local residents.

Newbury Town Council, Berkshire

- supports Town Centre Partnership and helped turn into Community Interest Company;
- supporting Business Improvement District;
- provides Christmas lights and associated events;
- Invests in public toilets;
- Supports and provides venue for weekly job club;
- buying local policy to support local businesses;
- running local markets and events and supporting the Town Centre Partnership and Retail Association.

Ventnor Town Council, Isle of Wight

- employing an Economic Development Worker to develop an Economic Strategy for the town to increase employment opportunities and support existing businesses.

Amesbury Town Council, Wiltshire

- key partners in the Economic Regeneration Group - including the local Chamber of Commerce – focussed on improving tourism schemes within the town.

Midsomer Norton Town Council, Avon

- revitalising the town centre including redevelopment of existing shop space and management of community buildings.

Oswestry Town Council, Shropshire

- council-owned 37 acres Smithfield site leased to auctioneers and facilitated £58m development including supermarket, retail, cinema, commercial lets and food outlets;
- retains ownership of land to generate capital receipt and property rents;
- set up regeneration forum with Shropshire Council;
- leading £75k scheme to promote B&Bs to increase provision;
- working with Shropshire Council on Oswestry app – what's on, jobs, council news offers etc;
- leading development of neighbourhood plan;
- empty shops scheme installing art from local artists.

Bodmin Town Council, Cornwall

- buying and redeveloping grade 2 listed Shire Hall into Tourist Information Centre and heritage centre
- over 200,000 enquiries in last 3 years, value of direct accommodation bookings in 2009/2010 at £50k;
- working with traders on fortnightly local produce market in town centre;
- Heritage Day, St. Piran's Day and other events bringing people into town;
- improved links with Chamber of Commerce and Industry and also Bodmin Economic Forum.

Dunstable Town Council, Bedfordshire

- corporate priority to help regenerate the town;
- large scale events programme and Shop Dunstable initiative;
- working with Central Bedfordshire Council on new £3m football complex;
- taking over management of market, with revitalisation plans and investment;
- taking on public toilets at cost of £35k;
- role in development of town Masterplan and delivery;
- leading campaign for A5-M1 link road awaiting Government decision.

Ivybridge Town Council, Devon

- developed a business centre which includes 14 business units, a conference centre, library, IT suite, café, multi-purpose space and meeting rooms.

Hatfield Town Council, Hertfordshire

- match funds £15k per year towards Town Centre Co-ordinator post and local events.

Maldon Town Council, Essex

- Set up the Maldon Business Association to support economic vitality of the town.

## Sevenoaks Town Council



## Economic Development Report 2013

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## **Background**

Sevenoaks Town Council aspires to support all sectors of the local community including local businesses. Originally this was carried out in a lower key manner, for example by provision of Christmas Lights and membership of the local Chamber of Commerce.

In 2008 the Town Council took a more defined decision to become more involved and responsible for the economic development and business growth for the town.

### **1. Stag Community Arts Centre**

The above decision coincided with the Stag venue going bankrupt for a second time. The Town Council put together a project plan and new business model and took over the venue on a 25 year lease from the District Council.

The facility consists of 450 theatre, two screen cinema operating commercially seven days per week and a function suite. The Stag Community Arts Centre now operated as an independent charity using over 200 volunteers and attracts over 300,000 visitors per annum and is a major factor in the economic development of the town, particularly for bars, restaurants, local retailers and car park income.

During 2013 Sevenoaks Town Council purchased a much need £45,000 digital projector for the cinema and rented it to the Stag Charity.



## **2. Job Club & Connexions**

Sevenoaks Town Council initiated and developed a job club which is held weekly in the town centre.

Facilities are also provided within the town centre to enable young people to access practical advice relating to obtaining work and completion of cvs.

The youth café has a noticeboard where it displays notices of apprenticeship opportunities and job vacancies. Connexions are also available one day per week.

## **3. Business Show**

In 2010 in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce the Town Council initiated and arranged its first Business Show. By popular demand this is now an annual event. The Business Show provides interaction and a support network for the local business community at the same time raising the profile of their businesses.

## **4. Opportunities for Young Workforce**

Via the Future Job Fund Sevenoaks Town Council has provided the opportunity for twenty-six young people to have paid employment and gain references and experience. Several of these have gone on to full time employment.

Sevenoaks Town Council is also actively supporting the national Modern Apprentice programme and has provided the opportunity for a young person to train as an accountant. During 2013 three more Modern Apprentices will be recruited.

The Town Council also provides regular opportunities for the Job Centre eight week work experience programme, one person has since been taken on full time in a newly created role.

## **5. Local Businesses & Business Awards**

Where possible and economically viable the Town Council will use local businesses and ensuring prompt payment. The Town Council has developed a good relationship with local businesses and this can be demonstrated by the sponsorship provided by them to assist with local initiatives.

2013 will see the first Business Award event for Sevenoaks. This Business Award project has been sponsored by seven local businesses and will cover the following areas:-

- i) Independent Retailer of the Year
- ii) National Chain Retailer of the Year
- iii) Young Entrepreneur



- iv) New Business (under 5 years)
- v) Customer Choice
- vi) Home Enterprise
- vii) Judges Choice.

## **6. Christmas Lights and other Events**

The Town Council's investment in Christmas Lights event has increased attendance from approx. 300 to 7000.



Also the Town Council is working alongside the Sevenoaks Town Partnership in creating an annual calendar with the aim of holding one monthly event per month, attracting visitors to the town.

The Town Council is the main sponsor of the two week Summer Festival which attracts thousands of people to the town.



## **7. Floral Displays**

The Town Council supported by local businesses provides floral displays throughout the town centre making the town a more attractive place to live and visit for shopping and entertainment.

Compliments from the public including letters to the local paper have encouraged the Town Council to enter the South East in Bloom competition.





## 8. Info Pods

The Town Council used to operate a traditional Tourist Information Centre

The decision has been taken to close the facility, due to poor usage and invest funding in digital provision located in public places where public can be assisted by staff if required.

The Info pods are made from an encased ipad showing the Sevenoaks Town Partnership's website. This will enable public access to information outside normal opening hours e.g. in the evening for accessing a B&B.

This facility will also provide new methods for promotion of local businesses.



## 9. Sevenoaks Markets

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 Sevenoaks Town Council has been awarded the contract to run the two markets in the town.

April will be used to address administrative issues and May will see the beginning of a marketing campaign to bring more attention to the two markets and help them prosper and encourage more people to shop in the town.

Cllr Stephen Arnold, Town Councillor and Chairman of the Sevenoaks Town Partnership said:- “This is exciting news for everyone associated with the Town. By committing their administrative support to both the Wednesday and Saturday markets, Sevenoaks Town Council recognise the historical importance of maintaining and developing a trading tradition stretching back for many years. The successful bid has come at the right time and will allow the Council to further promote and establish the market as part of our thriving community. The introduction this summer of the vintage Routemaster shuttle bus service between Knole and the Town will add visitor impetus and open up further opportunities for welcoming visitors and increasing footfall in the Town Centre”.

Cllr Richard Parry, Mayor said:- “This is excellent news for both the Town Council, local residents and market traders. From now on rent paid by market traders will be reinvested into the local market and not used elsewhere. I particularly want to thank the market traders and local residents who supported Sevenoaks Town Council in its bid to manage the markets”



## **10. Sevenoaks Town Partnership**

In 2011 Sevenoaks Town Council brought together like minded organisations, businesses, key visitor attractions and local people to create the Sevenoaks Town Partnership.

### **A. Sevenoaks Town Partnership – Strategic Aims**

- i. Increasing visitors to Sevenoaks Town
- ii. Branding Sevenoaks
- iii. Investigating and investing in different forms of digital marketing
- iv. Developing a branded Town Partnership website.
- v. Providing a calendar of events
- vi. Marketing the town as a clean and safe place to live and visit
- vii. Produce initiatives to address the empty shop issue
- viii. Improve engagement between public, and private and economic sector partners in order to use this combined expertise to improve the town.
- ix. Encourage inward investment into the town and make Sevenoaks attractive for businesses looking to start up
- x. Improving the accessibility and environment of Sevenoaks town.

Sevenoaks Town Partnership are delighted that the Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP, Minister of State for Business and Enterprise and Minister of State for Energy has agreed to be its patron. The Sevenoaks Town Partnership is also one of DCLG's Town Teams created following the Portas Review.

Almost all of the Town Council's economic development projects are now developed via the Sevenoaks Town Partnership enabling the opportunity for full consultation and involvement by other partners.

## **11. Vintage Bus**

The provision of the vintage bus service is to circulate footfall and increase the number of visitors to the town centre, using a hop and hop off ticket (£2 day ticket). The circular route will be Sevenoaks Station, Stag Community Arts Centre, Knole, Sencio.

The promotional event earlier this year attracted a good deal of attention and interest and it is hoped that the bus itself, a 1953 AEC Regal will become an attraction.



The 2013 pilot project will operate four days a week, to coincide with Knole's busiest days of the week and for twelve weeks, hopefully starting on the Summer Festival day. The bus will use volunteer bus conductors.

## **12. Information Screens**

The first information screen was installed in Knole Tea Rooms in August 2012. Knole is a National Trust property attracting more than 100,000 visitors per year.



The second screen was installed in the Stag Community Arts Centre foyer in September 2012. Visitors to the Stag's theatre, cinema and other facilities are in excess of 250,000 per year. The third is due to be installed in Sevenoaks District Council's foyer.

The purpose of the information screens is to promote businesses and events and encourage visitors attending these venues to move onto other areas of the town.

### **13. Website**

The new website will be the definitive information site for the local community, visitors and businesses and will cover a variety of topics including:

- Event information
- Eating out
- Shops & Businesses
- Culture & Leisure
- Young People
- Local History
- Tourist Information

The new website, which has been made possible by the substantial financial contributions from Sevenoaks Town Council and Knole together with the voluntary time provided by the members of the Partnership (in particular Andy Ross from Happen Websites), will be launched in May 2013.

The site will promote our fantastic town and encourage visitors and locals to spend more of their leisure and shopping time in Sevenoaks and the surrounding areas.

See [www.sevenoakspartnership.org](http://www.sevenoakspartnership.org)

### **14. Neighbourhood Plan for the Town Centre**

Consultation has just started in relation to the development of a Neighbourhood Plan regarding the long term aspirations for the town centre.

### **15. Long Term Strategy**

Sevenoaks Town Council and Sevenoaks Town Partnership will be working together to promote its five year strategic aims (copies available on request).



## Summary of Economic Development

	Project	STC financial contribution	Known Statistics
1	Stag Community Arts Centre Theatre & 2 screen commercial cinema	£27,000 p.a.  £45,000	Approx turnover £1.5 million 300,000 visitors p.a.  Digital cinema projector
2	Job Club	£1,000 p.a.	Run by volunteer
3	Annual Business Show	Income generating	45 businesses at show Approx. 500 attendees
4	Modern Apprentice x4	£30,000	
5	Christmas Lights	£18,000	7,000 visitors
6	Summer Festival	£5,000	
7	Sevenoaks Town Partnership	£5,000 & project funding & administration	
8	Vintage Bus	£15,000 p.a. Grants obtained of £13,000	
9	Information Screens x 3	£5,000	
10	Town Website	£8,750	
11	Sevenoaks Business Awards	Income generating	
12	Business Breakfasts	Income generating	
13	Info Pods	£7,500	
14	Markets	£32,000 rent but income generating	Market traders and local residents petitioned for Town Council to take over the management
15	Neighbourhood Plan for Town Centre	£20,000	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£174,250</b>	