

InShape

The newsletter of Sevenoaks District Council



Driving down our carbon emissions

We're investing in new zero and lower emissions vehicles to make our fleet cleaner and greener

PAGE 3

In this issue...

Tackling the sticky issue of pavement gum

Our chewing gum removal team hit the streets



PAGE 4

Gary's business has found a new home

Businessman moves his operation to our newly opened work hub



PAGE 11

Hello lamp post!

Chat to street furniture for information and advice!



PAGE 17



Meeting Room Hire

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assessments available from our Occupational Therapist
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making life less challenging

Reach out to us for a FREE home demonstration

Get Chitter Chattering!

We're very excited to launch Chitter Chatter, a new scheme to get residents talking in cafés across the District!

It's a great way to encourage the good ol' art of conversation whilst meeting new people.

Those who wish to take part just need to turn up to a participating café, sit on a designated Chitter Chatter table and wait for others to join them.

Cllr Lesley Dyball, our Cabinet Member for People and Places, says: "Chitter Chatter is a brilliant scheme for anyone who wants to make friends or talk to new people in a safe environment. Anyone of any age can come along to strike up a conversation with others who want to chat."

For more information visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/chitterchatter.

If you own a café and would like to join the Chitter Chatter scheme, email us on communities@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



Cafés that are taking part:

- Café on the Vine, Sevenoaks
- Hollybush Café, Sevenoaks
- Bridges, Edenbridge
- Nextdoor, Hextable

Driving down our carbon emissions

As part of our ongoing work to reduce our carbon footprint, we have invested in new zero and lower emission vehicles to make our fleet cleaner and greener.

In July we took receipt of a new electric powered van for our Environmental Health team.

The van, with low running costs and no emissions, is the fifth electric vehicle to join our fleet.

In recent months we also took ownership of 10 new waste collection trucks.

Currently, electric waste trucks do not have the range needed to cover our large, rural District. So we have gone for the next best thing, the most efficient diesel vehicles on the market.

The new British assembled trucks meet the latest 'Euro 6 Standard' with emissions reduced by 55% and fuel consumption 10% lower than the vehicles they are replacing.

With the lowest possible fuel consumption, they are also helping to keep our running costs to a minimum.



Our Animal Welfare Officer with her new electric powered van

As well as these new vehicles, we have introduced a new green staff travel plan to help reduce car journeys to and from work and during the working day.

We are making a pool car and electric bikes available to staff who have travelled to work by sustainable means (public transport, as a car passenger, by bike or by foot) for meetings and site visits. We're also setting up a new staff car sharing scheme while promoting cycling, walking and public transport.

Tackling the sticky issue of street gum

We have secured a further £25,000 to remove chewing gum stuck to the pavements of Swanley and Westerham.

We were just one of 56 councils that successfully applied for funding from the Chewing Gum Task Force, administered by Keep Britain Tidy and funded by the major gum manufacturers.



The funding is being used to remove the gum using our new 'Ecogum' machine, an electronic, rechargeable unit that allows gum to be eliminated from any surface in a few seconds. It only uses hot water, a biodegradable sugar-based solution and a bit of elbow grease.

The funding is also being used for a deep clean of both areas and new signs to encourage the public to put their gum in the bin or face the possibility of a fine.

Last year we secured £20,000 from the same fund to clean the streets of Sevenoaks and Edenbridge and to put in place new preventative signs.

Cllr Margot McArthur, our Cabinet Member for Cleaner and Greener, says: "While we encourage residents to put their gum in the bin, sadly, there's always a minority of people who are prepared to litter.

"But we're determined to do our bit to tackle the problem. So we're delighted to have received additional funding to help us with the ongoing challenge of chewing gum removal.

"National research found in the areas that benefited from last year's clean ups and preventative signage, the rate of gum littering was lower than before."

Silver Sunday is back for 2023!

As part of this year's Silver Sunday celebrations, we are promoting a series of free events, activities and groups for older residents.

From Tai-Chi to coffee mornings, swimming to walking groups – there is something for everyone!

Silver Sunday started over a decade ago with a simple tea dance. Within a few short years, it has transformed into a national campaign to celebrate the contribution of older people while promoting social activities and bringing generations together.

This year's Silver Sunday takes place on Sunday 1 October 2023. However, in a bid to extend the fun, we will be celebrating Silver Sunday events from September right through to December.

Events organised by us include information mornings in Chiddingstone, Edenbridge, Sevenoaks, Swanley and Westerham where you can find out about activities and services for older residents. We're also organising free tea dances in Swanley, Edenbridge and Sevenoaks.

Our partners are also running many exciting Silver Sunday events over the coming weeks. You can view all the local Silver Sunday events at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/silversunday.

Alternatively, to request your Silver Sunday programme, please email communities@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call 01732 227000.



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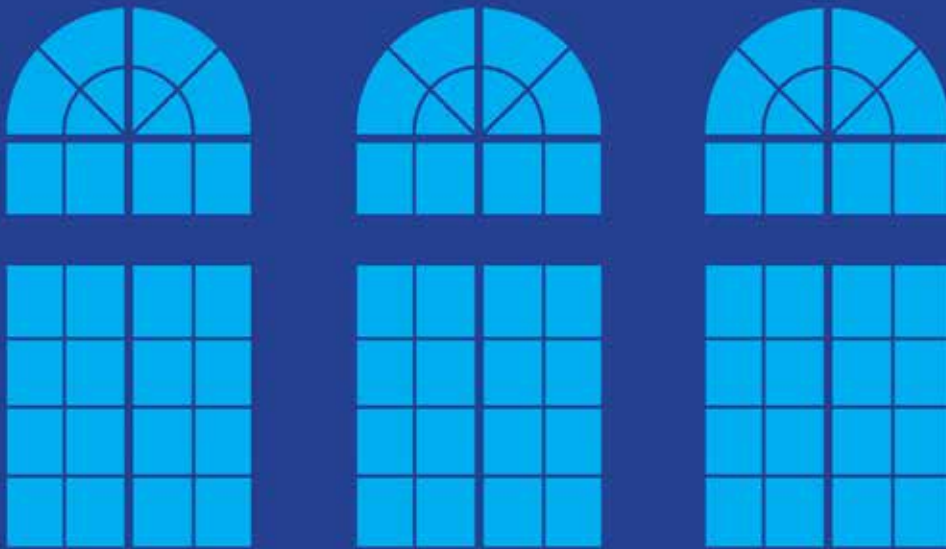
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SEARCH STAG SEVENOAKS



WHAT'S ON STAGE

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER MOTOWN SHOW
THE TIMELESS SONGS OF BARBRA STREISAND

LA BOHÉME

DAVID LIVE

NORTHERN SOUL LIVE

DECADES OF BOND

SPANDAU TOO - SPANDAU BALLET TRIBUTE

AN EVENING WITH ADRIAN EDMONDSON

WHAT'S ON SCREEN

ALL THE LATEST NEW RELEASES INCLUDING:

THE EXPENDABLES 4

DUNE II

NAPOLEON

STAG SELECTED:

NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE: A LITTLE LIFE
STARRING HAPPY VALLEY'S JAMES NORTON

EXHIBITION ON SCREEN: KLIMT AND THE KISS

WITH NEW EVENTS ADDED REGULARLY AND THE CINEMA SCHEDULE UPDATED EVERY WEEK

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New affordable homes



Our affordable housing company, Quercus Housing, has purchased 17 new homes in the District.

The Council owned company acquired the modern, energy efficient flats at 27-29 High Street in Swanley, above the new Meeting Point business hub.

Eleven of the rented homes are occupied by local essential workers and those with a housing need on our housing register.

A further six homes are being rented by Ukrainian essential workers who were previously living with hosts in the District.

Since Quercus Housing was set up in 2018, it has invested in 58 new affordable homes, including the latest properties above the Meeting Point.

As Quercus Housing is wholly owned by the public, any profit from rents is reinvested in more affordable homes for our residents.

Calling all landlords

For many years, we've helped local landlords to find tenants while offering financial and practical help.

Now we've launched an enhanced service offering landlords even more incentives and reasons to join.

Our new and free 'Sevenoaks Landlord Hub' can quickly find the right tenant for your property without parting with any agent fees.

The scheme includes comprehensive support for all tenants through our HERO service, including saving money on fuel bills, debt and benefit advice, help finding work and more.

Our Landlord Hub offers three levels of incentives:

Bronze	Silver	Gold
Tenant finder	Six month tenancy	12 month tenancy
HERO support for tenants	Tenant finder	Tenant finder
	Rent in advance	Rent in advance
	Rent deposit	Rent deposit
	HERO support for tenants	Free gas EPC and electric safety checks
		£1,000 payment
		HERO support for tenants

For more information or an informal chat, contact our Landlord Liaison Officer on **01732 227000** or email slh@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Visit our 'Housing and Community Hub' for advice

If you want support or advice about benefits, debt, housing and more then drop into our monthly Housing and Community Hub.

The Hub gives you the chance to discuss any issues or concerns in complete confidence with our staff and representatives from partner agencies.

The Hub takes place at our Council Offices in Argyle Road, Sevenoaks and no booking is necessary.

The next sessions will take place on the following days and times.

- Monday 2 October, 2pm to 4pm
- Monday 13 November, 2pm to 4pm
- Wednesday 6 December, 10am to 12 noon.

For more information visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/housinghub.

You can also contact our Housing Team by calling **01732 227000** or by emailing housing@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

All in a day's work!

Protecting residents' health and wellbeing is a priority for the Council with our dedicated Environmental Health team helping to lead the way.

The team protects our health by carrying out food hygiene inspections, dealing with workplace health and safety and investigating certain infectious diseases.

It looks into around 2,800 requests each year relating to noise and other nuisances and is responsible for improving air quality, regulating certain polluting processes and providing specialist advice on planning and licensing applications.

One member of the team is Charles Hook who has worked on the frontline for more than 20 years. Charles specialises in Environmental Protection and spoke with In Shape about his work.

"Working in Environmental Health can be challenging but it's diverse and interesting. One minute I'm advising a business how to reduce air related emissions, the next I could be investigating a neighbour complaint.

"Often we're dealing with complex, time consuming issues, but it's rewarding to know that we're helping to protect our residents' health and the environment.

"A big part of our role is supporting residents and businesses. For example, I may recommend controls to limit the noise from a festival or changes during building works to mitigate land contamination.

"In a small number of complaints, where our informal approach does not work, we can take further action,



including issuing enforcement notices and legal proceedings. Sometimes these actions can take a long time, but we will not hesitate to use them to protect residents' health or wellbeing.

"I would always recommend that where someone is affected by a problem caused by their neighbours that they try to discuss it with them first before contacting us. But where they do not feel that they can, or it is not safe to do so, they should be assured we will investigate impartially and act upon any evidence we collect.

"No two days are the same, which always keeps things interesting. But what makes the job really worthwhile is when I've resolved a problem and the complainant contacts me to say thank you. It's the best part of the job!"

Panto time!

Christmas may still be a few weeks away, but our friends at the Stag Sevenoaks are busy preparing for the highlight of the season, the ever-popular panto!

Celebrating 15 years of festive fun, this year Silly Billy will be back in Jack And The Beanstalk, a spectacular family treat for children aged 7 to 70!

On Friday 24 November, you can join Silly Billy (aka Ant Payne) and Sevenoaks' favourite dame Jamie Alexander Wilson with the rest of the cast for the big Christmas Lights Switch On event in Sevenoaks High Street.

Then, from 8 to 31 December, they will be live on stage in this year's panto.

So why not be your family's hero and book your tickets to the traditional trip to the Stag Sevenoaks, for the perfect panto treat!

To book, visit www.sevenoakspanto.com or call the box office on 01732 450175.



Helping our community!

Every year, we support local voluntary and charity organisations by allocating thousands of pounds in community grants.



The Sevenoaks Counselling team

It's always good to know how the money has helped these groups so we spoke to Sevenoaks Counselling and Swanley Scouts to find out more about the projects they used the funding for...

Sevenoaks Counselling received a grant of £1,200 in April 2022 and used it to provide counselling sessions in the community.

Sevenoaks Counselling has benefited from our grants for a number of years and between April 2022 and March 2023 used the money to support more than 125 residents. This included adults, children and young people, couples and families.

Sue Surgenor from Sevenoaks Counselling says: "As a charity, we depend on grants and donations to keep providing affordable counselling for all. We take great pride in helping individuals and families improve their lives and feel better about their problems."

Swanley Scouts applied for a grant for the first time in 2022 and received £2,916.25 for adventure activities and trips.

This money allowed the Scout leaders to offer a wide range of activities to young people that included a St. George's Day event, hiring a swimming pool for a

swimming badge session, a trip to Chatham dockyards, helping Explorer Scouts attend the week-long Kent International Jamboree and lots more! Many families in the area would not be able to afford these trips if it wasn't for the grant funding.

District Lead Volunteer of Swanley Scouts, Frances Wallace, adds: "Thank you so much for helping us offer these activities to local children. They were thoroughly enjoyed and gave our members a chance to try new things and learn skills for life. It also had a huge positive impact on the wellbeing, achievement, confidence and resilience of hundreds of young people and their families."

Grab a grant to support your group

If you run a voluntary, community or charitable group, you can now apply for a Community Grant worth up to £5,000 to support its work in the next financial year.

Our grants scheme supports volunteer-led services, activities and projects within the District that meet our community's priorities.

To find out more and apply, please visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communitygrants.

The closing date for applications is 12 noon on Thursday 2 November 2023.

Successful applicants will receive their funding in April 2024 and will need to complete their services, activities and projects by the end of March 2025.

If you need help with your application, or you have any questions, please call us on **01732 227000** or email grants@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



We're all Better Together!

Better Together is our new community hub connecting people with local activities, events and opportunities.

Visit the Better Together hub at www.bettertogethercommunity.org.uk.

You can also follow Better Together on Twitter @hub_together or search for 'Better Together Community Hub - Sevenoaks District' on Facebook.



Tell the world about your group

If you run a voluntary or community group or provide local activities, you can reach potentially thousands of new people for free by adding details to the Better Together hub.

Simply sign up to Better Together to add details, which you can update anytime.

Support for voluntary and community groups

If you run a voluntary or community group or you're considering setting up a new one, Better Together has loads of free resources.

Better Together has advice on setting up a new group, organising an event, writing a grant bid and the latest sources of funding.

Local events, activities and support

Find out what's going on in your area using the Better Together map or directory.

There's lots of information on local events for people of all ages as well as health improvement opportunities.

You can also find out about local food banks, warm spaces and where to get mental health support and more.

Volunteering opportunities

Volunteering can support people in your community while helping you to develop valuable new skills and knowledge. It's also sociable and fun!

You can view the latest volunteer opportunities by visiting the 'Getting involved' section on the Better Together Hub.



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Gary's business has found a new home!

Earlier in the year, the Meeting Point opened on Swanley High Street, offering a co-working space, private offices, hot desking and much more.

Local businessman Gary Steadman of Gary Steadman Personal Estate Agent saw what a great opportunity the Meeting Point was and jumped at the chance to rent a private office space.

Gary says: "I decided to rent a private office at The Meeting Point after seeing a recommendation on Facebook and I'm so glad I did! The office and staff are superb and it's lovely to have a dedicated office for my business. I love the bright and open areas and the fact that we are based right in the centre of town.

"It's a really inviting atmosphere for me and clients and there are lots of networking opportunities and business support available.

"If you are looking for somewhere to work or have days when you cannot get motivated working from home, I would highly recommend the Meeting Point for its professional yet relaxed environment."

If you're looking for a private office, an alternative to home working or a place to meet clients, find out more via www.meetingpoint.org.uk or call 01732 443041.



The Meeting Point isn't just a co-working space, it also offers you free business support. Get advice on:

- Grants
- Free events
- Business start-up
- Trade waste
- Eco-business
- And much more!

Dispose of your waste the right way!

We offer a reliable, flexible and competitive service to collect your commercial waste and recycling.

As a business, it is your duty to make sure your waste is disposed of effectively and by a licensed carrier. By signing up to our service, you can be sure your rubbish and recycling is dealt with properly.

Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/commercialwaste or call us on 01732 227000 for more information.

Funding advice for community groups

If you run a community or voluntary group and you're looking for information and tips about fundraising and applying for grants, come along to our free information events.

Organised by our 'Better Together' community hub, the two half-day sessions are aimed at groups with limited or no experience of writing grant applications or applying for funding.

The events will offer practical advice on writing an application, what funders are looking for, researching and preparing a proposal and avoiding the common pitfalls that could lead to an application being rejected.

You can also find out about the latest grant funding opportunities.

The sessions are taking place on:

- Thursday 28 September, 10am to 2pm at Rickards Hall, Edenbridge
- Wednesday 4 October, 1pm to 5pm at Fawkham and Hartley Church Centre, Hartley.

Further support will be available after the events.

For more information and to book your place, visit www.bettertogethercommunity.org.uk/funding.

Tag Active Schools Cup promises to be the ultimate active showdown

In September, youngsters from across the Sevenoaks District will be invited to take part in a knockout-style competition designed exclusively for primary school children.

Everyone Active, our leisure operator, presents the TAG Active Schools Cup, which will take place in the new academic year at White Oak Leisure Centre in Swanley.

TAG Active is an interactive gaming activity, combining elements of laser tag and obstacle course runs in a tech-driven indoor arena. The arena itself is split into separate zones and each area contains different challenges. Inside players must use speed, agility and strategy to locate and reach hidden transponder boxes. Once found, the box is 'tagged' using a sensor on a wristband and each time a player tags a box points are awarded.

The brand-new knockout style competition will be open to local primary schools, specifically targeting year 6 students, and promises to be a thrilling event filled with teamwork, sports and active fun.

School teams will be automatically divided into four groups. Each team will have three attempts to set their highest score. The highest-scoring

team from each group will progress to the semi-finals and the winners of the semi-finals will then battle it out in a final showdown for the TAG Active Schools Cup.

The winning team will not only have their name engraved on a trophy but will also enjoy an exciting activity day for their school at the leisure centre.

Hasan Romel, area contract manager at Everyone Active, says: "We are excited to invite schools to register for this brilliant competition at the start of the new academic year. We hope that the TAG Active Schools Cup will become an annual tradition that will continue to grow, fostering community spirit and promoting an active lifestyle among our young people."

In addition to the prestigious Tag Active Schools Cup, Everyone Active will also present two separate awards. The Most Valuable Player award will recognise the individual participant who sets the highest individual score throughout the competition. Furthermore, the

Highest Scoring Team award will honour the school that achieves the highest score overall.

Schools will be contacted in September. For more details and to register interest, please email sevenoakscommunity@everyoneactive.com.

Discounted broadband for residents on low incomes

These days, broadband is essential as more and more services and retailers are available online.

However, the cost of living crisis has pushed up broadband prices, making it unaffordable for some.

To help people on low incomes, many broadband suppliers provide social tariffs - discounted broadband packages for people who claim certain benefits.

You may be eligible for a social tariff if you are in receipt of Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, Pension Credit, Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance.

Kent County Council has compiled details of the social broadband packages available and their eligibility criteria.

To see if you can save money on your broadband, visit www.kent.gov.uk/socialtariffs.



Next generation of athletes supported by Sporting Champions scheme

Up-and-coming athletes in the Sevenoaks District are getting much-needed support as part of a sports talent development programme from our leisure provider, Everyone Active.

Everyone Active's Sporting Champions scheme, now in its seventh year, has helped thousands of athletes to achieve their sporting potential by providing free access to its 200+ leisure facilities, including White Oak Leisure Centre, Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, Edenbridge Leisure Centre and Lullingstone Park Golf Course.

Alongside free access to Everyone Active centres, Sporting Champions have the chance to receive valuable mentoring and guidance from an impressive panel of elite athletes.

The scheme's all-star line-up of decorated Olympians and Paralympians includes Jennifer and Jessica Gadirova, Lutalo Muhammad, Richard Kilty, Lauren Steadman, Kadeena Cox and Maisie Summers-Newton.

Throughout the year, these elite athletes share their experience and expertise through group mentoring

sessions, covering topics including mental wellbeing, nutrition, managing finances, social media and media training.

Olympic silver medallist Colin Jackson is also supporting the scheme through his role as an ambassador, working alongside the Elite athletes to make sport more accessible within local communities.

Tokyo 2020 paratriathlon champion and cross-country skier Lauren Steadman says: "I'm super proud to be an elite athlete for this year's Sporting Champions scheme, helping to mentor, guide and inspire up-and-coming athletes in their sporting careers.

"The fact there is now a brand creating opportunities and supporting younger athletes to achieve their full potential is amazing. I hope I can share my knowledge and experience with the Sporting Champions through

our mentoring days and that together we can create an incredible future generation of athletes."

Hasan Romel, Everyone Active's area contract manager, adds: "Everyone Active's Sporting Champions scheme has been very successful in providing exceptional support to emerging talent and we are delighted to be once again supporting athletes from the Sevenoaks District on their journey to success.

"It's fantastic to see how the scheme has expanded over the years, now providing more than 1,000 athletes nationwide with access to top-quality training facilities and support.

"As a leisure provider working in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council, we feel it is important to cater for all sections of the community. We hope to continue making a real difference to our athletes' success and are excited to see what the relaunch of the scheme will bring this year."

To find out more about the Everyone Active's Sporting Champions scheme, visit www.easportingchampions.com or follow @easportingchamps on Instagram.



Winning hearts, minds and appetites!

Kent farmer of the year, best farmers' market, best place to live, best restaurant, best family attraction! It's impossible not to feel a burst of pride about this extraordinary District in which we all live and work. And we all know that these businesses and venues are just a few among so many more talents throughout the Sevenoaks District.



Glamping at Bore Place

Let's start with Bore Place near Bough Beech which goes from strength to strength. Primarily a dairy farm, they also run year-round events, focused on bringing visitors closer to nature, whether through astronomy evenings, nature ID walks, plant-based print workshops, gardening clubs, citizen science projects or foraged infusions - there's something for all age ranges. Accommodation ranges from glamping with a glorious view to group accommodation in two large houses; this eco-friendly 500 acre farm has so much to offer. Earlier this year it won Taste of Kent's Farmer of the Year award. Hurrah!

With so much delicious local produce in the area, it was a particular joy to see Penshurst Farmers' Market get a top gong from Taste of Kent too (Food and Drink Market of the Year/Silver). Set against the wonderful backdrop of Penshurst Place, this monthly market boasts over 25 stalls, offering local and seasonal fruit and veg, meat, game, bread, pies, deli products, cheeses, craft ciders, chutneys, jams, cakes, plants and fresh flowers. The emphasis is on produce grown or created nearby, making this a very sustainable option, with boxes of chocolates made locally by Penshurst company Cocoa Retreat. A few products from out of the area may have been allowed to set up a stall too, but it's important to be welcoming right?

Taste of Kent Awards winner Penshurst Farmers' Market



If getting fit is necessary after exploring the Farmers' Market, stride along the road to another award-winning venture in Penshurst, MyTime Pilates, voted Best Yoga/Pilates Studio by UK-based Muddy Stiletto's readership (an online magazine with an astonishing 800,000 voters taking part this year). A contemporary studio set in glorious Kent countryside, the team at MyTime offer a wide range of pilates classes, including exercises using

state-of-the-art equipment. This form of focused exercise was developed in the 1920s by its German namesake, Joseph Pilates. Originally, it was used as a rehabilitation programme for prisoners of war who needed a safe and effective way to regain their fitness. Improved concentration, precision, control, breathing, and flowing movements all help restore your body's strength.

If you're thinking of buying plants in bulk, perhaps head over to Provender Nurseries (trade only) on the outskirts of Swanley. Swanley was once well-known for its horticultural college, giving rise to many famous landscape architects and botanists like Lorrie Dunington Grubb, the world's first ever female landscape architect, or Annie Gulvin, one of the first female gardeners on the staff at Kew Gardens. Provender Nurseries is keeping the tradition alive, having recently won Trade Nursery of the Year 2023!

We are spoilt for choice with so many top-end restaurants and supper clubs in our area. Hearing that The Old Bank in Westerham won Kent's Best Restaurant in the Muddy Stiletto's 2023 awards is cause for celebration (not to forget it has a Michelin star and two AA Rosettes). A fine dining delight, the Old Bank was set up by lifelong food enthusiast chef Adam Turley. Co-owners Emma and Adam both grew up locally and love to celebrate all that is seasonal and local, championing local producers such as Chart Farm (Seal), Fawkham Bee Honey, Watts Farm (Farningham), Westerham Brewery and Corban Coffee (Seal).



The Old Bank in Westerham won Kent's Best Restaurant award

The Squerryes Winery Restaurant has an AA Rosette



Adam shares his enthusiasm with his team, taking his junior chefs to see ingredients at their source, learning how they're grown, farmed and nurtured. Nearby Squerryes Winery Restaurant also has an AA Rosette and is going from strength to strength in its scenic location adjacent to the vineyard.

And with Sevenoaks town regularly coming in the top five of polls in best places to live, let's be thankful for all that we have on our doorstep. With plenty of new grants available for smaller businesses in the District, this trend is set to continue. Check www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/business to find out more about how we can support your work.

For more amazing places to visit and exciting days out in the District, go to www.visitsevenoaks.co.uk



The Westerham Brewery has a stunning tap room

The next steps for our new Local Plan

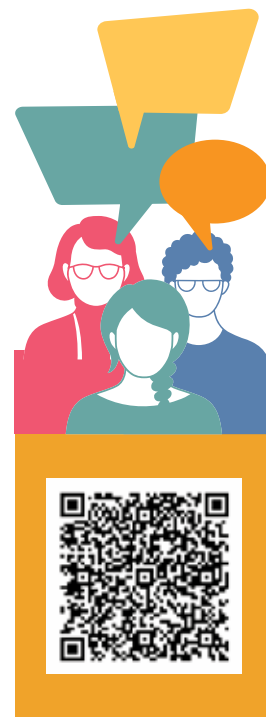
We've been busy working on Plan 2040 that will help decide what can be built and where in the next two decades.

Plan 2040 is focused around the three main themes of promoting health and wellbeing, tackling climate change and delivering design excellence.

Our first public consultation (called a Regulation 18 consultation) took place from November 2022 to January 2023. We proposed to focus the majority of new developments within existing built up areas. We received hundreds of comments and it was really positive to see all sections of our communities getting involved.

A second Regulation 18 consultation will take place later this year. In this consultation, we will consider a wider range of potential development sites across the Sevenoaks District, including on the edge of some settlements with good transport links and facilities.

To stay up to date with the latest Local Plan news, including the start date of the next consultation, sign up to our mailing list using the QR code or visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/plan2040.



New walking and cycling schemes move up a gear



Helping residents to get about more sustainably is one of our top priorities so we are working on several environmentally-friendly walking, wheeling and cycle schemes.

Here's a quick update on our three proposals....

Sevenoaks town East to West route

In June and July, we asked the community for their views on our detailed plans for a route linking Wildernesse in the east to Riverhead in the west of Sevenoaks.

The public were asked for their thoughts on specific sections of the route and if they supported the proposal. We received almost 500 responses, which are currently being analysed and we are refining the plans in light of the comments wherever possible.

A summary of the responses, and a plan of how we're going to take the scheme forward, will be presented to Sevenoaks District and Kent County Councillors on the Sevenoaks Joint

Transportation Board later this year. If Councillors give the scheme the green light, construction could begin in early 2024 with the route opening later that year.

We have already secured £1.2 million from Government for the construction of the route.

Otford to Sevenoaks route

We are progressing a new safe route linking Otford village centre with Sevenoaks town centre. We have already secured £184,000 from Active Travel England to develop detailed designs.

A consultant has been appointed to prepare outline designs. Detailed designs will be progressed next year when residents will be asked for their views on the scheme. Once this work is completed, we will be in a good place to bid for Government funding for the construction of the route.

Swanley town route

We have secured Government funding for a new Walking and Cycling plan in Swanley and we've appointed cycling and walking experts Sustrans to help.

During June, Sustrans ran an in-person consultation event at White Oak Leisure Centre and an online consultation in July to gather views on possible routes and to understand what currently deters people from cycling and walking.

Sustrans will produce an outline plan that will be used to bid for Government funding to build new walking and cycling routes in the town.





Talk to street furniture for help and advice!

Swanley residents who want to have their say about their town, receive advice or hear about local events and opportunities can talk to everyday street furniture!

We've teamed up with Hello Lamp Post, an artificial intelligence (AI) powered chatbot service that gives local people the chance to start a conversation with everyday objects such as a fence, lamp post or even a public building.

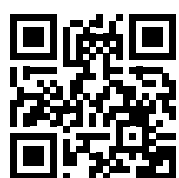
To start a conversation, simply scan the QR code or send a text message using the details on one of the nine Hello Lamp Post signs fixed to objects around the town and you'll soon get a friendly reply!

The conversations allow residents to share their thoughts, concerns and feelings about their area as well as finding out about local information and events, volunteering opportunities, advice on the cost of living and more.

All conversations are anonymous and no personal information is recorded. Any information provided will be used by us and our partners to help improve the area.

The service is completely free and there's no need to download an app or fill out a registration form. The service works with smartphones as well as basic mobile phones.

Find out more at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/hellolamppost.



Swanley residents can also use the service without visiting a Hello Lamp Post sign.

Simply go to <https://bit.ly/3pjsQkF> or use the QR code to start a conversation.

Foster for Kent

Are you looking for a rewarding journey and something truly valuable to do?

Kent Fostering is looking for people from all walks of life to become foster carers to care for one, or more, of the children and young people who need a home in Kent.

Fostering with Kent is a well-paid and extremely rewarding role, which offers a new career path, outstanding support and training and the opportunity to improve the lives and futures of our children and young people.

The need for more foster carers continues to be high across the country and Kent Fostering, as the largest and most experienced fostering agency in Kent, is continuing to see an increase in the number of children and young people of all ages and abilities needing safe, secure and loving foster families.

While it's helpful to have some experience of parenting or looking after children and young people, it's more important to have the desire to help, be available and to provide a place of safety for your foster placement for as long as they need.

Whether you are new to fostering or you wish to transfer from another agency, Kent Fostering is keen to speak with you.

To find out more, contact the Kent Fostering Initial Enquiries Team on 03000 420002 or visit www.kentfostering.co.uk.

Lose weight for good with One You



We all need a little help from time to time, especially when it comes to losing weight. Luckily there is a lot of support ready and waiting for you through One You.

One person who took the plunge last year was Xanthe Duffill from Kemsing. Xanthe, 72, was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and wanted to control it through weight loss rather than medication so her doctor suggested she spoke to our One You advisor, Natalia.

Xanthe was nervous as she has mobility issues and was worried about the physical side of weight loss. However, One You is always tailored to the individual so Natalia focused on food to begin with. They discussed making sure portion sizes were correct, healthy substitutions and how to get five items of fruit and veg in every day.

Xanthe says: "I knew this process wouldn't be easy but I found Natalia extremely supportive.

"The first thing that Natalia suggested was that I kept a food and drink diary. This was extremely helpful as I was eating and drinking more than I thought.

"I also began to weigh food items so that I knew the exact amount I was eating. Once I had done this for a few days, I found it much easier to judge portion sizes and not to overload my plate."

Once Xanthe got on top of her food habits, Natalia introduced a gentle exercise routine that would take into account her mobility issues. This includes seated exercises and Aquafit.

Over her year with One You, Xanthe has lost one and a half stone, is managing her diabetes without medication and is continuing to use her learning to lose more weight.

Xanthe adds: "I would like to thank Natalia very much for all she has done to help me during the year and would highly recommend 'One You' to anybody needing help."

If Xanthe has inspired you, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/oneyou or call 01732 227000.



Steps to wellbeing!

Walking is a fantastic way to keep fit and enjoy the great outdoors. If you're looking for a way to get some gentle exercise whilst meeting new people, join us on our 'Steps to Wellbeing' health walks.

The two to three mile walks usually last around 45 minutes and take place every other week in Edenbridge, Otford, Sevenoaks, Shoreham and Swanley.

They are run by our friendly volunteers and explore woodland areas and local landmarks.

To find out more and book your place on a walk, visit our website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/walking or call 01732 227000.



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

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 [@sdc_csp](https://twitter.com/sdc_csp)

Tackling domestic abuse

For support and advice for victims of Domestic Abuse, call the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service on **01892 570538** or visit www.davss.org.uk
For the Community Domestic Abuse Programme for men call **07933 359210** or visit www.kentcdap.org

Find out more about the Community Safety Unit!

The Sevenoaks District Community Safety Unit is in place to keep residents and visitors secure.

It consists of Council staff, Police, Community Wardens, Housing Associations and other partners and deals with all aspects of anti-social behaviour and community safety.

We chatted to Inspector Mark Stubberfield from Kent Police to find out more about what the Community Safety Unit does and how it can help you.

Mark says: "The group meets every day to discuss community safety concerns, crime and anti-social behaviour calls that have come in from the previous day. This ensures we get to the issues quickly and effectively.

"The Community Safety Unit has recently been focusing on safety campaigns and initiatives to keep residents in rural and urban areas safe. We have given out free timer switches, shed alarms, personal alarms and card protectors which are available to residents.

"We'd like to encourage residents to sign up to Kent Police's My Community Voice, a free and easy service for residents to have a two way conversation with their local police officers. You can register at www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk.

"We also use X (Twitter) to keep residents informed about what we're doing, give us a follow via [@SDC_CSP](https://twitter.com/SDC_CSP) and [@kentpolice7oaks](https://twitter.com/kentpolice7oaks). Please be aware, we cannot act on a report from Twitter so please tell us about your concerns by phoning Kent Police or reporting online.

"Finally, if life is in danger or a crime is in progress, always call **999**. For non-urgent police matters call **101** or report online via www.kent.police.uk."

For more information on free safety equipment, email community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk or phone **01732 227000**.



Keeping women and girls safe

Together with West Kent housing association, we've set up a Violence Against Women and Girls task group to address the safety of women and girls in public spaces.

The task group will talk to women and girls about what would make them feel safer in certain areas and how to be aware of their surroundings.

The group will also talk to school pupils about the issues and what role men can play in being champions against violence to women and girls.

If you would like to highlight spaces of concern and how to make them safer, please email community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Your Councillors

Sevenoaks District Council's priorities and policies are decided by 53 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.

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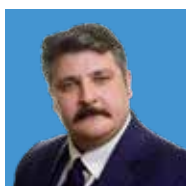
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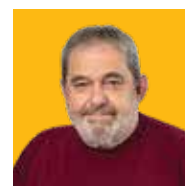
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How to contact your District Councillors

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**.

Budgeting for challenging times

Set against the national backdrop of a cost of living crisis, we are preparing to set our most challenging budget in more than a decade.

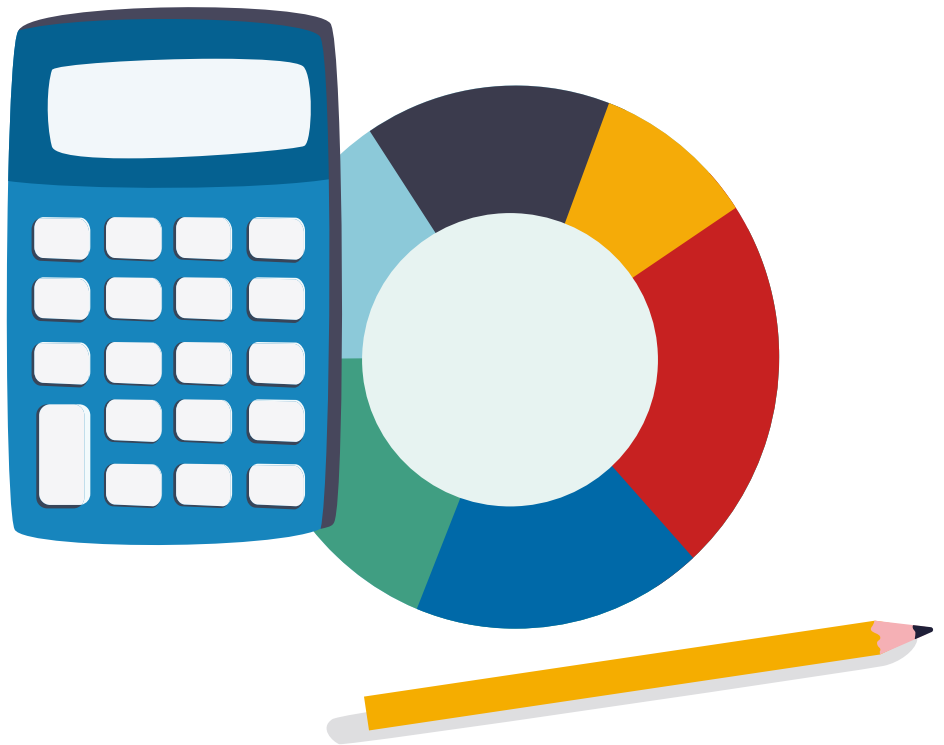
As a Council, we are more fortunate than most as we are in a strong financial position. When the Government withdrew our direct financial support nearly ten years ago, we embarked on new ways of generating income while at the same time maximising efficiency.

We set out to develop land we owned and purchased property for rent. This, partnered with new and innovative ways of working, led us to become the country's first financially self-sufficient council in 2016.

Since then, we continued to develop our property portfolio, worked more efficiently and strengthened our financial position.

But despite all of this, we have been impacted by the highest levels of inflation in a generation. Like everyone else, all of our costs have increased. At the same time, we are seeing greater demands on our services from people who need our help the most.

We also know that increasing our share of the Council Tax to cover these additional costs would not be acceptable to our residents.



As we look forward to next year's budget, we know we will need to make some difficult decisions to ensure our finances remain in good shape.

In the main, the savings will be achieved through further efficiencies, generating additional income and reducing our support costs while reviewing how we provide some discretionary services.

The budget will be set in February 2024, but we will keep residents informed as the new budget develops.

Cllr Kevin Maskell, our Cabinet Member for Finance & Investment, says:

"We have worked hard for over a decade to put the Council in a uniquely strong financial position and at the same time ensuring that

we continue to meet the needs of our residents.

"However, like all councils, we are now faced with increasing challenges arising from the steep rise in the cost of living, extra demands on our homelessness service, an increase in the waste we collect due to more people working from home, staff pay awards and the appointment of a new leisure provider. These challenges all combine to increase the pressure on our finances.

"Making savings and increasing efficiency requires difficult decisions and creative thinking. However, we know we must make these decisions now to ensure our finances remain in excellent shape for the future so we can continue to deliver on our residents' priorities."

Making Council Tax discounts easy

Applying for help with your bill is simple and quick.

If you ever thought you may be entitled to a reduction in your Council Tax but the idea of applying has put you off, you're probably not alone. Some people think the process is complicated and time consuming.

But in truth, it really isn't. And if you need assistance, we're always happy to help!

Severe mental impairment

If you live with someone who is severely mentally impaired, including dementia, you may be entitled to 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 may be entitled to help.

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're 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

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

Telephone **01732 227000**, 8am to
6pm Monday to Friday.

Emergencies (outside our usual hours)
01732 227000

then listen to the options.

Leisure centres

Ash Green Sports Centre*
01474 707164

Edenbridge Leisure Centre**
01732 442364

Lullingstone Park Golf Course**
01959 58019

The Olympic, Swanley*
01322 669201

Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Club***
01732 451889

Sevenoaks Leisure Centre**
01732 442365

White Oak Indoor Bowls Club, Swanley***
01322 665571

White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley**
01322 662188

* Operated by the local town or parish Council *** Operated by independent limited companies
** Operated by Everyone Active



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