

InShape

The newsletter of Sevenoaks District Council



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- Business Stationery
- Vehicle Signage
- Shop Signage
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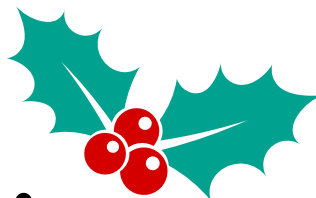
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Your festive waste collections



Our staff will be working extra days over Christmas and the New Year so you don't miss a waste and recycling collection.

Most collections will take place a day later than usual except the Christmas day collection on Monday 25 December, which will take place earlier on Saturday 23 December.

Please refer to the table to the below for details.

Your normal day	Your revised collection day
Friday 22 December	No change, normal collection
Monday 25 December (Christmas Day)	Saturday 23 December
Tuesday 26 December (Boxing Day)	Wednesday 27 December
Wednesday 27 December	Thursday 28 December
Thursday 28 December	Friday 29 December
Friday 29 December	Saturday 30 December
Monday 1 January	Tuesday 2 January
Tuesday 2 January	Wednesday 3 January
Wednesday 3 January	Thursday 4 January
Thursday 4 January	Friday 5 January
Friday 5 January	Saturday 6 January
From Monday 8 January	Normal collection days resume

Please put your sacks out at 7am on your collection day to help prevent attracting animals and the build-up of litter.

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



REMEMBER:

If you use our Garden Waste Collection Service, the same changes will apply

Help appealing parking fines

If you've received a Penalty Charge Notice (also known as a parking fine), you can now use our free AI powered telephone service to help you make an informed decision about whether to appeal.

When you call the service, you'll be greeted by a friendly AI assistant who'll ask a few questions about the circumstances of your Penalty Charge Notice.

If you have grounds for an appeal, the AI assistant will advise you of any evidence you may need to provide. You can also opt for the AI assistant to write the appeal for you, which would be sent to your mobile phone.

Alternatively, if there are no grounds for an appeal, the AI assistant will explain why we are unlikely to cancel your Penalty Charge Notice.

The call should last about three minutes. Usual call rates apply.

To use the service, call our dedicated helpline on **01732 902609**.

Cllr Margot McArthur, our Cabinet Member for Cleaner and Greener, says: "We're always prepared to embrace new ideas and technology that make our services available to residents at times that are convenient to them."

"Our new AI telephone service will help drivers to make an informed decision whether or not to appeal their fine. The service is available 24/7 and calls only last a few minutes. The service can even write the appeal if there are grounds for a challenge."

You can still speak with a member of staff about a Penalty Charge Notice during our usual opening hours.

Three ways to dispose of your real Christmas tree

There are lots of options available to recycle your real Christmas tree for **FREE** after this year's festivities have ended.

1 **Option 1 – Use our Garden Waste collection service (for permit holders only)**
If you hold a Garden Waste collection permit, simply place the tree in or next to your green bin and we'll pick it up on your usual collection days throughout January. We can take trees with a trunk of up to 90mm (3.5") in diameter.

2 **Option 2 – Take your tree to a local collection point**
Take your tree to one of the collection points, on the dates and times listed below, and we'll take it off your hands. We can take trees with a trunk of up to 90mm (3.5") in diameter.

Location	Date and time	Location	Date and time
Hartley By the allotments, Woodland Avenue, DA3 7DB	Mondays 8 and 15 January 8am to 8.45am	Sundridge Main Road layby, TN14 6EP	Wednesdays 10 and 17 January 1.30pm to 2.15pm
New Ash Green Centre Road Car Park, DA3 8HJ	Mondays 8 and 15 January 9am to 9.45am	Crockham Hill Deanery Road, TN8 6RE	Thursdays 11 and 18 January 8am to 8.45am
West Kingsdown Library Car Park, London Road, TN15 6BZ	Mondays 8 and 15 January 10am to 10.45am	Edenbridge Leisure Centre Car Park. Wellingtonia Way, TN8 5RE	Thursdays 11 and 18 January 9am to 9.45am
Eynsford Recycling site, Shoreham Road, DA4 0HP	Mondays 8 and 15 January 11am to 11.45am	Four Elms Layby by St Paul's Church, Bough Beech Road, TN8 6NE	Thursdays 11 and 18 January 10am to 10.45am
Shoreham Village Car Park, Filston Lane, TN14 7SX	Mondays 8 and 15 January 12.30pm to 1.15pm	Marsh Green Marsh Green Road Layby TN8 5QR	Thursdays 11 and 18 January 11am to 11.45am
Hextable Heritage Centre Car Park, Crawfords, BR8 7LU	Tuesdays 9 and 16 January 8am to 8.45am	Cowden Memorial Hall, Chantlers Mead, TN8 7HU	Thursdays 11 and 18 January 12.30pm to 1.15pm
Swanley Bevan Place Car Park, BR8 8BH	Tuesdays 9 and 16 January 9am to 9.45am	Hever Recycling site, Hever Castle Car Park, Hever Road, TN8 7NH	Fridays 12 and 19 January 7.30am to 8.15am
Crockenhill Village Hall Car Park, Stones Cross Road, BR8 8LT	Tuesdays 9 and 16 January 10am to 10.45am	Chiddingstone Richards Close, TN11 8LF	Fridays 12 and 19 January 8.30am to 9.15am
Otford Opposite 2 Bubblestone Road, TN14 5PW	Tuesdays 9 and 16 January 11am to 11.45am	Penshurst Penshurst Road layby, TN11 8DB	Fridays 12 and 19 January 9.30am to 10.15am
Sevenoaks Suffolk Way recycling site, TN13 1LX	Tuesdays 9 and 16 January 12.30pm to 1.15pm	Fordcombe Village Hall, The Green, TN3 0RT	Fridays 12 and 19 January 10.30am to 11.15am
Badgers Mount Near to Crest Close, Old London Road, TN14 7AE	Wednesdays 10 and 17 January 8am to 8.45am	Leigh Recycling site, Crandalls, TN11 8RF	Fridays 12 and 19 January 11.30am to 12.15pm
Halstead Village Hall, Knockholt Road, TN14 7EU	Wednesdays 10 and 17 January 9am to 9.45am	Weald Memorial Hall, Long Barn Road, TN14 6PT	Fridays 12 and 19 January 1.30pm to 2.15pm
Knockholt The Three Horseshoes car park, Main Road, TN14 7LD	Wednesdays 10 and 17 January 10am to 10.45am		
Dunton Green Lusted Road, Dunton Green, TN13 2UJ	Wednesdays 10 and 17 January 11am to 11.45am		
Westerham Recycling site, Brasted Road, TN16 1TD	Wednesdays 10 and 17 January 12.30pm to 1.15pm		

3 **Option 3 – Take your tree to a Household Waste Recycling Site**
Take your tree to one of Kent County Council's Household Waste Recycling Sites (informally known as the tip or the dump). They will take larger trees that are too big for us to collect.

Visit www.kent.gov.uk/recycling or call 03000 41 73 73 to book a slot.

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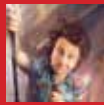
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**A JANUARY
FULL OF LAUGHS**

MILTON JONES

8pm 7TH JANUARY



PHIL WANG

8:15pm 9TH JANUARY

SARA PASCOE

8:15pm 19TH JANUARY



**WHAT'S BETTER THAN
CHOCOLATE AT CHRISTMAS?**



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SHOWING FROM 15TH DECEMBER

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Support with energy costs for households in financial hardship



Kent County Council will be providing vouchers to eligible households to support with energy costs. This scheme is funded by the UK Government's Household Support Fund, to support vulnerable Kent households in need of help with significantly rising living costs.

You may be eligible for assistance if you:

- are aged 16 or over
- are a Kent resident (excluding Medway)
- earn below £40,000 total household income (per annum before tax)
- do not have more than £1,000 in savings
- are responsible for paying the household energy bills (one award per household)
- do not receive free school meal voucher support during the school holidays.

Voucher scheme launch date

We are currently working towards making this support available as soon as possible - visit our dedicated Household Support Fund webpage regularly for launch date information. www.kent.gov.uk/householdsupportfund

Subscribe to KCC residents' e-newsletter

You can subscribe to our KCC residents' e-newsletter for the latest information at www.kent.gov.uk/updates

Help and support available

For details on help and support available to households, visit Kent County Council's 'Cost of living support' webpage at www.kent.gov.uk/kenttogether



Funded by
UK Government





Holly Harris, our Air Quality Promotions Officer, with pupils from High Firs Primary School in Swanley and Cllr Margot McArthur

Pupil's poster helps improve air quality

Artwork produced by a local school pupil has been put on display outside local schools to encourage motorists to turn off their engines when parked.

Children from across the Sevenoaks District were invited to enter a poster competition to raise awareness of vehicle idling and help improve air quality around schools.

Dozens of pupils took part with the winner named as Jenson from Lady Boswell's Primary School in Sevenoaks.

Jenson's poster formed the basis of banners and posters that are now on display outside many local schools, including High Firs Primary School in Swanley.

Idling petrol and diesel vehicles can cause a number of problems. The average parked car left running for ten minutes pumps out the same amount of CO₂ as driving a three mile journey, as well as other toxic pollutants. Not only is this damaging to the environment and residents' health, it's also expensive and illegal and could land drivers with a fine.

Cllr Margot McArthur, our Cabinet Member for Cleaner and Greener says: "We were blown away by the many amazing and thoughtful posters produced by school pupils from across the District. What came out of this competition was our young people care passionately about the environment and are keen to send a message to adults that small, important changes can make a big difference to our future.

"Improving air quality is a top priority for the Council. Although we have seen year-on-year improvements in the District's air quality, we need to make sure we are all doing everything possible to ensure this trend continues."

Jenson from Lady Boswell's Primary School with his winning poster, which formed the basis of the banners



The importance of microchipping your dog

Christmas is a time of giving and some of us may be considering a dog as a festive gift.



Making sure your new, or existing dog, is microchipped can save a lot of heartache should the unthinkable happen and they go missing.

Microchipping is quick, easy and painless and it can help make sure you're reunited with your dog quickly if they are found by our Animal Welfare Officer, and helps combat theft. It's also a legal requirement to have any dog over the age of eight weeks microchipped.

Every year we pick up over 100 dogs which have got away from their owners. Unfortunately, many of these are not microchipped and so are not reunited with their families. Since April 2023 we have rehomed over 40 unclaimed dogs through our charity partners.

Whilst it's a dog breeder's responsibility to ensure puppies are microchipped before selling them, you should check that the chip details for your dog are correct.

If your dog isn't already microchipped, your local vet can help. Prices vary, but vets typically charge around £15. Some animal charities may offer microchipping for free to people on low incomes.

Recent changes in the law mean that from 1 January 2024, American XL bully dogs can no longer be rehomed by us. If you own one of these dogs, it's more important than ever that they are microchipped so they can be returned to you if they go missing.

Join us for the Big Community Sing!

The Big Community Sing will return in 2024 and we're hoping to make it the best one yet!

We're inviting choirs, quartets, rock and acapella groups to showcase their musical talents at The Stag, Sevenoaks on Thursday 16 May 2024.



If your musical group would like a chance to sing on stage in front of a live audience, you can enter for free.

Cllr Lesley Dyball, our Cabinet Member for People and Places, says: "This is one of our favourite events and we're so excited that it's back for 2024.

"Singing as part of a group is a great way to get involved in the local community and improve health and wellbeing, it can even reduce stress and anxiety!"

"Make sure you don't miss out, get your application in by 31 January 2024!"

For more information and to enter, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/bigsing.

Your Local Plan, your say

We want to hear your views on our proposals to meet the District's future housing and development needs.

We have been working on 'Plan 2040', a new Local Plan, which sets out what can be built and where over the next 15 years.

Plan 2040 will help to deliver much needed new homes, including affordable homes, while promoting health and wellbeing and protecting the environment and the overwhelming majority of the Green Belt.

Last autumn, we asked for your views on 'Plan 2040' priorities. These are:

- Delivering new homes, including affordable homes and houses for older people
- Making the best use of land within existing built up areas
- Supporting our economy and high streets and delivering the right type of workspaces to meet current and future needs
- Protecting the environment and the majority of the Green Belt, along with natural resources and local character
- Improvements to transport and infrastructure
- Ensuring new developments promote good mental and physical health
- Tackling climate change by ensuring new developments have the minimum impact on the environment, including low carbon emissions

- Good design so new developments provide high quality places and spaces.

While the new Local Plan proposes to make the best use of land within existing built up areas, we face a big challenge as Government has told us the Sevenoaks District needs 10,860 new homes from 2025 to 2040.

As the District is 93% Green Belt, the third highest proportion in England, we have to consider a limited number of Green Belt sites to meet our housing and development needs.

The sites put forward in Plan 2040 are in the most suitable and sustainable locations close to existing settlements, transport and services. The majority of these sites have been assessed to be poorly performing Green Belt.

We're currently consulting on our latest proposals and we're keen to hear your views. You can have your say now and until midnight on Thursday 11 January 2024.

To find out more and have your say, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/plan2040 or use the QR code.



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Sliding to victory!

Sevenoaks Skeleton star, Issy Fassnidge, has her sights set firmly on the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Italy.

The 20-year old, who grew up in the town, has already represented Team GB and spoke with In Shape about all things Skeleton.

"I was competing for Tonbridge Athletics Club on the track when someone suggested I apply for 'Girls 4 Gold', a selection process run by British Skeleton for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games. I thought why not and decided to apply.

"At the time I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I knew of Skeleton double Olympic gold winner Lizzie Yarnold, who grew up in West Kingsdown, but not much else!"

"Two hundred and fifty people applied and, after the grueling physical and mental tests, I made it to the last seven. When we entered full time training at Bath University, I realised how exciting and fun the sport was, and as an adrenaline junky, I knew I wanted to pursue it further.

Issy, who is now based full time at Bath University, trains most days. Issy says: "Right now I'm doing a lot of gym work and sprinting. Most of the training is to build my leg strength as this helps when pushing at the start of the race. We also have a push track, which mimics the downhill run at the start of Skeleton.

"It was a very proud moment when I was selected to represent my country and last year was my first full season of racing. So far I've competed in three competitions and in Innsbruck, Austria I won a Bronze medal in the Under 20s Junior European Championships.

"What I love about Skeleton is travelling to new places, competing and taking in the most incredible views. My favourite track is Innsbruck and racing here is surreal. You get to stand at the top of the track surrounded by mountains. This, coupled with sliding at over 70mph and competing against other nations is such an amazing feeling."

"My goal now is to compete and win at the 2026 and 2030 Winter Olympics. In the meantime

I intend not just to defend my European Championship medal at Lillehammer in Norway, but to go one or two better and bring home a Silver or Gold!

Issy has received support from the Sevenoaks District Sports Council along the way. Issy says: "They've been incredible in helping me towards my Olympic goal. Their support has meant I don't need to work every night after training. They paid towards a new speed suit, assisted with free gym membership and have helped to raise the profile of Skeleton.

You can follow Issy on Instagram at [issy_fassnidge](https://www.instagram.com/issy_fassnidge).





Win dedicated desk space at Meeting Point!

Meeting Point is our co-working space for hot-desking, private offices, networking, events, meetings and more. It's perfect for home-workers, businesses, start-ups and community groups!

To celebrate being open for six months, we're holding a special competition where you can win one of five dedicated desk space packages worth £80 to try in the New Year!

Each package will provide you with five full days of dedicated desk space, which can be used consecutively or separately until 29 February 2024 and must be booked by 16 February 2024. The package includes refreshments, business support and printing, subject to our fair-use policy.

All you need to do to enter into our prize draw is email info@meetingpoint.org.uk quoting 'In Shape 128 Meeting Point Competition' in the subject title.

The competition closes on 5 January 2024 and five winners will be picked at random.

Packages must be booked in advance via Meeting Point's reception by calling 01732 443041. Other terms and conditions apply. For T&Cs, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/meetingpoint.

Remote interviewing just got easier!

If you have a remote business and are looking for a professional place to interview potential new staff, Meeting Point can help.

Our quiet meeting room is the perfect place to hold face-to-face interview or use the video conferencing facilities. Our free concierge service are on-hand to provide any assistance you need including greeting interviewees and offering them refreshments.

Visit www.meetingpoint.org.uk for more information.

Businesses and communities cash in on grants

Rural businesses and community groups, based in the Sevenoaks District, have secured thousands of pounds to create new jobs while tackling climate change.

Recently we allocated £125,000 from the West Kent Rural Grants scheme, funded by the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund, to support rural enterprises. Applicants applied for funding over the summer and nine were successful each receiving grants worth up to £25,000.

The funding is projected to create nine new jobs, while protecting six existing jobs, and will help six businesses and community groups to reduce their carbon footprint. A further 31 suppliers, who provide goods and services to the successful applicants, are expected to benefit from the funding.

Council Leader, Cllr Julia Thornton, says: "This important source of funding will help our thriving economy to further develop and grow enterprises while helping to reduce the District's carbon footprint. I am very proud we were among the first local authorities in the country to allocate the funding so it can make a difference as soon as possible."

Locally, the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund is being administered by us for the West Kent Partnership of Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Rural businesses and communities can apply now for funding

The next round of the West Kent Rural Grants scheme is now open for applications.

Grants up to £25,000 are available for rural-based businesses and community groups for capital projects. Terms and conditions apply and match funding is required.

Successful applicants will receive their funding in the 2024/25 financial year from next April, subject to release of Government funding.

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

Prepare for winter

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

Flooding

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



- Find out if you're at risk and sign up to the free flood warnings at www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk.
- Do not drive through floodwater and keep children and animals away from flooded areas.
- Prepare for a flood, including creating a flood plan www.gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding



Pavements and roads:

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

Waste and recycling collections:

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



Keep-up-to-date



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01732 227000

How to have your say on planning applications

Public comments are an important part of every planning application we consider.

We have the busiest planning department in Kent, dealing with some 2,000 planning applications a year, and all public comments are carefully considered before we reach a decision on every application.

Here's how you can find out about local planning applications and have your say:

How we advertise planning applications

- We write to immediate neighbours and sometimes there will be notices close to the site of the planning application
- All applications are publicised on our planning website <https://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk>. Here you can search for an application by reference or address. You can also register to be informed of planning applications in your area
- Some applications are publicised in a local newspaper

- We share a weekly list of planning applications with District Councillors, town and parish councils and groups and resident associations that have requested them. You can ask to receive our list by emailing planning.validation@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

How to have your say

- All planning comments have to be in writing
- The easiest way is to comment on our planning website <https://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk>
- You can also comment by email or post. Please include the planning application reference and address along with your name and address
- Anonymous comments cannot be taken into account
- Your comments, but not your name, address and email address, will be made available on our planning website.

What we can and cannot consider

Government guidance says we can only consider comments about planning issues. These can include:

- Overlooking, loss of privacy or light and overshadowing
- Highway safety, traffic and parking
- Noise
- Layout and density of building
- Design, appearance and materials
- Impact on listed buildings and conservation areas
- Disabled persons' access
- Ecology and biodiversity
- Government and local planning policies

Issues such as the loss of a view or the impact on property values are not deemed to be planning issues and therefore cannot be considered.

For more information, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/planning.

'Family-first approach' to swimming lessons

A learn-to-swim scheme in the District is making waves among local families for its 'family-first approach.'

Everyone Active – the leisure operator for Sevenoaks District Council – hosts its award-winning swimming lessons at White Oak, Edenbridge and Sevenoaks Leisure Centres, and helps hundreds of children every day to learn to be confident in water.

Aside from being a fun activity, swimming provides many physical health benefits such as improved strength, stamina and balance, helping children of all ages and abilities to stay happy and healthy.

"We are a small, loyal team that put our swimmers first," says Mark Horne, Swimming Coach and Swim Manager at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre. "This allows us to not only know all the children by first name, but also the parents, achieving a family-first approach. It's completely natural for parents to be nervous for their child to begin swimming lessons but, as not all children learn at the same rate, we adapt our lessons as needed for each child, suggesting one-to-one sessions if needed.

"Swimming is not only a great form of low impact sport for people with a wide range of conditions, it is one of the most important life skills we can teach children - not only as a very inclusive sport, but as a safety skill which will stay with them for life."

Recognising the benefits of the classes, Olivia, mother of three-year-old Kitty, adds: "Kitty's confidence has grown so much since her lessons began. At first, she struggled to get into the water without me, but by



week two she was jumping into the pool! Kitty's teacher is always encouraging the children, and no one is ever left out as all abilities are catered for."

For Kitty, learning to swim has helped her confidence and sense of

feeling safe around water. She says: "I can swim on my own now - I love jumping in!"

For more details on how Everyone Active's swimming programme can help your child, visit www.everyoneactive.com/courses-lessons/swimming-lessons.

Exercise classes for new Mums and Dads

FREE

Parents with babies in buggies can take part in our weekly and free PowerPush exercise sessions.

The sessions take place at 9.45am on Tuesdays from 16 January 2024 in and around Sevenoaks, starting from Hollybush Recreation Ground.

PowerPush involves a gentle warm-up followed by a brisk 45 minute walk with your baby in the buggy, finishing with a cool-down and the opportunity to buy a hot drink and chat at a local café.

The sessions are a great way to exercise and improve your fitness while enjoying the fresh air and socialising, helping to beat the January blues!

Open to both Mums and Dads, new Mums will need to have had their six-week check from their GP and be cleared to exercise.

To book your space, visit www.bettertogethercommunity.org.uk or call 01732 227000.

The Mill Pond is back to its best

Work to improve a historic pond for the benefit of wildlife and people was completed over the summer.

The Pond, on the junction of Seal Road and Mill Lane in Sevenoaks, is home to waterfowl, amphibians, insects and reptiles, and is much loved by local people.

But over the years it has become silted, impacting its appearance and ability to support a wide variety of wildlife.

Mill Pond is fed by nearby springs and storm water from highway drains. Silt from the roads and nearby building projects had, over time, built up.

Oil and other pollutants from the roads washed into the pond and in 2021, it suffered contamination from a Thames Water culvert.

In recent years, Greatness Residents' Association secured funding to transform the pond into a nature reserve. This included new silt traps, nature friendly plants and benches.

To support the Association's ambitions, we started work on a £60,000 package of improvements in March.



Specialist contractors were brought in to desilt the pond and additional wildlife-friendly greenery was planted.

The rotten wooden boardwalk was replaced with a new, accessible cinder concrete path and wooden railings allowing better access so we can maintain the pond going forward.

Cllr Margot McArthur, our Cabinet Member for Cleaner and Greener, says: "Thanks to the work of Greatness Residents' Association and the Council, Mill Pond has been completely transformed. The improvements include reducing the steep bank by the pond and putting in a new lower gradient path making the site accessible to people with prams and in wheelchairs. In the coming months and years, we expect the Mill Pond to flourish once again for both nature and residents."

Lace up your running shoes to raise money for dementia

'Run, walk or push against dementia' returns to the fabulous Knole Park in Sevenoaks on Sunday 19 May 2024.



The event is suitable for people of all ages and you can sign up to run, walk or push your way around the 3k and 5k courses or run the 10k course - it's up to you! Five-hundred places will be available.

The event is organised by the Sevenoaks Area Dementia Friendly Community, which includes ourselves.

Money raised by this charity event will help to fund five local Forget-me-not cafés and dementia-friendly singing sessions, wellbeing days, a dementia-friendly allotment and support for local groups who help people with memory issues.

Book your place on the race

'Run, walk or push' events often sell out so we would urge you to be quick off the mark to secure your space.

To book your place in next year's event, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/runwalkpush.

Steps to Wellbeing!

Walking is an excellent form of exercise that is not just good for your health, but also your overall wellbeing.

We offer four, volunteer-led 'Steps to Wellbeing' walks across the District on various days of the week. They are between two to three miles and take around 90 minutes. They often end near a nice café to enjoy a well earned cup of tea.

In Shape took a stroll with a health walk leader for Shoreham, Helen Wood, to find out more about these fantastic walks.

Helen was keen to join a walking group after retiring and originally went along to Every Step Counts, our gentle short walks. However, she felt she needed something more challenging so stepped up to volunteer as a 'Steps to Wellbeing' walk leader.

Helen says: "The walks run on a regular basis, and you know if you come along, then there will always be someone else to walk with.

"We enjoy some lovely views, which always lift the spirits, and it's great to see the changing seasons and the array of wildlife.

"There is medical evidence that regular walking reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, colon and breast cancer and Alzheimer's disease by more than 20%."

Steps to Wellbeing walks are free and open to all adults who can walk three miles over varied terrain, which includes uneven paths and some hills. Dogs are always welcome as long as they are kept under control.

Helen adds: "Come along and try a walk for yourself. It's always fun meeting all the lovely people and hearing about their interesting lives. I always feel better for getting outside and find I sleep better too."

If you'd like to find out more about our local walks, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/walking.

If you'd like to become a volunteer walk leader like Helen, email healthy.living@sevenoaks.gov.uk to find out how to sign up.

Currently, our walks take place in Edenbridge, Otford and Shoreham but if you'd be interested in leading one in your area, training and support is available. Please email healthy.living@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call 01732 227121.



Shoreham 'Steps to Wellbeing' walk leader, Helen Wood.

Stay warm over winter

Warm Spaces are existing community or business places that provide a safe and friendly public space where people of all ages can go and spend time reading, studying, chatting with others and meeting new people.

Generally they provide free Wi-Fi, tables and chairs, tea and coffee making facilities and toilets. Most are accessible for people with disabilities.

Warm Spaces are usually free and some offer support, services and advice. Full details can be found in our Warm Spaces directory.

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

Sharing and

With the season of sharing, caring and giving almost upon us, we thought we would scout out some great food, drink and gifts to share with you – all grown, made and brought to you by vibrant local businesses.

Need a main dish for that Christmas or New Year meal? For meat-eaters, what could be more local than home-grown venison from family-run Chart Farm in Seal Chart? Or grass-fed beef reared by the Martin family, at H M Coldbreath, also in Seal, one of the oldest butchers in the District?

Perhaps traditional sausages from Norman's Butchers in Eynsford?

And for vegetarian and vegan options we suggest heading to one of the District's many farmers' markets (check for dates over the holiday season), with Penshurst Market offering a wide range of choices. For bijou options check Brunch in Westerham for a market in their cosy courtyard.



Shops like Especially Health in Sevenoaks offer a whole range of vegan-friendly products.

Perhaps try Polhill Farm Shop for frozen fruit and veg, stacked with nutrients until the moment you need them and there's a popular fish counter outside. Falconhurst Farm Shop near Markbeece has delicious local cheeses (and plenty more) on offer, plus visiting market stall producers. Check out the wonderful vegetable boxes on offer at Bore Place or choose a 'Dine In' meal from Sevenoaks Fish Shop.

For foodie friends (or yourself) enjoy a taste of summer with delicious Farningham Jam and Sevenoaks Honey, created by bees feasting on the wildflowers and lavender of the Darent Valley (stockists all around the District).

If you're looking for the perfect cheeseboard, don't miss Bore Place's very own Blackwoods Cheese



– especially the award-winning Graceburn and Edmund Tew cheeses. You can buy direct from the farm but their cheeses also feature in Fortnum & Mason's hampers no less!

If it's fine wines, gin and healthy mixers you're after, why not visit The Mount Vineyard, Squerryes and the Westerham Brewery. Award-winning wines and ales are on offer and a variety of food – so why not take a break from the cooking and enjoy a seasonal meal out? Aronia Berries near New Ash Green is the UK's only grower of these extraordinary vitamin-packed berries, pressed to make fabulous rich syrups, ready for mixing with cider or whatever drink takes your fancy.

If it's a sweet tooth that needs attending to, then visit Eat 'n' Mess at Turvin's Farm near Dunton Green. Here you'll find gluten free cakes and biscuits, plus Halstead Bakery's amazing loaves and pastries. You can stock up on a few gifts at Jonomade Gin, also based at this fab business hub.



caring!



Presents: think about buying your loved ones fun experiences - at Eagle Heights Wildlife Foundation you can meet the Meercats or experience their birds of prey or huskies. Maybe a supper club ticket with Three Sisters (at Chart Farm) or one of their gourmet weekly meals, offered as takeaways if that's more your thing.

How about a staycation at Ye Olde Crown in Edenbridge, an ancient pub with six up-to-date rooms and regular events, and go romantic with a bunch of flowers from nearby Hever Flowers. For sustainable presents, try pre-loved gifts while following the Visit Sevenoaks Charity Shop Trail at visitsevenoaks.co.uk/charity-shop-trail.

Alternatively, buy a Friday Girl's Night just for teens from fabulous new health venue The Nest in Chipstead. Artwork (or cushions) from the Hive Gift Shop and Gallery in Westerham is a great option for the creatives in your family.

And after all that, why not stretch your legs over the festive period: download some Rail Trails and

explore the Darent Valley car-free; try out the Eden Valley Path and have a cup of tea at the Porcupine Pantry; explore Toy's Hill for panoramic views; or stroll around one of the many amazing National Trust properties and grounds in our area. Download the Rail Trail on the App Store or Google Play by searching for 'Darent Valley Trails'.

Happy holidays!

To find out more about your local businesses, check out the 'Sevenoaks so much more' business directory and if you run a business, sign up now for updates and networking opportunities.

Visit www.moresevenoaks.co.uk/business-directory.

Blooming wonderful gardeners get recognition

Businesses, residents, schools and community groups were rewarded for their green-fingered efforts at this year's In Bloom gardening competition awards.

Run by Coolings Garden Centre in Knockholt, there were dozens of entries to win one of the eight coveted categories.

The winners were named and presented with their awards at a ceremony at Coolings in September.

Cllr Roddy Hogarth, our Commissioner for the Public Realm, says: "Once again there were many fine examples of great gardens, allotments, planted containers, community projects and business gardens that all help to brighten up the District.

"The standard of entries was particularly high so I would like to congratulate not just the winners, but everyone who took part.

"As ever, I would like to say a big thank you to Coolings for their continued support of In Bloom and for running an amazing awards evening."

You can view the names of the winners at www.coolings.co.uk/in-bloom-2023-winners-announced.



Our Chairman, Cllr Alan Layland, presents the 'Best School Garden' award to Horizon Primary Academy in Swanley.

Lose weight, your way!

Successful weight loss looks different for everyone. It's about finding out what works for you as local resident, Steve Thompson, discovered earlier this year.

Steve, 68 from Sundridge, has several health complications, including COPD, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Pulmonary Fibrosis, which has meant he hasn't been able to do exercise for many years. These conditions were made worse as Steve was considerably overweight, so his GP referred him to our One You service.

Steve says: "I had my first face-to-face meeting with One You's Natalia in January 2023. Natalia gave me a full assessment which wasn't just about the weight I needed to lose but also how I wanted to change my lifestyle and what my ultimate goals were. Once Natalia understood my thought process, she explained the challenges I would face to achieve the end result I wanted."

In the past, Steve would lose weight by crash dieting, which would work to begin with, but then the weight would go straight back on again.

"Natalia explained why my approach wasn't working and that I needed to lose weight in a much more controlled manner. She encouraged me to set myself sensible targets over the coming weeks, including adding more healthy foodstuffs, like fruit and vegetables into my diet."

Because of Steve's health issues, exercise didn't come easy, but Natalia set achievable targets such as walking a little bit further and faster each day. Despite the challenges, Steve stayed on track.

Steve attended regular sessions with the One You team to give updates on what he'd achieved, his weight loss over the period and what new challenges he was setting himself.

"I am pleased to be able to say that I have succeeded in losing almost three stone in weight. I can now wear clothes I haven't worn for ages, I don't have to rely on my inhalers as much and it has massively improved my mental health. I can even take my dogs for long walks, something I haven't been able to do for some time.



Steve's new found health has meant he is even considering going skiing again with his children and grandchildren for the first time in many years.

"I cannot recommend Natalia and the One You service highly enough! Anyone who finds themselves in a similar situation as I was in should consider seriously getting the help that One You and people like Natalia can give. I'm a 68 year old, now feeling like a 58 year old!"

If Steve's story has inspired you, sign up to One You today! Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/oneyou.

Could you help Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees?

Local charity, Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees, supports families from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Syria to settle in the Sevenoaks District and is looking for volunteers to help with its work.

The charity provides practical support including befriending, teaching English, finding work, providing lifts, sourcing essential household items, making small welfare grants and finding hosts and landlords.

Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees currently has four volunteer roles available, these are:

- Key Partners Trustee
- Properties & Landlords Trustee
- Recruitment lead
- Data safety lead

The time commitment for each role is flexible, ideally four to six hours per week, including online meetings.

To find out more and how to apply, visit www.sevenoakswelcomesrefugees.org/vacancies. The deadline to apply is 6pm on Friday 29 December 2023.

If you have any questions, or if you'd like to arrange an informal chat about the roles, email volunteers@sevenoakswelcomesrefugees.org.

Funding and support for community and voluntary groups

Community and voluntary groups can apply for grants of up to £1,000 from our 'Better Together' community hub to deliver local projects.

Better Together supports new and existing groups that connect residents with activities, events and opportunities.

To be eligible for a grant, your service must meet one or more of our priorities:

- Community led projects that address local priorities and foster a sense of local pride
- Tackles isolation and loneliness
- Improves residents' physical and mental wellbeing
- Promotes and encourages community safety
- Improves the environment or promotes biodiversity and sustainability.

Applications for funding open on 8 January and close at 5pm on Friday 16 February 2024.

To apply visit www.bettertogethercommunity.org.uk/funding.

The grants are funded by the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

You can also follow Better Together on X [@hub_together](https://twitter.com/hub_together), Instagram [@bettertogethercommunityhub](https://www.instagram.com/bettertogethercommunityhub) or search for 'Better Together Community Hub - Sevenoaks District' on Facebook.

We're all Better Together!

Our 'Better Together' online hub has loads of free resources for community and voluntary groups, including advice on setting up a new group, organising events and bidding for funding.

Visit our Better Together hub at www.bettertogethercommunity.org.uk to find out how it could help you!

Get hooked on January's panto at The Stag

Pantomime season continues at The Stag in January as the Sevenoaks Entertainers return with Peter Pan.

This year's show marks 35 years of Sevenoaks Entertainers' pantos at The Stag and with a completely new story.

Auditions were held in September and, after 12 hours and over 120 performers singing, dancing and acting their hearts out, the cast was announced. And what a cast it is, packed with exceptional local talent.

Tickets for Peter Pan are available from www.stagesevenoaks.co.uk and through the box office on 01732 450175.



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.

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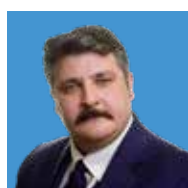
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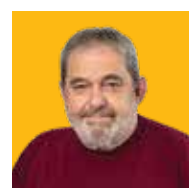
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How to contact your District Councillors

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**.



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 X 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

Protecting your property

We are always ready to get into the Christmas spirit and sometimes this leads to us and our property being a bit more vulnerable.



Criminals will often take a chance at this time to take what is not theirs. Here's how to make your home that bit safer over the festive period and the whole year round:

How to protect your home:

- Ensure doors and windows are secure before leaving your property
- Keep keys, cash and expensive items out of view
- Use timer switches on lights and radios to make your home look occupied
- Keep gates locked and boundaries secure
- Lock away bikes, tools and garden items that could be stolen or used to break into your home
- Be mindful of your discarded rubbish as it could advertise new and expensive items such as games consoles and new TVs

Reporting anti-social behaviour and the Community Safety Unit

The Community Safety Unit (CSU) consists of Council staff, Police, Community Wardens, Housing Associations and other partners. The CSU deals with all aspects of anti-social behaviour and community safety.

Partners meet daily to discuss community safety concerns and any crime or anti-social behaviour calls that have come in from residents or the Police.

The CSU allows us to have a speedy and effective response to residents. Please be assured that all information is treated in confidence and we will keep your details anonymous if you prefer.

If you witness anti-social behaviour, you can report it to us by emailing community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk or phoning **01732 227000**.

We also have an X (Twitter) account which you can follow at [@sdc_csp](https://twitter.com/sdc_csp). Please be aware we cannot act on a report from X so please tell us about your concerns by phoning Kent Police or reporting online.

You can also join Kent Police My Community Voice via www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk. This is a two-way engagement tool that allows you to inform Kent Police of local issues.

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.

Changes to postal and proxy voting

The Government has introduced some changes to the rules around postal and proxy voting, including the ability to apply for both online.

Postal voting

Previously, if you had an indefinite postal voting arrangement, it was permanent until you asked for it to end.

From now on, you will need to reapply for your postal vote every three years unless you have a postal vote for one election or for a set period of time less than three years.

If you currently have a postal vote, and you want this arrangement to continue, you will need to reapply before 31 January 2026. We will send you the information you need prior to the deadline.

When you apply for a postal vote you will need to provide your national insurance number.

To apply for a postal vote, visit www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote.

Proxy voting

A proxy vote allows someone to vote on your behalf.

Currently, an individual can act as a proxy for an unlimited number of close relatives and two other people.

Under the new rules, a person can only be a proxy for up to two people living in the UK, or a maximum of four people, with two people living in the UK and two people registered as living overseas.

If you apply for a proxy vote, you will need to provide your national insurance number.

To apply for a proxy vote, visit www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote.

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 583019

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



In Shape is published and distributed by Sevenoaks District Council to inform local residents and businesses about the work of the Council.

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In Shape is available in an audio format for residents with visual impairments and can be explained in other languages by calling **01732 227000**.

Design & print

www.whateverdesign.co.uk

Printed on carbon neutral paper.

Published December 2023.



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