

# inshape

Issue 70 Spring 2008

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## Food for thought with new 'Scores on the Doors' scheme

**Diners from across the District can now find out more about what is going on behind the kitchen door of their favourite restaurant thanks to a pioneering new food hygiene scheme.**

As part of the new 'Scores on the Doors' initiative, food businesses inspected by the Council's Environmental Health Team are given a star rating based on the assessment of their food hygiene standards. The top score of five stars is given to those businesses with excellent standards of food hygiene through to zero stars to those with unacceptable standards.

These results can be viewed by any resident or visitor to the District by going to the Council website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/scoresonthedoors](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/scoresonthedoors).

The scoring system is based on the Food Standards Agency's statutory risk rating system:

- The food hygiene practices and procedures in place (including prevention of cross contamination, chilling, cooking and temperature control)
- The structure and overall cleanliness of the premises
- Confidence in management of food safety controls (implementation and documentation of an effective food safety management system)

Currently not all premises have a rating, however scores are added as and when premises are inspected.

As part of the new initiative, once premises have been assessed, they are sent a certificate with the relevant number of stars and are requested to put it on public display.

A small number of food businesses, such as sole traders working from private addresses and meat cutting

plants and slaughterhouses are not included in the initiative.

Cllr Keith Loney, Sevenoaks District Council Cabinet member with responsibility for food hygiene, says: "The aim of the 'Scores on the Doors' scheme is twofold. One, to encourage businesses to maintain high levels of food hygiene thus achieving high ratings, and two, to give members of the public confidence that what is going on behind the kitchen door is of a high standard.

It is a scheme which will benefit everyone."

'Scores on the Doors' is a national public information service where you can find the official local authority hygiene ratings for food businesses across the country.

Nearly 100 local authorities have joined the scheme or will be joining soon. The national 'Scores on the Doors' website [www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk](http://www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk) contains information about the scheme across the whole of the country.



Cllr Keith Loney with representatives from some of the District's five star food businesses

# Easter and May bank holiday refuse collection times

Following the Easter and May Bank holidays, there will be some changes to your black and clear sack refuse collection and your garden waste collection times throughout Sevenoaks District.

The revised collection times are:

- Good Friday, 21 March – collected the next day Saturday 22 March
- Easter Monday, 24 March – all collections this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 29 March
- Bank Holiday, 5 May – collections during this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 10 May

- Bank Holiday, 26 May – collections during this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 31 May.

Please ensure that your black and clear sacks and garden waste are put out by 7am on your rescheduled day of collection.

Refuse put out after the crew has been through your road will not be collected and must be taken back in until the next collection.

For further information, call the Council on **01732 227000** or visit the refuse pages on the Council's website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/refuse](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/refuse)



## Top marks for efficiency

**For the second year running, Sevenoaks District Council has achieved top marks for efficiency and value for money according to the independent government body the Audit Commission.**

As part of the annual 'Use of Resources' review, the Council's finances were put under the microscope last autumn.

The review was judged against five key themes covering all aspects of the Council's financial dealings.

The review covered financial management, financial standing, internal control, value for money and financial reporting and each category was worth four points. Out of a possible 20 points, Sevenoaks District Council scored 19, the highest of any district council nationally.

Compared with last year, when the Council achieved the joint highest score for Value for Money in England, Sevenoaks improved in terms of internal control. Crucially, Sevenoaks was one of only seven district councils nationally to get the highest possible score for value for money.

Taken overall, the Council scored four out of four which is classed as 'performing strongly'.

The Audit Commission's report stated that the Council has taken a determined approach to improving efficiency and value for money.

It went on to say that the Council has robust arrangements in place for promoting accountability, a strong foundation for strategic financial planning, which includes setting and meeting challenging budgets. The Council performed best for value for money and the auditor said that a value for money culture was embedded within the whole organisation.

Cllr Brian Ramsay, the Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for finance, says: "The Council's focus is very much on delivering first class local services and offering the best possible value for money for our local residents. We are delighted to achieve good results two years in a row. However, our residents can rest assured that we will continue to look at more effective, efficient and often innovative ways of delivering our services in future."

## Are you entitled to help with your Council Tax?

Across Kent it is estimated that £3 million in Council Tax Benefit goes unclaimed every year.

Sevenoaks District Council is keen that anyone who is entitled to this benefit claim their fair share.

Council Tax Benefit is administered locally by Sevenoaks District Council on behalf of the Government to help meet the cost of Council Tax.

It is paid to people who are liable for Council Tax who have a low income, regardless of whether they are in full or part-time work, retired or unemployed. Those who receive Pension Credit and

certain other benefits may also be eligible.

Residents with over £16,000 savings will not be entitled to any help, unless they receive the guarantee element of Pension Credit.

The Council can do a calculation over the phone, so please have details of your income, capital, rent and Council Tax available when you call.

Contact us as soon as possible – if you don't, you might lose out on some money!

For more information call the Council on **01732 227000**.

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# Budgeting for the future

## Sevenoaks District Council has set its share of the Council Tax for the average household at £168.39 a year, an increase of £8.01.

From April 2008 for the next year, the Council is proposing to spend £17.1 million on local services, an increase of more than £273,000 on the current year. Despite investing more in services, the Council must make even greater savings across the organisation to balance its books.

The Council faces increased costs combined with reduced income from Government and is having to

re-prioritise some of its spending to meet new requirements.

In February, Sevenoaks District Council set its annual budget including a proposed package of efficiencies, savings and income generating measures totalling £2 million over the next four years.

Pressures facing the Council include a below inflation revenue support grant

from the Government as well as some important areas of funding, such as the annual planning delivery grant being cut altogether. It also faces additional costs totalling £1.5 million for the next year alone.

In setting the budget the Council has focused resources wherever possible on local residents' priorities following widespread public consultation in the autumn. It is also increasing its income,

for example by reviewing parking and planning charges, and finding more efficient ways of working.

However the Council is making savings on all its services across the board, which will result in some frontline services being reduced or stopped.

Despite these financial pressures, the Council has ensured that its Council Tax increase has been kept to 4.99%.

### Finance facts

The cost to the average Council Tax payer (at band D) for Sevenoaks District Council's services from April is £168.39 a year or 46p a day.

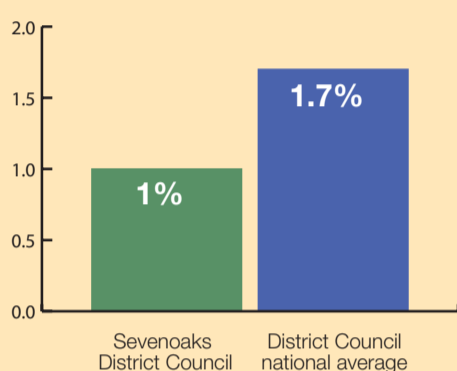


Sevenoaks District Council's average Council Tax annual increase is £8.01 or 2p a day.



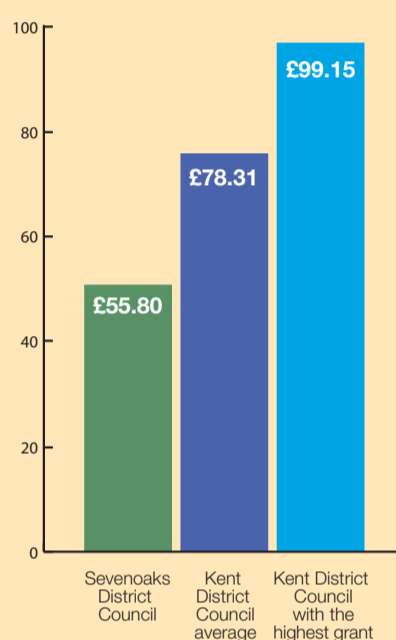
Sevenoaks District Council's annual support grant increase from Government is well below the District Council national average. From next April, Sevenoaks District Council will receive £6.29 million from Central Government towards the cost of providing local services, an increase of 1%, which is below inflation and in effect a reduction in support.

### Increase in government grant 2008/9



Sevenoaks District Council's annual support grant works out as £55.80 per head of population, the lowest in Kent. The Kent average is £78.31 and the Kent district council with the biggest grant will receive £99.15 per head of population, £43.35 more than Sevenoaks District Council's allocation.

### Government grant per head of population for Kent's District Councils



### How Sevenoaks District Council is funded

The Council is funded by a combination of grant from Government, Council Tax from local residents and money and interest taken from Council reserves.

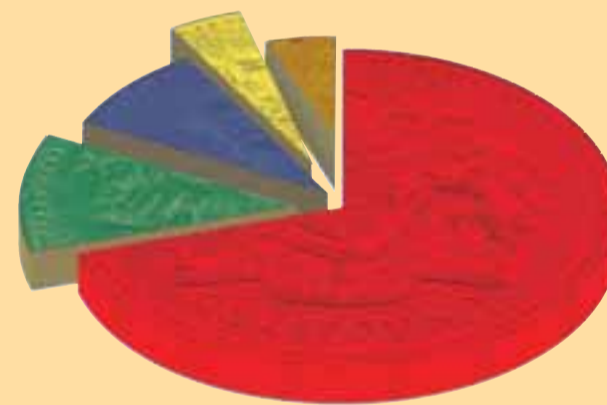
#### Sources of Council funding 2008/9

|                                        |              |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|
| Council Tax                            | <b>£8.4m</b> |
| Government grant                       | <b>£6.3m</b> |
| Interest from Council savings          | <b>£1.1m</b> |
| Money taken from the Council's savings | <b>£1.3m</b> |

### Your Council Tax bill

Your Council Tax bill is made up of five components and each authority sets its own charge. Sevenoaks District Council collects its share of the Council Tax and the other authorities' charge on their behalf. The chart on the right illustrates how much the five local authorities will receive for every £1 collected in 2008/9.

- Kent County Council – 70p
- Sevenoaks District Council – 12p
- Kent Police – 9p
- Kent Fire & Rescue Service – 5p
- Average town or parish council – 4p



### Which authorities provide local services?

| Kent County Council                             | Sevenoaks District Council                  | Kent Police Authority                | Kent Fire & Rescue Service                                      | Local town or parish council                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Children, families and education                | Community and housing                       | Crime detection                      | Saving lives and reducing risk from fires and other emergencies | Maintaining local assets including allotments, common lands, burial grounds, play areas, tennis courts, car parks, village halls, litter bins, seats and ponds. |
| Adult social services                           | Refuse collection and recycling             | Crime reduction                      |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Highways                                        | Environmental services and licensing        | Attending road traffic incidents     | Providing education on fire prevention                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Public transport                                | Council Tax collection and Housing Benefits | Responding to emergencies            | Providing free home fire safety checks                          |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Libraries                                       | Leisure services                            | Firearms licensing                   | Promoting road safety                                           | Town and parish councils are consulted on all planning applications affecting their areas.                                                                      |
| Waste disposal                                  | Street cleaning and parking                 | Neighbourhood policing teams         | Promoting domestic sprinklers and smoke alarms                  |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Trading standards                               | Planning services                           | Tackling serious and organised crime |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Average charge per household (at band D)</b> |                                             |                                      |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>£1,001.79</b>                                | <b>£168.39</b>                              | <b>£128.25</b>                       | <b>£63.81</b>                                                   | <b>£60.46</b>                                                                                                                                                   |

## Online access for Council Tax and Business Rates accounts

**For the first time residents and businesses can now view their Council Tax or Business Rates accounts online.**

The service is accessible by simply logging on to [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/accountaccess](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/accountaccess).

Once you have registered you will be able to view details of how your bill has been calculated, any payments you have made, any balances outstanding, your current instalments due and copies of bills sent to you.

To register for online access and obtain a Personal Identification Number (PIN) you can e-mail your request to [revenues.selfservice@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:revenues.selfservice@sevenoaks.gov.uk) giving details of your name, property address and Council Tax or Business Rates



account reference number, which is printed on your bill.

Alternatively you can telephone the Local Tax section on **01732 227000**.

# Parking charge shake up

**Major changes to the way Sevenoaks District Council enforces parking will take effect from 31 March.**

In the most radical shake up of national on street and off street parking enforcement for many years, councils from across Kent will take a standardised approach with a new penalty charge tariff that better reflects the severity of parking contraventions.

Under new regulations, which form part of the Traffic Management Act 2004, there will be two levels of penalty charges with a higher tariff for serious contraventions, such as parking on double yellow lines, and a lower tariff for less serious contraventions, including expired parking tickets.

In certain circumstances there will no longer be a need for a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) to be placed on a vehicle, or handed to a driver in order for it to be properly served as the new rules allow the PCN to be posted to the registered keeper of the vehicle.

The new regulations require improved training for employees involved in parking enforcement. Councils will also need to be more open and transparent about parking policies, carry out regular reviews of those policies in consultation with stakeholders and to communicate these policies effectively.

Independent adjudicators will have increased powers to refer appeal

cases about PCNs back to the Council when they consider that the Council should have used its discretion to cancel the penalty charge earlier.

Councils from across Kent have adopted the same penalty charges together with consistent policies on enforcements and cancellation of notices.

Cllr Gary Williamson, the Council's Portfolio Holder for the Built Environment says: "We welcome the new regulations which will help standardise and improve the service people receive from parking enforcement. This supports the work we undertake with other Kent councils to provide a fair and consistent parking service across Kent".

| Higher tariff for more serious contraventions | Lower tariff for less serious contraventions |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| £70                                           | £50                                          |

Both tariffs will be discounted by 50% if paid within 14 days as is the case presently.

For more information visit the Council's website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/parking](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/parking) or call **01732 227000**.

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## All change for bus passes

From 1 April, the free concessionary bus pass will allow national travel between 9.30am and 11pm for the over 60s and those with certain disabilities.

Current pass holders should receive their new passes by 21 March 2008. Pass holders who have not received their new pass by this date should call the Council on **01732 227000**.

The turnaround for new applications is 10 working days from receipt of the

forms to issuing the pass.

Sevenoaks District Council is legally obliged to provide the new scheme, which has different hours to the current local scheme. The information issued with the pass explains when it can be used.

The new scheme is significantly more expensive than the current Kent-wide scheme and regrettably the Council has had to withdraw its discretionary £10 rail warrant vouchers to help pay for the national bus pass scheme.



## Wildlife workshop springs into action

Residents are being offered the opportunity to get first-hand practical advice on how to attract and protect wildlife in their gardens with a free 'Spring Wildlife Workshop'.

The workshop will be held on Thursday 24 April from 7pm to 9pm in Sevenoaks Community Centre, Cramptons Road, Sevenoaks.

The event has been organised by Sevenoaks District Council as the first in a series of workshops designed to assist local wildlife.

The purpose of the workshop is to give hints and tips on how to attract and protect wildlife when you are gardening. The workshop will include guest speakers who will be on hand to answer any questions

people have, from where to start to how to improve your garden, so that you and wildlife can benefit.

Places on the workshop are limited and need to be booked early to avoid disappointment. To reserve a place on the free workshop call the Council on **01732 227000** or e-mail **sus.dev@sevenoaks.gov.uk**



## New parish council for Hextable

In just a matter of weeks residents of Hextable will have their own parish council.

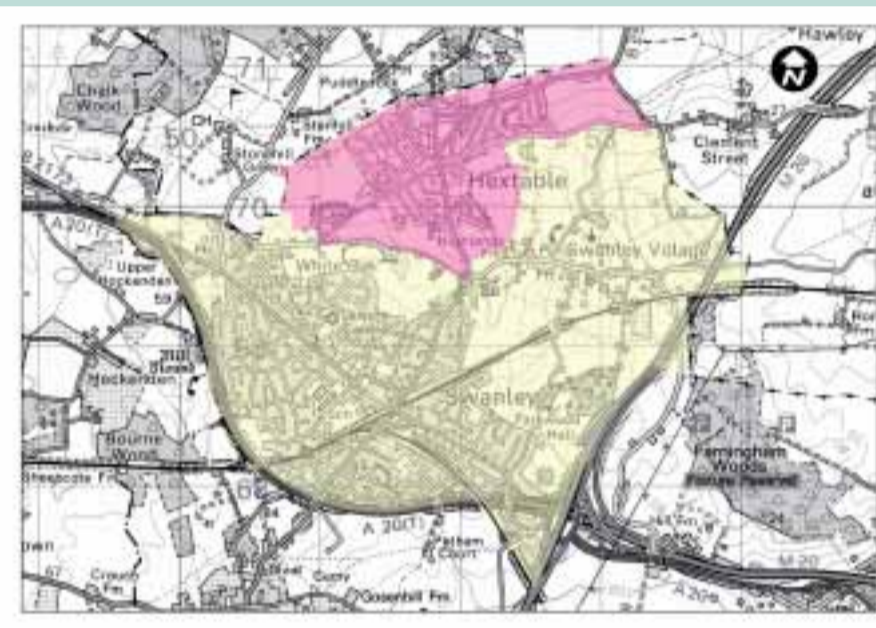
Hextable Parish Council will come into effect on 1 April following the decision, back in December, by the Minister for Communities and Local Government to approve the Council's recommendation for a separate parish.

For the first month the new parish council will be run by the four existing Hextable ward members of Swanley Town Council.

A month later, on 1 May 2008,

elections for the newly formed council and the revised Swanley Town Council will take place.

Residents of Hextable and Swanley who are not currently registered to vote have until 5pm on 16 April to submit an application from. Existing electors who wish to vote by post (who currently do not do so) also have until 5pm on 16 April to submit the appropriate form. All forms are available by calling **01732 227188** or **01732 227243** or by e-mailing **elreg@sevenoaks.gov.uk**. The deadline to appoint a proxy is 5pm on 23 April.



The Swanley Town Council area is shaded in yellow and the new parish for Hextable is hatched out in red

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## Planning advice review

As part of an overall review of planning services, the Council will introduce charging for some types of pre-application planning advice from April.

When developers or applicants wish to have a meeting with the Council's planning officers or receive advice on a major proposal there will be a charge of £250 plus VAT. If they wish to receive written advice on minor applications or small matters there will be charges of £100 plus VAT or £50 plus VAT depending on the scale of the proposal.

However, there will be no charge for householders seeking views on the acceptability of a house extension.

The Planning Reception at the Council's Sevenoaks Offices will remain available for members of the public to view planning applications and for general enquiries.

In addition, advice on planning matters is available via the Council's website **www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/planning**

## A new era at the Stag

The new year ushers in a new programme for Kino at The Stag Sevenoaks that's now in full swing.

With two fully digital cinema screens offering high quality sound and vision, not only you can watch the latest blockbuster or art-house movies, you can even make and show a film of your own!

For anyone with a keen interest in the arts, the Kino Education and Community programme offers exciting courses and workshops from scriptwriting to tap dancing.

And that's not all. The successful youth

theatre continues to expand with young thespians taking to the stage to showcase their talents.

Those looking to put a smile on their face should try the Laughing Stag comedy nights, held on the first Sunday of every month, where laughter is practically guaranteed.

If you are thinking of holding an event or performance why not consider the Art Deco bar, the hugely versatile studio or even the main auditorium.

To find out more about what is on offer visit **www.kinocinemas.co.uk** or call **01732 450175**.

## Government changes Business Rate rules on empty premises

The Government has recently reformed empty property relief to encourage landowners to bring their empty business property back into use.

This will help to increase the supply of premises to let, and

so reduce business rents and improve the competitiveness of the UK. It is also intended to bring forward brown field sites for re-development and so reduce the need for new development on environmentally valuable green field land.

As of 1 April 2008, most property that has been empty for more than three months – or, in the case of industrial property, for more than six months – will no longer receive relief from rates.

After the initial three or six month

rate-free period expires, empty property will be liable for 100% of the basic occupied business rate. Certain types of exemption will apply.

For further details contact the Local Tax section on **01732 227000**.

# The name's bond...

**Landlords who are keen to let out their property without the expense of advertising for tenants can take advantage of the Council's landlord's deposit bond scheme.**

The scheme provides a deposit bond for tenants who cannot afford to pay their own deposit.

The Council guarantees that the deposit bond will underwrite the cost of any damage above fair wear and tear caused during the tenancy. The Council will also arrange for an inventory of the fixtures and fittings and decorative condition of the property before the tenant moves in.

Steve Richardson, the Council's housing officer who manages the scheme, tells In Shape about some of the advantages of deposit bonds. "One of the main benefits is that properties can be let quickly without the expense of advertising as we have many people ready and waiting to rent. What's more deposit bonds do not need to be registered with one of the Government's registration schemes and in many cases rent can be paid direct to landlords."

Anyone who joins the scheme will also receive free advice about Housing Benefit, general tenancy enquiries and access to support networks through quarterly landlords forums.

Landlords who would like to know more about the scheme should call Steve Richardson at the Council on **01732 227000** or e-mail [social.housing@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:social.housing@sevenoaks.gov.uk)



Steve Richardson who manages the Council's landlord's deposit bond scheme

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## Important notice for benefit customers!

If your circumstances have changed since you last made a claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit you should let us know without delay.

Failure to do so could mean that you are no longer receiving the correct entitlement.

Details of any changes you need to tell us about can be found on application forms and notification letters. Alternatively see our leaflet, 'Changes you need to tell us about'.

For further information call the Council's Benefits team on **01732 227000**.

## April rule change for new Housing Benefit claims

If you make a new Housing Benefit claim, or move, and your claim starts on or after 7 April 2008 and you rent from a landlord in the private sector, new regulations will affect the maximum rent used to calculate your entitlement.

Your claim will be assessed according to the area you live in and the amount of bedrooms you need, as well as your income and savings.

It will no longer be based on the rent you actually pay and payments will in most cases, go straight to the tenant's bank account.

For further information please contact the Council's Benefit Team on **01732 227000** or visit the Council website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/benefits)



# Councils unite to 'Love food and hate waste'

**Sevenoaks is joining forces with Kent's other councils to support the national campaign, 'Love Food Hate Waste'.**

Figures reveal that a staggering one-third of the food we buy in the UK is thrown away. The astonishing statistic follows research carried out by WRAP, the Waste and Resources Action Programme, which shows that for every three bags of food shopping we bring home, we effectively put one straight in the bin.

The wasted cost to the average household is thought to be up to £400 a year – which would more than cover the average annual household electricity bill!

The campaign was launched in November by celebrity chef Ainsley Harriott who agrees: "The amount of food we throw away is criminal and we all need to take action and start changing our behaviour. That's why I'm supporting Love Food Hate Waste".

Sevenoaks District Council, together with Kent's 13 other councils, sees reducing food waste as an important step in protecting the environment.

Wasting food damages the environment in many ways. Most food thrown away ends up in landfill where it produces methane, a gas that contributes to the problem of global warming. All the energy used to produce, package, transport and store food which could have been eaten, but instead ends up being thrown away, produces the equivalent of at least 15 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year, another global warming gas.

For great recipes, clever ways to use left over food and other tips on how to cut waste, visit the Love Food Hate Waste website at [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)

## Garden waste collection service, April 2008 to March 2009

Our Garden Waste Collection Service helps residents dispose of cut grass and other compostable garden waste with little effort. Residents must purchase Council garden waste sacks or hold an annual permit to use this scheme.

Garden waste is collected from the boundary of your property fortnightly on the same day as your rubbish during Week 1 (green), or Week 2 (blue), on the calendar found below.

Visit [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/recycling](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/recycling), call **01732 227000**, or e-mail [recycling@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:recycling@sevenoaks.gov.uk) to determine your garden waste collection week.

Sacks, or wheelie bins with permits affixed, must be at kerbside by 7am on the day of collection or the night before. Please note that collections during the week of a bank holiday Monday are one day later, except during Christmas, New Year and Easter times when other arrangements may apply.

To find out more or to join the Garden Waste Collection Service call **01732 227000**.

See page two for details of this year's Easter bank holiday refuse collection arrangements.

### Fortnightly Kerbside Garden Waste Collection Service Calendar – April 2008 to March 2009

|     | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Mon |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |
| Tue | 1   |     |     | 1   |     | 2   |     |     | 2   |     |     |     |
| Wed | 2   |     |     | 2   |     | 3   | 1   |     | 3   |     |     |     |
| Thu | 3   | 1   |     | 3   |     | 4   | 2   |     | 4   | 1   |     |     |
| Fri | 4   | 2   |     | 4   | 1   | 5   | 3   |     | 5   | 2   |     |     |
| Sat | 5   | 3   |     | 5   | 2   | 6   | 4   | 1   | 6   | 3   |     |     |
| Sun | 6   | 4   | 1   | 6   | 3   | 7   | 5   | 2   | 7   | 4   | 1   | 1   |
| Mon | 7   | 5   | 2   | 7   | 4   | 8   | 6   | 3   | 8   | 5   | 2   | 2   |
| Tue | 8   | 6   | 3   | 8   | 5   | 9   | 7   | 4   | 9   | 6   | 3   | 3   |
| Wed | 9   | 7   | 4   | 9   | 6   | 10  | 8   | 5   | 10  | 7   | 4   | 4   |
| Thu | 10  | 8   | 5   | 10  | 7   | 11  | 9   | 6   | 11  | 8   | 5   | 5   |
| Fri | 11  | 9   | 6   | 11  | 8   | 12  | 10  | 7   | 12  | 9   | 6   | 6   |
| Sat | 12  | 10  | 7   | 12  | 9   | 13  | 11  | 8   | 13  | 10  | 7   | 7   |
| Sun | 13  | 11  | 8   | 13  | 10  | 14  | 12  | 9   | 14  | 11  | 8   | 8   |
| Mon | 14  | 12  | 9   | 14  | 11  | 15  | 13  | 10  | 15  | 12  | 9   | 9   |
| Tue | 15  | 13  | 10  | 15  | 12  | 16  | 14  | 11  | 16  | 13  | 10  | 10  |
| Wed | 16  | 14  | 11  | 16  | 13  | 17  | 15  | 12  | 17  | 14  | 11  | 11  |
| Thu | 17  | 15  | 12  | 17  | 14  | 18  | 16  | 13  | 18  | 15  | 12  | 12  |
| Fri | 18  | 16  | 13  | 18  | 15  | 19  | 17  | 14  | 19  | 16  | 13  | 13  |
| Sat | 19  | 17  | 14  | 19  | 16  | 20  | 18  | 15  | 20  | 17  | 14  | 14  |
| Sun | 20  | 18  | 15  | 20  | 17  | 21  | 19  | 16  | 21  | 18  | 15  | 15  |
| Mon | 21  | 19  | 16  | 21  | 18  | 22  | 20  | 17  | 22  | 19  | 16  | 16  |
| Tue | 22  | 20  | 17  | 22  | 19  | 23  | 21  | 18  | 23  | 20  | 17  | 17  |
| Wed | 23  | 21  | 18  | 23  | 20  | 24  | 22  | 19  | 24  | 21  | 18  | 18  |
| Thu | 24  | 22  | 19  | 24  | 21  | 25  | 23  | 20  | 25  | 22  | 19  | 19  |
| Fri | 25  | 23  | 20  | 25  | 22  | 26  | 24  | 21  | 26  | 23  | 20  | 20  |
| Sat | 26  | 24  | 21  | 26  | 23  | 27  | 25  | 22  | 27  | 24  | 21  | 21  |
| Sun | 27  | 25  | 22  | 27  | 24  | 28  | 26  | 23  | 28  | 25  | 22  | 22  |
| Mon | 28  | 26  | 23  | 28  | 25  | 29  | 27  | 24  | 29  | 26  | 23  | 23  |
| Tue | 29  | 27  | 24  | 29  | 26  | 30  | 28  | 25  | 30  | 27  | 24  | 24  |
| Wed | 30  | 28  | 25  | 30  | 27  |     | 29  | 26  | 31  | 28  | 25  | 25  |
| Thu |     | 29  | 26  | 31  | 28  |     | 30  | 27  |     | 29  | 26  | 26  |
| Fri |     | 30  | 27  |     | 29  |     | 31  | 28  |     | 30  | 27  | 27  |
| Sat |     | 31  | 28  |     | 30  |     |     | 29  |     | 31  | 28  | 28  |
| Sun |     |     | 29  |     | 31  |     |     | 30  |     |     |     | 29  |
| Mon |     |     | 30  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 30  |
| Tue |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 31  |

Key to colours: ■ = Bank Holiday ■ = Week 1 ■ = Week 2

# The funky way to get fit!

**Edenbridge residents have been putting an extra spring in their step over the past few months and learning a range of new dance styles thanks to a unique class in the town.**

The Strictly Dance Funk class runs for an hour every Friday morning at 10.30am at Edenbridge Leisure Centre, and offers participants a chance to learn a number of dance techniques including salsa, hip-hop, line dancing and many more.

The sessions are for people of any age or ability and cost £2, with free crèche facilities.

One of those who has benefited is 36 year old Karen Loveland, from Edenbridge, who has attended the class since it started back in September last year.

"I had been going to the EZ STEPZ hip-hop class on a Tuesday for a couple of years when I noticed a poster for the Strictly Dance Funk class and thought

I would give it a try." says Karen. "I'm really glad I did as it is tremendous fun, and without a doubt has made a difference to me. I have so much more energy and feel much fitter now."

The difference has been noticed by Karen's five children as well, she says, "For years I couldn't keep up with the kids when we played games or had races as I just didn't have the energy, but the other day I had a race against one of them and I beat him! I don't think he could believe it, but they all love having a more active mum who can join in with them."

For Karen the class is not just about keeping fit: "The great thing about this class is that you don't need to be a fantastic dancer. The group is really easy

going and everyone enjoys themselves so much that we are all firm friends now."

"The free crèche is a godsend too. There are a few of us that use it for the Friday class, and it really means there is no barrier to prevent me from going each week."

Strictly Dance Funk is a healthy lifestyle initiative co-ordinated by Sevenoaks District Council in partnership with Sencio Community Leisure and funded by West Kent Primary Care Trust as part of the Choosing Health agenda which aims to make healthy choices easier.

There is no need to book your place on the course, however crèche places are limited and can be booked in advance by calling **01732 865665**.

Edenbridge resident Karen Loveland, a regular at Strictly Dance Funk classes



## Sexual health matters

Young people in the District can now access sexual health advice and information thanks to a new partnership.

The Sevenoaks District 'Local Implementation Group' has been set up to help young people make more informed choices and to promote the

sexual health services available to them.

The Group promotes the Kent-wide 'For Young People' website, [www.foryoungpeople.co.uk](http://www.foryoungpeople.co.uk). It includes information about sexual health services, such as contraception distribution points, drug and alcohol information, support for young parents and much more.

In addition there is a free phone line on **0800 0728748** giving information on sexual health services available locally.

A text message service is also available, which is affiliated with the national organisation, Brook. Young people can text **BROOK INFO** to **81222** for instant automated

information on sexual health topics, or **BROOK SERVICE** to **81222** for details of their nearest sexual health service.

Although Sevenoaks District has one of the lowest teenage pregnancy rates in Kent, the Government aims to achieve a 50% reduction in teenage pregnancy by 2010.

## Dance yourself to fitness

In Edenbridge and Swanley, the Council in partnership with others runs a number of dance classes to help residents improve their fitness in a fun and supportive environment. There's no need to book for any of the classes, just turn up and join in. See the table for details. Classes in other areas are being arranged for later this year.

For more information contact Layla Powell, the Council's Choosing Health Co-ordinator by calling **01732 227000** or by e-mailing [healthyliving@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:healthyliving@sevenoaks.gov.uk)

| Dance class                                                | Day and time                  | Location                          | Cost                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| EZ Stepz Hip Hop Dance (Adults, any ability)               | Monday, 8pm to 9pm            | White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley | £2 per person          |
| EZ Stepz Hip Hop Dance (Adults, any ability)               | Tuesday, 10.30am to 11.30am   | Edenbridge Leisure Centre         | £2 with free crèche    |
| EZ Stepz Hip Hop Dance (For ages eight to 18, any ability) | Wednesday, 6pm to 7pm         | White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley | £1 per person          |
| Strictly Dance Funk (Adults, any ability)                  | Wednesday, 10.30am to 11.30am | White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley | £2 with free crèche    |
| EZ Stepz Line Dancing for over 50s (Beginners)             | Thursday, 3.30pm to 4.30pm    | White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley | £2 per class           |
| EZ Stepz Line Dancing for over 50s (Improvers)             | Thursday, 4.30pm to 5.30pm    | White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley | £2 per class           |
| EZ Stepz Line Dancing for over 50s (Intermediates)         | Thursday, 5.30pm to 6.30pm    | White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley | £2 per class           |
| Strictly Dance Funk (Suitable for any age and ability)     | Friday, 10.30am to 11.30am    | Edenbridge Leisure Centre         | £2 with free crèche    |
| EZ Stepz Line Dancing (Suitable for any age and ability)   | Friday, 12.30pm to 2.30pm     | Edenbridge Leisure Centre         | £3 for the whole class |



#### Reporting crime

To report a crime that is taking place, always call 999. If the incident has passed, please call Tonbridge Police Station on 01732 771055. Alternatively call Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

#### Domestic abuse

The Freedom Programme is available to help women who have or who are suffering from domestic abuse. For information call 07854 780690.

The Community Domestic Abuse Programme for perpetrators is a 29 week course which is free to men who are or have been abusive to their partners. For details call Penny Hennessey on 07933 359210.

#### Reporting a racial incident

To report a racial incident you can leave a recorded message by calling 0800 138 1624.

To report a hate crime call the 24 hour reporting line on 0800 328 9162.

#### Reporting graffiti or anti-social behaviour

To report graffiti or anti-social behaviour call 01732 227000, complete the online form on the Council's website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk). You can also text graffiti details to 07799 732732 starting with the word GRAF.

## Week of events highlights the Partnership's strengths

In the run up to Christmas, some readers may have wondered why they saw many stories in the local media about crime. The answer could lie in a week of events put together for the local press and radio to illustrate the diversity of the work of the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership.

The week, in November, focused on 12 projects funded by the Partnership, most of which received wide-spread coverage in the media.

One of the biggest stories was highlighting domestic abuse, a sensitive issue that can get little exposure and is not often talked about. Reporters were invited to speak with someone who had taken part in the Community Domestic Abuse Programme, which is designed to help men who feel their behaviour towards their partners has been, or still is, abusive. The individual, whose identity was kept anonymous, spoke openly

about his situation and how the programme had helped to change his behaviour and ultimately his relationship with his partner.

Another success was highlighting the work of the Clean Kent enforcement team, who tackle fly-tipping in the area. Local reporters were taken to a number of sites in the week and informed about the problems of fly tipping as well as the legal action taken against those who commit the crime.

Other events included a community clean up event in Swanley involving local people who have taken action to deal with repeat incidents of graffiti, and the Horizon Project in Edenbridge, which helps disadvantaged and vulnerable young people to develop practical skills.

The week ended with an opportunity for the local press to quiz key representatives



of the Partnership about the work it does. If you would like more information about the work of the Community Safety Partnership, please contact Kelly Webb, Community Safety Co-ordinator, on **01732 227000** or **communitysafety@sevenoaks.gov.uk**

## Cracking down on proxy sales

A proxy sale is the purchase by an adult of anything that has an age limit, such as alcohol and cigarettes, on behalf of another person who is under the legal age.

Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership's Night Time Economy Task Group has identified that there has been an increase in proxy sales across the Sevenoaks District.

The Partnership is working with retailers to combat this crime.

Proxy sales are illegal and carry a fine for the retailer of up to £5,000. If you purchase products such as alcohol and cigarettes on behalf of a person who is under the legal age, you are breaking the law and could be liable for an £80 on the spot fine.

Underage drinking, particularly binge drinking can lead to health problems and is often an underlying factor in anti-social behaviour and low level crime.



## Victim Support needs you!

The Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership works closely with Victim Support who help those affected by crime.

Victim Support is currently looking for people to become volunteers within the District to assist with the valuable and much needed work they are involved in.

Don't worry if you do not have any experience in offering guidance – Victim Support will provide the necessary training needed. The next training course will be held in the spring and expenses will be paid.

So, if you have some spare time, can help with fundraising and would like to offer support to others in your community, then please contact Victim Support – Maidstone & West Kent by calling **01622 690103** and asking for Wendy, Bridget or Jane.

## New plan to keep us safe

The Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership has recently produced its next three year action plan to help keep Sevenoaks the safest district in Kent.

The action plan, which covers the period from April 2008 to March 2011, is based on consultation with local people and an analysis of crime data across the District.

The plan contains 50 actions designed to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and includes projects taking action to reduce burglary, vehicle crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.

The Sevenoaks District has been the safest District in Kent since August 2006 and the action plan aims to maintain this success. Working closely with local communities is also high on the list of actions.

The three main aims of the plan are to:

- Reduce and detect crime
- Reduce anti-social behaviour and fear of crime
- Strengthen community involvement.

The action plan can be viewed online by going to **www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communitysafety**. Alternatively, paper copies are available by calling Sevenoaks District Council on **01732 227000**.

# Get ready now for a Halls Green adventure in 2009

Youth Groups in the Sevenoaks District have the opportunity to apply for the free use of self-catering accommodation at Halls Green Adventure Centre in 2009. This is available as part of a long-standing agreement between the Council and the centre.

Sevenoaks District Council funded the development of Owl Barn at the purpose built activity centre in Weald a number of years ago and as a result have ongoing access to the lodge for two summer weeks and several weekends throughout the year. Day visits can also be arranged.

Applications for free residential or day trips will be expected to demonstrate how the activity will contribute to the Council's Young People's Action Plan and the Sevenoaks District Community Plan.

The lodge has 21 beds in seven ensuite bedrooms, one with disabled facilities for two people. It also has a lounge, dining

room, fitted kitchen and drying room.

Adventure activities available include abseiling, climbing, multi challenge low ropes course, archery, orienteering and fencing. There is also an indoor swimming pool and outdoor games and recreation areas. Instructors and lifeguards are required for certain activities and are charged at an additional rate.

Cllr Felicity Broomby, Cabinet member with responsibility for young people's issues says: "This is a wonderful opportunity to have a great time away with free accommodation – start planning for 2009 now!"

For more information or for an application form, please contact Sophie Lord on **01732 227492** or e-mail [youthmail@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:youthmail@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

For more information about the Halls Green Adventure Centre visit [www.barnabas.org.uk](http://www.barnabas.org.uk).



## Nominate a young person and celebrate their achievements

There are still two weeks left to get your nominations in for the Sevenoaks District Young Volunteer of the Year. The closing date is 31 March.

Groups or individuals are invited to nominate a young person aged 14 to 18 who has made a difference in their community through their volunteering efforts during 2007 and has shown:

- Personal commitment and achievement
- Good leadership
- Innovation and creativity
- Measurable impact or benefit

Nomination forms are available at Sevenoaks District Council Offices, town and parish councils, libraries, community and voluntary youth groups, schools and online at [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/youngpeople](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/youngpeople).

All selected nominees will receive a certificate and the Volunteer of the Year and the runners up will be presented with prizes at an award ceremony in May.

Cllr Felicity Broomby, the Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for young people's issues says: "Many young people give up their valuable time to help others through volunteering in the community and their achievements deserve recognition. We are committed to raising the profile of young volunteers and celebrating the good work done across the District."

For more information visit [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/youngpeople](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/youngpeople) and go to the Young People's Action Plan pages. Alternatively contact Sophie Lord, Youth Development Co-ordinator, on **01732 227492** or e-mail [youthmail@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:youthmail@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

## Spring into the zone

For the first time ever, the Council's popular 'Youth Zone' will be out and about during the spring school holidays.

With a healthy lifestyles theme, young people can take part in sports, games and arts and crafts.

All activities are free and there is no need to book in advance – just turn up! Children are registered with the staff team when they arrive, and those aged eight and above can be left with the staff team for the day.

Children under the age of eight must be supervised by a parent or carer at all times.

For more information, visit the 'In the Zone' page on the Council's website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/youngpeople](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/youngpeople), e-mail [youthmail@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:youthmail@sevenoaks.gov.uk) or call **01732 227000** for more information.

Activities have been funded in partnership with West Kent PCT as part of the national 'Choosing Health' agenda.

| The events are taking place at:              |                   |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Swanley – The Junction, Swanley Youth Centre | Monday 7 April    |
| Sevenoaks – Community Centre, Cramptons Road | Tuesday 8 April   |
| Edenbridge – Edenbridge Centre, Station Road | Wednesday 9 April |
| Knockholt – Village Hall                     | Thursday 10 April |
| New Ash Green – Village Hall                 | Friday 11 April   |





# Prime times

**There was a time when retirement meant the end and, for some, it often signalled isolation and days that were once filled with working commitments stretching ahead as empty pages on a calendar.**

But as life expectancy increases with advances in medicine, more and more of us can look forward to an active retirement. And for most, it's just the start of a golden age of new interests, new friends and realising long-held ambitions.

For those living in the District there is a helping hand on offer to ease the adjustment from working life to work-free life. Prime Time was launched several years back by Sencio Community Leisure – the not-for-profit organisation that runs Sevenoaks District Council's leisure facilities – and it provides a flourishing forum for social and sporting interaction.

The scheme operates several weekly sessions at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, Edenbridge Leisure Centre and White Oak Leisure Centre in Swanley.

Tony Grogan has been an active participant in Prime Time for the past two years and, as the 67-year-old former civil engineer from Otford explains, his experience has been both rewarding and refreshing.

"I really started out looking for somewhere I could get involved in exercise and fitness but I got the added bonus of both fun and friendship."

"The thing about Prime Time is that it doesn't operate as a club. It's informal, not at all competitive and the emphasis is firmly on making people feel welcome, whatever their ability in a particular activity. If, for instance, you're a lapsed badminton player and unsure of your current skills the group will work with you and at your pace."

Badminton is by far the most popular of the Prime Time pursuits, but it is part of a programme that also features other sports and, crucially, a growing social element.

"On a simple level, many of us go into the café for a coffee or lunch at the end of the session and it's just a very relaxed way to chat and build new friendships," adds Tony. "On a more ambitious scale, I have been pleased to organise theatre trips and a Christmas lunch for the Sevenoaks group."

"We get upwards of 20 people on our weekly sessions but everyone is here to keep fit and to benefit from the vital social interaction that can suddenly just stop the day you get that 'gold watch'."

Tony – who has taken part in the Great North Run and undertaken a Macmillan Cancer Care challenge

climbing Kilimanjaro – is a great advocate for pursuing an active, social retirement.

"There are plenty of things out there which people can get involved in. My advice would be simply to give Prime Time a go. It's not in the least bit clikky, and Katie Lord, who runs the sessions at Sevenoaks is a real star when it comes to giving new people a warm and supportive welcome."

Across the District at White Oak Leisure Centre, Fred Rowland has a long association with health and fitness having retired in 1991 and starting a new career as a lifeguard and swimming coach at the Swanley centre.

Fred, who runs the White Oak Prime Time sessions with Kathie Stonebridge, knows from first-hand experience the value of regular exercise.

"I suffered a round of illnesses culminating in a heart attack which meant having to give up my swimming commitments. White Oak suggested I might like to get involved in helping to run a programme for the retired and semi-retired," says the 73-year-old who enthuses a real passion for a full and active later life.

Like Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, badminton is one of the most popular pursuits in the Prime Time programme at White Oak, although Fred is quick to point out that there is plenty more on offer.

"We also run new age curling and short matt bowls sessions, and our Prime Movers session is great for those who want a low-impact and gentle workout to stretch and tone."

"We also make time after our sessions for people to have a chat and plan their next meeting. And it is this social element that we know is important to people."

"I am a firm believer that the longer you exercise and the more you become involved and interact then the happier and healthier your retirement is going to be. Let's face it, we all work long enough not to enjoy our hard-earned free time."

For details on Prime Time sessions call Edenbridge Leisure Centre (01732 865665), Sevenoaks Leisure Centre (01732 470700) or White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley (01322 662188). Alternatively, visit [www.sencio.org.uk](http://www.sencio.org.uk)



Cllr Keith Loney and Clare Perry from the Licensing Team toast the launch of the on-line licensing service

# Raise a glass to new licensing system!

**Residents of the District can now find out more about their local pubs and clubs thanks to the Council's new online licensing system.**

The Public Access for Licensing module allows anyone, at the click of a mouse button, to view licence applications online, and see exactly what permissions pubs, clubs and any other licenced premises across the District currently have, or have applied for.

Cllr Keith Loney, Sevenoaks District Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for licensing, says: "The Public Access for Licensing module is an important service for local people as it allows them to check licensing applications seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. So whether you want to see what time your local pub is open until on a Tuesday night, or find out if it has a licence for live music on a Sunday, Public Access for Licensing will be able to help you".

The ability to comment online about applications that are going through their consultation period is also available, as well as details of temporary event notices.

Currently there is a limited amount of documentation attached to each record held on the module, however this will grow as the Council's Licensing Team work through a backlog of licences and certificates that have been issued over the past two years.

The module is accessible by going to the Licensing section of the Council website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/licensing](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/licensing)

## Sevenoaks District Council at your fingertips

### Main office

Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG

Tel: **01732 227000**

Minicom: **01732 227496** (text telephones only)

Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5pm and Friday 8.45am to 4.45pm

Planning Reception Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm, Friday 9am to 4.45pm and every Tuesday until 7pm

Emergencies (outside office hours)

**01732 462222**

Complaints co-ordinator, Julie Heather **01732 227000**

### Swanley Contact & Information Centre

Swanley Library & Information Centre, London Road, Swanley BR8 7AE

Tel: **01322 614660**

Council Tax payment facility available

Monday to Thursday 9.30am to 5.30pm,

Friday 9.30am to 6pm and Saturday 9am to 4pm

### Edenbridge Local Office

Adjoining Edenbridge Leisure Centre, Stangrove Park, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 5LU

Thursdays only

Planning surgery call **01732 227000**

for surgery days and times

Benefits surgery 1.30pm to 4pm

### Leisure centres

Ash Green Sports Centre\*

**01474 707164**

Edenbridge Leisure Centre\*\*

**01732 865665**

Lullingstone Park Golf Course\*\*

**01959 533793**

Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Centre\*\*\*

**01732 451889**

Sevenoaks Leisure Centre\*\*

**01732 470700**

White Oak Indoor Bowls Centre, Swanley\*\*\*

**01322 665571**

White Oak Leisure Centre\*\*

**01322 662188**

\*Operated by Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council

\*\*Operated by Sencio Community Leisure, Head Office **01732 746010**

\*\*\*Operated by independent limited companies

### Your Councillors

The policies of the District Council are decided by 54 Councillors elected by local people. These Councillors are not employed by the Council and you cannot normally contact them at the Council Offices. For up-to-date addresses and telephone numbers for any Councillor, please call the Council's main office at Sevenoaks on **01732 227000**.

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**Editor:** Daniel Whitmarsh  
**Editorial Assistants:** Steve Mandaluff and Alison Walker

**E-mail:** [communications@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:communications@sevenoaks.gov.uk)  
**Tel:** 01732 227000  
Sevenoaks District Council, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG

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