No one will miss a waste or recycling collection over Christmas

CHRISTMAS WASTE AND RECYCLING
Find out when your festive collections take place

FREE FESTIVE PARKING
Make the most of your town centres before Christmas

LOCAL PLAN LATEST
Last chance to comment on the Plan

OUR PROMISES TO YOU
Residents’ wellbeing put at the heart of all we do
Most award-winning national care company offering quality live-in care at home

The Good Care Group is not only the most awarded care provider, but is also the only Live-In Care company dedicated to providing a managed elderly care service, to be rated outstanding by CQC.

- One-to-one care and support - 24 hour live-in care - permanent or respite
- Specialist care of medical conditions tailored to your needs - includes Dementia, Parkinson’s, MS, Cancer, Stroke rehabilitation, High acuity and End of life
- Nursing-led care and support
- Service that is regulated and endorsed by charities, medical specialists and clients
- Unrivalled 24/7 management and support for all the family
- Carers employed and trained to highest standard

Our expert care advisers are happy to discuss how we can help you – please contact us for more information and friendly advice

01732 441 098
www.thegoodcaregroup.com
kentenquiries@thegoodcaregroup.com
@goodcaregroup
Most collections take place a day later than usual except the Christmas Eve collection, which takes place earlier on Saturday 22 December, and the Christmas Day collection, which takes place a day earlier on Monday 24 December.

If you receive a garden waste collection, the changes will apply to this service too.

We ask that you put your sacks and bins out at 7am on your revised collection day to help prevent attracting animals and the build-up of litter.

To view your refuse collection days online, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/collectiondays

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<td>Monday 7 January</td>
<td>Normal collection service resumes</td>
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FREE festive parking

Make the most of our excellent town centres with FREE parking across two weekends in the run up to Christmas.

We’re offering extra Christmas cheer by relaxing all charges in our car parks and on-street in Sevenoaks and Westerham on Saturdays 8 and 15 December.

Sencio Community Leisure is joining in too by waiving parking charges in the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre car park.

Parking will also be free in Blighs car park in Sevenoaks on Sundays 9 and 16 December to help spread the Christmas cheer.

Parking is already free at weekends in our other Council car parks, including in Swanley.

There will be no need to show a pay and display ticket, but we will continue to patrol the car parks to ensure drivers park responsibly and do not outstay the maximum period allowed.

For our car park locations visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/carparks

Helping you get the best from your project

Whether you’re extending or altering your home, the Building Control Partnership can help.

As a Council run service, you can trust that we will work closely with your architect and builder to provide impartial and practical advice making sure all the works meet national building regulations.

For more information about our award winning service, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/buildingcontrol or call 01732 227376
Local Plan latest

In recent months, we’ve been busy finalising the new Local Plan with proposals for new community infrastructure and housing.

The Government has told us we need to plan for new homes to help meet our housing needs up to 2035.

We are proposing to prioritise brownfield land and build at higher density. But with 93% of the District in the Green Belt, and the remaining 7% close to being fully developed, we had little choice but to consider the 400 greenfield sites put forward by landowners for new homes.

As part of their submissions, the landowners had to demonstrate ‘Exceptional Circumstances’, as to why development should be considered in the Green Belt.

We assessed these sites rejecting 388 of them and, over the summer, we asked for residents’ views on the remaining 12 ‘Exceptional Circumstances’ sites that were included in the first draft of the Local Plan. During the autumn, we considered the 8,000 comments made by residents together with further feasibility studies on the sites.

On 14 November, we published details of the latest version of the Local Plan, which proposes four strategic Green Belt sites for new homes and infrastructure. These are:

- Tarmac Quarry, Sevenoaks (Sevenoaks Northern Masterplan)
- Land east of London Road in Dunton Green
- Land south of Four Elms Road in Edenbridge
- Pedham Place near Swanley and Farningham as a broad location for growth

As In Shape went to print, the latest version of the Local Plan, with these sites, was due to be debated by our Planning Advisory Committee on 22 November and Cabinet on 6 December.

Don’t miss your last chance to comment on the Local Plan

If the Local Plan is approved by Cabinet on 6 December, there will be a final consultation, known as a ‘Regulation 19 Publication’, taking place from mid-December.

The final decision to approve the Local Plan will be taken by the Planning Inspector at a public examination in 2019. If you wish speak at the examination, which is at the Planning Inspector’s discretion, you will need to register during this consultation period.

After the consultation closes, the Council will submit residents’ comments and the draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspector for consideration.

To view the latest version of the Local Plan and take part in the final consultation, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/draftlocalplan

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
Could you be a host family for international students?

Since 2015, local company ISE (International Student Experiences) has welcomed over 10,000 students from across Europe, successfully matching them with host families for short-term trips. Not only are these experiences culturally enriching, they can generate a welcome income for the host family as well! Many international schools are keen to visit England and stay in ISE’s flagship hosting areas in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. Host families are located within the surrounding areas and can be couples with or without children, retired or single people. Stephanie Heymer, Founder and Director of ISE, asked some of her regular host families to share their experiences of having international students stay with them.

Sarah, Bradley and Charlie
We welcome the students as we would want our family members to be looked after. We provide them with a bed in our otherwise empty spare rooms. After collecting them from their cultural programme in the evening, we have dinner together. They love trying all the traditional English meals! After finding out about their day, we often sit down to a game of cards and learn more about each other’s way of life. After a quick breakfast in the morning, we give the students a packed lunch and drop them off to meet their friends and teachers for their busy day ahead.

Tracie
We have been pleasantly surprised at how easily hosting has fitted in with our busy lives. The students normally arrive on a Monday evening and go home after three or four nights. We have met some wonderful people and it has been a great way for us to have a little window into the lives and culture of people living in different parts of the world.

Sarah, Richard, Harry and Miles
We originally heard of ISE’s reputation in West Kent and of their commitment to supporting local businesses and the local economy through tourism. ISE have always been very supportive and we get clear and timely information which ensures the whole process runs very smoothly. During the time we have been connected to ISE we have got to know Stephanie and the team. They are passionate about showcasing our wonderful area through unique cultural and educational experiences. We are always recognised and valued by ISE for doing a good job - it makes being a host mother even more pleasurable!

International Student Experiences
To find out more about being a host family please call Stephanie Heymer on 01892 514504 or 07555 548470, email info@isegb.co.uk or visit www.isegb.co.uk
Parking charges frozen again!

It seems inevitable that the cost of everyday goods and services, such as your gas and electricity or phone and food bills, will go up at some point. But not our town centre parking charges, which have remained generally unchanged since April 2016.

We've made a New Year's resolution to keep a lid on next year's charges in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Westerham town centres along with all on-street charges and resident parking permits, which are staying the same too.

What's more, we will continue to offer free parking in our Westerham car parks for the first three hours and free parking in our staff car park in Gordon Road, Sevenoaks every weekend.

The only increase from next April will be the daily and season ticket charge at Bradbourne car park, the first change since April 2015. This new car park, that reopened in 2017 following an £8 million Council investment, offers extensive CCTV coverage, 'smart' energy saving lighting and free electric vehicle charging.

Despite increases in our operational costs, such as business rates, insurance and general maintenance, we continue to reinvest in our car parks, including new safety barriers, increasing capacity, resurfacing, renewing drainage and upgrading lighting.

Will you go the extra mile for dementia?

On your marks, get set, go!
After the huge success of 'Run, Walk or Push against Dementia' over the past two years, it's time to lace up your running shoes once again as the popular event returns in 2019.

Taking place in Knole Park on Sunday 12 May, there will be timed 3, 5 and 10k courses suitable for everyone, from parents with pushchairs to seasoned runners.

Five-hundred places will be available giving you and your family the chance to be part of something special while raising cash for the Sevenoaks Area Dementia Friendly Community Forum, who are organising the event.

To view the registration fees and to book your place, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/runwalkpush or call us on 01732 227000.

Our festive office opening times

Sevenoaks Office
Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5pm and Friday 8.45am to 4.45pm
• OPEN as usual up to and including Friday 21 December
• CLOSED Monday 24, Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 December
• OPEN Thursday 27, Friday 28 and Monday 31 December
• CLOSED Tuesday 1 January
• OPEN as usual from Wednesday 2 January

Swanley Link
Not all organisations will be available at the Link during the festive period.
• OPEN as usual up to and including Friday 21 December, 9am to 6pm
• OPEN Saturday 22 December 9am to 4pm
• OPEN Monday 24 December 9am to 1pm
• CLOSED Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 December
• OPEN Thursday 27 and Friday 28 December 9am to 6pm
• OPEN Saturday 29 December 9am to 4pm
• CLOSED Tuesday 1 January
• OPEN as usual from Wednesday 2 January from 9am

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
Councillor scoops health and care award

Cllr Michelle Lowe has been recognised for her outstanding work after she clinched a prestigious national honour at the 2018 Councillor Achievement Awards.

The Cabinet Member won the ‘Health and Care’ category at the awards hosted by the Local Government Information Unit and Churches, Charities and Local Authorities on 6 November.

Cllr Lowe was praised for her work bringing our health and housing services together, helping to address issues with residents’ homes that can lead to health problems as well as introducing preventative health services.

Under her leadership, she oversaw the ‘Super HEROES’ service, that has assisted over 1,800 clients by reducing their debt and rent arrears and supporting them into training, work or volunteering. She was also applauded for pioneering the rapid hospital discharge scheme, which has adapted or changed the homes of hundreds of patients so they can leave hospital when they’re ready, reducing costly bed-blocking.

It is the second consecutive year one of our Councillors has succeeded at the awards after Cllr Peter Fleming won the Leader of the Year category in 2017.

Our £20 gift to you

Christmas may be just around the corner, traditionally a time of giving. But we’re offering all our residents the chance to receive a £20 gift voucher all year round just for sharing their views on our services.

We’re keen to speak with customers who use a range of our services to find out how they could be improved.

Taking part will involve attending an informal discussion session at our offices in Sevenoaks lasting about an hour. No preparation would be needed and sessions will take place throughout the year.

Everyone who takes part will be offered a £20 shopping voucher as a small way of saying thank you for their time and effort.

If you would like to take part, please email your contact details to projects@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call 01732 227000.

SMALL CHANGE. BIG DIFFERENCE.

Swap your slippers for walking boots and go for a walk and enjoy your local countryside. Walking is free, it lifts your mood and is great for your heart and bones.

To find out about walking groups near you, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/oneyou or call us on 0300 020 0636.

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
You’ll be spoilt for choice with a wide selection of great days out across the District this December. Discover some of the top oh-so-jolly events coming up throughout this season and, for further inspiration, head to www.visitsevenoaksdistrict.co.uk

Christmas at the Castle
Castle rooms dressed in their festive best, roaring log fires and frosted Christmas trees lining grand hallways, all in celebration of traditional Christmas tales. Enjoy a Christmas at Hever Castle until 24 December including a festive themed tour around the much beloved Charles Dickens novel ‘A Christmas Carol’. Bring the little ones to meet Father Christmas, sample delicious festive food and ride on the vintage carousel in the Castle grounds.

To buy tickets in advance visit www.hevercastle.co.uk/whats-on/hever-castle-christmas

Winter walks
With its rolling countryside, miles of twisting footpaths and stunning views, Sevenoaks District is the ideal destination for wonderful winter walks. Put on your woollies and head over to National Trust’s Knole Park for one of their unique Christmas trails. As In Shape went to print, the trail dates were yet to be confirmed, but they are likely to run throughout December. Pick up a map from the visitor centre to find all 10 of Knole’s special deer and, once you’ve found them, be sure to collect your prize. All ages are welcome, although the trail is designed for families with children aged 10 and under.

For more information visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk and search for ‘Christmas at Knole’

Merry gardens
Wrap up warm and head to National Trust’s Chartwell for their Big Circus garden family trail. Step back to 1947 to celebrate Christmas with Clemmie Churchill and the grandchildren. Wander through the garden in search of the silhouettes of amazing circus acts from juggling clowns to flying acrobats. This trail is open daily until 6 January and if you explore the woodlands, you can find the brand-new treehouse hidden away up high.

For more information visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell

Winter warmers
Take a sneak peek behind the scenes of the fantastic Westerham Brewery at one of their Christmas open evenings this December. Discover the secrets behind the art of brewing and sample some of their delightful beers and Squerryes Estate wines at the brewery, tap room and shop. This makes for the perfect present for your partner or a pre-Christmas celebration with friends.

Open evenings take place on 19 and 20 December and can be booked at www.westerhambrewery.co.uk/events
Raising the curtain on the District’s heroes

With the return of our ‘Making It Happen’ Community and Voluntary Awards just around the corner, 2017 award winner, Steph Harrison, has been reflecting on where her work began and why others should get involved with their local area.

The awards are returning for the fourth time as they take to the Stag Theatre in Sevenoaks on 13 February with residents encouraged to nominate local heroes in the 12 categories.

Last time round, Steph took home the Individual Community Champion Award, presented by former Strictly Come Dancing judge, Len Goodman, in honour of her 10 years of charity work for people facing breast cancer.

"10 years ago I was diagnosed with breast cancer and while I was receiving my treatment, I watched a young girl in her 20s receive her diagnosis. Seeing the shock on her face and the reaction of her mother really distressed me", says Steph, 59, from Sevenoaks.

"I started one fundraiser and that was going to be it, but then there was another and another and before I knew it, we had raised over £175,000 for the charity I had chosen to support, Breast Cancer Care.

Over the years, Steph has forged relationships with over 100 local businesses, given numerous talks and organised hundreds of fundraising initiatives such as the annual Pink Week and Pink Party, making her become known in Sevenoaks as the ‘pink lady’ before finally gaining recognition at the ceremony in 2017.

"I don't even know who nominated me! I felt so proud after the night, as my category was up last, I got to sit there and listen to some of the work people have done and how many people put themselves out to help others and I just felt so honoured to be there and be a part of that.

"It felt like a huge group of friends in that room that night and we were all blown away by each other’s achievements. The award sits pride of place on my cabinet in my living room and it attracts a lot of attention! I always remember after the ceremony texting my sister with the award and saying 'look, I got a ten from Len'!"

"There are so many people who deserve a thank you but wouldn't put themselves forward. People being recognised is so important, if you look at some of the real heroes of this world, they never ask for recognition – so it’s down to us to give it to them."

The deadline to enter next year’s awards is Friday 14 December.

To nominate a person, voluntary organisation or group, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communityawards.

You can also request an application form by calling us on 01732 227000.
Be a star and recycle this Christmas

At this time of year, we produce more waste than ever, but the good news is you can recycle much of this extra material using our convenient clear sack scheme. And with no one missing a collection over the festive period, your sacks won’t be hanging around too long either.

In addition to the things you can recycle every week, these festive favourites are welcome in your clear sacks:
- Christmas cards
- Metal and plastic sweet containers
- Metal and plastic biscuit and crackers tins
- Paper wrapping paper
- Christmas crackers
- Advent calendars (cardboard part only please)
- Paper hats

And don’t forget, you can always recycle these items in your clear sacks:
- Paper and cardboard
- Metal drinks cans and food tins
- Metal tops
- Clean aluminium trays and foil
- Plastic bottles and tops
- Plastic pots, tubs and trays (but not black plastic)

Find out more about recycling at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/recycling

Don’t forget to check your Christmas waste and recycling collection dates on page 3!

Bottle up this Christmas!
Please take your empty glass bottles and jars to one of our 40 recycling sites, which are eagerly awaiting your extra presents! www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/glass

Tree-cycle this Christmas

After this year’s festivities have ended, we will collect and recycle your real Christmas tree for free.

From Wednesday 2 January until Friday 1 February, we will collect any tree with a trunk of up to 90mm (3.5 inches) in diameter.

Simply leave your tree at the boundary of your property and visible from the road by 7am on the day our Garden Waste Collection Service visits your road.

If you’re not sure when the service is scheduled for your area, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/collectiondays and search for your road.

All the trees we collect are turned into environmentally friendly compost and for this reason, we cannot take trees which are decorated or in pots or stands.

If your tree is too big for this service, you can take it to one of Kent County Council’s (KCC) Household Waste Recycling Centres. Visit www.kent.gov.uk or call KCC on 03000 417373 for locations and opening times.

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
Striking it right with our free business support

After becoming a second Dan black belt, a 2009 national champion and part of the 2011 England Karate World Cup squad, Invicta Karate founder, Toby Price was determined to become a master in business.

With the support of our Economic Development Team, and working with our partner the National Centre for Micro Business (NCMB), Toby’s karate academy has attacked the business world, taking advantage of the free support and advice on offer.

Toby started Invicta Karate, which has classes running in Sevenoaks, two years ago, but it wasn’t until he attended a Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce meeting at our offices, where he met our Economic Development Team, that he was able to really kick his business into gear.

“In 2012, I started a very small club with just four students whilst still working full time and then a couple of years ago, my family circumstances changed and I turned it into a business. Now we have around 90 students, starting with our youngest in the Tigers at four years of age”, says Toby.

“I met the Council’s Economic Development team and explained my ambition to become the premier karate academy in the country. The team told me they could help me to achieve this goal and introduced me to the NCMB.

“I've been given excellent guidance on how to grow the business and bring the commercial side of things into it, target markets as well as perception management and how to build the brand. Now many of our classes are full and others are filling up fast and we even have waiting lists, which is a great situation to be in.”

With the business going from strength to strength, Toby was also able to take advantage of the NCMB ‘Business SatNav™’, which offers step-by-step advice on how to make your business’ vision succeed, as well as other support such as our RealBusiness newsletter and networking events with other local businesses.

Toby continues: “In karate, when you come into the dojo as a beginner, you’re blissfully unaware of what to do until you look around and see what others are doing and that’s exactly what it’s like when it comes to your business.

“I always knew where I wanted the business to end up, but I needed the knowledge of how to get there and how to put it into practice. The District Council and the NCMB have really been able to help with that.”

To find out how our helpful Economic Development Team could help your business, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/business, e-mail business@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call 01732 227000.

You can also visit Toby’s club website at www.invictakarate.co.uk
Our promises – The Council Plan

We’ve been working on our new Council Plan that promises to put your wellbeing at the heart of everything we do.

Our Economy

We need a strong local economy which provides the training and jobs that you need. To attract businesses, we’re protecting and making better use of business sites while developing brownfield land.

Health

We’re committed to creating the healthiest environment possible for you and your family. Your health and wellbeing will run through everything we do from housing to our new Local Plan and we’ll work with charities and others to promote a healthy way of life.

As ever, our work will be underpinned by providing...

VALUE FOR MONEY
The Environment
The environment is essential for our wellbeing. We’re committed to protecting the very special environment of the District, enhancing our natural environment and biodiversity, keeping our area tidy, continuing to combat fly tipping and remaining the only Council in Kent to provide weekly waste and recycling collections.

Community Safety
Our District is one of the safest in the country and we want to keep it that way. We’re working with charities and others to combat crime and anti-social behaviour, and to build age-friendly towns and villages to encourage independent living for everyone, from children to those with dementia.

Housing
Your home is where you spend most of your time and it has the biggest influence on your health and wellbeing. We’re committed to meeting your changing housing needs with more affordable housing, supported housing and retirement homes.

Want to know more and see all our promises? Log on to www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/councilplan or call us on 01732 227000 for a paper copy of the new Council Plan.
Prepare for winter

As the weather turns colder and wetter, now is the time to start thinking of the steps you can take to keep you and your family safe and warm.

Flooding
Flooding is a very real threat for many people and can become a problem very quickly, but you can prepare by taking the following steps:

- Find out if you’re at risk and sign up to the free flood warnings at www.environment-agency.gov.uk.
- Find out if there’s a local community flood group or how to set one up at www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk.

Pavements and roads:
For details of winter gritting and snow and clearance, visit Kent County Council’s website at www.kent.gov.uk/highways.

Waste and recycling collections:
During freezing weather, our collections may be cancelled. If we’re unable to collect your sacks, please take them inside and put them out again the following week on your usual collection day, unless we advise otherwise.

Keep-up-to-date
- www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
- sdc_newsdesk
- @sevenoaksdc
- 01732 227000

Keeping warm
If you’re aged 65 or older, or have an ongoing health condition, it’s important to keep your home warm. A healthy indoor temperature, especially the living room, is around 21°C. It’s OK to keep the bedroom slightly lower. You are at greater risk of health problems if your home falls below 16°C.

Reducing your winter bills
You could reduce your gas and electricity bills by checking our independent energy comparison service, Sevenoaks Switch and Save, which has helped residents to save, on average, £290 a year on their bills. Visit www.sevenoaksswitchandsave.co.uk or call for free on 0800 410 1147.

If you’re on a low income, or having difficulty paying your water bills, you may be entitled to help. Find out more at www.ccwater.org.uk/households/help-with-my-bills or call 0300 034 2222.

Preventing falls
At this time of year, people are at greater risk of trips, slips and falls, especially older residents.

For advice and support on how to manage the risk of falling, please call 01732 227000 or email psh@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Seek help if you’re feeling unwell
At the first sign of a winter illness, even if it’s just a cough or cold, get advice from your pharmacist before it gets more serious.

When you need urgent healthcare, but it is not an emergency, ring 111, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Visit www.nhs.uk/staywell for more information.
Archery course hits the bullseye

If you’re looking to add a new string to your bow, sign up to our new Inclusive Archery Course starting in January.

Open to anyone from the age of 12, the next six-week course, starting on Friday 25 January from 6.30pm, is the perfect chance for the whole family to try something different at an affordable price.

Each two-hour session is delivered by a qualified instructor from North Downs Archery club at Edenbridge Leisure Centre and costs £36 for the whole course and includes all the equipment.

Westerham couple John and Mandy McSporran spoke to In Shape after they took part in the archery course last year, leading to some unexpected competition between each other.

John says: “We had a bit of experience with archery with some taster sessions while away on holiday. With all the kids grown up and gone, we were looking for something to do in the evenings and when we saw the In Shape story about the course, we thought we’d give it a go.

“We loved it, the instructors were really good and it was great to have that common interest with Mandy. But it also led to a bit of healthy rivalry between us, not something I expected.

“Since the course, we’ve taken it to the next level, joining the North Downs Archery Club and taking part in competitions, giving us the chance to work as a team and to win together.

“One of the things I like about archery is it’s a great way to relax, whilst also providing you with physical exercise. Mentally, you can just clear your mind and focus on that moment. What’s more we really enjoy the social side of it.

“Mandy and I have always done most things as a couple and now we really look forward to our weekly archery sessions together.”

To sign up to the next course, starting on Friday 25 January at Edenbridge Leisure Centre, email communities@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call 01732 227000.

Inclusive Archery on target at awards

Our Inclusive Archery Course was recently recognised at the Kent-wide KUDOS awards.

The awards, run by Kent Sports, highlight innovative community sports that change lives. The winners’ ceremony took place in Maidstone on 9 October.

Inclusive Archery, running since 2016, is open to all and caters for a diverse range of participants, including those with disabilities, long-term illnesses, mental health issues and learning difficulties.

Having made it to the last four in the finals, the scheme picked up one of the two runners up spots. Thera-Box, a boxing fitness exercise programme for children with additional learning needs, proved to be a hit with the judges taking the top spot.
£1 million investment unveiled at Sevenoaks leisure centre

A £1 million-plus investment into the gym and fitness facilities at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre was officially opened in September.

The project, which took five months to complete, was a collaboration between Sencio Community Leisure (SCL), Sevenoaks Town Council and Sevenoaks District Council.

Council Leader, Cllr Peter Fleming, joined 81-year-old Blanche Smith and Sencio Wellness supervisor James Arnold at the unveiling of new facility.

Foot on the ladder

With more than 7,000 gyms, memberships approaching 10 million and a market value of £5 billion, the UK’s health and fitness industry is growing. One in every seven people is a gym member so, together, these statistics speak not just to the sector’s buoyancy but also to significant employment opportunities.

Jane Parish, Sencio Community Leisure’s chief executive says: “We want to develop a workforce equipped with lots of different skills and where people have opportunities to experience several areas of the business from the gym and lifeguarding to sales, front of house and catering.

“One way we do this is through an apprenticeship route that entails a 12-month programme on the NVQ 2 Operational Services or Activity Leadership courses. This allows staff to obtain several valuable qualifications, including the possibility to go on and coach football, trampolining or gymnastics, and even be one of our next swimming teachers,” adds Jane.

“We look for people who are team players, engaging and welcoming as it’s vital customers have a great experience so, as part of that, we help staff identify a career path by offering the opportunity to obtain qualifications that will take them to the next level. For example, a lifeguard could train to be a duty manager and that sets them on a path to progress to a deputy or assistant manager and even centre manager.”

For details of career opportunities with Sencio Community Leisure, email angela.marshall@sencio.org.uk

Jacob Dodd

Sixteen-year-old Jacob Dodd from Edenbridge is on a two-year apprenticeship with Sencio Community Leisure that not only sees him perform lifeguarding duties, but is also allowing him to be part of a team ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for customers.

Jacob, who has been into sports and played rugby from an early age, is now looking towards a long-term career in leisure and having the opportunity to learn different roles.

“I would definitely recommend this sort of opportunity to others as it’s a great way to learn valuable skills from people with lots of experience and to be trained by the best,” says Jacob.

“Leisure is a really sociable environment and the best thing about the apprenticeship is that you interact with all kinds of people from colleagues to customers. It’s really helping me build confidence and learn valuable life skills.”

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
On the floor

If a certain Saturday night television show has set those dancing feet twitching, you should quick step it down to your local leisure centre.

Sencio Community Leisure’s (SCL), Katie Lord, says: “Dance is one of the best forms of exercise. We all have everyday life pressures, but when you dance and concentrate on steps, rhythm and music, the world ceases to exist for an hour and you can put worries on hold.”

And there are wider-ranging benefits, as Katie explains: “It has been proven line dancing is one of the best forms of dance for warding off the effects of dementia. You have to use your brain and it is therefore a good workout for body and mind. Zumba Gold has the same effect.

“Some of our classes at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre are so popular we use half the sports hall. With around 35 people all dancing to music from Africa to Spain, Irish to Scottish and Bollywood to Maori, we circle the world and it’s always such a vibrant and social scene. And, for anyone with the ‘Strictly’ bug, we have introduced a new fortnightly ballroom class.”

For details of dance classes go to www.sencio.org.uk

Christmas burn-off

We consume, on average, a whopping 6,000 calories on Christmas Day - and you’d need to jog for 45 minutes to burn-off one mince pie. But before we go all bah humbug on you, we asked Sencio Community Leisure Wellness Manager, Phil Wyatt, to provide some perspective at a time of year that is, after all, designed to be social and enjoyable!

“No fitness professional is going to tell you to be restrained on Christmas Day,” says Phil. “If you do want to avoid that feeling of overindulgence though, consume plenty of water, ask yourself if you’re really hungry the next time the dips get handed round and don’t go overboard with alcohol. A pre-lunch walk is always a good thing, as is one after all the food – eating large amounts makes us lethargic. Above all, enjoy yourself – and maybe plan some exercise for Boxing Day, even if it’s a long walk to a country pub!”

White Oak Leisure Centre (WOLC) in Swanley has launched a series of taster sessions designed to encourage youngsters to think about diving as a potential sport and, who knows, maybe set the next Tom Daley on his or her way.

Made possible through a grant from Swim England’s Start Diving campaign, WOLC is offering two free introductory sessions on Thursday and Sunday afternoons open to those aged six and over and who have attained a level of swimming competency.

The taster sessions run until September 2019 and can be booked through WOLC reception.
Six tips to stay switched on to cybercrime

Fraud and cybercrime not only affects vulnerable people, anyone can become a target.

Victims often feel embarrassed about what has happened, but there is no reason to be. Reporting fraud helps the Police to understand new techniques and issue warnings, investigate incidents and put fraudsters before the courts.

Kent Police have some top tips to help protect yourself and your family from this technology based crime, so check out their advice and stay safe online.

**Passwords**
Make them at least eight characters and use three random words or numbers to replace letters such as: ‘JU5T L!K3 THI5’. Avoid using personal information e.g. children’s names and don’t use one password for everything.

**Antivirus software and updates**
Make sure you have firewall and antivirus software on all your devices and update it regularly, including on apps or web browsers you use. Failure to update may provide criminals with an opportunity to hack into your computer and steal your data.

**Check security settings**
Regularly check your security settings, particularly with social media sites such as Facebook, to see who can view your data. Where you can, limit who can see your page as much as possible.

**Fake websites**
Try not to click on a link in an email; type in the website address instead.

Clicking a link in a fraudulent email can take you to a ‘phishing’ site that will look so real, it will fool you into entering your login information.

**Look for https://**
Before entering payment details into any website, check the web address has an ‘s’ – which stands for secure – after the http. If it doesn’t, don’t use it.

**Check e-mail properly**
Beware of ‘phishing’ emails which use a hook, such as asking you to confirm security information, in order to steal your personal data. Banks will never ask for your information in this way. If in doubt, call the bank directly or delete the email.

For more information, go to www.kentpolice.co.uk or if you are a business, youth or community group and would like to receive a talk on cybercrime contact us at community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk or 01732 227000.

You can also report suspicious activity by contacting Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or at www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud
Safer school parking scheme extended to Sevenoaks

A scheme to improve the safety of children at our District’s schools has been extended following a successful trial.

Safer School Zones were introduced in partnership with schools following calls from parents and residents to improve pedestrian safety and traffic flow during the busy drop off and pick up times.

High visibility signs have been put up around school ‘Keep Clear’ areas, school crossings and yellow lines reminding drivers that stopping is not allowed. Civil Enforcement Officers (better known as traffic wardens) are making extra patrols to these areas and will issue an instant fine to any vehicle that stops in the Zones.

The scheme was introduced to St Bartholomew’s, High Firs and St Mary’s primary schools in Swanley in February 2017.

After a successful trial, Sevenoaks Primary, Walthamstow Hall, Weald Community Primary, Chevening Primary and St Johns Primary school have joined in.

Cllr Matthew Dickins, Sevenoaks District Council’s Cabinet Member for Direct and Trading Services, says: “Safer School Zones are yet another great example of the Council and the community working hand in hand by focusing on parking enforcement outside school gates at drop-off and pick-up to improve the safety of children in our District. This has already had a really positive impact with schools, parents and residents alike reporting more safe and considerate parking.”
Swanley and Hextable housing hubs opens their doors

With our latest housing strategy promising to deliver more retirement accommodation, two new housing schemes for older people, across all income groups, were unveiled this autumn.

The latest to take in tenants was Woodlands Court in Swanley in October. The new £6.5m West Kent housing association scheme provides 31 new affordable homes for the over 55s with supported communal facilities helping tenants to lead independent lives.

Woodlands Court is just a short walk from the West Kent’s modernised White Oak Court, a residential ‘hub’ that boasts a 24-hour on-site care team, restaurant, hairdresser and activities room.

Opened just a few weeks earlier was Emerson Park, a privately run development of 47 retirement apartments in Hextable. Similar to Woodlands Court, the scheme incorporates communal facilities and is home to a bistro, café, fitness suite, salon and even a cinema!

Cllr Michelle Lowe, our Cabinet Member for housing, says: “These fantastic developments show that it’s possible to create vibrant communities for older people, helping them to live fulfilling lives. Purpose built homes for older people are cheaper to heat and safer as residents are much less likely to suffer a fall.

“What’s more, these schemes allow older people to downsize, often freeing up larger homes for other families.

“They demonstrate we are delivering some of the key aims of our Housing Strategy: providing older people with greater housing choice while tackling isolation and providing support for people living with dementia.

“We’re working closely with housing associations and the private sector to deliver more schemes across the District, providing even greater choice.”

Meander round the District’s merry Christmas markets

‘Tis the season to visit a festive Christmas market where you can discover excellent value and great gifts for friends and family.

Swanley Market
There’s a change to this popular Wednesday market the week before Christmas as it takes place a couple of days earlier than normal on Monday 24 December.

Blighs Christmas market
Get the perfect present at Blighs Meadow market every Saturday before Christmas and every day from 15 to 22 December, 9am to 4pm.

Edenbridge Market
Join in the fun in Edenbridge at the Market Yard car park every Thursday before Christmas.

Sevenoaks High Street Saturday market
Selling fresh foods and other festive treats, this market is running every Saturday from 9am to 4pm before Christmas plus two extra days on Thursday 20 and Friday 21 December.

Sevenoaks Wednesday Markets
This popular general market is open as usual every Wednesday before Christmas.
Major investment in Bradbourne Lakes

In October, we agreed to spend £60,000 to take forward the restoration and improvement of the Bradbourne Lakes.

This was after we commissioned leading landscape and leisure experts, Land Use Consultants (LUC), to work with the community to develop a creative vision for the future of the Lakes.

The funding would see LUC commissioning reports from tree, wildlife and water experts, producing detailed designs for delivering the vision and planning the project delivery before approaching a host of potential funding partners.

Cllr Matthew Dickins, the Council’s Cabinet Member for Direct and Trading Services, says: “The Bradbourne Lakes are a jewel in the Sevenoaks crown and have long been a favourite destination for visitors from both far and wide – but there is lots we’d like to do to polish that gem and really make it sparkle.

“The consultation over the summer, led by renowned experts Land Use Consultants and kindly supported by the Bradbourne Residents’ Association, resulted in a creative vision which clearly sets out the community’s ambition for the Bradbourne Lakes.

“I am extremely grateful to all those who took part in this vital work and we’re now determined to see that vision delivered.”

The five ornamental lakes date back to 1740, once forming part of the Bradbourne Estate before they were handed to Sevenoaks Urban Council in 1935. Over the years, we have worked with the local community to maintain the much-loved park, including investing in new fencing, gates and benches. We are now seeking to carry out the biggest overhaul of the Lakes since they were built.
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