SPRINGING BACK INTO LIFE
As restrictions are set to be eased, it's time to make plans to enjoy your District again!

DIG THIS!
Show off your green-fingered skills with the In Bloom gardening competition
Page 3

NEW LEISURE CENTRE TAKES SHAPE
And Swanley's getting other benefits too!
Page 4

HELPING OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH COVID
Meet some of the volunteers supporting residents through the pandemic
Pages 6 and 7
New water main installation

As part of our £2.8 million project to keep taps in Sevenoaks flowing for generations to come, we’re laying a new 2.2km pipeline through Knole Park.

We’re working closely with landowners throughout this project which is due to complete in September. Temporary trackway has been installed to protect the land.

Find out more about the project at: corporate.southeastwater.co.uk/Sevenoaks

If you have any questions, please call our dedicated customer liaison officer, Steve Anthony, on 07926 535414 or call our out of hours line on 0333 090 365 for any emergencies. Alternatively, please email: sevenoaks@southeastwater.co.uk

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Russell House Parent 2021

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Sevenoaks Study Centre
Mandy Yarnold 01342 851 221
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Free vary. Please refer to your local study centre.
Bank holiday waste collections

Following the Easter and May bank holidays, there will be one or two changes to your rubbish and recycling collection days. The same changes will apply if you use our garden waste collection service.

Your revised collection days are:
- **Good Friday, 2 April** – this collection will take place the next day, Saturday 3 April
- **Easter Monday, 5 April** – all collections this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 10 April
- **Early May Day Bank Holiday, Monday 3 May** – all collections this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 8 May
- **Spring Bank Holiday, Monday 31 May** – all collections this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 5 June.

Please put your sacks out at 7am and your garden waste out at 6.30am on your collection day. Thank you.

Spring into the In Bloom competition

Once again, we’ve teamed up with Coolings garden centre in Knockholt to run this year’s ‘Sevenoaks District In Bloom’.

The competition gives you the chance to show how your gardening skills have blossomed. You don’t need shedloads of experience as the competition is open to novice and expert gardeners alike. And best of all, you don’t need to fork out any money as entry is completely free! In fact everyone who takes part will be given a free £5 voucher to spend at Coolings, limited to one per household.

There’s lots of categories available, including front gardens, allotments, environmentally-friendly gardens, ornamental gardens, shop fronts and pub, restaurant, B&B and hotel gardens too.

Whether you have a large or small garden, an allotment, a window box or a hanging basket, there’s a category for you!

The deadline for entries is Monday 5 July with judging taking place later that month.

For details of this year’s In Bloom categories and how to enter, visit www.coolings.co.uk

Nominate a fabulous front garden

This year, we’re encouraging residents to tell us about fantastic front gardens in the District so we can invite the owners to enter this year’s competition.

Cllr Roddy Hogarth, our Commissioner of the Public Realm, says: “Front gardens can really brighten up an area. If you’ve seen a front garden, residential or business, that stands out or makes you smile, please let us know. We’ll send the owner a postcard thanking them for making a difference and inviting them to enter the In Bloom competition.”

Please send your front garden nominations to public.realm@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Show off your garden on social media

As we move into spring with warmer, longer days on their way, we would love to share photos of your garden or allotment coming into life.

Post your photos to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using our handle and the hashtag #SevenoaksInBloom. We’ll share our favourite posts so our 11,000 followers can see the fruits of your labour and just how wonderful our District really is!

Let us know the location of your garden and feel free to include yourself and friends and family in the shot!

sevenoaksdc

FREE

Ian Hyson from Collings and Cllr Roddy Hogarth are encouraging residents to enter In Bloom.
Leisure centre takes shape

Work on Swanley’s new, £20 million leisure centre is progressing well.

The new energy-efficient White Oak centre should open in early 2022 and will replace the current centre, which at more than 50 years old, is coming to the end of its working life.

As In Shape went to print, the foundations and steel frame had been completed. The main and learner pools had been excavated, most of the shell had been concreted and the cladding and roofing was being added.

Despite the many challenges of the lockdowns, ISG, the company building the centre, is working hard to deliver additional benefits to the wider community.

Recently, ISG ran online ‘built environment’ training sessions for young people to help with their studies. They donated PPE to White Oak Swimming Club and supplied and installed new topsoil and grass at Horizon Primary Academy.

ISG carried out a thorough clean up around the existing leisure centre and the bowls club as well as pruning trees and shrubs and putting up bat boxes.

Karl Taylor, the Senior Project Manager for ISG, says: “The lockdown has hampered our ability to deliver some of the community improvements. But when the restrictions are eased, it will be full steam ahead.

“We are Beams, a local charity that supports disabled children and their families, is desperate for a new kitchen in its St David’s Road centre. We’ve agreed to supply and fit their new kitchen and we can’t wait to get cracking.

“We’ve also offered to re-tarmac the footpath along the back of Horizon Primary Academy as well as running a bridge building competition with pupils.

“We’ve got more virtual site tours with schools and work experience opportunities for construction students in the pipeline too.”

For the latest news on the Centre, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/whiteoak

Safer Internet Day goes online

Eighteen local primary and secondary schools took part in this year’s Safer Internet Day. Because of the pandemic, events took place exclusively online.

The Day celebrated the vast range of information and opportunities on the web and how to separate online fact from fiction.

Resources were provided by the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership. Throughout the day, the schools shared photos of their activities and participation certificates on social media.

Cllr Lesley Dyball, our Cabinet Member for People and Places, says:

“Helping young people to stay safe online is a priority for the Council. We were delighted that so many schools could take part. The internet has transformed our lives for the better, but we know there are potential risks. This year’s event was a fun way to help young people spot fake and misleading information online. This should stand them in good stead for many years to come.”

The annual event took place on 9 February. Find out more about Safer Internet Day and staying safe online, at www.saferinternet.org.uk

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
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Academy Consulting
Meet the lockdown volunteers

When the first lockdown was announced back in March 2020, we were overwhelmed with how many of you wanted to help others.

Jenny Godfrey is an officer at Sevenoaks District Council who was involved in setting up the Care for our Community.

Jenny says: “Helping to set up and support the scheme in the early days of the lockdown was challenging but exceptionally rewarding as the immediate response and action by the community was incredible. It was a privilege to be involved in this and my overriding memories are of the sheer scale of warmth and energy shown by so many in the District.

Jenny adds: “When I speak to residents and hear their relief that someone is going to be able to help them, perhaps with the collection of a prescription or some shopping, I realise the enormity of the impact of this scheme. Our District’s volunteers have been and continue to be amazing and we owe enormous thanks to them for continuing to support our residents.”

Reverend Johnny Douglas from Hextable became a volunteer lead as a commitment to his community. Rev. Johnny co-ordinates 31 volunteers across Hextable and Swanley village as well as running errands, befriending and signposting help to vulnerable residents too.

Johnny says: “Being a volunteer is utterly rewarding. Serving the people of the community and bringing hope during the challenges and weariness of this time is so important.”

A year on, we’ve caught up with a few of our ‘Sevenoaks District Care for our Community’ recruits to see what life is like as a volunteer.

Care for our Community in numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help requests fulfilled</th>
<th>Number of volunteers</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1,665</td>
<td>1,276</td>
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If you or someone you know needs help with shopping and other small tasks, register for help on our website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/requesthelp or call 01732 227000.

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk sdc_newsdesk
Toni Roast is an Assistant Town Clerk at Swanley Town Council. She wanted to help vulnerable people when the pandemic hit so became a lead volunteer for the Swanley area. In her time as a volunteer, Toni has done all kinds of tasks, including regular errands like shopping and prescription collecting to more unusual requests like organising the registration of a new-born baby!

Toni says: “It is great being able to help people and make a difference to their day. Some days can be very busy but having such great volunteers has really contributed to bringing Swanley together.”

District Councillor Lynda Harrison who represents Fawkham & West Kingsdown has always enjoyed being part of the community and knew she wanted to help early on in March 2020.

Lynda says: “To be able to tell a person in need that someone can help them and hearing their relief is just so rewarding. Some of my volunteers have built up friendships and contacts with people they’ve helped that will stay after the COVID-19 restrictions have passed.

Lynda adds: "We will continue to help people for as long as we are needed. I want to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers in West Kingsdown who are doing an amazing job to help me support our village; it is true community spirit.”

The expected high standards of safety, quality and efficacy for the COVID-19 vaccine remain the same as for any other medicine or vaccine.
Get out and about this spring with bats, bluebells and bunnies!

Shake off the winter months and pandemic blues with an Easter trail or a walk through a bluebell-carpeted wood.

After months of closure, local gardens and places to visit are expected to throw open their doors again very soon with some gardens already open. So mark the arrival of spring – and something like normality – with flower festivals, bat walks and willow workshops.

Bluebells and blooms
Did you know that more than half of the world’s bluebells grow in the UK? And we’ve got more than our fair share of them right here in the Sevenoaks District. Bluebells usually bloom from mid-April, although they can arrive earlier if the weather has been mild, so now is a great time for a stroll through a local bluebell wood.

Emmetts Garden’s slopes will be swathed in the delicate blue blooms – the woods have even been designated a site of special scientific interest because of the native bluebells that grow here (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/emmetts-garden). You could see magnolias, azaleas and tulips too.

Riverhill Himalayan Gardens should reopen after their annual hibernation, and their bluebell display is so spectacular it’s usually celebrated with a Bluebell Festival. Check out their website www.riverhillgardens.co.uk for the latest info and springtime events.

Other local places to see swathes of bluebells include Kemsing Down and Stubbs Wood.

By the third week of April, Hever Castle’s grounds will be ablaze with more than 25,000 blooming tulips (www.hevercastle.co.uk). The daffs should still be blasting forth their cheery hues too. New for 2021 is a bed of 4,000 tulips planted to mimic a flowing rainbow, next to Two Sisters’ lawn. And if you can’t visit in person, follow Hever Castle on social media for daily pics of the different varieties on display. Budding gardeners should check the website for video tutorials and worksheets from the Castle’s head gardener, Neil Miller.

Easter activities for all ages
Penshurst Place gardens and grounds are expected to move to full-time opening from late March, bursting into spring with a photo album trail that puts kids hot on the heels of the

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
Easter Rabbit throughout the Easter holidays (www.penshurstplace.com). This spring will also be the first time Penshurst's new cherry trees blossom – guaranteed to soothe your winter-weary eyes! The grounds will also be bursting with tulips, wild flowers and more bluebells.

Bore Place kicks off spring with a bunch of workshops (www.boreplace.org). Learn to work willow into practical garden structures such as sweet pea frames and sunflower supports, or spend four days learning to saw, axe, shave and lathe green wood (adults only). In May, you can join a bat walk that uses bat detectors (yes, there is such a thing!) to listen for the creatures as they hunt for insects at dusk (ages 5+).

At the time of writing, not many places have confirmed their springtime activities – it's difficult to make plans during a national lockdown – but many hope to run Easter trails and other seasonal events. Keep an eye on your favourite places' websites and social media for the latest updates.

Park life
If lugging your kids and all their paraphernalia around potentially muddy countryside doesn’t appeal, now is also a great time of year to spend some time in your local park. The paths are wheel-friendly, the grass is green again and life is returning to the ponds and trees.

With more than 15 attractions and mobility friendly paths spread through its 60 acres, Swanley Park is brilliant for younger kids (www.swanleypark.co.uk). As well as the playground, you'll find mini golf, boat hire, a bouncy castle zone, a miniature railway and dino karts (charges apply). Or you can simply feed the ducklings.

Lullingstone Country Park has more of a back-to-nature feel, so let little ones run wild in this beautiful space (www.kent.gov.uk and search for 'Lullingstone country park')

Follow the 2.4km Discovery Trail – there's play equipment along the path – or take in springtime views of the Darent Valley and Lullingstone Castle on the more challenging Lullingstone Loop. Not all the paths are surfaced but most are fairly flat. Swing by the visitor centre for more info.

And if the weather doesn't play ball, check out what's on at The Stag (stagsevenoaks.co.uk). Expected to open from late May, your local theatre will appreciate your support after a particularly challenging year.

Five things you probably didn’t know about bluebells

1. Native bluebells are a protected species and it's a criminal offence to uproot one intentionally.
2. Other names for the bluebell are wood bell, cuckoo's boot and witches' thimbles.
3. In folklore, bluebells ring at daybreak to call fairies back to the woods.
4. Bluebell juice is toxic in large doses.
5. Medieval archers used the sticky sap to glue flight feathers to their arrows.
Sky lanterns (also known as Chinese lanterns) usually consist of a paper-covered wire or bamboo frame and an open flame heat source, which lifts the lantern into the air. They can float for miles from the point of release before eventually returning to earth as litter, posing many dangers. Anyone releasing a lantern has no control over where it will land. Animals can eat or become entangled or entrapped in their remains.

When eaten, sharp parts like the frame can tear and puncture an animal’s throat or stomach causing internal bleeding. Animals can become entangled in fallen lantern frames, where they can suffer from injury and stress trying to get free or starve to death from being trapped.

Marine life is not immune either as they too are at risk from lanterns falling into the sea.

What’s more, lanterns pose a fire hazard as they use an open flame which has destroyed wildlife habitats, set animal housing, feed and bedding alight and set fire to crops, farm buildings and even fences and sheds in residential areas.

Sky lanterns are not the only culprit - helium balloons also cause significant problems. Once released and uncontrolled, these will eventually become litter in a tree, hedge or a field with the potential to harm.

Cllr Margot McArthur, our Cabinet member for Cleaner & Greener, says: “We’re asking residents to think twice before releasing any sky lanterns or foil balloons. They have the potential to harm wildlife, farm animals, property and the environment. There are of course alternatives that have a minimal impact. Instead of a sky lantern, you could instead use stationary candles and nightlights or static lanterns or outdoor lights.”

How does your garden waste grow?

After a lot of time indoors, most of us are looking forward to spending more time in the garden and spring is a great time to get your outdoor spaces in order.

With all those extra cuttings, it’s also a perfect time to sign up to our popular and eco-friendly garden waste collections.

Our time saving service means less trips to the tip and protects your car from mud and dirt. It’s also good for the environment as all the garden waste we take away is composted then sold as a soil improver and fertilizer.

We collect your garden waste every two weeks, usually on the same day as your recycling and rubbish is collected, and there are two options to choose from:

- An annual permit for a 240-litre bin for £47 or a 140-litre bin for £32
- 25 garden waste sacks for £15

Join over 12,500 Sevenoaks District residents and apply for a permit today! Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/gardenwaste or call 01732 227000.
Local homes for local people

Sevenoaks District is one of the most protected building areas in the country resulting in high land prices. This protection in turn produces a challenge to providing new affordable housing for local people. As a result, we are working with partners to deliver new homes for people who otherwise would not be able to afford to live locally. The newest example of this successful approach is this latest build in the Weald.

Local needs homes are built for people with a strong connection to their parish. They help young people to remain in the community in which they grew up. They also help older people to downsize and stay where they have connections. These homes benefit the community as a whole by retaining people who support and work in local businesses.

The homes are usually rented and cannot be bought under ‘Right to Buy’. Local people always have priority when they become available. The special nature of these homes enables them to be built on Green Belt land.

Weald Parish Council got the ball rolling by asking local residents and those with a connection to the village about housing. The survey found there was a need for new affordable homes for local people.

Rosie Wood, the Chairman of Sevenoaks Weald Parish Council, says:

“We suspected for some time there was a need for more affordable housing. The survey confirmed this. It presented a strong case for a housing association and Sevenoaks District Council to deliver new affordable homes in the village just for local people.”

The two new Weald homes are owned and managed by West Kent Housing Association. Both homes will enable people with a very strong local connection to live in the parish. Kate Flaherty, Partnerships and Development Director at West Kent explains:

“This is a great achievement that really shows what can be achieved by partnership working. West Kent is determined to provide affordable, quality homes throughout Kent. It’s wonderful that these have provided homes for families who may otherwise have to leave the village they love.”

Cllr Kevin Maskell, Sevenoaks District Council’s Cabinet Member for Housing and Health, adds:

“Building affordable homes for local people is a priority for this Council. But with high land prices and 93% of the District in the Green Belt, it is not straightforward. By working with parish councils and housing associations to identify local needs, together we can help to deliver these much needed homes”.

If you feel your parish would benefit from new affordable housing for local people, please speak with your parish council. Sevenoaks District Council is funding a programme of housing needs surveys in every parish over the next five years.

If you’d like to know more about housing for local people, email our Housing Strategy Team, housing.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call 01732 227000.
Elections with a difference

On Thursday 6 May, you can vote in the Kent County Council and the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

But this year, we’ve made a few changes for residents voting at polling stations to help keep everyone safe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting on election day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polling stations...</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>We’ve changed the layout of some polling stations so there’s enough room for social distancing and in many cases, a one-way system will be in place. Some polling stations are unavailable for these elections, which means you may not be voting at your usual place. The location of your polling station will be printed on your polling card that will be delivered before the elections.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entering the polling station...</td>
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<tr>
<td>We’re limiting the number of people who can enter some polling stations at any one time, so you may be asked to wait outside until you are invited in to vote.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bring a pen or pencil...</td>
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<tr>
<td>We’re asking you to bring your own pen or pencil to mark your ballot papers.</td>
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<td>Wear a face covering...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please wear a face covering before you enter the polling station, unless you have a medical exemption.</td>
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Postal voting

If you don’t want to vote in person at a polling station, you can register for a postal vote instead.

Getting a postal vote is simple and anyone who is registered to vote can apply.

You can register for a postal vote just for these elections, for a specific period or until you decide you no longer want to vote by post.

Visit [www.gov.uk/voting-in-the-uk/postal-voting](http://www.gov.uk/voting-in-the-uk/postal-voting) and download the application form or call us on 01732 227000 and we’ll send you a form.

The last day you can apply for a postal vote for these elections is 5pm on Tuesday 20 April 2021.

Are you on the electoral register?

You can only vote if your name appears on the electoral register.

You can register in minutes at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) or you can request a registration form by calling us on 01732 227000. The deadline to register to vote for these elections is Monday 19 April 2021.

Your local services, your say!

These elections give you an opportunity to say who should run some of your local services.

Kent County Council is responsible for providing care services, public health, libraries, waste disposal, roads, pavements and public rights of way.

The Police and Crime Commissioner will decide Kent Police’s priorities for the coming four years.

Election job opportunities

If you’d like to get involved in this year’s elections, you can apply to work in one of our polling stations.

Full training will be provided.

For details of the roles, including the rates of pay, visit [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/electionjobs](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/electionjobs)

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk sdc_newsdesk
Cash lifeline for businesses

It’s been a year since the first national Coronavirus lockdown was introduced and our lives changed forever.

Businesses have been some of the hardest hit, with the retail and hospitality sector forced to close their doors for months at a time.

However, we’ve been doing our best to support them through these unprecedented times.

Over the past year, we have distributed million of pounds in non-repayable grants to hundreds of businesses.

One business to receive grants was Edenbridge based company Rent-a-Keg. Director Daniel Kenney, spoke with In Shape.

“When the lockdown began, our customers began postponing then cancelling their bookings. Even though we had diversified into home delivery, we were struggling to keep our heads above water.

“The grants have allowed us to keep going so, when the restrictions are relaxed and business picks up again, we’ll be ready to go. Thanks to the support, we’re positive about the future.”

You can view details of the latest business grants and support at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/lockdownsupport

Local businesses need support more than ever. The good news is there’s lots you can do to help them through the COVID-19 restrictions.

• Shop locally online – many offer a click and collect or they can post goods to you
• Support your local pubs and restaurants – even if they’re closed, many offer click and collect services
• If you use social media, follow the accounts of your favourite local businesses and share their posts
• If you’re happy with their services, write an online review on Google, Trustpilot or a similar review site.

Free help and advice for small businesses

If you run a small business and you’re considering diversification, you can get FREE advice from the Centre for MicroBusiness.

The Kent based Centre specializes in helping sole-traders and small businesses. Over the years, they’ve supported hundreds of people, including throughout the current crises.

Roger House, one of the Centre’s Directors, spoke with In Shape about the help on offer.

“Many small businesses have seen big reductions in their income since the start of the pandemic. In response, some have diversified their work. That’s where we can help.”

“We offer free, tailored, one-to-one support. Sometimes people come to us with well-formed ideas. We can act as an extra pair of eyes and ears highlighting any gaps in the proposals.”

“At the other end of the spectrum, others don’t have a firm plan in mind. Here we will look at their strengths and put forward options we believe are a natural fit.”

“We also help with marketing plans and how best to harness social media, a cost-effective medium for reaching new customers.”

For more information, and to book a one-to-one slot with an advisor, visit www.ncmb.co.uk
Shift that lockdown weight!

Nearly 50% of adults in the UK claim to have gained weight during lockdown. Whether it be from comfort eating or the extra glass of wine here and there, it all adds up.

If you fall into that category, now is a great time to get back into shape and our One You team are here to help. Just like they did with 24-year-old Commercial Assistant Eleanor Morris from Edenbridge. Eleanor was referred to One You after seeking advice from her GP about losing weight.

Eleanor had a difficult relationship with food and exercise but found out straight away that One You worked for her.

Eleanor says: "The service is excellent. My One You group leader Natalia made me feel at ease with weekly phone calls and group discussions via video calls along with exercise sessions."

Eleanor joined the free weight management service delivered by the Sevenoaks One You team. Each week she gained new knowledge and skills on how to adopt a healthy diet. For Eleanor, learning how to cook tasty, healthy meals was particularly beneficial.

"Cooking healthy meals has made a huge difference. Using the Easy Meals app helped me for inspiration."

Eleanor has now lost an impressive one stone 4lbs and is still going with her new healthy lifestyle.

"Since starting One You I feel so much healthier and happier. If you are thinking about signing up, you 100% should!"

If Eleanor has inspired you to take the first step, contact One You today via our website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/oneyou.

You are not alone

The last year has taken its toll on most people and the impact of Coronavirus has been different for everyone.

If the pressures of lockdown are getting to you, talking about how you are feeling is the first step to tackling the issue. If you’re not comfortable speaking to someone you know, there are lots of free services available to lend a non-judgemental ear and offer support.

Stevie Rice, CEO of local mental health charity West Kent Mind, says: “It’s so important to do what we can to look after our mental wellbeing, especially in these uncertain times. At West Kent Mind, we want to make sure anyone struggling with their mental health has somewhere to turn for advice and support. Visit our website www.westkentmind.org.uk for details of how to contact us and all the services and support we offer our local community.”

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk
Sevenoaks students get creative to improve the public realm

Students from Knole Academy have made a series of short films in a bid to improve local public spaces.

Four teams made up of Year 12 pupils entered a Council-run competition to assist us with our plans to improve the public realm - areas that are free and open to all.

Each team shot a film that set out their priorities for public spaces and their concerns, such as the impact of litter and fly-tipping on the environment. The filming also supported the pupil’s career development.

After a tight run race the judges, including Cllr Roddy Hogarth and the actor and former Sevenoaks resident Douglas Reith (who recently starred in Downton Abbey) declared Gabby Granville, Lisa Chawira and Lucy M’Grady the winners.

Cllr Roddy Hogarth, our Commissioner of the Public Realm, says: “Public spaces are the most important places outside the home that shape our lives. We felt it was really important that we heard the views of young people as part of our work to make the best use of these places.”

“The quality of the films were outstanding and I want to say a big thank you to all the pupils who took part. Their input will help us make the very best of our public spaces.”

You can view the entries on YouTube by searching for ‘M12 Productions’.

Drawing up plans for public art

We are commissioning a public art installation close to Marks & Spencer in Sevenoaks and you can soon have a say on the options for the site.

The artwork, which is in a prominent and well-used area, will reflect the location, culture and history of the town and will stay in place for at least 20 years.

Artists were recently invited to come forward with their ideas for the site and we had an amazing 38 submissions.

You’ll have an opportunity to have your say on four shortlisted submissions when they go on display on our website from Monday 12 April to Friday 7 May 2021.

Cllr Roddy Hogarth is leading the project and says: “We are extremely excited to be bringing public art to such a well-used location, right in the heart of Sevenoaks town. The final artwork will be visually and physically accessible and should have meaning for residents and visitors.

“The past year has shown us that our outdoor spaces are incredibly important so now, more than ever, we want to make the most of our public areas.

“We would love to know what you think of the shortlisted proposals, so please visit our website and have your say.”

The project is costing around £17,000 and will be funded by contributions from developers.

To view the proposals after 12 April, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/publicrealm
Sencio launches home fitness

Exercise has as many benefits mentally as it does physically. The last year though has been a challenge for those who benefit from ensuring fitness is a part of their lifestyle. To help people look after their wellbeing, Sencio has launched a home fitness hub. Wellness supervisor James Arnold spoke to In Shape.

Q. Online exercise has, for a lot of people, been one of the many changes over the past year. How has Sencio gone about creating its virtual offering?

A. Lockdowns have been devastating for the leisure industry and, like most, we’ve had to adapt quickly. Sencio has remained committed to ensuring it plays a part in keeping our community mentally and physically well. We have recorded our most popular fitness classes with a selection of instructors from all three centres so members can see a familiar face and get back to the fitness they love.

Q. What classes are available and how do they operate?

A. We’ve launched both pre-filmed and live Facebook classes. They are designed to support members and help them stay active. The fitness hub is accessible to everyone and our plan is to continue with it even once we re-open. To start off, we introduced six workout programmes and five class videos. We are continually adding to this library and taking on board feedback to help shape what we offer next.

Q. By the time this issue of In Shape appears, we hope gyms will be planning for their reopening. However, do you see the online exercise environment as one you’ll continue to develop?

A. I think things will look rather different on the other side and confidence will take time to return. Fitness will have to change and, whilst we all believe there is still no substitute for exercising with friends or in a class environment, online has been extremely important and will continue to play its part.

Q. For lots of people, going to a group class can be as much a social thing. As trainers, how do you go about creating that “atmosphere” virtually?

A. Engaging with members is everything in group exercise. That “family” and “we’re all in this together” feel we strive to provide must come across in classes and our instructors have a great rapport with members. These online classes recreate some of that camaraderie and, we hope, help until such a time as we can all be back together.

Q. We’ve all begun to realise the huge impact the pandemic is having on our mental wellbeing. What advice would you have for someone who doesn’t exercise or who has struggled and stopped exercising?

A. This has been tough for everyone to varying degrees. It’s all about balance, so I’ve told people to go with the flow but also reminded them exercise is incredibly powerful. Sure, it’ll help burn off some of those lockdown calories, but even 30 minutes a day can crucially raise the mood, motivate you, clear the mind and give your day structure.

For more details go to www.sencio.org.uk/homefitness
Back in the swim

At the time In Shape went to press, none of us knew what would be happening next week, never mind when this issue landed on doormats. Assuming some restrictions will be relaxed by the summer – and given education has been so disrupted – we want to take the opportunity to remind people about the importance of safety in and around water.

Almost 140,000 children cannot swim the statutory 25 metres on leaving primary school. That’s one-in-four and, when you consider more than 400 people accidentally drown in the UK every year, the need for education and increased safety awareness is vital.

You can join Sencio Community Leisure’s swimming lesson courses at any time of the year subject to availability and, of course, prevailing safety constraints. Visit www.sencio.org.uk for details.

Spring into activity

It’ll come as no surprise that 78% of us have spent more time sitting down this past year, while figures from UK Active – a not-for-profit association that promotes commercial fitness gyms and community leisure centres – show 42% of adults estimate their sedentary time may have increased by as much as 14 hours a week. And this comes on top of a country already viewed as being largely inactive and at risk of even higher obesity levels.

The guys at Sencio Community Leisure have a few quick tips to help try and limit ‘sofa time.’

Working from home and no longer walking to work or the train station? Try taking a stroll before work. This can help reduce time spent sitting - and also boosts your mood, especially good with the arrival of lighter mornings.

1. Take phone calls standing up or walking.
2. Take regular breaks from the computer. Even walking to the kitchen for a cup of tea or general household tasks help to keep your circulation moving and reduces strain.
3. Replace some sedentary activities with exercise. Try walking with a good podcast or some favourite music.
4. We’re fortunate to have an abundance of television and streaming shows - but it’s all too easy to binge-watch for hours. Try standing up and stretching or walking a lap of the room during commercial breaks or between episodes. It’s not much, but it all helps!

For more tips go to www.sencio.org.uk/physical-health-tips

Subject to further Government guidance, Lullingstone Park Golf Course will reopen on March 29 and Edenbridge, Sevenoaks and White Oak leisure centres on April 12 (with certain activity restrictions in place).
Sevenoaks District Community Safety Unit

To report or receive advice on: anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, graffiti, licensed premises, abandoned vehicles, environmental and noise nuisance, crime reduction, neighbourhood watch and other community safety issues, call 01732 227000 or e-mail community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Every year, the Community Safety Partnership, which includes the Police, Kent County Council, Kent Fire & Rescue, housing associations, charities and ourselves, draw up an annual action plan with priorities for tackling crime and community safety concerns. These priorities are based on an assessment of the last year’s crime data and speaking with residents about what concerns them most. The plan includes 34 targeted initiatives to tackle current and emerging crime as well as residents’ fear of crime. Here we take a look at some of the actions in the latest plan.

To find out more, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communitysafety

We’ve been working with residents and partners to produce a new Community Safety Action Plan to keep Sevenoaks District one of the safest areas in the country.

Serious and organised crime

_Burglary, vehicle crime, violence and ‘County lines’_

Follow up visits, patrols in areas of concern and work with young people.

Anti-social behavior

_Fly tipping, neighbour nuisance, graffiti, noise and community nuisance_

Working with neighbouring councils to tackle fly-tipping, enforcement and support for young people at risk of committing serious crime.
Reporting crime
To report a crime that is taking place, always call 999. If the incident has passed, call Kent Police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555111

Social media
For the latest community safety news follow us on Twitter visit @sdccsp

Tackling domestic abuse
For support and advice for all victims of Domestic Abuse call the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service on 01892 570538
For the Community Domestic Abuse Programme for men call 07933 359210 or visit www.kentcdap.org

Domestic abuse
Including stalking
Support for domestic abuse victims and training to help people to identify and report concerns and support for perpetrators to change their behavior.

Safeguarding
Protecting vulnerable people, mental health, human trafficking, modern slavery and counter-terrorism
Police visits to businesses that may use trafficked people and training for public sector staff to identify modern slavery and people at risk of extremism.

Doorstep crime and fraud
Rogue traders, bogus callers, scams and online fraud
Tell people how to spot and avoid these types of crimes and support for young people.

Substance misuse
Illegal drugs and alcohol abuse
Speaking with primary school pupils about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and help for people looking to reduce their intake of alcohol.
Your Councillors

Sevenoaks District Council’s priorities and policies are decided by 54 Councillors who were elected by local people. The Sevenoaks District is divided into 26 smaller areas, known as wards and each ward is represented by one or more District Councillors. You are very welcome to contact the District Councillors to express your views and to ask for their help on local issues.

Conservative (C)  Independent (I)  Labour (L)  Liberal Democrat (LD)  Sevenoaks Independent (SI)

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Alan Pett (C)  Ash and New Ash Green  clrlpett@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01732 227000

Anna Firth (C)  Brasted, Chevening and Sundridge  clrlfirth@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01732 227000

James London (C)  Brasted, Chevening and Sundridge  clrlondon@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01732 464678

Matthew Dickins (C)  Cowden and Hever  clrmdickins@sevenoaks.gov.uk  07910 328110

Rachel Waterton (I)  Crockenhill and Well Hill  clrlwaterton@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01732 227000

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Cameron Brown (C)  Dunton Green and Riverhead  clrlbrown@sevenoaks.gov.uk  07950 266746

James Barnett (C)  Edenbridge North and East  clrlbarnett@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01732 227000

Stuart McGregor (C)  Edenbridge North and East  clrlmcgregor@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01732 865559

Alan Layland (C)  Edenbridge South and West  clrlayland@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01732 864140

Margot McArthur (C)  Edenbridge South and West  clrlmcarthur@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01732 227000

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Faye Parkin (C)  Fawkham and West Kingsdown  clrlparkin@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01474 879425

John Grint (C)  Halstead, Knockholt and Badgers Mount  clrlgrint@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01959 532809

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Larry Abraham (C)  Hartley and Hodsoll Street  clrlabraham@sevenoaks.gov.uk  01474 706690

Penny Cole (C)  Hartley and Hodsoll Street  clrlpennycole@sevenoaks.gov.uk  07540 668751
How to contact your District Councillors

We have provided your District Councillors’ phone numbers and e-mail addresses. If you would like to write to them, their postal addresses are available on our website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/councillors or by calling us on 01732 227000. If you are unsure which ward you live in, please call us on 01732 227000.
Reinvigorating our towns

In this issue of In Shape, we look at the work to regenerate Council-owned sites in our town centres as well as some of our plans for the future.

Swanley
- Work is underway on the new business hub at 27 to 37 High Street, the former Meeting Point. When complete, the development will include energy efficient heating, electric vehicle charging points, cycle parking, a wildlife-friendly garden and new homes. Work is expected to be finished in 2022.
- We’re putting together a team to take forward the redevelopment of Bevan Place, the former Working Men’s Club. Ideas include a mix of business space and new homes. You’ll have an opportunity to comment on our proposals as part of the planning process. This site, along with the former Meeting Point opposite, forms the southern gateway to the town center. Redeveloping these sites will help to regenerate the wider entrance to the town.
- Much of the structural work on the new White Oak Leisure Centre has been completed – full details are on page 4.

Edenbridge
- Earlier this year, we submitted a planning application for a bigger, much improved community shop in the Stangrove Estate. The application includes new communal parking to tackle historical parking problems and some new homes, the proceeds from which would help fund the improvements.

Sevenoaks
- We’re setting up a project team to look at how we can improve the area between the High Street and Buckhurst Avenue. We already own the bus station, the adjoining car park and the former M&Co building, which includes land to the rear. Working with other nearby landowners, our ambition is to provide new community facilities, improved pedestrian links, new business space and much-needed new homes. The ideas are at a very early stage and there will be plenty of opportunities to have your say as our plans develop.

.Disabled people and what matters most

The Sevenoaks District Access Group is asking residents to comment on a new National Strategy for Disabled People.

The Access Group represents disabled people living in the Sevenoaks District. They work with disabled people and local organisations to make communities easier for everyone.

Simon Goldsmith, the Chairman of the Group, spoke with In Shape.
"Disabled people face many barriers in life. It is only right that the new National Strategy is based on their lived experience and what matters to them," says Simon.

"Right now, many disabled people are also experiencing isolation, loneliness and a lack of access to technology."

"The Government wants to hear about their experiences past and present, the barriers they face and what could be done to improve their lives."

'I'd encourage disabled people and their supporters to comment on the draft strategy. If you are unable to do so at home, please ask a support group or local organisation to help."

For details, visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disability-unit

The survey closes on Friday 23 April.
Making Council Tax discounts easy

Applying for help with your bill is both simple and quick.

Have you ever thought you might be entitled to a reduction in your Council Tax, but the idea of applying for it has put you off? Or perhaps you don’t have the time to do the research?

You’re not alone. Lots of people think that applying for a Council Tax discount or exemption is complicated and time consuming. But in truth, it really isn’t. And if you need assistance, we’re here to help!

Severe mental impairment
If you live with someone who is severely mentally impaired, including dementia, you can apply for a discount.

Physical disability
If you or someone in your home is disabled and uses a wheelchair, has a treatment room or a second bathroom, you can apply for a discount.

Live-in carers
If you have a live-in carer who is not a spouse or partner and provides 35 or more hours of care a week, you may be entitled to a 25% discount.

Low income
If you are on a low income or out of work, we may be able to reduce your Council Tax bill if you apply for Council Tax Reduction.

Students
People aged 18 or over in full-time education may be entitled to a discount. If everyone in your house is a student, you may be exempt from paying.

Living alone
If you’re aged 18 or over and live alone, you can apply for a 25% discount.

As with all discounts and exemptions, there are some conditions. Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/counciltax and click ‘Reduce your bill’ to find out more. You can also call us on 01732 227000 or email revenues@sevenoaks.gov.uk to discuss with our team.

Sevenoaks District Council at your fingertips

Main Office
Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG
01732 227000
Open Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5pm and Friday 8.45am to 4.45pm.
Emergencies (outside office hours) 01732 227000
then listen to the options.

Leisure centres
Ash Green Sports Centre*
01474 707164
Edenbridge Leisure Centre**
01732 865665
Lullingstone Park Golf Course**
01959 533793
The Olympic, Swanley*
01322 669201

Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Centre***
01732 451889
Sevenoaks Leisure Centre**
01732 470700
White Oak Indoor Bowls Centre, Swanley***
01322 665571
White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley**
01322 662188

* Operated by the local town or parish Council
** Operated by Sencio Community Leisure
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