

12 October 2021 at 7.00 pm

Council Chamber, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

Published: 04.10.21



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## Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee

### Membership:

Chairman, Cllr. McArthur; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Carroll

Cllrs. Andrews, Barnett, Bayley, Dr. Canet, Collins, G. Darrington, Firth, Griffiths, Raikes and Roy

### 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.

	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. <b>Minutes</b> To agree the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 June 2021, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 4)	
2. <b>Declarations of Interest</b> Any interests not already registered.		
3. <b>Actions from Previous Meeting (if any)</b>		
4. <b>Update from Portfolio Holder</b>		
5. <b>Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee (if any)</b>		
6. <b>Budget 22/23: Review of Service Dashboard and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)</b>	(Pages 5 - 28)	Alan Mitchell Tel: 01732227483

- |     |   |                 |                                    |
|-----|---|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 7.  | <b>Net Zero 2030 Update - October 2021</b>  | (Pages 29 - 48) | Helen French<br>Tel: 01732 227357  |
| 8.  | <b>Service Update: Environmental Health</b> | (Pages 49 - 64) | Nick Chapman<br>Tel: 01322 343160  |
| 9.  | <b>Tree Management Strategy 2021 - 2031</b> | (Pages 65 - 92) | Trevor Kennet<br>Tel: 01732 227407 |
| 10. | <b>Work Plan</b>                            | (Pages 93 - 94) |                                    |

#### EXEMPT INFORMATION

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.

If you wish to obtain further factual information on any of the agenda items listed above, please contact the named officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact Democratic Services on 01732 227000 or [democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

**CLEANER & GREENER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. McArthur (Chairman)

Cllrs. Bayley, Collins, G. Darrington, Griffiths, Raikes and Roy

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Barnett, Dr. Canet, Carroll and Firth

Cllrs. P. Darrington and Purves were also present.

Cllr. Andrews was also present via virtual media platform, which does not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr McArthur be appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2021/22.

(Cllr McArthur in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Carroll be appointed Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2021/22.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee held on 16 March 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

5. Actions from Previous Meeting (if any)

There were none.

6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, gave an update on services within her portfolio. From the 1 July 2021, the Dartford and Sevenoaks Environmental Health

## Agenda Item 1

### Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 29 June 2021

Partnership would come to a close and the Environmental Health team would return to the Council Offices in Sevenoaks.

Within Direct Services, a parking enforcement contract with Tandridge District Council had been won for the next three years and a tender had been put in for 15 additional electric vehicle charging points from Kent County Council for the Council's car parks. There had been a restructure of staff as well as a refurbishment of the offices at Dunbrik. A solar powered bin had been brought to Bligh's Meadow in Sevenoaks Town for a trial run. The Waste and Recycling service had been a finalist in the Association Public Services Excellence Team of the Year Award.

The Licensing team had resumed the taxi knowledge test for new applications for drivers. There was new safeguarding training which was underway. Pavement licensing had been introduced to help hospitality businesses, this had been a success particularly on Bank Street in Sevenoaks Town.

It was acknowledged that the work of Facilities Management had allowed more staff to return to work in the offices quickly following the Covid-19 lockdown.

#### 7. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee (if any)

There were none.

#### 8. Net Zero 2030 Update - Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy

The Principal Planning Officer (Policy) presented a report which outlined the Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy (LEEVs) as part of the Council's commitment to be Net Zero by 2030. Transport remained the largest carbon emitting sector in the UK and Sevenoaks District had the highest level of registered electric vehicle ownership in Kent. The Strategy would aim to help the Council promote low carbon travel, improve the electric vehicle charging network across the district and continue the transition to a zero-carbon emissions vehicle fleet wherever possible.

Members asked questions of clarification. It was clarified that there were currently charging points at 12 locations across the District as shown on the map within the report. Use of hydrogen technologies had also been considered as well as electric vehicles. Members were advised that the length of time it took to charge the vehicles depended on the type of charging point and vehicle as they varied, however, those with off street parking could also charge at home. Currently, the charging points in the Council's car parks were free to use.

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impact under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy, be agreed.

9. Air Quality - Update on the Development of a new Air Quality Action Plan

The Acting Environmental Health Manager presented the report which updated Members on air quality within the District. The Department of Environment Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had required the Council to publish its air quality monitoring data. The District was showing trends of improvement therefore it was proposed that 5 of the 9 existing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) be requested to be revoked. It was proposed that a Working Group be set up to consider measures to be introduced in the Air Quality Action Plan and that the 'Air Alert' scheme be brought to a close.

Members asked questions and discussed the report. It was clarified that the proposed AQMAs the Council would request to revoke had been consistently below the national objective levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) or small particulates (PM<sub>10</sub>) and were very unlikely to exceed them. Air Quality was generally worse in areas where vehicles had to accelerate and decelerate such as town centres.

Members discussed measures to encourage residents to do more active travel and drive less in order to reduce local air pollution including collaboration with Kent County Council on schemes such as developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) officers request to DEFRA for the revocation of the M20 AQMA on the basis of the assessment undertaken by BV, be agreed;
- b) officers request to DEFRA for the revocation of the M25 AQMA (PM<sub>10</sub>) on the basis of the assessment undertaken by BV, be agreed;
- c) subject to additional monitoring demonstrating that NO<sub>2</sub> levels do not exceed objective levels at the roundabout at London Road, Westerham and residential properties along the A224 and B221 near to the M25, officers request to DEFRA for the revocation of the M25 AQMA (NO<sub>2</sub>), be agreed;
- d) subject to additional monitoring demonstrating that NO<sub>2</sub> levels do not exceed objective levels at receptors along the A224 London Road flyover, officers request to DEFRA for the revocation of M26 AQMA, be agreed;

## Agenda Item 1

### Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 29 June 2021

- e) subject to additional monitoring demonstrating that NO2 levels do not exceed objective levels as residential properties at Phillip Avenues / Ladds Way / Cyclamen Road, Swanley, officers request to DEFRA for the revocation of the A20 AQMA, be agreed;
- f) following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener, the Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer of Planning & Regulatory Services' constitution of a Working Group of up to 15 Members and Officers (with a quorum of 5) to develop a shortlist of workable measures to be tested (scenario testing) to quantify their impact upon Air Quality within the AQMA, explore possible measures which could be included in the Action Plan and report to the next Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee, be authorised; and
- g) the District Council's withdrawal from the 'Air Alert' scheme as provided by Sussex Air and Imperial College and alternate and comparable 'Air Alert' information be made available on the Council's website, be agreed.

#### 10. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the addition of an item on Tree Policy and an item on Budget 2022/23: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) at the meeting on 12 October 2021.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.00 PM

CHAIRMAN

**BUDGET 2022/23: SERVICE DASHBOARDS AND SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (SCIAs)**

**Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee - 12 October 2021**

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance and Trading

**Status:** For Comment

**Also considered by:**

- Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 28 September 2021
- People and Places Advisory Committee - 6 October 2021
- Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee - 7 October 2021
- Development and Conservation Advisory Committee - 19 October 2021
- Finance and Investment Advisory Committee - 4 November 2021

**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Summary:**

This report sets out updates to the 2022/23 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The report presents growth and savings/additional income proposals that have been identified which need to be considered (if applicable to this Committee), and requests further suggestions from the Advisory Committees, before finalising the budget for 2022/23.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it is proposed that the Council continues to set a revenue budget that assumes no direct funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. This will result in the Council continuing to be financially self-sufficient.

To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10-year period will continue to be challenging largely due to the uncertainties and ongoing financial impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The budget process will be the same as two years ago as opposed to the shortened process last year. However, we are looking to streamline the process in future years to run from November to February, but this will require changes to the committee meetings schedule.

No changes have been made to the assumptions at the stage, so the annual budget gap included in this report is £100,000 which relates to the annual savings target. However, it is expected that the gap will increase due to the impacts of homelessness, ongoing Covid-19 impacts and inflationary pressures.

The Advisory Committees will comment on the growth and savings/additional income proposals included in the reports, and their recommendations will be considered by Cabinet as part of the process to remove this gap. By addressing these issues, this Council will once again be in a strong financial position that other councils would aspire to.

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Matthew Dickins

**Contact Officer(s):** Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153; Alan Mitchell, Ext. 7483

**Recommendation to each Advisory Committee:**

- (a) Advise Cabinet with views on the growth and savings/additional income proposals identified in Appendix E applicable to this Advisory Committee.
- (b) Advise Cabinet with further suggestions for growth and savings/additional income applicable to this Advisory Committee.

**Reason for recommendation:** It is important that the views of the Advisory Committees are taken into account in the budget process to ensure that the Council's resources are used in the most suitable manner.

### Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council's financial strategy over the past seventeen years has worked towards increasing financial sustainability and it has been successful through the use of a number of strategies including:
  - implementing efficiency initiatives.
  - significantly reducing the back-office function.
  - improved value for money.
  - maximising external income.
  - the movement of resources away from low priority services.
  - an emphasis on statutory rather than non-statutory services.
- 2 Over this period, the Council has focused on delivering high quality services based on Members' priorities and consultation with residents and stakeholders.



- 3 Using the data sources available to the Council, this report sets out a budget over the 10-year period but recognises that it is likely that more accurate data will become available in future months and current assumptions may need to be updated.
- 4 In setting its budget for 2011/12 onwards, the Council recognised the need to address both the immediate reduction in Government funding as well as the longer-term need to reduce its reliance on reserves. The outcome was a 10-year budget, together with a four-year savings plan, that ensured the Council's finances were placed on a stable footing but that also allowed for flexibility between budget years.
- 5 With the Revenue Support Grant provided by Government ceasing from 2017/18 it is important that the council remains financially self-sufficient by having a financial strategy that is focused on local solutions. These solutions include:
  - continuing to deliver financial savings and service efficiencies.
  - growing the council tax base.
  - generating more income.
- 6 The intention of this report is to provide Members of each Advisory Committee an opportunity to give their views on potential growth and savings/additional income items that could be included in the updated 10-year budget that will be presented to Council on 22 February 2022.
- 7 The 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2021/22 and Beyond' report has been presented to Cabinet to start the budget setting process for 2022/23.

### **Financial Strategy**

- 8 In order to maintain a viable Council that continues to deliver on its main priorities and the services it provides to its residents, the Council continues to adopt a Financial Strategy that embraces the following principles:
  - Remain financially self-sufficient.
  - Be clear about the Council's future financial prospects, with a ten-year budget as an integral part.
  - Ensure a strategic approach is taken to the management of the Council's finances, Council Tax, and budget setting.
  - Make effective use of reserves and capital receipts.
  - Manage our money carefully, monitor monthly and constantly strive for better value from our spending.
- 9 A two-page summary of the Financial Strategy can be found at **Appendix H**.

## Agenda Item 6

### Review of the 10-year Budget Process

- 10 An audit of the 10-year budget process has recently been completed by Mazars (working for Internal Audit) and their findings were that the Council has adequate, effective and reliable controls in place over budget setting and long-term financial planning.

### Financial Self-Sufficiency

- 11 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2018 set out an ambition for the Council to become financially self-sufficient which was achieved in 2016/17. The current Council Plan aims to continue with this approach. This means that the Council no longer requires direct funding from Government, through Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus, to deliver its services.
- 12 This approach was adopted in response to the financial challenges the Country was faced with in bringing its public spending down to ensure it was able to live within its means. In practice this has seen Government funding to local authorities dramatically reduced since 2010/11 with Sevenoaks District Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18.
- 13 The decision to become financially self-sufficient is intended to give the Council greater control over its services, reducing the potential for decision making to be influenced by the level of funding provided by government to local authorities.
- 14 The Council's decision to seek to become financially self-sufficient was subject to scrutiny by the Local Government Associations Peer Challenge of the District Council during December 2013. In their closing letter to the Council, they concluded that they 'fully support that aspiration and given the existing and anticipated squeeze upon public finances this makes much sense'.
- 15 With the Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18 and New Homes Bonus reducing from 2018/19, this approach remains appropriate. The attached 10-year budget assumes no Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. Any funding received from these sources will be put into the Financial Plan Reserve which can be used to support the 10-year budget by funding invest to save initiatives and support for the Property Investment Strategy. One of the aims of the Property Investment Strategy is to achieve an income yield of 3%+ above the Council's average treasury management return (currently 0.1%) when not borrowing or internally borrowing, and 3%+ above the borrowing rate (currently 1.7% for 30 years) when externally borrowing, based on an average over ten years. Therefore, using funding for this purpose will result in additional year on year income that is not impacted by Government decisions.
- 16 Cabinet are keen to remain financially self-sufficient which has served the Council well and ensured it is one of the most financially stable local authorities in the country. In the 2020/21 budget, a new target was set to replace reliance on Business Rates income over the coming years. However,

due to the impact of Covid-19 and the greater uncertainty as Government reviews have been deferred, this was not addressed during the 2021/22 budget process but remains a future aim. This ambition will allow this Council to move ahead in the knowledge that this council has the financial resources to provide the services that the district's residents need into the future.

### Service Dashboards

- 17 The intention of service dashboards is to provide Members with improved information during the budget setting process to provide context and inform any growth and savings/additional income ideas that Members may put forward.
- 18 The Service Dashboards cover a summary of the services provided, objectives, achievements and opportunities, challenges and risks and performance.
- 19 **Appendix A** contains the Service Dashboard for this Advisory Committee and **Appendix B** contains the budget for those services.

### Savings Plan

- 20 **Appendix C** to this report sets out a summary of the savings/additional income and growth items approved by Council since the 10-year budget strategy was first used in 2011/12, which have allowed the Council to deliver a 10-year balanced budget.
- 21 The savings plan requires a total of over £8.2 million to be saved between 2011/12 and 2021/2 which is an average saving of £745,000 per annum.

### Current 10-year Budget Position

- 22 The 10-year budget set out in **Appendix D** has been updated from the version agreed by Council on 23 February 2021 by rolling it forward one year
- 23 No changes to assumptions have been made at this stage so the annual budget gap is currently £100,000 which relates to the annual savings target. However, it is expected that the gap will increase due to the impacts of homelessness, ongoing Covid-19 impacts and inflationary pressures.
- 24 The assumptions currently included take into account the latest information available, but a number of assumptions may change before the final budget meeting in February 2022.

### Proposed Growth and Savings/Additional Income Items

- 25 Growth items are items that are in addition to non-service issues and risks, such as grant settlements, impacts of economic change and other pressures highlighted in the 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2022/23 and Beyond' report considered by Cabinet on 7 September 2021.

## Agenda Item 6

- 26 A number of growth and savings/additional income items will be proposed at the Advisory Committees with the aim of achieving the savings/additional income to bridge the budget gap.
- 27 The proposed growth and savings/additional income items relating to this Advisory Committee are listed in **Appendix E** (if applicable).
- 28 Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) contain further details for all proposed growth and savings/additional income items. SCIAs applicable to this Advisory Committee can be found in **Appendix F** (if applicable).

### **Role of the Advisory Committees**

- 29 A training session on the budget process was provided to Members in 2019. If Members require any further training or require any additional details on the content of this report and appendices, please contact Adrian Rowbotham or Alan Mitchell prior to the meeting.
- 30 Views of the Advisory Committees on the growth and savings/additional income items proposed together with any additional suggestions will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 December 2021.

### **Process and Timetable**

- 31 This report is the second stage of the budget process as shown in the Budget Setting Timetable (**Appendix G**).
- 32 Members will recognise that this is the same budget process as two years ago as opposed to the shortened process used last year. However, we are looking to streamline the process in future years to run from November to February, but this will require changes to the committee meetings schedule.
- 33 Budget Update report will be presented to Cabinet in December and January to provide details of progress made before the Budget Setting report is presented to Cabinet on 10 February 2022.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

All financial implications are covered elsewhere in this report.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications.

For the effective management of our resources and in order to achieve a sustainable budget it is essential that all service cost changes and risks are identified and considered.

Challenges and risks are included in the Service Dashboards and each Service Change Impact Assessment (SCIA) includes the likely impacts including a risk analysis.

A separate Risks and Assumptions report will be presented to the Finance and Investment Advisory Committee and Cabinet.

### Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.

Individual equality impact assessments have been completed for all Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) to ensure the decision-making process is fair and transparent.

### **Conclusions**

The Strategic Financial and Business Planning process has ensured that the Council follows a logical and well considered process and approach in dealing with the many difficult challenges that it has faced. The 10-year budget has further improved this process and helped to ensure that the Council is well placed in dealing with more immediate and longer-term financial challenges.

By becoming financially self-sufficient at an early stage, this Council has become much more in control of its own destiny.

The attached 10-year budget shows that this Council is aiming to continue to be financially stable going into the future with a level of assurance that any council would aspire to.

This budget process will once again be a challenge for a Council that already provides value for money services to a high standard; and ensuring that these proposals lead to an achievable 10-year budget, Members will need to consider the impact on service quality, staff and well-being.

Members' consideration and scrutiny of the relevant services is an essential and key element in the business and financial planning process. If the net total of growth and savings/additional income proposals identified by the Advisory Committees and approved by Cabinet does not reach the £100,000 target, additional savings will be required that may result in service changes, to ensure a balanced budget position.

## Agenda Item 6

### **Appendices**

Appendix A - Service Dashboards relating to this Advisory Committee.

Appendix B - 2021/22 Budget by Service relating to this Advisory Committee.

Appendix C - Summary of the Council's agreed savings plan and growth items.

Appendix D - 10-year budget

Appendix E - New growth and savings/additional income items proposed relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable)

Appendix F - Service Change Impact Assessment forms (SCIAs) for the new growth and savings/additional income items relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable)

Appendix G - Budget Setting Timetable

Appendix H - Financial Strategy

### **Background Papers**

Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2022/23 and Beyond - Cabinet 16  
September 2021

**Adrian Rowbotham**

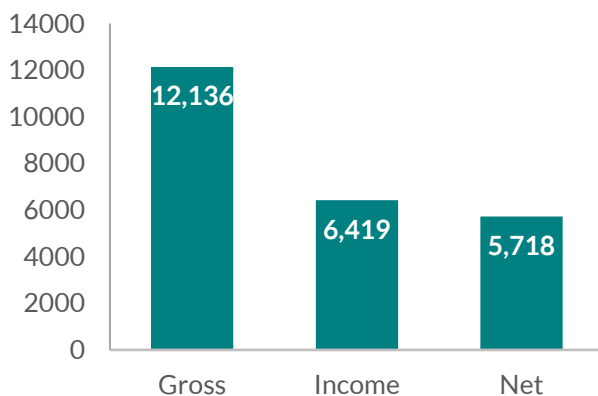
**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading**

## Service Dashboard Portfolio for Cleaner & Greener

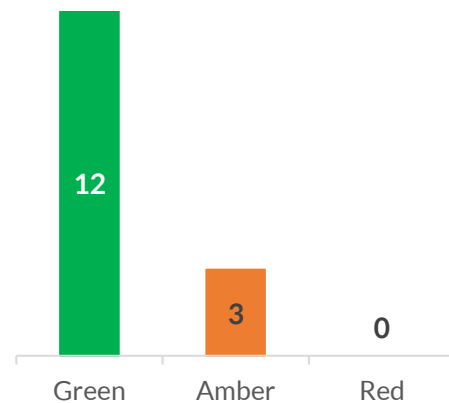
### The services we provide

Direct services, street cleansing, waste & recycling, CCTV, environmental health, green spaces, parking, pest control, licensing, facilities management, emergency planning, air quality, delivery partner assurance, wellbeing

#### Revenue Budget (£000)



#### Performance



#### Service contribution

Statutory service



Income generating



Working in partnership



#### Council Plan

Wellbeing ✓

Environment ✓

Economy ✓

Housing ✗

Community Safety ✓

Health ✓

#### Achievements & Opportunities

- Continuing weekly refuse and recycling collection throughout the Covid-19 pandemic
- CCTV accreditations and assisting arrests
- Significant EH, Licensing & Parking roles in the Covid emergency, including additional powers and responsibilities and flexible deployment of staff
- Opportunities arising from the closure of the Environmental Health Partnership
- Opportunity to seek greater income levels from existing and new services

#### Challenges & Risks

- Government consultations and policy approach to the collection of waste & recycling
- Continuing to collect refuse and recycling on a weekly basis as the impacts of Covid-19 and shortage of HGV drivers persist
- Impact of Covid-19 on completing and catching-up food safety inspections
- Supporting the economy, including the reopening of businesses and effective management of car parks

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<b>Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee</b>		<b>Appendix B</b>		
		2021/22 Exp Budget	2021/22 Inc Budget	2021/22 Approved Net Budget
<b>Revenue</b>		£000	£000	£000
Chief Officer				
Planning & Regulatory Services	Administrative Expenses - Health	5	0	5
Planning & Regulatory Services	Administrative Expenses - Licensing	7	0	7
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Administrative Expenses - Property	3	0	3
Finance & Trading	Administrative Expenses - Transport	7	0	7
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Asset Maintenance Argyle Road	79	0	79
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Asset Maintenance Hever Road	40	0	40
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Asset Maintenance Leisure	190	0	190
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Asset Maintenance Operatives	5	0	5
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Asset Maintenance Other Corporate Properties	35	0	35
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Asset Maintenance Sewage Treatment Plants	9	0	9
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Asset Maintenance Support & Salaries	138	0	138
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Bus Station	19	(11)	8
Finance & Trading	Car Parking - On Street	587	(833)	(245)
Finance & Trading	Car Parks	984	(2,182)	(1,198)
Finance & Trading	CCTV	316	(47)	269
Finance & Trading	Civil Protection	49	0	49
Finance & Trading	Direct Services Trading account	1,807	(2,039)	(231)
Planning & Regulatory Services	EH Animal Control	41	(19)	22
Planning & Regulatory Services	EH Commercial	284	(4)	280
Planning & Regulatory Services	EH Environmental Protection	410	(10)	400
Finance & Trading	Emergency	81	0	81
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Estates Management - Buildings	108	(125)	(16)
Finance & Trading	Estates Management - Grounds	128	0	128
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Housing Other Income	0	(14)	(14)
Strategic Head Commercial and Proper	Housing Premises	16	0	16
Planning & Regulatory Services	Licensing Regime	146	(99)	47



SCIA		Description	2011/12 -	2022/23	Later Years	Total
Year	No.		2021/22	£000	£000	£000
		<b>Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee</b>				
2021/22	2	Car Parking income inflation 21/22: deferred for one year (reversal of temporary growth item)		(118)		
2021/22	10	Direct Services: new commercial services		(100)		
		<b>Development and Conservation Advisory Committee</b>				
		No savings or growth agreed from 2022/23 onwards				
		<b>Finance and Investment Advisory Committee</b>				
2021/22	13	Property Investment Strategy: Tenant in administration (reversal of temporary growth item)		(96)		
2021/22	17	Internal Audit: ongoing impact of 2019 staff restructure		(8)		
2020/21	10	Insurance contract renewal (reversal of temporary savings item)			87	
		<b>Housing and Health Advisory Committee</b>				
		No savings or growth agreed from 2022/23 onwards				
		<b>Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee</b>				
2021/22	22	Review efficiency of partnerships		(100)		
2020/21	1	Apprenticeship Levy (reversal of temporary growth item)			(50)	
		<b>People and Places Advisory Committee</b>				
		No savings or growth agreed from 2022/23 onwards				
		Minor movements between years				
		<b>Total Savings/additional income</b>	<b>(8,192)</b>	<b>(208)</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>(8,313)</b>
		<b>Total Growth</b>	<b>2,677</b>	<b>(214)</b>	<b>(50)</b>	<b>2,413</b>
		<b>Net Savings</b>	<b>(5,515)</b>	<b>(422)</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>(5,900)</b>

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	Budget 2021/22	Plan 2022/23	Plan 2023/24	Plan 2024/25	Plan 2025/26	Plan 2026/27	Plan 2027/28	Plan 2028/29	Plan 2029/30	Plan 2030/31	Plan 2031/32
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Expenditure</b>											
Net Service Expenditure c/f	15,581	16,879	16,633	16,967	17,171	17,380	17,643	18,173	18,712	19,258	19,813
Inflation	616	496	503	509	515	522	529	539	547	556	565
Superannuation Fund deficit	0	0	100	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0
Net savings (approved in previous years)	682	(642)	(169)	(206)	(206)	(209)	1	0	(1)	(1)	0
<b>New growth</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>New savings/Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>
<b>Net Service Expenditure b/f</b>	<b>16,879</b>	<b>16,633</b>	<b>16,967</b>	<b>17,171</b>	<b>17,380</b>	<b>17,643</b>	<b>18,173</b>	<b>18,712</b>	<b>19,258</b>	<b>19,813</b>	<b>20,378</b>
<b>Financing Sources</b>											
Govt Support: Revenue Support Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
: Lower Tier Services Grant	(98)										
: Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)	(245)										
New Homes Bonus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Council Tax	(11,443)	(11,836)	(12,366)	(12,786)	(13,182)	(13,589)	(13,982)	(14,384)	(14,798)	(15,222)	(15,657)
Business Rates Retention	(2,182)	(2,226)	(2,271)	(2,316)	(2,362)	(2,409)	(2,457)	(2,506)	(2,556)	(2,607)	(2,659)
Collection Fund Deficit/(Surplus)	17	17	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interest Receipts	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)
Property Investment Strategy Income	(1,468)	(1,508)	(1,558)	(1,558)	(1,558)	(1,655)	(1,655)	(1,655)	(1,696)	(1,696)	(1,696)
Contributions to/(from) Reserves	(337)	(146)	(130)	(572)	226	241	255	271	285	185	148
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>(15,944)</b>	<b>(15,887)</b>	<b>(16,496)</b>	<b>(17,420)</b>	<b>(17,064)</b>	<b>(17,600)</b>	<b>(18,027)</b>	<b>(18,462)</b>	<b>(18,953)</b>	<b>(19,528)</b>	<b>(20,052)</b>
<b>Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>(250)</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Contribution to/(from) Stabilisation Reserve</b>	<b>(935)</b>	<b>(746)</b>	<b>(471)</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>(316)</b>	<b>(43)</b>	<b>(146)</b>	<b>(250)</b>	<b>(305)</b>	<b>(285)</b>	<b>(326)</b>
<b>Unfunded Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>Assumptions</b>	
Revenue Support Grant:	nil all years
Business Rates Retention:	Business Rates Retention safety-net plus 2% per year
Council Tax:	2% in all years
Council Tax Base:	Increase of 730 Band D equivalent properties p.a. from 22/23, 580 p.a. from 25/26, 480 p.a. from 27/28
Interest Receipts:	£188,000 in all years
Property Investment Strategy:	£1.508m in 22/23, £1.558m from 23/24, £1.655m from 26/27, £1.696m from 29/30
Pay award:	2% in all years
Other costs:	2.25% in all years
Income:	2.5% in all years except for off-street car parks which are an average of 3.5% per annum from 19/20 - 23/24. Note 21/22 Car Parking inflation deferred for one year

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## New Growth and Savings/Additional Income Proposals: Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee

SCIA Year	No.	Description	Year	Ongoing	2022/23 Impact £000	Budget Impact £000
<b>Growth</b>						
2022/23	6	Enforcement Investigation Software	2022/23	Y	20	200
Sub Total					20	200
<b>Savings/Additional Income</b>						
none						
Sub Total					0	0
Net (Savings)/Growth Total					20	200

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SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

SCIA 06 (22/23)

Chief Officer: Adrian Rowbotham  
Service: Direct Services  
Activity: Enforcement  
No. of Staff: 8

Activity Budget Change	2022/23 Growth / (Saving) £000	Later Years Comments (ongoing, one-off, etc.)
Enforcement software	20	ongoing

**A. Reasons for and explanation of proposed change in service**

The environmental enforcement do not have any investigation management software to manage and prosecute criminal offences.

**B. Key Stakeholders Affected: Legal, Police**

**C. Likely impacts and implications of the change in service  
(include Risk Analysis)**

This will be a positive change and reduces the risk of failing prosecutions in Court, as the new court listing system requires electronic submission of evidence, which this new system will achieve.

The software will also ensure better case management and supervision for the new expanded team.

**D. Risk to Service Objectives (High / Medium / Low) Medium**

**E. 2021/22 Budget (£'000)**

Operational Cost 325

Income (321)

Net Cost 4

**F. Performance Indicators**

LPI\_DS Clean 002: Average number of working days taken to remove fly tips which the District Council has responsibility to clear

Actual 3.2

Target 4

**SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**G. Equality Impacts**

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.

## 2022/23 Budget Setting Timetable

### **Stage 1: Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2022/23 and Beyond**

7 September - Finance & Investment AC

16 September - Cabinet

### **Stage 2: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)**

28 September - Housing and Health AC

6 October - People & Places AC

7 October - Improvement & Innovation AC

12 October - Cleaner & Greener AC

19 October - Development & Conservation AC

4 November - Finance & Investment AC

### **Stage 3: Budget Update (incl. Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs), feedback from Advisory Committees)**

9 December - Cabinet

### **Stage 4: Budget Update (incl. Government Settlement information)**

13 January - Cabinet

### **Stage 5: Budget Update and further review of Service Change Impact Assessments (if required)**

January to February - Advisory Committees

### **Stage 6: Budget Setting Meeting (Recommendations to Council)**

10 February - Cabinet

### **Stage 7: Budget Setting Meeting (incl. Council Tax setting)**

22 February - Council

**Note:** The Scrutiny Committee may 'call in' items concerning the budget setting process.

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# Financial Strategy








## INTRODUCTION

In the years preceding this Strategy Sevenoaks District Council has proven itself to be highly successful in some of the most austere and challenging times faced by local government. This was only possible because of our award winning financial strategy and the achievement of a self-sufficient balanced budget within our unique 10-year budget framework.

The absolute need and desire to support our local businesses and people in our communities during the Covid-19 pandemic placed an unforeseen and difficult challenge on the Council and its finances. Using our previous experience and following our principles, we acted early, bringing forward our budget setting, making incredibly difficult but necessary savings to maximise the opportunity for a much stronger financial position in the medium to long-term.

Our Financial Strategy enables the Council to deliver its services effectively, in accordance with the priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy. At the same time, it ensures that our spending is prioritised to deliver the promises our Members set out in the **Council Plan themes**:

-  Environment
-  Economy
-  Housing
-  Community Safety
-  Health

## OUR FINANCES

### Our Vision

Long-term financial health to deliver exceptional services and achieve the promises set out in the Council Plan.

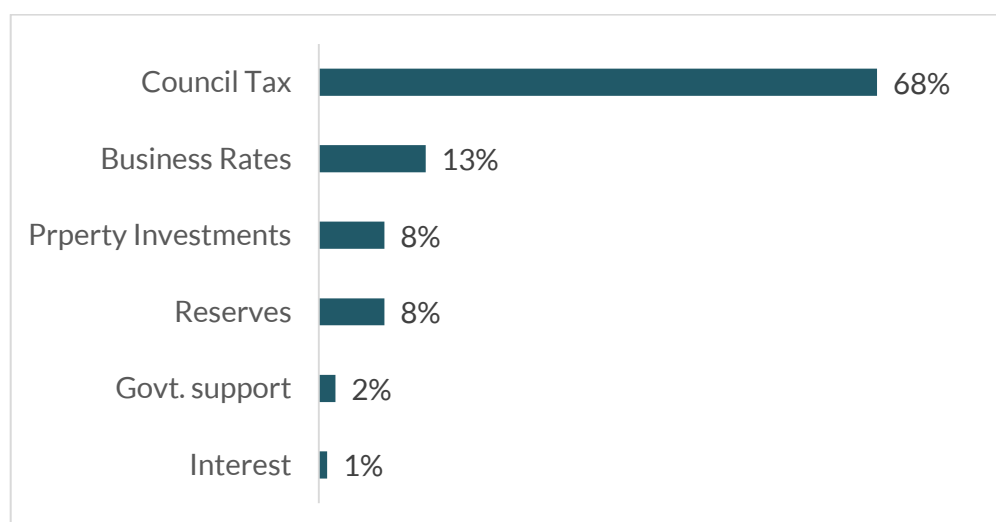
### What's important to us:

- Our budget supports the Council's vision and priorities
- Taxpayers and customers receive quality services and value for money
- Innovation, efficiency and cost-effectiveness
- Maximising income from grants and other funding opportunities
- Taking a commercial approach where it will benefit our budgets and our residents and local businesses
- Good quality, risk managed investments to generate more income for local priorities

### To be successful, we must:

- Remain financially self-sufficient
- Be clear about the Council's future financial prospects, with a ten-year budget as an integral part
- Ensure a strategic approach is taken to the management of the Council's finances, Council Tax, and budget setting
- Make effective use of reserves and capital receipts
- Manage our money carefully, monitor monthly and constantly strive for better value from our spending

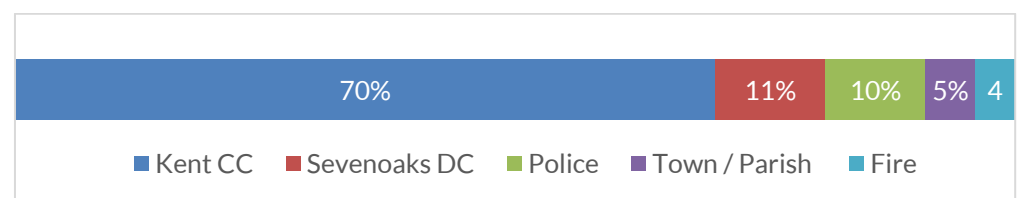
### WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM



### COUNCIL TAX





Sevenoaks District Council collects the Council Tax charge for itself but also for Kent County Council, Kent Fire & Rescue Service, Kent Police & Crime Commissioner and all the local town and parish councils. Each authority sets its own charge that contributes to the total.




Sevenoaks District Council's part of the charge at Band D is £224.91, 11% of the total. Council Tax contributes about £11.4million to District Council services.



### WHERE OUR MONEY IS SPENT

In 2021/22 the Council will spend about £16.8million on services for local people

	Cleaner & Greener £5.7m
	Development & Conservation £0.9m
	Housing & Health £1.0m
	People & Places £0.6m

	Finance & Investments £3.1m
	Improvement & Innovation £5.7m
	Other -£0.2m

**OUR PRIORITIES** | By keeping a focus on our priorities we will deliver our vision

**Financial self-sufficiency**



No longer relying on direct government funding gives greater certainty to our financial planning. It allows for long-term plans to be developed over our 10-year budget period.

- We will produce high quality financial reports and monitor our budgets every month
- We will address growth items and service pressures annually through the budget planning process
- We will manage inflationary pressures and prudent assumptions about future pressures and keep them under regular review

**Savings & reserves**



Creating a culture where there is a continuous drive for better value in our spend helps to create savings to balance our budgets. Alongside flexible and effective use of reserves, it allows for sustainable solutions to financial pressures

- We will seek to deliver a minimum of £100,000 in savings annually
- We will regularly review the use of reserves and maintain a minimum balance of 10% of the Net Service Expenditure budget.
- We will make flexible use of the Budget Stabilisation Reserve to increase resilience in the budget setting process

**Income & investments**



Making best use of the Council's reserves and carefully managed borrowing generates 10% of the Council's annual budget. Seeking new opportunities for funding from grants and investments is increasingly essential to the Council's financial sustainability.

- We will bid for external funding
- We will adopt a commercial approach where it will be of benefit to our budgets and support the delivery of Council priorities
- We will make investments in property and banks and institutions to bring in income to support the delivery of Council services

**Delivering our Financial Strategy**

Our Financial Strategy is supported by a number of related strategies and an action plan to help us achieve our vision and to deliver the ambitions set out by Members in the Council Plan.

How we work as a team of officers is critical to the success of the organisation and to help us achieve our aims, the Financial Strategy seeks to unite us all behind the same priorities and approach.

The outcomes we hope to achieve and the measures that will help us to determine whether we have been successful are set out below.



**Outcomes and success measures**

Financial self-sufficiency					
	Financial plans ensure there are no unplanned reductions to Council services		Overall proportion of Council budgets funded by income from council tax does not increase		A balanced 10-year budget is delivered annually
Savings & Reserves					
	Annual savings exceed the £100,000 target whilst continuing to protect services		The General Fund reserves retains at least 10% of the Net Service Expenditure budget		Specific savings agreed as part of the annual budget process are achieved as planned.
Income & Investments					
	Successful bids for external funding generate new income and opportunities for the Council		Income from paid for services is in accordance with budget costs, is comparable to neighbouring authorities and is considered to provide value for money		Treasury Management, Property and commercial investments exceed expected yield

**NET ZERO 2030 UPDATE - OCTOBER 2021**

**Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee - 12 October 2021**

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services

**Status:** For Information

**Also considered by:**

N/A

**Key Decision:** No

This reports support the Key Aim of The Council's commitment to Net Zero 2030.

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Margot McArthur

**Contact Officer(s):** Helen French, Ext. 7357; Margaret Carr, Ext. 7341; Naiomi Sargant, Ext. 7122

**Recommendation to Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee:**

To note this update report for information.

**Introduction and Background**

- 1 The Council has committed to working towards achieving Net Zero emissions by 2030 on Council assets and services.
- 2 It has also been agreed that the Council will be a “community leader” and encourage low carbon measures across the District through education, best practice, incentives, policy and opportunities. This includes working collaboratively with Kent County Council (KCC), Parish and Town Councils, Local Interest Groups and the Local Government Association.

**Net Zero 2030 Action Progress Update**

- 3 Actions for 2021-22 were agreed by Cabinet in February 2021. This report provides a mid-year update on progress. Appendix A includes a short commentary on each of the actions and this report provides a more detailed summary of a selection of the ongoing projects for information.
- 4 We have made good progress on achieving the Net Zero 2030 actions. The majority of actions will remain ongoing until 2030, with steps towards achieving net zero carbon emissions.

## Agenda Item 7

### Net Zero 2030 Communications

- 5 The Council have committed to helping local communities to reduce the carbon emissions of the District. We have been using our various communication channels to help achieve this aim, as set out in Appendix A.
- 6 As part of this we have held a number of events to encourage communities to engage with the Net Zero agenda and to make more environmentally friendly choices at home.
- 7 One of the most important, but also challenging, aspects to reducing carbon emissions is influencing positive behavioural change. Good communication is essential in working with and inspiring communities.

### Sevenoaks Wildlife Event - Summer 2021

- 8 Sevenoaks Wildlife Event took place in July/August 2021, in partnership with the North West Kent Countryside Partnership. The event sought to increase residents awareness of local biodiversity and provide engaging DIY activities for families to do at home.
- 9 Together with the North West Kent Countryside Partnership, we created five 'Wildlife at home' videos which were filmed in the Sevenoaks Environmental Park.
- 10 The videos showed families how to encourage wildlife in their gardens. This included bird and butterfly feeders, mini ponds, insect houses and much more. There was also a video about sustainability and reusing household materials in the garden.



- 11 Visit the [Sevenoaks District Council YouTube page](#) to watch all the videos.

 Sevenoaks District Council Official  
23 July · 🌍

Our #FREE wildlife eco-trails begin next week! There are five trails across the District and include fun quizzes along the way for all the family. Plus, there's an opportunity to win an Eco-hamper! Find out more [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/wildlife](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/wildlife)



👍 135

13 comments 42 shares

- 12 Between 26 July and 13 August, we set up and promoted eco-trails around the District. They took place at Bradbourne Lakes, Farningham Woods, Hollybush Recreation Ground, Oxenhill Shaw and Shoreham Woods and included fun facts and quizzes along the way. The trails were self-guided and encouraged families to enjoy local nature sites.



- 13 We also asked participants to take photographs and tag us in them on Facebook. Anyone who did this was entered into a prize draw to win one of five eco-hampers.
- 14 To promote the trails we had an article in In Shape and several social media posts, one of which was boosted and reached over 7,200 people.

**Zero Waste Week - September 2021**

- 15 Zero Waste Week took place between 6 and 10 September 2021, and to celebrate we created several social media posts to encourage residents to think about what they waste and what they can do to waste less.
- 16 This included a video of Cllr Fleming talking about what we are doing as a Council to achieve Net Zero 2030 and simple tips for residents.
- 17 In addition, we posted messages about reducing food waste, composting and cutting down on single-use plastics.



- 18 We also wanted to encourage Council staff to think about what they waste. Civil Enforcement Officer, Janine Otto, contacted the Net Zero team as she has created a website about becoming more sustainable.

- 19 She agreed to participate in a video from her allotment in Otford that we sent to all staff. In

the video, she talks about the steps she's taken to be less wasteful and more environmentally friendly.

- 20 We wanted to get staffs ideas about what we can do in the working environment to be less wasteful. To encourage staff, we created a competition where everyone who gave us an idea would be entered into a prize draw to win some eco-goodies.



### **Air Quality and Net Zero Carbon Emissions**

- 21 We have been working closely with Officers from Environmental Health on the development of the new Air Quality Action Plan. This strategic document will seek to improve air quality across the District and within our designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA), through the implementation of measures and actions which will reduce pollution or human exposure to pollution.
- 22 The recent Air Quality Technical Review identified vehicle emissions as a key contributor of poor air quality in the district. Transport remains the largest carbon emitting sector in the UK and accounts for 63% of total carbon emissions in Sevenoaks District. By reducing vehicle emissions, we will improve air quality and also reduce carbon emissions from transport.
- 23 As the two are closely aligned, we will continue to work collaboratively to identify and deliver measures to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality including:
  - encouraging sustainable and active travel such as cycling and walking
  - improving the electric vehicle charging network and encouraging the uptake of electric vehicles
  - promoting behavioural change to encourage more efficient travel
  - encouraging the use of public transport as an alternative to private vehicles.

### **Climate Change Network**

- 24 Officers from the council have joined the Kent Climate Change Network. This is a public sector, technical officer group that facilitates collaboration and networking across the county on Net Zero action plans, climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability. Members of the network are climate change and sustainability specialists from Kent County Council, Medway Council, District and Borough Councils, NHS, and blue light services.
- 25 Although the Network has been running since 2009, the recent focus on the urgency to reduce emissions, with many councils declaring a climate emergency and setting out a commitment to become Net Zero within a decade or more, has meant a renewed focus for the Network on how we can work together and share good practice, innovation and ideas.
- 26 The Network has also established sub groups looking at communications and procurement, this latter group looking at how emissions can be calculated and reduced when commissioning goods and services, and has co-ordinated a response to the Governments Environment Audit Committees consultation on the role of local government in reaching Net Zero. The response emphasised the significant influence local authorities have on an areas carbon emissions, their capacity to join activity up holistically and efficiently and called for clear direction or guidance from Government with regards to our role, with clear targets, a consistent methodology to calculate emissions, and a mandatory mechanism to report progress in a way that allows benchmarking

across England. Finally the response called for funding and resources in order to achieve this.

- 27 The Network meets regularly and promotes the exchange of good practice, co-ordination of activity, showcasing ideas and innovations, and providing mutual support.

### **Engaging with local communities and businesses**

- 28 Officers gave a presentation at the Town and Parish Forum in July 2021, setting out the council's ambitions and how communities can reduce their own emissions. A community carbon calculator tool for town and parish areas has been added to the net zero webpages, alongside a carbon footprint calculator for individuals. We encourage communities to use these tools to see how they are currently performing and to help identify areas where improvements can be made.
- 29 Officers were invited to give a presentation at the Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce Business Show in September 2021. This was an excellent opportunity to engage with local small and medium businesses, to set out what the council is doing and discuss ways that businesses can reduce carbon emissions.

### **Next Steps**

- 30 Officers will continue to make progress to achieve the Net Zero 2030 actions. We will also continue to identify new opportunities and projects to deliver the Net Zero 2030 commitment.
- 31 Regular update reports on the Net Zero 2030 work will be provided for members via the Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee.

## Agenda Item 7

### Other options Considered and/or rejected

Not Applicable

### Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

The Council have made a commitment to Net Zero 2030.

### Key Implications

#### Financial

Funding for the Net Zero 2030 commitment will be met from existing budgets.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

No legal implications have been identified.

#### 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.

### Conclusions

The Council have committed to Net Zero 2030 and have identified actions to help achieve this goal. We are currently making good progress to achieve the actions within the agreed timescales.

#### **Appendices**

Appendix A - Net Zero Actions 2021/22 Progress Update

#### **Background Papers**

None

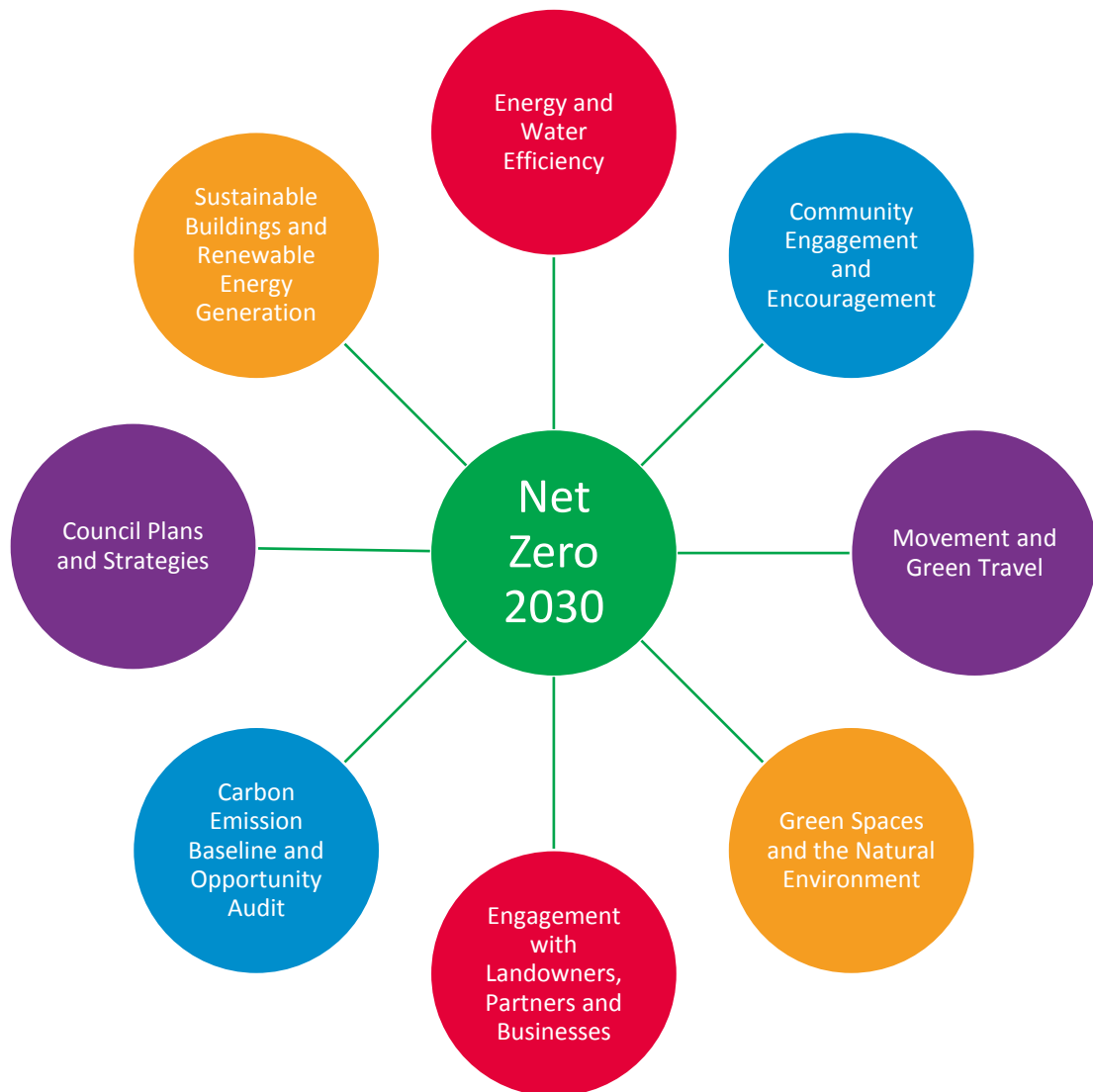
**Richard Morris**

**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services**

### Appendix A - Net Zero Actions 2021/22 Progress Update

In November 2019, the Council agreed a series of actions to begin the process of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. These actions have now been updated and revised to take account of new opportunities and innovations. Additional actions have also been added. The 2021/22 Actions were agreed by Cabinet in February 2021.

The actions are grouped into a series of work areas relevant to the Net Zero commitment.



**Energy and Water Efficiency**

We are committed to increase the energy and water efficiency in Council buildings. This will also reduce the associated carbon emissions. In addition, we will aim to source the remaining energy needs from renewable and low carbon sources.

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
ENG1	Increase energy efficiency in Council buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to ensure that the council can reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 we will commission a Carbon Reduction Plan to map out our path to net zero. The Carbon Reduction Plan will be focused on how the council can reduce the carbon emissions from its assets but will also consider the wider district emissions, opportunities for renewable energy generation and carbon offsetting.</li> <li>• Six of the 13 recommendations in the Energy Management Survey of Argyle Road offices have been fully or are partially completed.</li> <li>• An internal staff competition, held via Grapevine (internal newsletter) was held in September offering prizes for ideas to improve energy efficiency and to reduce waste in Council buildings. The ideas have been presented to management and then implemented as appropriate.</li> </ul>

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
ENG2	Explore Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for energy efficiency improvements in the Council Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A bid for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund was prepared and submitted; but later withdrawn following questions over long term future of Argyle Road building and match funding required.</li> </ul>
ENG3	Water efficiency measures in Council buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water efficiency measures have been implemented including toilet refurbishments to replace old cisterns and waterless urinals.</li> </ul>

**Community Engagement and Encouragement**

We will support businesses, residents and visitors to reduce carbon emissions across the District. We will do this through positive engagement, best practice and working with local communities.

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
COM1	Create a dedicated “Net Zero” and “Climate Change” webpage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A dedicated webpage has been set up and is regularly updated. <a href="http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/netzero">www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/netzero</a></li> <li>A Net Zero 2030 Communications has been developed and implemented. Net Zero 2030 regularly features on the Council’s social media posts and an InShape article has been published in July 2021.</li> </ul>
COM2	Promote national events to support wildlife awareness and opportunities to improve biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sevenoaks Wildlife Event took place in July/August 2021 in partnership with the North West Kent Countryside Partnership. This included releasing “making space for nature at home” videos and “Eco-trails” in SDC owned open space and woodland. The videos, released via social media and available on the Council’s YouTube channel, sought to increase resident’s awareness of local biodiversity and provide engaging DIY activities for families to do at home. The scavenger hunts included an eco-quiz and awarded prizes to five randomly selected residents who took part.</li> </ul>
COM3	Promote national events to support water saving initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Net Zero communications plan provides mechanisms for effectively sharing water saving initiatives with residents and businesses in line with future national events.</li> </ul>



Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
COM4	Support and promote initiatives and opportunities to reduce waste and improve levels of recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zero waste week was held at the beginning of September and provided guidance and advice to residents so they can take steps to reduce their waste. This included an informative video from the Leader of the Council.</li> </ul>
COM5	Help householders and businesses improve energy efficiency by providing free advice and support for energy improvements and energy saving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice to increase home energy efficiency is set out on our Website by Public Sector Housing team including guidance on subsidised heating and insulation. A thermal imaging camera is also offered on loan so that residents can discover where heat is escaping in their homes.</li> </ul>
COM5	Hold a Green Summit in bringing together groups, organisations, companies and experts to engage and inspire residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unfortunately, due to social distancing measures, it has been very difficult to plan an event such as a Green Summit. Therefore, hosting a Green Summit has been delayed beyond a short term action.</li> </ul>

**Movement and Green Travel**

Transport is the greatest carbon emitter for both the District and the Council. Although we are not the highways authority for the District, we will work with Kent County Council and communities to develop and encourage sustainable travel. We also commit to reducing the carbon emissions from our own fleet by efficiency measures and embracing new low emission technologies.

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
TRA1	Promote low carbon travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Movement Strategy is being produced to set out the council's priorities for sustainable travel and movement across the District. This will include low carbon travel opportunities.</li> <li>• The Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy sets out how SDC will support low emission and electric vehicles within the Council's fleet and across the District.</li> <li>• The Movement Strategy will include consideration of cycling and walking. SDC are looking into the possibility of developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.</li> </ul>
TRA2	Improve the electric vehicle charging network across the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy sets out how SDC will support low emission and electric vehicles within the Council's fleet and across the District. It was agreed by Cabinet in July 2021 and publish August 2021.</li> <li>• Working with KCC to deliver the ambitions in the Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy. This includes encouraging Town and Parish Councils to take part in the Rural charging scheme.</li> <li>• Working with KCC to deliver 2 charging points for Taxi Vehicles to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles.</li> </ul>

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
TRA3	Work with schools, local communities and groups to encourage community transport hubs for short journeys, minimising pollution, improving air quality and reducing congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with KCC and neighbouring authorities to consider the impact of the new national bus strategy and how Quality Bus Partnerships can help deliver the sustainable transport and support the Movement Strategy.</li> </ul>
TRA4	Promote the annual Car Free Day and similar initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of initiatives to reduce car travel have been included in the communications plan. Car Free day takes place on 22 September and will be shared to staff and residents. Similar events such as Cycle to Work Day and Bike Week have also been shared to raise awareness of active travel and promote alternatives to car use.</li> </ul>
TRA5	Continue our transition to a zero-carbon emissions vehicle fleet wherever practicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with potential providers to explore low emission and electric vehicles including hydrogen vehicles.</li> <li>Direct Services Waste Collection Review</li> </ul>

### Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

We commit to improving our natural environment for now and future generations, taking account of a changing climate. We will also support multi-benefit projects which conserve and enhance the natural environment whilst also increasing levels of carbon sequestration.

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
NAT1	Carbon emission offsetting through new planting including planting new trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical evidence and site selection underway. New planting will be included as part of the Queen's Jubilee Green Canopy initiative.</li> </ul>
NAT2	Improve areas for biodiversity and create new habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will be identifying land for biodiversity net gain offsetting to support the Environment Bill and the Local Plan.</li> <li>• We have developed a number of community based projects with the North West Kent Countryside Partnership including hedgehog highways and climate change community gardens.</li> </ul>
NAT3	Natural flood management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing work with North West Kent Countryside Partnership and KCC to identify suitable projects and funding opportunities.</li> </ul>

**Engagement with Landowners, Partners and Businesses**

Partnership working is key to the delivery of the Council’s Net Zero 2030 commitment. Many other organisations have also committed to a similar achievement and therefore there are many opportunities for partnership working and we all work towards the same goal.

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
PAR1	Require bidders for all tenders to include an environmental statement, including their plan for achieving Net Zero, a ‘Net Zero Commitment’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with the Procurement Assurance Group about the introduction of social value in the council’s procurement processes, and how this can be used to lever Net Zero outcomes for goods and services. Provide appropriate information and training for officers once this has been agreed.</li> </ul>
PAR2	Report and promote our actions towards Net Zero, and support our partners including landowners, residents, businesses and visitors to our District to play their part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Councils webpages are updated with Council targets and actions to reach Net Zero and also offer helpful advice to residents on topics such as energy efficiency, biodiversity and even how to calculate their own individual carbon footprint. In addition, an extensive communications plan aims at sharing advice and support through social media to a wider audience.</li> <li>• Net Zero presentation was given at the Town and Parish Forum in July 2021.</li> <li>• Net Zero features in each issue of In Shape. Weekly net zero social media posts (in accordance with our communications plan). Net zero agenda included in communications where appropriate.</li> </ul>

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
PAR3	Encourage the location of clean growth businesses in our District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Net Zero 2030 presentation to the Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce in September 2021. Looking for future opportunities to work with the business and commercial sector.</li> </ul>
PAR4	Work with the local government family within Kent to deliver Net Zero across all our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with KCC Officers from the Transport Innovations Team, Climate Change Network and Sustainable Business and Communities Team.</li> <li>• The Kent and Medway ELES has been endorsed by the Council. The Implementation Plan has also been agreed.</li> </ul>

**Carbon Emission Baseline and Opportunity Audit**

It is important to understand the baseline carbon emissions for the Council. This will be incorporated into the Carbon Reduction Plan and is currently calculated following the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy guidance and the Local Government Association Greenhouse Gas Reporting Tool.

We have also committed to looking ahead to 2030 by identifying potential opportunities for achieving Net Zero. This will also be incorporated into the Carbon Reduction Plan.

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
BASE1	Audit our current and levels of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2019/20 and 2020/21 emission reports are available on the net zero <a href="https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/850/carbon_emissions_reports">webpages</a>. <a href="https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/850/carbon_emissions_reports">https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/850/carbon_emissions_reports</a></li> </ul>
BASE2	Undertake an Opportunity Audit for ways to reduce carbon emissions in Council buildings and assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently drafting the consultant brief for a Carbon Reduction Plan to include: Council emissions including reduction solutions; District emissions; carbon offsetting. The Plan will be produced by a consultant following the results of the Council's Asset Review.</li> </ul>

**Council Plans and Strategies**

We are committed to ensure the Net Zero commitment is integrated into all aspects of the Councils plans, strategies and services to ensure all potential opportunities are utilised.

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
STR1	Deliver the carbon emission reducing aspects of the Air Quality Management Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Air Quality Action Plan being drafted. Actions will align with the net zero commitment.</li> </ul>
STR2	Deliver the environmental aspects of Sevenoaks District Councils Council and Development Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee report template to be revised to take account of carbon emissions implications for council decisions. A Net Zero carbon emissions assessment will be included in committee reports from the Autumn/Winter 2021.</li> </ul> <p>Guidance for officers on how to complete the template will be provided once the report template has been agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant National and Local Plan Policies are being applied in decisions including the installation of electric vehicle charging points and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.</li> </ul>
STR3	Explore opportunities to invest in clean growth such as a local Net Zero Bank to finance energy efficiency and carbon reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers are considering ways to support clean growth through SDC policies, government funding and partnership working.</li> </ul>



Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
STR4	Where everything possible has been done to achieve zero carbon but there is still a shortfall, take action through offsetting carbon dioxide emissions where necessary, and explore a Carbon Offset Fund to finance this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carbon Offsetting will be included as part of the Carbon Reduction Plan.</li> </ul>

**Sustainable Buildings and Renewable Energy Generation**

Buildings remain a significant emitter of carbon and therefore we commit to supporting low carbon buildings where suitable. This will also include exploring renewable energy technologies and opportunities both large and small scale.

Ref	Action 2021/2022	Progress (Spring/Summer 2021)
SUS1	Investigate ways to encourage sustainable building practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An Agents and Developers Forum is likely to take place in Autumn 2021 and will include the Net Zero 2030 agenda.</li> <li>Work is underway to update the local plan. It is envisaged that policies will promote and encourage sustainable building practices in line with the latest evidence.</li> </ul>
SUS2	In all new SDC and SDC owned company developments, set an ambitious stretch target for sustainable homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers are looking at a number of options with regards to how sustainability measures can be included into new development.</li> </ul>
SUS3	Investigate renewable energy generation possibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will be considered as part of the Carbon Reduction Plan.</li> </ul>

**SERVICE UPDATE: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH - AUTUMN 2021**

**Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 12 October 2021**

**Report of:** Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services

**Status:** For Consideration

**Also considered by:** N/A

**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Summary:** The District Council have recently brought the Environmental Health function back 'in house'. The Environmental Health team undertakes a variety of statutory functions across a wide range of disciplines, which have a significant influence on public health and community wellbeing. This report outlines some of the key areas of work within the team, the current challenges which may impact upon service delivery and the team priorities for the next 12 months.

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. McArthur

**Contact Officer:** Nick Chapman, Ext. 7167

**Recommendation to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee:**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**Reason for recommendation:** To update Members on the Environmental Health Service.

**Introduction and Background**

- 1 In April 2012, Sevenoaks District Council's Environmental Health Team began to deliver services in partnership with Dartford Borough Council. This arrangement enabled the District Council to make financial savings whilst at the same time maintaining traditionally high levels of customer service.
- 2 Whilst the EH Partnership achieved its aims; in September 2020, Sevenoaks District Council notified Dartford Borough Council and staff of its intention to bring the Environmental Health service 'back in house'. This decision was based on the desire to integrate the Environmental Health function more closely with other regulatory teams at SDC, align EH with 'customer redesign' principles and have greater control over the team's priorities and direction.
- 3 On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021, the Environmental Health Partnership officially disbanded and the Service returned to Sevenoaks.

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- 4 This report has come to the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee to provide councillors with an update on the work and functions undertaken by the Environmental Health Team and to provide an outline of the challenges likely to be faced over the next 18 months.

### **The work, role and function of the Environmental Health Team**

- 5 The Environmental Health Team discharge a number of statutory functions/ obligations which are imposed on a Local Authority including:
  - a. Food Hygiene- inspection /regulation of food businesses and investigation of complaints.
  - b. Investigation of Health & Safety complaints/ accidents.
  - c. Investigation of Infectious diseases (inc Covid-19).
  - d. Investigation of statutory nuisance complaints under s79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990
  - e. Investigation of drainage complaints under s59 of the Building Act 1984.
  - f. Risk assessment of Private Water Supplies
  - g. Issuing and regulation of Environmental Permits
  - h. Monitoring and the identification of measures to improve air quality
  - i. Regulation of licensed animal activities including zoos
  - j. Registration of skin piercers and tattooists under local bylaws
  - k. Stray dog collection and re-homing/ disposal
  - l. Licensing consultations
- 6 In addition, the team undertake a number of non-statutory duties. These activities either add significant value to other teams/ services within the Council or are considered to have a beneficial impact for the residents of Sevenoaks district:
  - a. Consultation on planning applications
  - b. Issuing and enforcement of Community Protection Warnings and Notices.
  - c. Investigation of animal welfare complaints
  - d. Dog on dog complaints/ anti-social dog owners
  - e. Provision of information and advice
  - f. Out of hours service
- 7 A number of activities undertaken by the Environmental Health Team are on behalf of other government agencies/ departments and we have a number of service level agreements that dictate our expected performance.

### Team Structure

- 8 At the time of writing, the structure of the service is being formalised. Officers will be able to provide an update to Members at the meeting.

### Food Hygiene

- 9 There are 1490 registered food premises and 10 approved premises within the district as of 01/09/2021. This is an increase of 550 since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

### Table of food businesses registered with the District Council

Food Registration Type	Number of Premises
New Uninspected	362
Catering	174
Distribution/Warehousing	6
Farm/ Smallholding	5
Food Broker	2
Hospital/Residential Home/School	119
Hotel/Pub/Guesthouse	99
Importer	9
Food Manufacturing/Processing	26
Market	15
Moveable Premises	54
Premises Used by a number of Businesses	6
Other	44
Packer	8
Private House used for a Food Business	218
Restaurant/Cafe/Snack Bar	160
Retailer	141
Staff Restaurant/Canteen/Kitchen	15
Takeaway	23
Wholesale/Cash and Carry	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1490</b>

**Table of Approved Premises**

Approval Type	Number
Meat Preparation/ Meat Products	2
Egg-packing and distribution	4
Milk pasteurisation	1
Kefir production	1
Cheese production	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>

10 Every food business is risk rated (A to E) with the higher risk rated premises subject to more frequent inspection (see table below).

Category	Inspection Rating	Minimum inspection frequency
A (High Risk)	92 or higher	at least every 6 months
B	72 to 91	At least every 12 months
C	52 to 71	At least every 18 months
D	31 to 51	At least every 2 years. An alternative enforcement strategy (AES) can be used when and where it is deemed appropriate for every alternate inspection.
E (Lowest Risk)	0 to 30	At least every 3 years. An AES can be used when and where it is deemed to be appropriate due to the low risk nature of the business. For business not considered as a food business by the public AES can be used for every scheduled inspection.

- 11 During 2020/2021, the Covid-19 pandemic a large number of food businesses were forced to temporarily close. At the same time, the Environmental Health team suspended inspections of food businesses in accordance with government and Food Standards Agency advice in order to focus on the enforcement of Covid-19 regulations. As a result, many businesses have missed their programmed inspection and the team are now working hard to rectify that.
- 12 In addition to the existing food businesses, the district council receives a significant number of new food business registrations each year (222 in 2020 and 150 so far in 2021).

Registering a food business is free of charge and many never start trading. Nevertheless, the District Council is required to assess each registration received and where appropriate inspect them to ensure that they have adopted safe food hygiene practices and comply with food safety legislation.

Traditionally the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has set a target of inspecting new food businesses within 28 days from receipt of the registration. However, during 2020/2021, restrictions imposed because of the pandemic have meant that this has not been possible and consequently we now have a significant number of newly registered businesses that need visiting (360). A similar situation has occurred nationally.

- 13 In recognition of this national issue with ‘missed inspections’, the FSA issued new guidance on its priorities to all Local Authorities in July 2021. As a result, and in accordance with the FSA priorities, the Environmental Health Team are currently focussed on ensuring that our highest risk premises and new food businesses are inspected as soon as possible as well as dealing with matters of public health significance.
- 14 All food hygiene officers are required to meet minimum competency standards (through qualification and experience) and must show evidence of continued learning each year. At an inspection, the officer will check the following three elements:
  - a. how hygienically the food is handled- how it is prepared, cooked, re-heated, cooled and stored.
  - b. the physical condition of the business -including cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation, pest control and other facilities.
  - c. how the business manages ways of keeping food safe, looking at processes, training and systems to ensure good hygiene is maintained. The officer can then assess the level of confidence in standards being maintained in the future
- 15 Officers will offer advice and information as appropriate regarding good practice during the inspection, take detailed notes and photographs and at the end issue a food hygiene rating (1 to 5 depending on compliance with legal standards) and a food hygiene report. Where a contravention of food hygiene law is found they can issue legal notices or in extreme circumstances close a food business.
- 16 We have a new legal duty to advise businesses about their responsibilities in respect of allergens. Depending on the nature of the food being produced, this can be extremely complex and time consuming.
- 17 A food premises inspection can take from as little as 2-3hrs for a simple low risk premises, up to a full day for a complex, high-risk food business.
- 18 We undertake a programme of scheduled and reactive food sampling in ‘Approved Premises’, of imported foods and in response to complaints and regional surveys initiated by Public Health England

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### Health and Safety

19 Local Authorities' are responsible for regulating the health and safety of around half of the GB workforce (HSE,2021) including those working in the following sectors:

- a. Offices (except government offices)
- b. Shops
- c. Hotels
- d. Restaurants
- e. Leisure premises
- f. Pubs and Clubs
- g. Privately owned museums
- h. Places of worship

Within Sevenoaks District, this includes the enforcement of health and safety at Brands Hatch Motor Racing Circuit.

20 Section 18(4) of the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974 places a duty on Local Authorities to make 'adequate arrangements for the enforcement' of health and safety. It is however, recognised that it is neither proportionate, nor effective to deliver a regulatory function based on arbitrary fixed inspection cycles of individual workplaces - particularly since many of those workplaces will already be managing their risks effectively (HSE, 2021).

21 The District Council adheres to the HSE's schedule of Local Authority priorities and targeted interventions. In accordance with this schedule, we have adopted a risk-based approach to investigations and interventions.

22 Typically, most health and safety interventions undertaken by Environmental Health are reactive in response to a specific incident or complaint. The extent and nature of our involvement will often be proportionate to the potential or actual impact of the alleged contravention (i.e. an incident resulting in a fatality or serious injury will potentially require significant time to investigate and enforce).

23 In addition, we undertake a number of proactive inspections, which are not triggered in response to a single specific incident or concern but result from a wider consideration of local intelligence, or national trends that identify poor performers. Currently the national priorities for health and safety enforcement are:

- a. Coronavirus
- b. Construction
  - i. Duty to manage asbestos
  - ii. Falls from height



- iii. Respirable silica dust
  - c. Animal Contact at visitor attractions (i.e. petting zoos etc)
  - d. Inflatable amusement devices
  - e. Failure of shop signage
  - f. Trampoline Parks
  - g. Gas safety at commercial premises
  - h. Pesticides
  - i. Spa Pools and hot tubs on display (legionella)
  - j. Welfare of delivery drivers
  - k. Prevention of injury to members of the public from accessing large commercial waste and recycling bins
  - l. Promoting worker involvement in safety management systems
- 24 In 2020 and 2021, we have understandably focused of initiatives to reduce the spread of coronavirus. This work has included; proactive and reactive inspection of businesses, assessment of covid risk assessments, and the provision of advice to businesses.

#### **Skin Piercing and Tattooing**

- 25 The council has adopted bylaws under the Local Government (miscellaneous provisions) Act 1982 requiring the following activities (and individuals undertaking the activities) to be registered:
- a. Tattooist (5 premises in SDC)
  - b. Semi-permanent make up (16 premises in SDC)
  - c. Acupuncture (20 premises in SDC)
  - d. Electrolysis (7 premises in SDC)
  - e. Cosmetic body piercing (11 premises in SDC)
- 26 Upon application (and payment of relevant fee) the premises and piercer is inspected to ensure they are complying with the bylaws and have adequate control of infection measures in place.
- 27 For many of these treatments there is no legally set standard so the standard of training and knowledge varies greatly. Officers are increasingly finding many examples of poor practice.
- 28 The number of skin piercing applications has steadily increased over the years, but in the last couple of months have received an unusually large number, which has affected the workload of the team.

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### 29 Number of 'skin piercing' enquiries each year

2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021 to date
23	37	36	33	17	47

### Notifiable Infectious Diseases

- 30 The Environmental Health Team are responsible for the investigation of diseases that have a significant public health significance including E.coli, salmonella, campylobacter, cryptosporidium, giardia, typhoid etc.
- 31 We are tasked by Public Health England to investigate the source of the infection, interview those infected and obtain samples as necessary.
- 32 In some circumstances, we may use legislation to take enforcement action to prevent the spread of infection or enforce against poor/ unsafe practices.
- 33 In 2020, our team was at the forefront of the Covid-19 Pandemic and was responsible for the enforcement of the 'Covid Regulations' which required businesses to implement certain safety practices.
- 34 We continue to implement the final stage of the national 'test and trace' scheme and door knock positive covid-19 cases that have failed to adequately engage with the national and county contact tracers. In 2020, Environmental Health door knocked 16 cases but following the relaxation of 'lockdown' rules and the return of schools after the summer holidays the number of these requests has continue to rise week by week. As a result, we have investigated 113 cases (up to end of September).

### Statutory Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour Complaints

- 35 Local Authorities have a statutory duty to investigate complaints of statutory nuisance (as defined by section 79/80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990). The Councils also have a number of duties conveyed by the Building Act 1984, Public Health Act 1936, and Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949.
- 36 Complaints are logged on Uniform as Service Requests and are then allocated to individual officers for investigation. The assigned officer will impartially investigate the complaint and determine if the matter falls within the statutory legislative framework.
- 37 Officers will also consider the use of discretionary powers to address reported issues where it is considered that there is a 'moral imperative' to do so or where there is considered to be a corporate or member priority

38 The majority of the complaints received by the Environmental Health Team are about noise (see table below). During the Covid-19 lockdowns, the Environmental Health Team saw significant increases in the number of neighbour noise complaints being received as residents forced to stay in their homes were impacted more than ever by general noise and anti-social behaviour from those they live near.

39 Sevenoaks District Council uses the NoiseApp. This is an application, which runs on a mobile device and allows a customer to create an electronic diary of the noise incidents they are experiencing. For each report, the customer is encouraged to upload a short recording (taken by their device) to demonstrate the complaint.

The NoiseApp has proven to be a useful tool to assist complaint investigations. During the lockdown periods it enabled our officers to continue monitoring and enforcement of complaints when visits could not be undertaken.

40 In addition to noise complaints, the EP team investigate complaints about accumulations of waste, rats, drainage, light nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Each of these complaints requires our officers to maintain specialist knowledge and have an understanding of the legal frameworks which exist.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Noise	566	584	561	473	620
Rats/Waste	197	172	212	156	275
Light	21	27	22	20	29
Drainage	39	29	43	30	29
Bonfires	139	146	160	114	315

### Private Water Supplies

41 Environmental Health regulate 9 Private Drinking Water Supplies, which serve approximately 280 properties within Sevenoaks district.

42 A private water supply is either one which directly abstracts or collects untreated water (for example from a borehole or spring), or one where water from a public supply is further distributed to other property owners via a private pipework network.

43 Each of these supplies has to be periodically risk assessed to ensure that they remain safe and free from contamination. We also undertake regular sampling to ensure that the water quality meets minimum standards.

44 Many of our private water supplies rely on old supply networks, which often traverse large areas of land (in multiple ownership). This can make it difficult for users and those in control of the supply to ensure it does not

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accidentally become damaged and makes routine maintenance of pipework difficult.

- 45 Depending on where water is collected/ abstracted, there can be a risk of pollution from nearby agriculture (chemicals and biological contamination), radon gas, sewage effluent and other natural and manmade substances.
- 46 Unfortunately there is often a reluctance amongst supply owners to treat private water with chemicals

### Environmental Permits

- 47 The Environmental Health Team are responsible for issuing and then regulating Environmental Permits for some types of polluting premises.
- 48 Within Sevenoaks are responsible for 30 businesses that operate under Environmental Permits including;
  - a. 13 petrol filling stations
  - b. 11 dry cleaners
  - c. 3 mobile crushers
  - d. 1 cement batcher
  - e. 1 Wood Processing Activity
  - f. 1 Mineral Drying Activity
- 49 These sites are inspected at a frequency determined by annual risk assessment. Depending on the nature of the activity and the associated pollution risk, this can be from every 6 months to once every 3 years.
- 50 At inspection, our officers inspect the technical equipment, which is in use at a premise and then audit records, technical information and management controls to ensure compliance with national regulations and guidance.
- 51 This is a highly specialised area of work. Our officers are required to have a working understanding of the emission points, chemicals in use and sector best practice for each type of premises.
- 52 Each premises, which has an Environmental Permit, is required to pay an annual subsistence fee to the District Council. This fee is set by DEFRA on an annual basis. Unfortunately, it is our experience that fees do not adequately cover the costs incurred by the District Council in undertaking this statutory duty.

### Stray dog service

- 53 Environmental Health operate the District Council's stray dog kennelling service. All Local Authorities are legally required to collect and then house stray dogs, which are found within their district for a period of 7 days. After this time, a stray dog becomes the responsibility of the Council.

- 54 The Environmental Health Team have a contract with a kennel in Dartford to provide our stray dog services and we are lucky to work with New Hope Animal Rescue who help us rehome uncollected strays.
- 55 The pandemic has significantly affected the number of stray dogs, which are found by the council, but the numbers remain high.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Found	184	124	130	72	45
Claimed	90	63	41	30	27

### Animal Licensing

- 56 Our Animal Welfare Officer is responsible for licensing and inspecting premises which undertake specified activities involving animals within the district. These include:
- a. 13 Kennels/ Catteries
  - b. 5 Dog Breeders
  - c. 12 Home boarders
  - d. 8 Pet Shops
  - e. 7 Riding Activities
  - f. 2 Performing Animals
  - g. 3 Dog Day Care
- 57 During an inspection, our officers assess the facilities, equipment, standards and management against national standards to ensure that animal welfare standards are acceptable. Each animal activity is then awarded a ‘star rating’ based upon its assessed risk.
- 58 We are also responsible for licensing two zoo’s within the district:
- a. Eagle Heights
  - b. Willows Bird of Prey Centre

### Animal Welfare

- 59 Our Animal Control Officer works with other teams and agencies including Planning Enforcement, Community Safety Unit, WKHA, RSPCA and Kent Police to deal with complex dog issues/ complaints, promote dog welfare and responsible dog ownership.
- 60 We investigate complaints where an owner of a dog has failed to control their animal, dog on dog incidents and persistent straying. Where

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appropriate we take legal action to prevent further incidents and or impose controls such as compulsory lead use/ muzzling.

### Air Quality

- 61 Environmental Health discharge the legal duty for the District Council to monitor and assess air quality within the district against National Objective Levels. Where it appears that the air quality objectives will not be met by the designated target dates, local authorities must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and develop action plans in pursuit of those objectives.
- 62 The Environmental Health Team operate 2 Air Quality Monitoring stations located at:

Reference	Location	Parameters monitored
CM1	Bat and Ball Junction, Sevenoaks	NO <sub>2</sub> , PM <sub>10</sub>
CM2	Greatness Park, Sevenoaks	NO <sub>2</sub> , PM <sub>10</sub> , Ozone

Each of the Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) analysers requires regular calibration (every fortnight). This process takes approximately 40 minutes. In addition an amount of routine maintenance (including the cleaning of sample inlet pipes, replacement of sampling tape within the PM<sub>10</sub> analysers) is required to keep the stations operational.

- 63 The Environmental Health Team maintain a network of 54 passive diffusion tubes. These are exposed on a monthly basis and measure levels of NO<sub>2</sub> at a designated location. Officers from within the Environmental Health Team change diffusion tubes on a monthly basis in accordance with a National Monitoring calendar.
- Data from these diffusion tubes is collated on an annual basis when it is bias adjusted against monitoring results from our Air Quality Monitoring Stations.
- 64 Air Quality Monitoring data is published annually on our website and in statutory reports provided to DEFRA.
- 65 Where exceedances of National Air Quality Objectives are identified, and an Air Quality Management Area is designated, a local authority is required to identify and implement measures to improve air quality or reduce exposure to pollution. These measures are reported within an Air Quality Action Plan (a statutory document). The Environmental Health Team are currently working to redevelop our existing plan.

### Planning Applications

- 66 The Environmental Protection Team operate as consultees for Sevenoaks District Council, on planning applications.

- 67 We provide specialist assessment and advice in respect of environmental issues including air quality, acoustics, odour control and contaminated land to our planning colleagues. This work often includes assessing submissions from specialist consultants on behalf of developers, liaison with consultants as to appropriate assessment standards, rebuttal of evidence and information and attendance at Planning Committees

2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
281	270	209	261	357

### Licensing Application Consultations

- 68 The Environmental Protection Team operate as statutory consultees on licencing applications (New and amended premises licences and Temporary Event Notices).

Officers assess applications and where they are determined to have a potential impact on ‘public nuisance’ or public safety’ can object to the licence and/ or request that conditions are added to a licence (premises licences only).

- 69 When an officer objects to a premises licence or a TEN, they are required to attend the relevant committee hearing and provide professional evidence to support their concerns and any suggested conditions.

	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Premises Licence	75	79	72	43	37
TEN	435	518	428	450	51

### Out of Hours Service

- 70 Sevenoaks District Council continue to operate an Out of Hours Service on Friday and Saturday evenings between (18:00 and 00:00). This is a discretionary service staffed by officers from Environmental Health and Private Sector Housing.
- 71 As of the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021, Sevenoaks are now the only authority in Kent that provide this service for our residents.

### Challenges

- 72 Whilst there are undoubtedly opportunities generated by the return of Environmental Health to Sevenoaks it has also created a number of challenges which need to be overcome.
- 73 The combined Environmental Health Partnership comprised 25 officers (21.8FTE). This enabled managers to ensure that specialist skills were

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shared throughout the team. The new Sevenoaks Environmental Health Team currently comprises 11 officers (9.2FTE) and a number of experienced officers have chosen to remain at Dartford. As a result we have lost established skills in specialist areas which we now need to replace. These include:

- a. Air Quality review, assessment and action planning
- b. Risk Assessment and Inspection of Private Water Supplies
- c. Experience of licensing Zoo's
- d. Contaminated Land experience
- e. Acoustic experience
- f. Environmental Permitting experience.
- g. Exportation of Food certificates
- h. Specialist cheese makers

- 74 It is currently extremely difficult to recruit officers with sufficient experience to immediately fill these skills gaps. Experienced Environmental Health Officers are currently in demand to fill positions at the new border facilities (EHOS are required for food importation checks and controls). In addition EHOs have been heavily involved in Covid-19 enforcement and the National Test and Trace scheme and many authorities have employed additional EHOs to provide these functions.
- 75 The team are ambitious and committed and will re-train any skills lost following the dissolution of the partnership.
- 76 There is also a strong desire to review and refresh customs and practices within the Environmental Health Team, many of which have remained unchallenged since the inception of the EH Partnership. The aim of this work will be to enhance the experience of our customers (internal and external), identify and pursue efficiencies (through the use of technology or processes changes), identify income streams and enhance the reputation of the team.

This work will take place in the coming months, however, once complete it is hope that we will be able to generate additional capacity, which will allow us to focus on our priorities.

### **Team Priorities Ambitions for the next year**

#### Food Inspections

- 77 As stated above, the pandemic has resulted in a significant fall in the number of Food Inspections that have been undertaken by the team. Whilst this was inevitable, it does mean that some food businesses have either never been inspected or are overdue inspection.
- 78 It is our experience that where a food business has not been visited regularly that standards can slip, increasing risks to public health. It is



therefore imperative, that the District Council carry out these inspections as soon as possible.

- 79 We are currently developing a project plan, which will set an ambitious target of completing all due inspections by the end of March 2022.

Maintain or improve our performance across our services

- 80 While the dissolution of the EH Partnership has caused some disruption we are committed to restoring and then enhancing upon previous performance as quickly as possible.
- 81 In order to achieve this we are reviewing systems, processes, and our use of technology to deliver operational efficiencies, which will allow us to achieve more with our comparatively smaller resources.

Ensure processes and practices are customer focussed and represent best value

- 82 The EH Partnership has always prided itself on the level of customer service we have provided. However, we now have the ability to shape and tailor our services to the needs of 'Sevenoaks residents' and remove any areas where it was necessary to compromise for the operation of the shared service.
- 83 As part of this work, we intend to review how we engage with our customers to ensure that the services we provide are accessible, effective and efficient and that they fully adhere to Sevenoaks corporate standards.

Re-establish reputation and value of the service within the Sevenoaks area and the wider community.

- 84 The work of the Environmental Health Team has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of the community. Unfortunately, over the past few years whilst in partnership the majority of this work has gone largely unnoticed.
- 85 We will ensure that our service engages proactively with residents, councillors and other teams so that they are aware of the work we are undertaking, the benefits this brings to our communities and how our work can assist or influence other internal or external initiatives.

Development of a New Enforcement Policy

- 86 Associated with the ambitions above, we are committed to developing a new enforcement policy for Environmental Health, which will reaffirm our commitment to fair and proportionate enforcement practices.

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### Conclusion

- 87 Following a period of disruption and uncertainty, the Environmental Health Team have now re-settled as an 'in house' service. We are working extremely hard to put in place new processes and procedures which will allow us to improve the services we deliver whilst at the same time maintaining existing standards and managing the health impact of the ongoing pandemic.

### Key Implications

#### Financial

None

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Not applicable

#### 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.

#### **Appendices**

None

#### **Background Papers**

None

**Richard Morris**

**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services**

**TREE STRATEGY 2021-2031**

**Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 12 October 2021**

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer, Finance & Trading

**Status:** For Decision

**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Summary:** This report sets a draft 10-year Tree Management Strategy for the Council.

**This report supports the Key Aim of:** Making Sevenoaks District to be a place where people can enjoy clean and high quality urban and rural environments.

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Cllr. Margot McArthur

**Contact Officer:** Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

Trevor Kennett, Ext. 7407

**Recommendation to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee:** That the draft 10-year Tree Strategy 2021-2031, be considered, and its views be submitted for consideration by Cabinet and be approved.

**Recommendation to Cabinet:** That the draft 10-year Tree Strategy 2021-2031 along with any proposals submitted by the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee be considered and approved.

**Reason for recommendation:** The Council currently does not have a comprehensive Tree Strategy.

**Introduction**

- 1 The aim of this tree strategy is to assist and inform residents, Council officers and Councillors of the council's responsibilities and strategy regarding its own tree stock.
- 2 This strategy links strongly to the Council's Plan, Net Zero 2030 commitment and the Council's Local Plan in promoting a cleaner, greener, eco-friendly environment.
- 3 The full draft strategy is in Appendix A.

**A 10-year Tree Strategy**

- 4 The value of trees cannot be overemphasised. They provide numerous environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits; however, strong consideration on these benefits before any tree works is undertaken.

## Agenda Item 9

- 5 These benefits include:
  - Environmental
  - Social
  - Cultural
  - Economic
- 6 The importance of providing open spaces and trees to help improve mental and physical health was highlighted in 2020 with the outbreak of Covid-19 and the introduction of national lockdowns. These sites become increasingly popular as residents explored their local woods and parks.

### Trees in Sevenoaks

- 7 There is a strong cultural and historic link to trees within the district; the Council's own logo is of the seven Oak trees, and linked with the town's name, it is believed.
- 8 There is over 7,000 hectares (ha) of woodland that cover across Sevenoaks District. This equates to over 19% of the district being covered by woodland (11% ancient woodland), which is considerably higher than the overall English average.
- 9 Sevenoaks District Council has responsibility for 487ha of woodland. Approximately 287ha is common land, and 200ha is Council owned, designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodland, Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife sites.
- 10 In an average mature woodland, you could find between 200-400+ trees per ha. This means that within woodlands that Sevenoaks District Council has responsibility for; there could be in excess of 100,000 trees.
- 11 The council also maintain the responsibility of approximately 30ha of residential housing estate grounds, 20ha of open spaces, closed churchyards, parks, and 10 ha of car parks across the district.

### Key Implications

#### Financial

In 2020/2021 the budget and spend for trees was approximately £40,000, this included maintenance, planting and removal of trees across the district.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984, as amended, the Council has a duty of care to ensure it acts as a reasonable and prudent landowner. This requires the Council to ensure they avoid acts or omissions that could cause foreseeable risk or harm to persons or property.

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.

**Conclusions**

It is important that the Council have a published and adopted strategy for tree management as a large and responsible landowner.

**Appendices - Appendix A - Tree Strategy 2021-2031**

**Background Papers - None**

**Adrian Rowbotham**

**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading**

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# Tree Strategy

2021-2031

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## *TREE STRATEGY 2021 – 2031*

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## Scope of the Strategy

The aim of this tree strategy is to assist and inform residents, Council officers and Councilors of the council’s responsibilities and strategy regarding its own tree stock. This strategy is strongly linked to the **Council’s Plan, Net Zero 2030 commitment** and the **Council’s Local Plan** in promoting a *cleaner, greener, eco-friendly environment*.

## Benefits of having a Tree Strategy

The value of trees cannot be overemphasised. They provide numerous environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits, which need to be strongly considered before any tree works are arranged. These benefits include:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Environmental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces the urban heat island effect</li> <li>• Improves carbon sequestration</li> <li>• Trapping dust and particulate matter producing clearer air</li> <li>• Produces oxygen</li> <li>• Alleviates flooding</li> <li>• Provides vital habitat for huge range of biodiversity</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves the aesthetics</li> <li>• Acts as landmarks</li> <li>• Screens unsightly views</li> <li>• Provides shade, reducing temperatures and improving comfort levels</li> <li>• Reduces stress and illnesses by providing psychological relief</li> <li>• Encourages physical recreation</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cultural</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides historical continuity</li> <li>• Contributes to the local character of an area</li> <li>• Ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats</li> <li>• Contributes to the landscape character of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can improve property values</li> <li>• Enhance spaces, which provide attractive environments for investments</li> <li>• Reduces costs for heating and cooling systems in buildings</li> <li>• Provides business and employment opportunities in the arboriculture and wood fuel industry</li> </ul>

The importance of providing open spaces and trees to help improve mental and physical health was highlighted in 2020 with the outbreak of Covid-19 and the introduction of national lockdowns. These sites become increasingly popular as residents explored their local woods and parks. Forestry England, the country’s largest land manager, recorded an increase in 77million (or 35%) visits in 2020 compared to the previous year.

### [Queen's Green Canopy](#)

Sevenoaks District Council is calling on everyone in the district, from residents to businesses, town and parish councils, landowners, schools, voluntary and community groups to help support the Queen's Green Canopy unique tree planting initiative to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. This is a great opportunity not only to grow trees, but also to come together as a community and contribute to reduce our impact on climate change and protect the environment in our district for generations to come.

Sevenoaks District Council has developed an action plan, which details the projects we will undertake as a Council and how we can encourage partners and communities to be involved too. At present, the Council has identified and confirmed two Council-owned sites in Sevenoaks and Swanley for tree planting. However, we will be working with partner organisations to ensure from October 2021, they 'pin' their jubilee tree on the interactive map provided at the official website; <https://queensgreencanopy.org/map-education-hub/>

### [Trees in Sevenoaks](#)

There is a strong cultural and historic link to trees within the district; the council's own logo is of the seven Oak trees, linked with the towns name.

There are over 7,000 hectares (ha) of woodland across Sevenoaks District. This equates to over 19% of the district being covered by woodland (11% ancient woodland), which is considerably higher than the overall English average. Of this Sevenoaks District Council has responsibility for 487ha of woodland.

Approximately 287ha is common land, and 200ha is council owned, designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodland, Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife sites. In an average mature woodland, you could find between 200-400+ trees per ha. This means that within woodlands that Sevenoaks District Council has responsibility for, there could be in excess of **98,000 trees**.

The council also maintain the responsibility of approximately 30ha of residential housing estate grounds, 20ha of open spaces, closed churchyards and parks and 10 ha of car parks across the district.

Our tree management work is important because under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984, the Council has a Duty of Care to ensure it acts as a reasonable and prudent landowner. This requires the Council to ensure they avoid acts or omissions that could cause foreseeable risk or harm to persons or property.

This is reinforced by Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Section 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which state that employers are responsible for making suitable and sufficient assessment of risks posed to their employees and persons not in their employment.

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### Council Managed sites in Sevenoaks

Site	Size	Designations	Type	Description
Farningham Woods, Farningham	78ha	SSSI, LWS, LNR, AW	Countryside Site	Part owned by Farningham Parish Council, but managed in it's entirety by the District Council's Countryside team in accordance with an approved Forestry Commission Woodland Management Plan. Predominately consists of Sweet Chestnut coppice woodland, but with areas of grassland meadow, heathland and a pond.
Shoreham Woods, Shoreham	99ha	LWS, PAWs	Countryside Site	A complex of 5 separate high canopy woodlands. Managed in accordance with an approved Forestry Commission Woodland Management Plan with the primary aim to provide opportunity for visitors to enjoy and benefit from nature, whilst at the same time maintaining, restoring and enhancing the ancient woodland for biodiversity and so the woods are sustainable and resilient for the future.
Oxenhill Woods, Kemsing	24ha	LWS	Countryside Site	Former Agricultural land that is now a mix of early successional woodland and scrub with important grassland habitats. Managed in accordance with a Woodland Management Plan. The large population of Ash ( <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ) trees are being managed due to Ash Dieback.
Riverside/Town Fields, Edenbridge	4ha	LWS	Countryside Site	A flood meadow along the River Eden. The meadow is allowed to grow for biodiversity with a network of footpaths mown throughout. Annual hay cut conducted at the end of the year.
Hollybush Recreation, Sevenoaks	7.4ha		Park/Recreation	Situated near Sevenoaks Town. Consists of 3 main fields used for amenity, a playground, café, tennis courts, all weather hockey pitch and indoor and outdoor bowls. A small woodland and a good population of trees throughout.
Bradbourne Lakes, Sevenoaks	3ha	Locally Listed Asset: Public Garden	Park	Located in North Sevenoaks. Historic gardens with 5 ornamental lakes and waterfalls. A large tree population with notable veteran specimens
Bartholomew Park, Swanley	0.5ha		Park	A small site in the heart of Swanley. A short footpath around an amenity area surrounded by mature trees and shrubs.

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Site	Size	Designations	Type	Description
Mill Pond, Sevenoaks	0.1ha	Locally Listed Asset.	Pond	Small pond in the north of Sevenoaks, designated a main river with a small number of individual trees.
Hosey Common, Westerham	61.61ha	Registered Common Land, part SSSI and LWS	Common Land	Owned by the Squerryes Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consist primarily of semi-natural mixed broadleaf woodland with roads dissecting the site into 5 separate woodlands.
Crockhamhill Common, Westerham	85ha	Registered Common Land and LWS	Common Land	Owned by the Squerryes Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mosaic of semi natural woodland habitats dissected in two by the B2026.
Farley Common, Westerham	5ha	Registered Common Land and part LWS	Common Land	Owned by the Squerryes Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a semi natural woodland and area of acidic grassland. Bisected by the Farley Lane.
Seal Chart Common, Seal (Including St Lawrence Sand Pit)	71ha	Registered Common Land and part SSSI and AW	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mixed semi-natural broadleaf woodland, with areas of acidic grassland and heathland. Seal Chart is bisected by the A25 Maidstone Road.
Bitchet Common, Seal	20.53ha	Registered Common Land and SSSI	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mixed semi-natural woodland, with areas of heathland. It is bisected by a unnamed road.
Fawke Common, Seal	25ha	Registered Common Land and SSSI	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mixed semi-natural woodland. It is split into 4 woods by a number of roads.
Godden Green Common, Seal	2.5ha	Registered Common Land	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mixed semi-natural woodland and grassland surrounded by road and residential property.
Sevenoaks Weald Common, Weald	5.24ha	Registered Common Land	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. The village green of the Common

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Site	Size	Designations	Type	Description
				is managed by Sevenoaks Weald Parish Council. The remaining common consists of a mixed semi-natural woodland surrounded by rural roads and residential property.
St John's Dunton Green	0.4ha		Closed Churchyard	Churchyards that have been closed by Order in Council and maintenance responsibilities have been passed on to the District Council through section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. Church building has been converted into a vets.
St Mary's Riverhead	0.6ha		Closed Churchyard	Churchyards that have been closed by Order in Council and maintenance responsibilities have been passed on to the District Council through section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. Surrounded by residential properties and the A25.
St Mary's Woodlands	0.1ha		Closed Churchyard	Churchyards that have been closed by Order in Council and maintenance responsibilities have been passed on to the District Council through section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. Situated in a small village between Kemsing and West Kingsdown.
<p>Playground</p> <p>The District Council own and manages 9 playgrounds across the district, which vary in size and character. All bar one has trees located close to or in the playground. Informal visual checks on the trees are part of the operational playground inspection. List of locations</p> <p>Cherry Avenue playground - Cherry Avenue, Swanley  Hilda May playground - Hilda May Avenue, Swanley  Russett Way Slide - Russett Way, Swanley  Oliver Crescent playground - Oliver Crescent, Farningham  Hollybush playground - Hollybush Recreation ground, Sevenoaks  Lower Watercress Drive playground - Watercress, Drive, Sevenoaks  Upper Watercress Drive kick wall - Watercress Drive, Sevenoaks  Park Avenue playground, Park Avenue, Edenbridge  The Pen MUGA - Field Drive, Edenbridge</p>				

\* Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Wildlife Site (LWS), Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Ancient Woodland (AW), Re-Planted Ancient Woodland (PAWs)

### Objectives

To provide the Council with a management tool that clearly sets out agreed priorities for the long-term management of the Council's tree stock.

### Aims

- Provide a basis to perpetuate the character of towns and other areas and provide for a continuity of the local tree-scape by establishing a tree population with a balanced age structure and diverse species mix.
- Allow the identification, quantification and evaluation of the Council's tree resource.
- Enable the preparation and execution of maintenance regimes and the prioritising and programming of a periodic maintenance or conservation works appropriate to the nature of each site. The Council's legal obligations would also be met more effectively as would resistance to claims for damage or negligence.
- Improve the service to the general public. By increasing proactive maintenance and prudent replacement, trees would cause less danger, damage and nuisance thus reducing complaints, claims for damage and emergency situations.
- Enable the true cost of maintaining the Council's tree stock in a responsible manner to be established and allow realistic annual estimates to be compiled. Initial costs could increase significantly, but in the longer term as the health and condition of the tree stock improves, subsequent maintenance costs should reduce.
- Make the general public aware of the strategy by appropriate publicity thereby projecting the Council as an environmentally responsible body. Generally encourage and educate people not only to appreciate trees but also understand the reasons and need for tree renewal.
- Establish a more positive form of tree management which would allow both Council Members and its officers to deal with representations from the public, in a firm, fair and more orderly manner.

### Review

This strategy will be monitored to gauge its success upon implementation and reviewed every 5 years to ensure it is up to date with current best practice, legislation and still in line with Council objectives.

### Tree Description

The surveying of all trees under the Council's control is being currently undertaken across the district. This is a time consuming exercise as, with the exception of woods and other semi-natural sites, each tree has to be inspected and its details recorded. Woods and semi-natural sites are recorded as an area. Information on these sites relates to trees only and do not consider grass, low scrub or water courses.

### Strategy

It is intended that this strategy will provide information and guidance, which will help the Council and its Officers to base future decisions on agreed standards and procedures. The strategy is divided into three groups. These are General, Site Specific and Tree Specific.

### General

#### Tree Contractors

The Council will employ specialist, qualified arboricultural contractors to undertake tree works. These contractors will operate within the conditions and specifications contained in the Council's Contract Standing Orders. All tree works will be completed under the general direction and supervision of a suitably positioned Council Officer and be in line with current arboriculture best practice (BS3998:2010).

#### Prioritising Tree Works

The need and reasons for tree works are many and varied. Therefore, with limited resources in finance, staff and time, together with the constraints of weather and seasonable considerations, it is necessary to prioritise tree works. The following system of prioritising works shall be used:

- **EMERGENCY AND URGENT WORKS** - these works are where there is an immediate or imminent risk of danger or damage (emergency works) or where a situation requires action within a few days to avoid more serious danger or damage occurring (urgent works).
- **PRIORITY ONE WORKS** - this priority will normally be applied to dead, dying or hazardous trees where there is a significant risk of potential danger or damage.
- **PRIORITY TWO WORKS** - this priority will be given to essential or important maintenance.
- **PRIORITY THREE WORKS** - this priority will embrace general maintenance operations.
- **PRIORITY FOUR WORKS** - these will normally be low priority and non-essential works.

#### Trees and the Law

Statutory laws dictate how the Council must manage trees that are within areas of its responsibility. These laws can be summarised as follows:

- **Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984** place a Duty of Care onto all tree owners to ensure that they act as a reasonable and prudent landowner. This requires the Council to ensure they avoid acts or omissions that could cause foreseeable risk or harm to persons or property.
- **Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1974 and Section 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**, which state that employers are responsible for ensuring risk assessments are undertaken of its tree stock.
- **The Town and Country Planning Act 1990** places a duty upon the council to assess the impact of tree loss within the district and where tree removal



is likely to have a significant impact upon local and wider landscapes trees are to be protected through Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

- **The Highway Act 1980** empowers the Council under its Agency Agreement with the County Council to require landowners to deal with dangerous trees threatening the safety of users of the public highway.
- **The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976** gives powers to the Council to require landowners to render safe dangerous trees threatening persons or property on adjacent land.
- **High Hedges (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Part 8)** empowers the Council to require landowners to cut and maintain high, evergreen hedges where valid complaints from neighbouring residents are received.
- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)** dictates how trees should be managed to protect wildlife and habitat species.

The Council will continue to delegate its powers to the appropriate officers where implementation of the above powers is required.

#### [Information and Consultation to Residents](#)

It will not always be possible to inform residents generally in advance of smaller scale tree maintenance works or indeed emergency and urgent tree work situations. The Council will, however, endeavour to inform local residents of proposed or imminent tree works where such works are likely to cause concern, disruption or inconvenience. The information will normally be disseminated by letter but additional or alternative means may be used where appropriate, e.g. by house or telephone calling or press release.

Localised community consultation will generally be undertaken where a genuine choice exists between differing non-essential proposals which will affect the local treescape. Views and preferences will be sought from residents and other interested parties consulted or informed as necessary. The results of consultation will be considered along with other factors affecting the proposed works in order to achieve, as far as practicable, the most satisfactory solution or course of action.

#### [Allegations of tree related damage or injury](#)

Where it is alleged that a Council tree is implicated in damage to property, with or without an accompanying claim for compensation, the Council will investigate the allegation and, if necessary, ask the property owner or their insurer for evidence in support of their claim. Subject to the circumstances and strength of evidence, the Council/its insurers may employ its own/external expertise to assess the extent and cause of the damage and collect evidence.

The Council may decide at this point to take non-prejudicial action to reduce the risk of further damage and/or invite the property owner to substantiate any losses for consideration by the Council/ its insurers. The Council/it's insurers will refute any claim if the evidence produced fails to substantiate the allegation.

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The Council will not pay for any preliminary survey or excavation costs incurred by a potential claimant but these may be included in any final settlement if the claim is successful. Claims will be passed to the Council's insurer for assessment and settlement but subject to the deduction of any policy excess which is paid by the Council.

Claims for alleged personal injury caused by trees owned or managed by the Council are relatively uncommon. Where such claims are made, the Council will follow a similar procedure to claims for damage. Where a serious injury has occurred, the Council will act with appropriate urgency to minimise any contriving risk of danger to people.

### Limited or seasonal nuisance

The presence of trees near dwellings, especially in urban areas, can cause a limited or seasonal nuisance leading to complaints from residents. Examples include the shedding of leaves, seeds, fruit, petals and other debris, honeydew secreted by aphids, bird droppings, squirrel activity, shading of sun or daylight, obstruction of views, minor rubbing of telephone lines, interference with television and satellite entertainment and also solar panels.

The Council does not consider these nuisances to be sufficiently serious and will only prioritise these in special circumstances. Where special circumstances have been found, work to the tree will be kept to a minimum so to preserve the trees aesthetics and its associated benefits to the surrounding community.

### Privately owned trees

The Council will not generally supply detailed advice or guidance on the maintenance or management of private trees. Officers may give some general verbal guidance or supply written guidance through the planning system where trees are protected or of some public value. The Council will not undertake works to privately owned trees. In exceptional circumstances, e.g. where there is an immediate or obvious risk of danger and the tree's owner cannot be traced or is not in a position to organise tree works, the Council may use its tree contractor to rectify the situation and recover any costs from the tree owner subsequently. Alternatively, contact Kent County Council to progress should the situation involve issues to the public highway.

### Sponsored tree works

Third parties will be allowed to sponsor the costs of tree works in appropriate circumstances. Offers of sponsorship usually relate to tree planting. In relation to sponsoring a tree to be planted, the provision of plaques etc. will only be permitted at the Councils discretion on certain sites.

The Council will not normally allow third parties to organise or carry out tree works on its land. Where an exception is made, the Council will require the sponsor to employ one of the Council's own tree contractors to execute the works in accordance with the Council's contract conditions.

### Closed circuit television (CCTV)

The increased use of CCTV for surveillance purposes has led to annual requests for pruning where tree foliage obstructs the view of cameras. It is hoped that those responsible for siting such cameras will take account of the presence of trees and their effect on camera vision to minimise problems. However, some conflict is inevitable. The Council will carry out the pruning of trees to maintain and improve the vision of CCTV cameras in liaison with the CCTV operatives. This pruning will generally aim to maintain the aesthetic appearance of the trees. Excessive pruning or tree removal shall only be considered where serious circumstances justify such action.

### Criminal damage

Acts of criminal damage includes unauthorised attempts by third parties to fell or destroy mature trees and acts of vandalism which can result in the loss semi-mature or young trees.

Where trees are damaged or lost as a result of criminal acts, the Council's Enforcement Officers will initially investigate the situation and involve the police if necessary. Where sufficient evidence can be obtained to identify the offenders, the Council may consider civil proceedings or support any action the police deem appropriate. In deciding the costs of criminal damage, the Council will include:

- The cost of all corrective, repair and reinstatement works.
- The cost of any replacement planting.
- The estimated loss of any amenity value.

### Fly-posting

The Council will not allow posters of any kind to be fixed to its trees. Any illegal fly posters will be removed or defaced and reported to the Council's Enforcement teams for action if required.

### Age class and monocultures

Tree populations need to contain a range of age groups to provide a continuity of trees and perpetuate particular features or character of an area. There also needs to be a mixture of different species of trees to reduce the effect of pests and diseases. This is especially important where particular tree species or families are susceptible to serious problems in this respect.

The council will manage its trees to ensure that there is an uneven age structure, i.e. A mixture of young, semi-mature, mature and over-mature trees relevant to the nature of the site and safety considerations. Similarly, a range of tree species shall be present in any given area and monocultures avoided. This strategy above must not conflict with features such as tree avenues where uniform rows of trees of a similar age and the same species are needed for the desired effect. Different

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avenues can, however, be at different ages and species to provide the required diversity.

### Wildlife

All proposed arboricultural works will take account of their effect on the local flora and fauna. Wildlife and their habitats are protected statutorily by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000. This means that many tree work operations, especially where the works are undertaken at semi-natural sites and to hedgerows, would need to be undertaken during the appropriate season. There are exemptions, however, where for instance the works have health and safety implications.

All Council appointed contractors are aware of their legal responsibilities when it comes to protecting wildlife and ensure all precautions are taken to avoid harm. This is particularly important for ensuring no active bird nests are disturbed and all potential bat habitats are inspected before work commences.

The nature and extent of the works may also affect the value and quality of the habitat for wildlife. All such works shall aim at conserving and improving the habitat for wildlife wherever practicable.

### Tree pests and Diseases including Ash Dieback

Over the last few decades the UK has experienced increasing threats to tree health as increased global trade acts as a pathway for the arrival of new organisms, with impacts potentially exacerbated by climate change. This has been highlighted by the increasing number of tree disease and pathogen outbreaks, most notably Ash Die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), Horse Chestnut bacterial canker (*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *aesculi*), Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*), with its associated threat to human health; and Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp (*Dryocosmus kuriphilus*), which impacts the growth and health of Sweet Chestnut trees and was first recorded at Farningham Woods. The cumulative impact of climate-induced stress and of any associated changes in the impact of pests on the trees is uncertain in the medium-long-term, but new pests, diseases and pathogens are appearing. It is therefore vital that the Council remains abreast of developments and is able to adapt strategically to new challenges.

Ash Die-back poses one of the biggest threats to one of our commonest trees and poses a health and safety risk when heavily infected close to human occupation. The Council will follow advice and work in partnership with the Forestry Commission and Forest Research to take the following actions:

Continuing to monitor the condition of its Ash stock in both woodlands and on housing estate lands.

Due to how the disease affects the structural integrity of the wood, action to make areas safe are accelerated and trees which might look healthy will be removed due to the underlying weakened wood.

Where Ash trees are situated away from property and human occupation, these will be left to allow for natural genetic resistance to establish and for habitat value.

Trees in woodlands - These trees are more likely to become infected as there is a higher concentration of fungal spores. Mature trees next to paths, roads and property will be prioritised for surveys and remedial action.

Parks and Open Spaces - Leaves from parks and open spaces that are collected are composted at a facility in Kent. This reduces the amount of spores available to infect the tree and can help its survival against the disease. We will inspect any trees that are suspected of being infected and review this arrangement depending on the situation on a case by case basis.

### Common Ivy

Common Ivy is an indigenous evergreen climbing plant which, in its natural environment, uses trees as a means of support to gain increased exposure to light and air. Ivy provides cover and food for wildlife and often contributes to the character of woodlands and similar habitats. It is not a parasite and healthy trees will usually tolerate and control its spread. It is generally only when an ageing tree starts to decline, i.e. its vigour decreases and its canopy thins, that Ivy may take advantage of the situation by growing into its crown and in some circumstances, engulf the whole tree and hasten its demise. This is a natural process but it is often perceived that the Ivy is responsible for strangling and killing healthy trees. General observations over the past few years support the perception of some that the presence and growth of Ivy is on the increase but as far as is known, no scientific research has been carried out to support this perception. The control of Ivy in woodlands and commons by cutting and killing would prove an expensive and probably ill-founded conservation exercise.

The Council's general policy on Ivy shall be that measures to kill or control its growth will normally only be taken where it threatens important trees, may be obscuring defects, impairing inspections, or for other reasons of safety or nuisance. Ivy will not normally be controlled at semi-natural sites.

### Trees and Development

This strategy addresses only those tree related issues which may have a bearing on the future maintenance responsibilities of the Council. These general principles are:

- All trees identified for retention on development sites shall be properly surveyed and protected in accordance with British Standard BS5837:2012:
  - Building in Relation to Construction - Recommendations.
- The Council, through its Planning Services, shall seek agreement with the developers under Section 106 Agreements to secure, where appropriate, provision for new tree planting or works to maintain or conserve important trees and other arboricultural features.

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- Where there is no alternative but to remove trees on land managed by the Council, the developer will be required to replace two trees for each one lost.
- This strategy encourages all developers to plant the right type of trees, in the right location to ensure trees have the best opportunity to thrive and survive in that habitat.

Trees are legally protected in three ways:

- Through part 8 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended in the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012 by making Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). These TPO's are administered by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and prohibit tree owners from felling, topping, lopping, uprooting, willful damage, willful destruction without written consent from the LPA. Enquiries about existing TPOs or if you wish to submit a request for a new TPO, please contact [trees@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:trees@sevenoaks.gov.uk)
- Where a tree is situated within a designated Conservation Area. Under section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 any tree works within a Conservation Area require 6 weeks' written notice to be given to the LPA. If you need to enquire about trees within a Conservation Area please contact [trees@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:trees@sevenoaks.gov.uk)
- Through a Forestry Felling Licence. Under the Forestry Act 1967 any felling of living trees will require a Felling Licence, unless an exemption applies. These licences are administered and enforced by the Forestry Commission. For a full list of exemptions and for help understanding about felling licences, please visit the Forestry Commission website.

### [Site Specific](#)

The Council is responsible for a range of sites each with its particular nature or character. These sites may be owned by the Council, managed under an agency agreement or after adoption or by agreement with the site owner. The following general principles will be applied to the various categories of sites where trees are present.

#### [Recreation Grounds](#)

The management of trees in parks and playing fields must take account of the character and usage of the site. While trees often make a valuable contribution to such sites, they must be in balance with other features and facilities such as flower beds, shrub borders, open grass, sports and play areas, and buildings. Over-planting with trees will be avoided.

Where space permits, trees will generally be allowed to grow naturally with minimum maintenance but some features will require periodic maintenance. Additional inspections and maintenance will be needed for trees near play areas. Provision will be made for the gradual replacement of older trees to ensure the presence of mature trees in the future.

### Housing Estates

Most trees in modern housing estates are planted informally on grass amenity areas. Older estates may have both large and small trees on highway verges with only a few trees on amenity land. The trees will generally be managed as for trees in parks including additional maintenance where they are near buildings or play areas.

### Highway Trees

The management of highway trees is the responsibility of Kent County Council. We believe that these should be maintained on safety and the provision of amenity grounds. Trees may also perform other secondary functions of varying importance including the reduction of noise and air pollution, traffic calming, physical barriers, screening, shade and shelter.

The need for highway trees to be maintained in a safe condition is very important.

### Semi-Natural Sites

The trees at semi-natural sites may range from dense woodland through more sparsely treed areas with groups or single specimen trees to open common with a few scrubby or hedgerow trees. The trees and other woody vegetation at these sites shall be managed to conserve and enhance the value of the site which can include amenity, wildlife habitat and the management of public access. Where an agreed management plan exists, maintenance works should comply with or compliment the plan's aims.

### Miscellaneous Sites

These include trees in car parks, around public buildings and at allotment sites. Trees in car parks and around public buildings need to be in a safe and healthy condition and maintained similarly to trees alongside highways or near play areas.

## Tree Specific

### Tree Inspections

The Council will undertake periodic inspections of all trees and woodlands under its control. These inspections shall be carried out between one and five year intervals subject to available resources, location, age and condition of the trees but may be shorter or longer in some circumstances. Inspection intervals will, however, inevitably depend on available resources. A record of each inspection will be kept on the Council's GIS system and Action Manager (TAM) management database including details of any action required and its works priority rating. (Also see Tree Site Zoning)

Tree inspections will consist of 3 levels:

- Level 1 - an informal, visual, walk-over survey. This is to be carried out by a member of staff or contractor with a basic understanding of trees. Due to their site knowledge and experience they will be able to notice common



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defects and abnormal growth in trees and will report their concerns to more experienced personnel.

- Level 2 - Formal inspections. A competent officer or contractor for the sole purpose of performing an inspection. These inspections will be recorded and be aided by the use of probes, nylon-faced mallet and binoculars. Resulting recommendations may include the use of a Detailed Inspection to assess the extent of decay.
- Level 3 - Detailed Inspection. Required to provide assessment of decay or tree stability by using specialised equipment e.g. Resistograph or PiCUS. This level of inspection will be reserved for high value trees within high risk areas. Due to the financial costs of instructing qualified contractors to undertake these detailed inspections, it would be disproportionate to apply these inspections to all trees due the lack of benefit in overall risk reduction.

Qualifications and training of the surveyors for the different levels are:

- Level 1 - Informal Inspections: LANTRA Basic Tree Inspection certificate.
- Level 2 - Formal Inspections: Minimum of a Level 3 in Arboriculture qualification and/or a LANTRA Basic Tree Inspection certificate.
- Level 3 - Detailed Inspection: Minimum of a Level 6/BSc/Professional Diploma in Arboriculture and a LANTRA Professional Tree Inspection (PTI) certificate. Any external contractor or consultant that makes recommendations must hold a valid Professional Indemnity Insurance

It is important that appropriately qualified individuals undertake these inspections so to reduce the risk of misidentifying a potential hazard and compromising Health and Safety and also unnecessarily condemning a tree.

### Tree Felling & Removal

Trees will only be felled where a qualified arborist has concluded one or more of the following circumstances:

- The tree is dead, dying, damaged, diseased or dangerous, and its removal is the safest or the most prudent course of action.
- The tree is causing, or there is a significant risk of it causing, unacceptable damage to the surrounding area or an adjacent structure. Substantial evidence should be supplied to support any proposed removal.
- In some circumstances trees may be felled in conjunction with a tree replacement scheme.
- As part of good woodland management, for example of a thinning exercise to improve the growth of other adjacent trees or coppicing.
- Where the tree occupies the space required for an approved structure or construction and there is no satisfactory alternative to felling.
- There may occasionally be special or exceptional circumstances that warrant the removal of a tree.



Tree stumps will normally be removed wherever practicable for safety reasons and also to control disease, prevent unwanted regrowth and to allow proper reinstatement and replanting if required. Stumps may be left in situ especially at semi-natural site where regrowth is encouraged or wood is left to decay and provide a wild life habitat.

### Tree Pruning

Trees will normally be pruned for one or more of the following reasons:

- Where part of tree is dead, dying, damaged, diseased or dangerous to rectify the defect and maintain safety.
- To remove or alleviate an unreasonable source of nuisance or potential damage to people or property.
- To remove obstructing branches or foliage for safety reasons, clear over-ground services or improve the vision of CCTV cameras.
- To encourage the formation of a safe and balanced tree.
- To prune or sever roots to remove or reduce the risk of existing or future damage. This may include entering private land, with the owner's consent, to deal with roots originating from a Council maintained tree.

### Tree Replacement – Plant 2 tree for every one removed

The two main modes of tree replacement undertaken by the Council are tree planting and natural regeneration.

Tree planting will be the prime form of replacing trees in both formal and informal tree-scapes including parks and playing fields, highway verges, churchyards, and housing estates. New tree planting may be necessary on sites which are being improved, developed or adopted by the Council. Where tree planting is being considered, factors such as the aims and purpose of the planting, timescale and scope, tree species, size and siting, and need for protection, aftercare and long-term maintenance implications must all be considered. To maintain a healthy, resilient tree stock, Sevenoaks District Council will aspire to plant 2 trees for every tree removed.

Where the nature of the planting site allows, indigenous plant species and their varieties will generally take preference over exotic species. Great Britain does, however, have a rich and diverse population of exotic species and these will often prove more suitable for specific sites especially where size, habitat and ornamental value are prime considerations.

All tree planting will conform to BS8545:2014 and be in line with 'The Right Tree for the Right Place'.

Sites where natural regeneration is deemed appropriate, such as Council owned woodland sites, will be managed to encourage such regeneration by selective felling, thinning and protection as required.

All opportunities to plant the Right Tree for the Right Location will be taken to help the Council reach its Carbon Net Zero goal of 2030 in line the Council's

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‘Making the Best Use of Green Space’ objective. Preserving the Council’s trees and planting where appropriate make an important contribution in absorbing Carbon, providing cleaner air to our residents, essential habitats for wildlife and reducing the risk of flooding.

### Risk Management

#### Tree Risk

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has described the general level of risk as “broadly acceptable” within the Tolerability of Risk Framework. Risks falling in this region are generally regarded as insignificant and adequately controlled. The HSE would not usually require further action to reduce risks unless reasonably practicable measures are available. The levels of risk characterising this region are comparable to those that people regard as insignificant or trivial in their daily lives.

The risk of death caused by a falling tree or part of the tree is 1 in 10million per annum and the average number of Accidents and Emergency admissions per year due to tree related incidents is 55<sup>1</sup>. To put this into contexts, there are 2.9million leisure related A&E cases per year; even wheelie bins are reported to cause more admissions (2200) to A&E.

Despite the low levels of risk, tree failures resulting in death or serious injury often make headline news. As such the public perception of risk from trees is high. The cost of defending against claims can be high and there are pressures to carry out unnecessary tree work. It is important to ensure that work is not unnecessarily undertaken which will reduce the tree related benefits and put pressure on the council’s limited budgets.

Sevenoaks District Council recognise that the risk from falling trees is low, however as a large public landowner, it has a legal and moral responsibility to visitors, residents and the general public in general to ensure that risks are ‘as low as reasonably practicable’.

#### Risk Management – Scope and Objectives

This strategy covers the management of the risk from trees only on land owned by, or under the responsibility of Sevenoaks District Council. It does not provide guidance on the management of private trees or trees under responsibility of another authority.

The objectives of a tree risk strategy must strike a balance between the level of risk, the benefits and the resources available. This tree risk strategy has the following objectives:

- To identify and control risks
- To comply with relevant legal and regulatory requirements

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<sup>1</sup> National Tree Safety Group (2011) Common Sense Risk Management for trees

- To assure the public that the trees on public land are appropriately managed

In order to ensure objectives are being met, the risk strategy should be reviewed annually. Any weaknesses should be highlighted to inform where additional resources are necessary.

Tree Site Zoning

Due to the very large tree population (circa 100,000) under the council’s responsibility and the resources available, it is unrealistic to inspect all trees on an annual basis. Therefore, Sevenoaks District Council will prioritise its resources to trees located in high risk areas.

In order to establish which trees are to be prioritised, Sevenoaks District Council landholdings will be divided into three risk zones, which reflects how the area is used and how frequently it is occupied.

The frequency of inspections is shown in the summary below. The ideal situation would be to inspect the trees with leaves on and then the leaves off in alternate surveys. This would enable the inspector to note physiological issues with the tree e.g. chlorosis or die back in the summer while allow a clear view of the structural branches and fungal fruiting bodies in the autumn/winter. Undertaking inspections every 18 months or 30 months would enable this strategy. Special attention will be paid to mature/over mature trees as these present a larger risk than younger trees. Young trees will still be looked at for opportunities to undertake formative pruning, which will the tree to grow with less potential issues.

Risk Zone	Site Characteristics	Frequency of Inspections	Level of Inspections
<b>High</b>	Frequently occupied. Within falling distance of buildings, major roads, railways, playgrounds, and car parks.	Every 18months and reactively after extreme weather events (F9 or above)	Routine Level 2 inspection.
<b>Medium</b>	Adjacent to footpaths in parks, cemeteries and woodlands. Where trees are in falling distance of gardens. Where occupation is influenced by weather (amenity open spaces away from footpaths).	Every 30 months (2.5years)	Level 1 – Informal inspection.  Level 2 – Formal inspection once every 5 years.

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Risk Zone	Site Characteristics	Frequency of Inspections	Level of Inspections
Low	Areas with restricted public access and no property of value.	Every 5 years	Level 1 – Informal inspections

These inspections will need to be recorded and retained as evidence as it is the tree owner's responsibility to provide proof should an incident accident occur. Records will be digitalised and mapped.

It is not practical to undertake a full report on all trees within a level 1 & 2 inspection. Only when there are significant defects will a full report be conducted. Groups of trees that do not have any significant defects can be grouped together with general characteristics and labelled 'G'(1).

Where remedial work is recommended, this will be recorded and given a priority setting, stating time scales to undertake the work.

### Remedial Work

Trees that have been identified with significant defects and the level of risk is not 'As Low As Reasonably Practical', it will be necessary to undertake remedial work to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level. These works will be prioritised by the level of risk; higher risk trees (storm damaged tree overhanging a playground) will be prioritised over lower risk trees (small deadwood over a garden shed).

Remedial works can include:

- Tree surgery (dead-wooding, felling, crown reductions etc.),
- Soil improvements (mulching, aeration) or by
- Restricting and moving public features away from the risk (exclusion zones, re-routing footpaths and benches etc.)

### Enquiries & Timescales

Sevenoaks District Council has finite resources for managing its trees and the legal and moral responsibility to reduce risk. It is therefore accepted that this should be the focus of budgets and officer time. In order to advise what work will be carried out and when and Traffic Light system is proposed:

Traffic Light Colour	Priority	Timescale Targets	Type of work likely to fall within this category
Red	EMERGENCY AND URGENT WORKS &	Within 24hrs – 2 week	Immediate safety concerns, e.g. windblown/storm damaged trees by a target in a high or medium risk zone. Or dying/ hazardous trees where there is a

Traffic Light Colour	Priority	Timescale Targets	Type of work likely to fall within this category
	PRIORITY ONE WORKS		<b>significant risk of danger to person or property. Major obstructions to highways.</b>
Amber	PRIORITY TWO WORKS & PRIORITY THREE WORKS	3 - 6 Months	Essential safety works such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing standing dead trees from public areas.</li> <li>• Removing fallen trees where they present a slight obstruction.</li> <li>• Removing significant deadwood overhanging a high usage area.</li> <li>• Remedial action to mitigate fungal decay.</li> <li>• Cutting back trees/branches that are physically touching buildings, but are not a significant risk of causing damage.</li> </ul>
Green	PRIORITY FOUR WORKS	6 -12 Months (where budget allows)	Where resources allow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing less significant deadwood.</li> <li>• Cutting back branches which are slightly touching buildings but not causing damage.</li> <li>• Formative pruning</li> </ul>
Black		N/A	Unless there are special circumstances, the Council <b>will not</b> fell or prune trees solely for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branches are overhanging a boundary property</li> <li>• Blocking of Light</li> <li>• Interference with television/satellite signals</li> <li>• Blocking a view</li> <li>• To alleviate problems caused by seasonal/natural phenomena (Leaves, seeds, nuts falling/pollen levels/attracting wildlife)</li> <li>• It's too big</li> </ul>

All relevant tree enquires and action taken will be recorded on The Action Manager (TAM). This will conform to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

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The council uses external contractors who have their own workload and priorities to schedule. It is the aim to complete the priorities within the parameters set but a degree of flexibility is required.

### [Failure Log](#)

A record will be kept of all tree failures, regardless of whether it resulted in damage or harm. This will help inform officers of patterns or areas that require increased expenditure/resources. It will also help establish the real risk posed by trees.

### [Emergencies and out of hours' incidents](#)

Should an emergency occur out of hours/over the weekend, please call the Council on 01732 227000 where our 'out of hours' team will log the report.

An on-call member of staff from Direct Services will be called to assess the situation and fence/tape off the immediate area to warn the public of the danger. A relevant officer will then attend site on the next working day to arrange any works.

In the very rare event that the emergency requires urgent action to avoid immediate damage to private property or threat to public safety, the Senior Countryside Ranger or Clean and Green Team Manager will be contacted to try and arrange emergency contractors to undertake any required works to remove the risk or make as safe as possible until further works can be arranged on the next working day.

**Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee Work Plan 2021/22 (as at 30/09/21)**

**12 October 2021**

- Net Zero 2030 Update
- Service Update: Environmental Health
- Tree Policy
- Budget 22/23: Review of Service Dashboard and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)

**18 January 2022**

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**15 March 2022**

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**Summer 2022**

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