

InShape

The newsletter of Sevenoaks District Council



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Waste collections

We're taking action to protect your waste collection service while lowering our carbon footprint



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Your say on the Local Plan

The results of our latest consultation and the next steps for our Local Plan



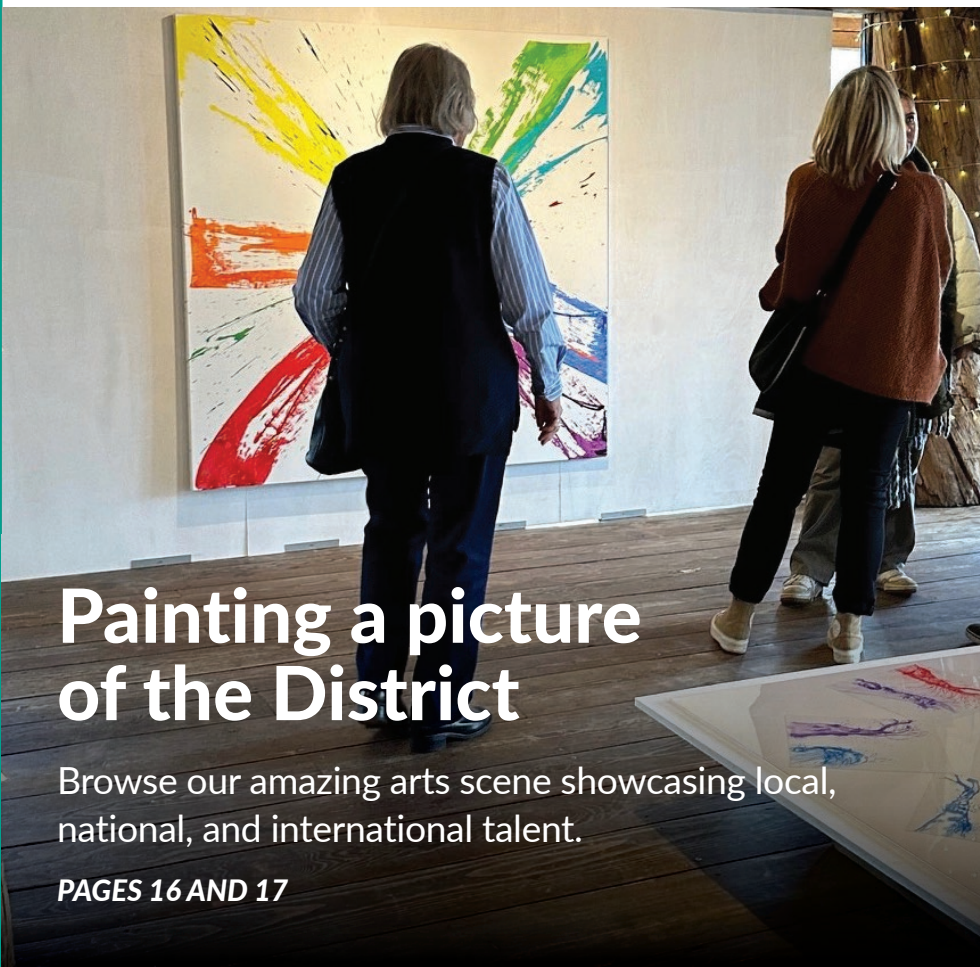
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Join us for the Big Community Sing!

Local singing groups, choirs and schools perform at the Stag to raise cash for a good cause



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Painting a picture of the District

Browse our amazing arts scene showcasing local, national, and international talent.

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Assessment & Service Centre

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Our In Shape magazine is published four times a year and is delivered to 53,000 homes and businesses by Royal Mail.

A limited amount of space is available for local businesses and organisations to promote their services.

To find out more, please call Daniel Whitmarsh at the Council on **01732 227414** or e-mail communications@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Bank holiday waste and recycling collections

Following the Easter and May bank holidays, there may be one or two changes to your rubbish, recycling and garden waste collection days.

Easter

- **Good Friday, 29 March** – no change - collections will take place as usual on this day.
- **Easter Monday, 1 April** – all collections this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 6 April.

Early May Bank Holiday

- **Monday 6 May** – all collections this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 11 May.

Spring Bank Holiday

- **Monday 27 May** – all collections this week will be one day later than usual until Saturday 1 June.



View your waste collection days online at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/collectiondays.

Protecting waste collections by saving costs and helping the environment

Like many councils, we are conscious of improving our carbon footprint as well as tackling rising costs and inflation.

Since the pandemic, the volume of household waste and recycling we collect has increased significantly with more people working from home and greater reliance on home deliveries. This has meant the cost of providing the service has rocketed in the past four years with more staff and vehicles needed and increased visits to the waste transfer station.

Our residents continue to tell us how much they value our weekly refuse collections and we are determined to continue to offer this service for as long as we can, when so many other councils have moved to fortnightly – or longer – collections. We therefore set ourselves the task of finding ways to reduce the cost of the service whilst retaining high levels of customer service.

That is why we have taken the decision that, from 1 April, we will no longer supply residents with black waste sacks.

Removing black waste sacks not only saves costs, it has been shown to increase recycling rates as residents opt to make the best use of their recycling facilities.

And to further improve our carbon footprint, we will introduce a 'Sack for life' for your recycling from September. This means, from this date, we will no longer need to supply clear sacks, reducing single use plastics.

These changes will also save our crews driving 30,000 miles every year to deliver the sacks to every household, further cutting our carbon footprint.

Cllr Margot McArthur, our Cabinet Member for Cleaner & Greener, says: "As far as we are aware, we are the last council in the country to still supply residents with black waste sacks. We hope that residents will

support these changes to deliver cost reductions while helping the environment. We are confident the changes will encourage residents to make the best use of our recycling facilities while cutting our use of disposable plastics and reducing travel, lowering the District's carbon footprint."



From April, we're asking you to...

Supply your own sacks - please use sacks made specially for household waste

Put your sacks out at 7am on your collection day



Lace up your running shoes to raise money for dementia

The event is suitable for people of all ages and you can sign up to run, walk or push a buggy at your own pace on the 3k and 5k courses or run the 10k course - it's up to you! Five-hundred places are available.

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

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



Book your place on the race

'Run, walk or push' events often sell out in advance so we'd urge you to be quick off the mark to secure your place!

To book, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/runwalkpush.

Next steps for the new Local Plan

Late last year and into January, we asked residents for their views on Plan 2040, our new Local Plan with potential development sites across the District.



Thank you to everyone who took part in our consultation and attended our pop up sessions. Nearly 5,300 people took part, making it one of the highest responses to any of our consultations in recent years.

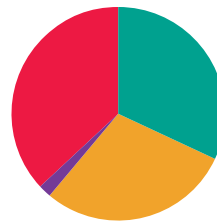
As In Shape went to print, we were still reviewing the comments. A full report of the survey results will be taken to our Development and Conservation Advisory Committee at 7pm on Tuesday 26 March 2024. The meeting is open to the public and you can watch it live on our YouTube channel available from www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/councilmeetings.

We asked residents for their preferences on the possible locations for new development.

Their preferences were:

A standalone settlement at Pedham Place 37%

A combination of multiple sites & Pedham Place 2%



Multiple sites across the District 32%

None of the options 29%

As well as the preferred locations, we will also consider the other topics and issues raised by residents during the consultation.

Some of the issues residents raised were:

- The need for services to support new housing, such as GP surgeries, schools and public transport
- Careful consideration of the Green Belt is needed, particularly given the recent updates to national planning policy
- Concerns about the impacts of traffic and congestion
- The need to provide homes and services for older people
- Concerns about specific Green Belt sites particularly Pedham Place (bordering Swanley and close to the villages of Farningham and Eynsford) and sites on the edge of Sevenoaks town.

In the coming months, we will prepare the final draft of Plan 2040, reflecting the views of local people. You will have an opportunity to comment from late summer and in the autumn.

The Plan will then be scrutinised by a Government Inspector at a public examination later in the year.

For more information about the Local Plan, and to sign up for the latest updates, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/plan2040.

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Our Golden Anniversary

We're celebrating our 50th anniversary and to mark the occasion, In Shape is taking you back to 1974 to give you a flavour of the times.

The new Council was made up of Sevenoaks Urban and Rural District Councils, and part of Dartford Rural District Council, and came into being on 1 April 1974. There were staff at Argyle Road and Oak Hill Road in Sevenoaks and White Oak, Swanley.

The average rates bill, including water rates, was around £100 but, as you would expect, costs were very different from today. A new Ford Escort was £925, a Sevenoaks Chronicle cost just 5p, eating out was a snip, with a typical two-course meal costing £1.28, and petrol was 50p a gallon, or 13p a litre.

There were just three television channels in 1974. Saturday evening viewing might have been Dr. Who at 5.30pm followed by Dixon of Dock Green on BBC 1. ITV offered Reg Varney, Candid Camera, Sale of the Century and Kung Fu. Programmes ended by 10.30pm due to the power crisis.

Some key events over the past 50 years

April 1974

The birth of Sevenoaks District Council coincides with the opening of Wildernesse Sports Centre. More sports and leisure centres follow.

October 1987

The Great Storm fells thousands of trees, miles of roads are blocked and power and phone lines are cut. To deal with the massive clear up, we set up an emergency control room and the army is drafted in.



April 1989

We become one of the first councils to transfer our housing stock. West Kent goes on to become one of the most successful housing associations in the country.

July 1998

Our first website goes live.



Spring 1996

Fortnightly newspaper collections begin. They're succeeded by weekly recycling collections in 2001. We're still collecting your waste and recycling every week.

April 1995

Our CCTV system becomes operational.

Summer 1990

We win the tender to keep our waste and street cleaning services in-house, where they remain to this day.

October 1999

Work starts on Blighs with shops opening in December 2000.



August 2012

London 2012 Paralympic Games come to the District.



February 2016

We become the nation's first financially self-sufficient council. We go on to build car parks, a hotel, homes, the Swanley Meeting Point and purchase offices and shops to generate income to fund our services.

November 2016

We scoop 'Overall winner' at the Guardian Public Sector awards for our finances. More awards follow.



November 2023

We begin a £10.3m project on the Spitals Cross, Edenbridge, the biggest investment in the estate since the 1960s.

November 2021

Dozens of electric charging points are installed in our car parks.

January 2019

Our affordable housing company, Quercus Housing, purchases its first properties. It now has around 100 affordable homes.

July 2018

We buy our first electric vehicle.



Rail partners chuffed to win national award

The Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership has scooped a prestigious award for renovating historic Eynsford Railway Station.

The Partnership has been working since 2019 to promote the picturesque Darent Valley rail line running from Sevenoaks to Swanley.

Along the way, they've been sprucing up stations, including Eynsford's Victorian station dating back to the 1860s.

In 2022, the former waiting room and ticket office were restored and the original platform shelter was rebuilt then repainted in heritage colours. An accessible toilet was also added. Volunteers from Eynsford

in Bloom maintain the impressive station gardens.

At the National Railway Heritage Awards last December, the Partnership was awarded a Highly Commended certificate for the Eynsford Station restoration.

Cllr Lesley Dyball, our Cabinet Member for People and Places, says: "We are thrilled the Partnership has been recognised at a national award.

"This has been a fantastic team effort from local volunteers, councils and

the rail industry to promote this fabulous scenic line. Not only are there great attractions along the route, Eynsford station has become a destination in itself."

The Partnership is funded by us, GTR Thameslink, Southeastern, Sevenoaks and Swanley Town Councils and Eynsford, Shoreham and Otford Parish Councils.

For more information about the Darent Valley rail line and attractions and days out along the route, visit darentvalleycrp.org.



Wendy Wright from South Eastern, Cllr Lesley Dyball, Cabinet Member for People and Places, and Sarah Newman, Rail Projects Community Officer.

Help purchasing your paw-fect pooch

If you've decided to take on the commitment of welcoming a happy hound into your home, check out our top tips for finding your new furry friend...

The breeder should....

- Give you the opportunity to see the mother and handle all of her puppies in the litter, not just the one you're thinking of buying
- Only sell you a puppy once they are eight weeks of age or older
- Show you where the dogs are kept, where they sleep and where the puppies were born - you should see comfortable bedding, food and clean water
- Provide you with details of their vet (so you can check on the health of their puppies and breeding dogs) and any paperwork (e.g. certificates from The Kennel Club, vaccination information, health tests or screening scheme certificates)
- Answer any questions that you have about their dogs

The breeder should never sell a puppy that is unwell or showing signs of illness (runny eyes or nose, weakness or diarrhoea). Puppies should appear happy, healthy and inquisitive.

Finally, trust your instincts. Do not buy a puppy if you feel pressured or if you have any doubts about the breeder.

Changes to animal licensing

Anyone who breeds puppies for sale may require a dog breeding licence.

Registered breeders will be inspected by us and will receive a rating from one to five stars (one being the lowest and five being the highest).

There is also a requirement for boarding kennels, home boarders and doggy day care establishments to apply for a licence and these too will receive a star rating from us.

All our rated establishments can be found at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/animalicensing.

To apply for a licence, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/animals.



Help to grow your community group

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

One group that has used Better Together's help is new community garden project 'Grow a healthy Swanley and Crockenhill', initiated by local GP, Dr Lunt.

With the support of Better Together, the group acquired an allotment in Harvest Fields in Crockenhill with the aim of growing cheap, healthy food as well as encouraging the community to enjoy the benefits of being outdoors with others.

We spoke with husband and wife project managers, Jackie and David Griffiths, to find out more about their community allotment project.

Jackie says, "Being outside and enjoying the natural environment has a positive effect on physical and mental health. We wanted to create



David and Jackie Griffiths with allotment advisor John Mullen.

a safe space, where people can come and be part of a group. We also hope that growing our own food will help feed the community and combat social isolation and loneliness.

"This project is for anyone, and we are hoping to encourage a diverse group of people to help us plant and tend to the allotment. In particular, we are keen to welcome those who may be experiencing mental health problems or loneliness issues. We are in the process of improving the allotment for visitors, which includes putting in a gazebo for shelter and

clearing pathways. We would like to invite everyone to our open morning on Wednesday 17 April"

If you would be interested in taking part, call Jackie and David on **01322 662363** or email **davidgriffiths701@hotmail.com**.

If you have a community project or an idea that would benefit from the free support available at Better Together, visit **www.bettertogethercommunity.org.uk** or email **contact@bettertogethercommunity.org.uk**.

Join us for a musical extravaganza!



Get ready for the amazing music groups, choirs, and schools to strike a chord with you this May!

The Big Community Sing will be back with a bang at The Stag Theatre on Thursday 16 May 2024, and just like previous years, it sets to be a magical night.

Musical groups of all ages, backgrounds and genres will be coming together to hit the right note for a packed-out audience.

Singing is not just lots of fun, it's also been proven to improve mental health and wellbeing.

All money raised from this event will support mental health services for young people in the Sevenoaks District.

Tickets cost just £5 plus booking fee and are available from The Stag's website **www.stagsevenoaks.co.uk** or call their box office on **01732 450175**.

Have your say at the Police and Crime Commissioner election

On Thursday 2 May, you'll have an opportunity to elect a Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent.



To vote at the election, you need to be on the Electoral Register and, if you want to vote in person, you'll need valid photo ID.

Important deadlines

Midnight on Tuesday 16 April 2024

is the deadline to register to vote for this election

5pm on Wednesday 17 April 2024

is the deadline for:

- New postal vote applications
- Changes to existing postal vote arrangements
- Changes to existing proxy vote arrangements
- Amendments or cancellations of postal proxy vote applications

Find out more information about registering to vote or applying for a postal or proxy vote please visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/voting. If you do not have access to the internet, call us on **01732 227000** and we'll send you a form.

5pm on Wednesday 24 April 2024

is the deadline for:

- New proxy vote applications (excluding emergency applications)
- Voter Authority Certificate applications.

Thursday 2 May 2024

is polling day, from 7am to 10pm.

New rules for postal voters

New rules have been introduced about returning your completed postal votes that must be followed or your postal vote could be rejected.

If you return your completed postal vote by hand at one of our polling stations or to the Council Offices you must complete a form.

You cannot hand in more than five postal ballot packs for other electors plus your own (six in total).

If a person hands in more than five postal ballot packs for other electors, all the postal votes (other than their own) will be rejected.

We can no longer accept postal votes left in the letterbox at the Council Offices.

Please take advantage of the freepost envelope included in your postal vote pack. Put it in the post box and return it to us by Royal Mail as soon as you can.

Voter ID

Anyone who votes in person, as well as proxy voters, will have to take their own photo identification to the polling station.

Accepted forms of Photo ID

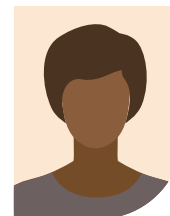
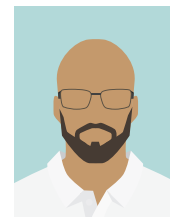
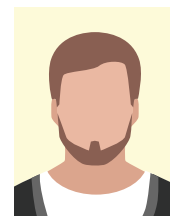
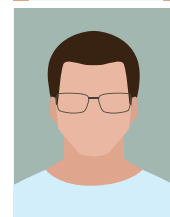
You probably have an acceptable form of ID, but please be aware, **only original documents can be accepted.**

If you don't have an accepted form of photo ID you can apply for a free 'Voter Authority Certificate'.

For more information, or to apply online, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/VoterID or call **01732 227000**.

Even if your photo ID has expired, it will be accepted so long as the photograph is still a good likeness to you.

The most popular forms of Voter ID are a **passport, driving licence (including a provisional licence), Blue Badge or certain concessionary travel cards.**



HOUSING

here to help!

Our Housing Service does much more than just provide support and advice. We can help with a multitude of issues from home adaptations for residents with mobility issues to help with energy efficiency.



Housing and Community Hub

If you want help, support or advice about benefits, debt and housing, come to our monthly hub. You can discuss any issue or concern in confidence.

It takes place at our office in Argyle Road, Sevenoaks (TN13 1HG).

No booking is necessary.

The next sessions will take place on...

- Thursday 28 March 2024
2pm to 4pm
- Thursday 25 April 2024
2pm to 4pm
- Thursday 23 May 2024
2pm to 4pm



Health and Safety standards for rented homes

We inspect and licence Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and Mobile Park Homes and we act on complaints from residents in private rented properties.

If you rent a property that you believe is impacting on your health, ask us to carry out an inspection and if does not meet the minimum legal standards, we can take action.

Email psh@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



Delivering affordable homes

We work closely with housing associations and developers to deliver social and affordable rented properties, shared ownership and discounted market homes.

For the latest availability of affordable homes, email housing.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



Housing advice

We can help if you are homeless or if you are likely to lose your home. The sooner you contact us the more we can do to help.

Email housing@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Our recent achievements

Given out **75 Disabled Facility Grants**, helping residents to remain in their own homes.

Moved **154 families** into social and affordable rented properties.

Signed up **15 landlords** who now rent their property through our Landlord Hub scheme.



Finding somewhere to live

We manage the District's Housing Register, the list of people who can apply for social housing. Find out if you're eligible to join by completing a pre-assessment and a housing register application form on the Kent HomeChoice website www.kenthomechoice.org.uk.

Email housing.register@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



Energy efficiency

If your home is difficult or expensive to heat, and you're struggling to keep warm, funding may be available to help pay for energy efficiency improvements. These include insulation, air source heat pumps, electric storage heaters and solar panels.

Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/energyefficiency or email psh@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



Changing Spaces

We work with housing associations to help their tenants who live in homes that are too big or have unused mobility adaptations to move to more suitable properties. This frees up family sized and adapted homes for people who need them.

Email changingspaces@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



Helping you stay in your home

If you or a family member has mobility issues, we have Disabled Facilities Grants to pay towards home adaptations.

These grants can help pay for stair lifts, walk in showers, handrails, ramps and other access improvements. The grants are means tested.

You do not need to be registered disabled, but you must have your needs assessed by an Occupational Therapist from Kent County Council. To request an assessment, call Kent County Council on 03000 41 61 61 and ask for the Occupational Therapist Duty Officer.

If you're eligible, we can help with the paperwork, drawing up plans and appointing a contractor.

Email psh@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



Bringing empty homes into use

Empty homes are not just a wasted resource, they can attract anti-social behaviour. We work with Kent County Council's 'No Use Empty' scheme. It provides access to interest free loans, expert advice and other support.

To find out more, visit www.no-use-empty.org.uk or email psh@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



Support for landlords

Our Landlord Hub supports people who want to rent their property without expensive letting fees and advertising costs. Landlords are matched with suitable tenants on our waiting lists and access to other benefits, including free EPCs and gas and electric safety checks, financial assistance and support for tenants.

Email slh@sevenoaks.gov.uk.



HERO service

Our HERO service provides personalised, expert advice to all residents on:

- Saving money on fuel and broadband costs
- Debt, rent and mortgage advice
- Welfare benefits
- Retraining, volunteering and getting back to work
- Referrals for support and housing advice.

Email hero@sevenoaks.gov.uk to book an appointment.

To call us about any housing matter or concern, please call 01732 227000.

Improved the energy efficiency of 14 homes.

Brought 17 empty homes back into use.

Assisted 143 residents through our HERO service.

Moved 2 households into suitable accommodation through our Changing Spaces scheme

Show off your green fingered gardening skills with In Bloom

Once again, we're supporting the annual 'Sevenoaks District In Bloom' gardening competition.

Run by Coolings Garden Centre with judging sponsored by Pennywood Tours Ltd, the competition is open to gardeners of all abilities, giving you the chance to show off your blossoming gardening skills.

Best of all, you don't need to fork out any money as entry is completely free! In fact, everyone who enters will be given a £5 voucher to spend at any Coolings centre.

There's lots of categories available, including front gardens, allotments, ornamental gardens, businesses and schools and above all it is fun as all the judges are friendly and looking at ways to award points for your efforts!



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

The deadline to enter is Sunday 30 June 2024 with judging taking place through July.

The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony in September.

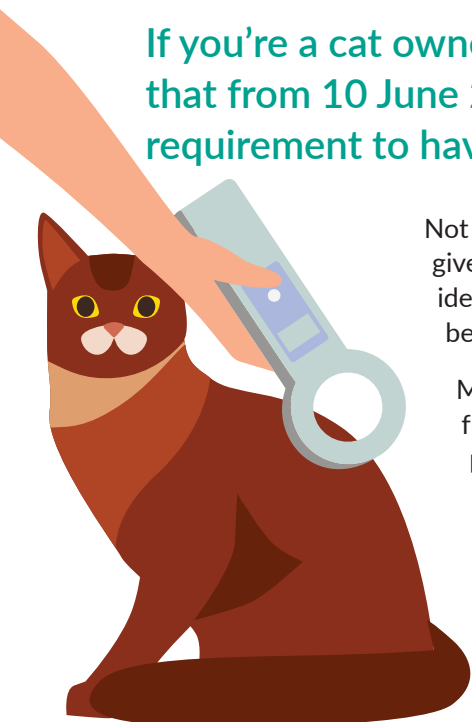
Full details can be found at www.coolings.co.uk where entry forms will be available from 1 April.

Be the purr-fect owner and get your feline friends microchipped

If you're a cat owner, you should be aware that from 10 June 2024, it will be a legal requirement to have your cat microchipped.

Not only is it the law, microchipping gives your cat the best chance of being identified and reunited with you if they become lost or stolen.

Microchips are safe, easy and pain-free to implant. You can expect to pay between £20 and £30 for each cat - speak with your local vet for details. Some animal charities and rescue organisations may be able to microchip your cat for a reduced rate.



Spring into action!

Warmer, longer days are a great time to get back into gardening. Whether you're a seasoned veg grower or a first-time flower planter, our Garden Waste service can help.

We collect cuttings, leaves, and other garden debris every two weeks, saving you trips to the tip.

It's picked up on the same day as your rubbish and recycling is collected, and there are two options to choose from:

- An annual permit for a 240-litre bin or a 140-litre bin
- 25 garden waste sacks

If we've planted the idea in your head, apply for a permit today! Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/gardenwaste or call 01732 227000.

The great indoors

how to stay active no matter the weather!

Spring, often a wet season, can pose a challenge for parents aiming to keep their children entertained. However, there are numerous ways to ensure the entire family stays active and engaged, even when the weather is less than ideal.

Your local leisure centres offer lots of choices for kids and family activities, especially during weekends and school holidays when drizzly weather threatens to dampen your plans.

Everyone Active – the leisure operator for Sevenoaks District Council – offers a variety of activities at White Oak, Edenbridge and Sevenoaks Leisure Centres catering for hundreds of families striving to maintain both mental and physical activity levels throughout the year.

All three leisure centres provide the convenience of free parking in their onsite car parks, making your family's activities even more accessible.

Soft play

Soft play is a guaranteed hit for entertaining young children. At White Oak Leisure Centre, children up to 12 years old can unleash their energy in the soft play area, climbing, clambering and exploring, while parents enjoy the café. Exciting news – a small soft play frame is now available at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, accompanied by a grab-and-go cafe offering food and drinks for the first time since 2020.

TAGActive

TAGactive at White Oak Leisure Centre offers a game-based indoor obstacle course suitable for kids, teens and adults over 1.2 meters tall.

Navigate through the arena filled with challenges, including net climbs, cargo tunnels and ball pools. Each challenge is adorned with tags that must be tapped using a sensor on your wrist. Earn more points by reaching the tags in more challenging locations, adding an extra layer of competition!

Swimming

Consider a trip to your local swimming pool, one of the most affordable activities for families and children. Despite rising living costs, research from Swim England highlights that casual swimming is more budget-friendly than many other family activities. Beyond the economic advantage, swimming offers extensive health benefits and serves as an excellent way to keep the family entertained during holidays and weekends. Family swimming sessions, toddler swimming and inflatable swimming sessions are available at all three leisure centres.

Racket sports

Engage in spirited family fun with our array of racket sports available at leisure centres. Whether you're aiming to perfect your badminton skills, shoot some hoops on the basketball court or enjoy a game of table tennis, our sports halls can be hired to accommodate your favourite racket-based activities.



To find your nearest centre, and for more details on how Everyone Active can help your family stay healthy and happy, visit www.everyoneactive.com/centre.

Don't get caught out with your commercial waste

Did you know that, as a business owner, it's your duty to make sure your trade waste is disposed of effectively and by a licensed carrier?



We offer an efficient, local, and friendly service to collect your commercial waste and recycling.

Our flexible approach can accommodate changing business needs and there are no extended contract periods.

What's more, when you become a Commercial Waste customer you can be safe in the knowledge that you are contributing to your local community and area upkeep.

To find out more and view our competitive rates, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/commercialwaste.

Healthy mind, healthy business!



Win up to one month's FREE gym membership when you sign up to a Meeting Point hot-desk package in April.

Meeting Point in Swanley is a 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.

Hot-desking at Meeting Point couldn't be easier with their new Gold, Silver, and Bronze packages for varying business needs. With added benefits such as free refreshments, ultra-fast broadband and a knowledgeable team providing business support and advice, Meeting Point offers exceptional value!

To make these packages even more enticing, Meeting Point has teamed up with their friends at Everyone Active to offer up to a month of FREE gym membership at White Oak Leisure Centre in Swanley for the first 20 people who sign up to a hot-desk bundle during April.

Gold package customers will receive one month's free gym usage, Silver package customers will receive one week's free access to the gym and Bronze package customers will receive one day free at the gym.

These free gym passes are limited to one per customer and will be given on a first served basis. To claim a gym pass, you must purchase a hot-desk package in April 2024. Other terms and conditions apply.

Find out more about the packages and the other services Meeting Point offer at www.meetingpoint.org.uk or give them a call on 01732 443041.

Meeting Point Packages

GOLD 20 days hot-desking plus one day's use of the Meeting Room – £300 + VAT

SILVER 10 days hot-desking – £170 + VAT

BRONZE 5 days hot-desking – £90 + VAT

All packages include free refreshments, fair use printing, business support and ultra-fast broadband.

New building rules for homeowners

If you're planning to have building works carried out in your home, you're now responsible for ensuring they meet the Building Regulations and appointing competent designers and builders.

Certain works, including new buildings, conversions, renovations, extensions and structural works, must meet the national Building Regulations to ensure they're safe, healthy and energy efficient.

To make sure the works meet the Building Regulations, you will need to appoint a Building Control Inspector (who from April 2024, must be registered with the Building Safety Regulator) and apply for Building Regulation consent.

Depending on the nature of the works, you may need to submit structural plans and arrange for the Building Control Inspector to carry out inspections as the works progress.

When the work is complete, you will need to arrange for the Inspector to visit your property. If the work meets the Building Regulations, you will need to submit a 'Notice of Completion', which has to be signed by you and your builder before the Completion Certificate can be issued.

Your local Building Control Inspector

If you're having construction works that may require Building Regulation consent, our Building Control team is on hand to offer professional help and impartial advice.

Call **01732 227376** or email **building.control@sevenoaks.gov.uk** for a quote today.

For more information about Building Regulations, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/buildingcontrol.

Our promises to you



We've been working on 'Delivering together', our new Council Plan that sets out our promises to our communities over the coming years.

The key promises in the plan include: supporting our communities and the local economy, providing value for money, protecting the environment and providing new homes, including much needed affordable homes.

Cllr Julia Thornton, Leader of the Council, says: "Our new Council Plan is being introduced at a challenging time. Our communities and our local economy continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic and we have seen sharp increases in the cost of living affecting most people.

"But, we have risen to challenges before, and we will do so again. It is important we remain focused on our residents and their wellbeing, that businesses have confidence and our local economy grows and we protect our environment and lead locally on tackling the challenge of climate change.

"We will continue to make sure the Council is managed efficiently and be responsible with residents' money.

"We will be our most effective by delivering together. Listening to what is needed, empowering communities to act, and working with the people and organisations that share our values and ambitions to make the place we live, work or visit the very best it can be."

If you want to know more about our new Council Plan and our promises, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/councilplan or call us on **01732 227000** for a paper copy.



Picture this...

As we get ready to launch a new cultural grants scheme, In Shape browses the District's vibrant arts scene.

And what an amazing creative community we have on our doorstep with galleries, studios and producers showcasing local, national, and international talent.

The artist-run Sevenoaks Kaleidoscope Art Gallery (in Sevenoaks Library) is a contemporary space showcasing work from established and emerging artists. Run by the Sevenoaks Visual Arts Forum (SVAF) the gallery hosts a variety of exhibitions and talks throughout the year.

Also in Sevenoaks, Second Floor Studios offers discounted space to local artists with public open days when all the works on display are for sale.

Next Door Hextable is a new community venue offering event and exhibition space and a stylish community café.

Inspiring public art can be found in the grounds of Riverhill Himalayan Garden and masterpieces can be tracked down in the many National Trust properties in our District.

Knole, run by the National Trust, is one of Britain's most important historic homes but it also has an internationally important art collection with paintings by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Lely and Kneller. In a restored 15th century barn next door, talented conservators at the Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio (free entry) restore items in the National Trust collection. You can view them at work with guides on hand to explain the process with interactive displays to explore the materials, tools and techniques used.

The studio at Chartwell (also National Trust) has the UK's largest collection of paintings by the former Prime Minister Winston Churchill, including one nearing completion, as if he had just stepped out of the studio for a moment! Enjoy seeing his artwork up close with a state-of-the-art 'touch wall' screen exhibit and don't miss the Monet in the house itself.

Nearby Quebec House in Westerham (National Trust) has a barn in its grounds where exhibitions are frequently staged.

You can also find stunning stained glass artworks at many churches throughout the District. At St Peter and St Paul's in Shoreham, there is a beautiful window from the William Morris studio with another at St Mary and the Virgin in Westerham, and several in the ancient St Peter & St Paul church in Edenbridge, dedicated to Arts and Crafts architect Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott (buried in the churchyard).

Henry Holiday, an artist who was part of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, designed another window in St Mary, Westerham. Laurence Lee, the artist who created stained glass windows at Coventry and Southwark Cathedrals, was also responsible for a window at St John the Baptist Church in Penshurst.

Sundridge Gallery is a family business, established over 30 years ago by antique and art collectors, Tim and Maggie Tyrer. The gallery



Second Floor Studios



The Samuel Palmer Trail



Kaleidoscope, Sevenoaks

stocks mainly 19th and 20th Century watercolours and oil paintings and a selection of contemporary paintings and other artworks.

Recently opened Clarendon Fine Art in Sevenoaks High Street is part of a group of 80 galleries nationwide. Limited edition art is on sale, including internationally-famous artworks by Tracey Emin, Barbara Hepworth, Keith Haring, David Hockney and even Pablo Picasso, together with newer works.

The family-run Portico Gallery in Riverhead is a framing business with a gallery on the first floor with regular exhibitions from contemporary UK artists.



Art workshop in Knole

Jessops Farm Studios near Edenbridge hosts a collective of artists who stage exhibitions and occasional workshops.

Pigdown Pottery, near Hever Castle, is run by Lotte Andrews. Everything is handmade and produced in small batches. Lotte also runs regular pottery workshops.

Falconhurst Farm near Markbeech holds frequent exhibitions, with artworks hung in a beautifully restored barn next to the Farm Shop or sometimes in the shop itself, around the vegetables!

Seal Chart Etching Studio is a wonderful space offering art courses, run by artist Lindy Webster, using a historic Harry Rochat printing press. There are exhibitions from June to July and in November with small prints on sale.



An exhibition at Kingdom

Kingdom, near Penshurst, is a café, events and exercise venue with The Outpost, a stylish art and retail space. It's full of creative and eclectic works by local and internationally-acclaimed artists and designers. A ceramic studio is set to open later this year.

Art in June and South East Open Studios (all over the District) offer regular weeks when artists open up their studios, usually in June each year. There are dozens of fabulous spaces to explore and the chance to meet with artists and buy work directly from them.

The Samuel Palmer Trail in Shoreham offers a fascinating insight into the life of this innovative and highly influential artist. Internationally renowned Palmer produced his most impressive work while he lived in Shoreham in the 1820s and 30s. The trail is audio-visual and can be downloaded as part of the Darent Valley walking app.



Stained glass, Four Elms Church

New arts funding

To celebrate World Art Day, on 15 April 2024, we will soon be launching our new Cultural Grants Programme, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Further information about the fund will be available at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/culturalgrants from 15 April.

Every Step Counts!

Looking to get a bit fitter or make new friends? Walking could be for you!

It's free, sociable and one of the best ways to keep physically and mentally fit whilst benefiting from fresh air and our stunning countryside.

Every Step Counts is a local volunteer group who believe the benefits of walking should be available to everyone. We spoke with volunteer walk leader, Irene Collins, to find out more.

Irene says: "Our walks are aimed at our older friends, those who need a gentle walk after an accident or illness or people who would like to walk, chat, and meet new people at the same time as improving or maintaining their fitness. We walk at the speed and for the length that suits each individual. Most walks last 20 minutes but there is always an option to do more, or less, if you wish to and feel able to. After the walk there is always an opportunity to have refreshments in a nearby café or venue to enjoy the company of the group."

Irene started Every Step Counts with a friend in 2017 in Otford, but soon realised how popular it was and decided to rollout further walks. There are now 10 local groups.

Irene adds, "It doesn't matter if you can only manage a short distance, are recovering from an operation, are trying to lose weight or need someone to encourage you to exercise. Every Step Counts!"

To book onto the walks, email everystepcounts17@gmail.com.

For more information on all our walks, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/walking.



FREE

The **FREE** Every Steps Counts walks take place weekly in the following locations:

- Eynsford - Monday - 10.30am
- Riverhead - Tuesday - 10am
- Chiddingstone - Tuesday - 11.30am
- Otford - Wednesday - 10am
- West Kingsdown - Wednesday - 10.30am
- Chipstead - Thursday - 10am
- Swanley - Thursday - 10am
- Sevenoaks - Thursday - 2pm
- Kemsing - Friday - 10.30am
- Edenbridge - Friday - 12.30pm



Ready for a new you?

FREE

Are you looking to:

- Eat well
- Move more
- Reduce your alcohol intake
- Improve mental wellbeing
- Lose weight.



If so, One You can help! Our friendly advisors can tailor their approach to suit you. For more information, please call us on 01732 227000, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/oneyou or email sdh.healthylivingteam@nhs.net.

Helping Edenbridge Health Centre become a reality

In November, the much anticipated Edenbridge Memorial Health Centre opened its doors to the public.

The £13.5 million state-of-the-art facility is home to a host of health services all under one roof, including a GP surgery, children's and diagnostic services, a wellbeing centre and outpatient clinics. It's helping to reduce the need for many patients to travel to Tunbridge Wells or Maidstone hospitals for care.

We played an important role bringing the centre to the District by contributing £1.2 million of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, secured from developers.

Cllr Simon Reay, our Cabinet Member for Development and Conservation, says: "I am so proud we could support the health centre from inception through to making a substantial financial contribution towards its development.

"For some years, communities in Edenbridge and the surrounding areas needed a fit-for-purpose medical facility. Now a reality, this new centre is benefitting thousands of residents."

Since we introduced CIL in 2014, we have secured more than £15 million from developers for dozens of local projects.

In the latest round of CIL funding, agreed last December, more than £1.3 million was allocated to new projects delivering health, social and environmental benefits.



These were:

- £250,000 for The Kent Wildlife Trust for improvements at the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve Visitor Centre
- £209,000 for Kent County Council to improve Public Rights of Way in Otford, Kemsing, Swanley, West Kingsdown, Knockholt, Sevenoaks and Edenbridge
- £25,000 for Swanley Town Council to help fund a sewerage connection for its public toilets in Swanley Park
- £17,000 for West Kingsdown Village Hall Management Committee towards car park improvements
- £787,500 for Sevenoaks Town Football Club and Sevenoaks Town Council towards a new Community Pavilion at Greatness Recreation Ground
- £20,000 for Crockenhill Parish Council to help pay for playground improvements at Harvestfield Park.

Kentish Opera hits a high note in Sevenoaks

Kentish Opera return to The Stag for a three-day run of Verdi's Aida, grand opera at its finest.

Founded in 1953, Kentish Opera, made up of professional and amateur singers, has been performing throughout Kent for the past 70 years.

The company form a vital role in the country's operatic life, by giving young professional singers the experience of performing in major operatic roles. This year's production features professional soloists from major opera companies, accompanied by a full orchestra and the superb Kentish Opera chorus.

Aida is one of Verdi's most dramatic works and a favourite with audiences around the world. The tragic story of doomed love in the time of Ancient Egypt draws its appeal from the impassioned arias, magnificent choruses, including The Grand March, and exhilarating orchestral music that highlight Verdi at the peak of his composing prowess.

Show times for Aida are 18, 19 and 20 April 2024. Tickets are available from www.stagevennoaks.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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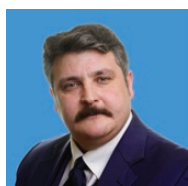
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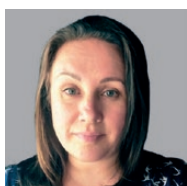
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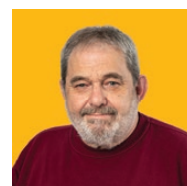
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How to contact your District Councillors

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

Making The Vine safe for you

Last year, the Community Safety Partnership and Sevenoaks Town Council ran a survey to find out residents' opinions on how to tackle anti-social behaviour on The Vine in Sevenoaks. After considering the results, a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for the area was approved by the District Council for the benefit of locals and visitors.

When a Public Space Protection Order is in place, it gives the Police and the Council the power to issue an on-the-spot warning, or a fixed penalty notice for anti-social behaviour.

It also prohibits behaviour which is likely to cause harassment, alarm and distress. This means those causing trouble cannot return to the area within 24 hours.

Kent Police District Commander for the Sevenoaks District, Elizabeth Jones, says: "We know this is an important issue to residents so we want to make sure we are doing everything we can to combat anti-social behaviour.

"We are lucky that we live in one of the safest Districts in Kent and we want to keep it that way. The Vine is such a special place for residents and a great place to spend time. It's a shame that a handful of people can make it feel unsafe.

"We believe the PSPO will be an effective deterrent and that The Vine will be a place where everyone feels safe."

The Public Space Protection Order has been in place since February 2024 and can remain for up to three years.



Commander Elizabeth Jones with District Council Leader, Cllr Julia Thornton, and Sevenoaks Town Cllr Lise Michaelides.

Priorities for the coming year

The Community Safety Partnership works to keep the District safe and has set its priorities for the coming year based on an analysis of the latest crime statistics.

The priorities include dealing with:

- Serious and acquisitive crime
- Anti-social behaviour and environmental crime
- Drugs and county lines
- Domestic abuse, including stalking and harassment
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Business crime

- Safeguarding, including mental health, adults at risk, children, modern slavery and human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

If you have a community safety concern, please email community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call **01732 227000**.

For more information regarding community safety, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communitysafety.

Window of opportunity to improve our Palace

If you've been past Otford Palace in recent weeks, you may have noticed the windows have been glazed for the first time in many years.



The Archbishop's Palace in Otford is one of the District's hidden historical gems. Once the inspiration for Hampton Court, today only a small part of the original Tudor buildings remain.

Volunteers from the Archbishop's Palace Conservation Trust are working to restore this local landmark, developing it into a centre for education and discovery about the Palace and the Darent Valley.

Following works to stabilise and glaze the building (believed to be the first new windows since the 1600s), the Trust is applying for a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant while raising 'matched funding' from other sources for further improvements.

The Trust is also making enhancements to Palace Field, tripling the number of trees in Heritage Orchard and providing benches and interpretation boards.

All of this activity is only possible with the support of volunteers. If you'd like to get involved, please email secretary@otfordpalace.org.

Sevenoaks District Council at your fingertips

Main Office

Argyle Road, Sevenoaks,
Kent TN13 1HG

01732 227000

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

Emergencies (outside 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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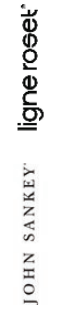


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