

InShape

The newsletter of Sevenoaks District Council



Coming soon 
**Your new weekly food
waste collection** 

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Coming soon your new weekly food waste collection service



In the coming weeks, we'll deliver your new food waste caddies ready for your food waste collection service that starts from Monday 27 April 2026.

As part of our work to improve the District's recycling services, we are introducing separate weekly food waste collections for most households.

By taking part in the service, you'll be helping the environment, as your food waste is used to produce

renewable energy and fertiliser. Food waste is also cheaper to dispose of when it's collected separately from general waste, which helps keep costs down for taxpayers.

Residents who already use communal waste bins and those who live in certain housing blocks or estates will not receive food waste caddies. Instead, they will get new communal food waste facilities at a later date.

Your food waste caddies

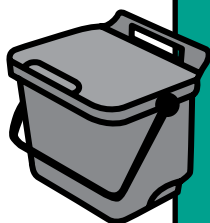
We're delivering food waste caddies between 30 March and 24 April 2026.

You'll receive two caddies:

Your small indoor caddy

Most people keep this caddy in the kitchen so plate scrapings can go straight in.

To keep it clean, you could use compostable liners (available from most supermarkets and online) or line it with newspaper.



Your outdoor caddy

Every few days, or when it's full, empty the contents of your indoor caddy into your outdoor caddy and lock the lid by putting the handle in the down position.

This is the caddy you should put out for your weekly collection.



In your outdoor caddy you'll find a roll of compostable caddy liners to get you started, and a leaflet explaining how to use the new service.

You can view our caddy distribution schedule on our website. www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/foodwaste.

We can provide additional caddies for bigger households. An application form is available on our website.

The start date

We will begin collecting food waste **every week from Monday 27 April 2026** on the same day we collect your general waste and recycling.

Put your outdoor caddy at the edge of your property by 7am, near your general waste and recycling, making sure it's visible to our crew.

If you get your caddy early, please do not start separating food waste until **one week before** your first collection and do not put your caddy out for collection until the new service starts from 27 April.

When alternate weekly waste and recycling collections begin later this year, food waste will still be collected every week.

The benefits of separate food waste collections

About 30% of our household waste, by weight, is made up of raw and cooked food. Currently, it's incinerated to generate electricity, but this is very expensive and the nutrients in the food are lost forever.

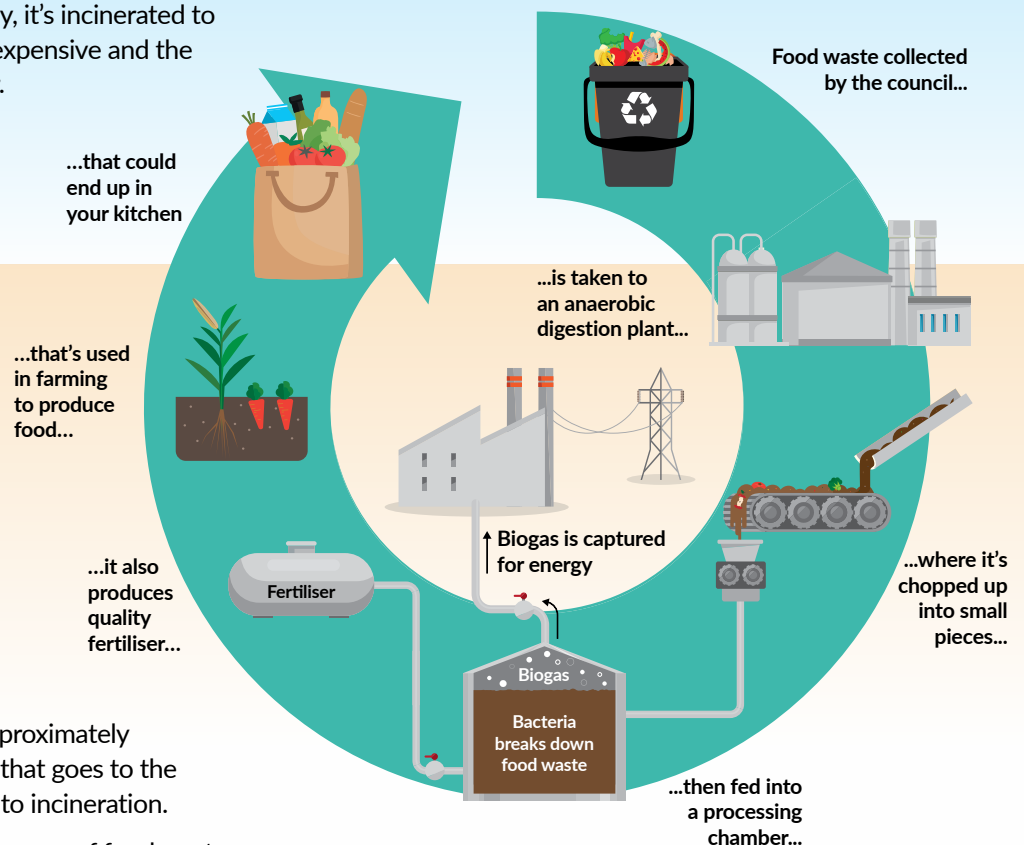
Separately collected food waste goes to a specialist 'anaerobic digestion' plant where bacteria break down the food to produce natural biogas.

The biogas is captured and fed into the national grid and is used in homes for cooking and heating and electricity production. Some is used to power the anaerobic digestion plant itself. The process also creates quality fertiliser.

Recycling food waste costs far less than disposing of it with your general waste.

Kent County Council (KCC) saves approximately £130 for every tonne of food waste that goes to the anaerobic digestion plant compared to incineration.

We expect to collect at least 5,000 tonnes of food waste every year, saving KCC around £650,000.



How to support our food waste collection crews

Mark your house number or name on your caddy with a sticker, marker pen or paint so you can recognise it from your neighbours' caddies.

Only put food waste in your caddy, without plastic bags or food packaging.

Our crew have never done this activity before. Each crew member will empty at least 800 caddies every day! Please be patient and supportive while they settle into their new routine.

Help putting food waste out for collection

We can help if you're unable to carry your caddy to the boundary of your property for collection if no one else is available.

We can provide assisted collections for residents who are frail, elderly and those with disabilities.

To find out if you are eligible, and to register for the service, fill in our application form on our website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/assistedcollections.

Food waste roadshows

We will be visiting town centres in April 2026 to help you get ready for your new weekly food waste collection service.

Come along to ask questions, learn how to use your new food waste caddies, find out what food waste you can recycle and get tips on reducing food waste at home.

You can find us at:

- **Edenbridge - outside Waitrose**
Saturday 11 April, 10am to 2pm
- **Swanley Market**
Wednesday 15 April, 10am to 2pm
- **Sevenoaks - under the clocktower in Blighs**
Saturday 18 April, 10am to 2pm

Want to know more?

Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/foodwaste for further information, including our FAQs, and a short video showing what happens to your food waste once it's been collected.

Pupils name food waste trucks

Local schoolchildren put their thinking caps on to name the new vehicles that will collect your food waste from 27 April 2026.

During January and February, the District's primary schools were invited to take part in a competition to name our fleet of eight, energy-efficient food collection trucks.

As part of the competition, schools were provided with resources and classroom activities to help pupils understand the environmental benefits of food waste collection.

Each school class was invited to put forward one name, and we received 50 entries. The judging panel whittled down the best eight names, which will be sign written on the front of the new collection trucks.



Horizon Primary School, Swanley - Year 2
Magic Faraway Tree



St Thomas' Catholic Primary School,
Sevenoaks - Year 5



Steephill School, Hartley - Aderin-Pocock and
Hawking classes



Chiddingstone Primary School - Year 2

And the winners are...

- **Eco-Express**
Steephill School -
Aderin-Pocock Class
- **Rock 'n' Roll Re-user**
Hextable Primary School
- Darwin Class
- **Frank the Friendly Food Bin**
Chiddingstone Primary
School - Year 2
- **Sir Scraps-a-lot**
High Firs Primary School
- Year 4 and Steephill
School - Hawking Class
- **Foodie Doodie**
St Bartholomew's Catholic
Primary School - Years 1 & 2
- **Trashasaurus Rex**
Downsview Community
Primary School - Birch Class
and St John's CE Primary
School - Year 2 Hedgehogs
- **Planet Saving Sally**
St Thomas' Catholic
Primary School - Year 5
- **Waste Warrior**
Horizon Primary Academy -
Year 2 Magic Faraway Tree

Clr Irene Roy, our Cabinet Member for Cleaner and Greener, says: "We're really excited that local schools could help with the launch of our new food waste collection service.

"Children are enthusiastic about the environment, and the competition was a fun way to get them, and their families, thinking about the importance of recycling.

"We had so many great entries and it was a tough job getting the list down to just eight names and there were many worthy entries. I want to thank all the schools, teachers and pupils for taking part."

For more information about food waste collections, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/foodwaste.

The new food waste collection trucks have been funded by a Central Government grant.

Wheelie bin UPDATE

We're working to provide most households with wheelie bins and the move to alternate weekly waste collections as part of our Big Recycling Upgrade project.

Between summer and October 2026, when the new service begins, most households will receive two wheelie bins:

- one for recycling
- the other for general waste.

The recycling bin will hold 240 litres and is for all your dry recycling, including:

- glass bottles and jars
- paper and cardboard
- metal cans, tins and trays
- plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays and empty toothpaste tubes
- long-life cartons.

The general waste bin will be slightly smaller, holding 180 litres. This is to encourage recycling and food waste separation and to make the best use of your recycling capacity.

Service standards

As part of the changes, we are introducing new Waste Collection Service Standards. These are intended to keep our collection crews safe and to support higher recycling rates.

From October 2026, we will no longer collect 'side waste' – any general waste left next to or on top of your bin. We will, however, continue to accept flattened cardboard boxes presented neatly next to your recycling bin if it is full.

In other areas, this has helped residents recycle more and make better use of their weekly food waste collections.

We're also required under health and safety regulations to reduce manual handling of loose waste and sacks.



Collection frequency

Once all wheelie bins have been delivered, we will move to alternate weekly collections from October 2026, collecting your general waste one week and your recycling the next.

Food waste will continue to be collected weekly.

Alternate weekly collections are used by most councils in the UK and were supported by the majority of District residents who took part in our Big Waste Conversation survey. They also help councils manage waste services more efficiently.

We will advise you nearer the time about the start date of your alternate weekly collections.

Properties without wheelie bins

Some properties, such as flats above shops or homes without storage or access, will continue to use alternative arrangements.

Households currently using communal waste bins will see no change. Other blocks or estates that cannot have individual wheelie bins but currently put out loose sacks will move to large communal bins – ask your landlord or managing agent what is happening at your location.

For further information, including our FAQs, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/bigwaste.



Reporting missed waste and recycling collections

We're improving how missed waste collections are reported so we can respond more quickly when something goes wrong.

From 1 April 2026, missed collections will need to be reported by the end of the next working day after your scheduled collection. Reporting promptly helps us investigate while information is still current and allows us to put things right faster.

A missed collection is when your waste was:

- put out by 7am on the correct day and in the correct container
- but was not collected by our crews.

As part of wider service improvements, we are introducing new in-cab tracking technology on all our collection vehicles. We have this already in our garden waste and new food waste collection trucks. This allows

us to see when our vehicles were in your street and records the reasons why the waste collection could not be completed.

If we've genuinely missed your collection, and you've reported it by the deadline, we'll return the next working day to pick it up.

If it was put out late, presented incorrectly, or contained the wrong items, it won't be treated as a missed collection. You'll need to wait until the next scheduled collection or make alternative arrangements for disposal.

Missed collections for food waste, recycling, garden and general waste can all be reported using the same form at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/missedcollection.

Your Easter waste collections

Following the Easter bank holidays, there may be changes to your refuse and garden waste collection days.

- **Good Friday, 3 April** – no change - collections will take place as usual on this day.
- **Week beginning Easter Monday 6 April** – all collections this week will be **one day later** than usual until Saturday 11 April.

Please do not start separating food waste until one week before your first collection and do not put your caddy out for collection until the new service starts.

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





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- June - Northumberland
- July - Isle of Wight
- July - The Battle Proms at Hatfield House
- September - Royal Sandringham
- February '27 - Fête du Citron
- April '27 - Keukenhof and other Dutch Surprises
- May '27 - Spring in the Isles of Scilly

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We're all **better together**

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

Since April 2022, the scheme has...

- Awarded **£43,650** in grants
- Funded **67** local projects
- Supported **46** different groups and organisations
- Funded **eight** community events, in partnership with Town & Parish Councils
- Set up **seven** new community groups

Looking ahead, Better Together will continue to support our communities, and is running a series of FREE training courses, in partnership with Kent Adult Education, to improve wellbeing, develop new skills and encourage pathways to employment.

Details of the courses can be found at www.bettertogethercommunity.org.uk.

If you have an idea to benefit your community, would like to share your skills or learn more about volunteering opportunities, please contact@bettertogethercommunity.org.uk.

Better Together is funded by the UK Government.



Get ready to Run, Walk or Push Against Dementia!

'Run, Walk or Push Against Dementia' returns to the stunning surroundings of Knole Park on Sunday 14 June 2026, giving you the chance to take part and raise money for a great local cause.

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

One family who took their fundraising to the next level at the last event in 2024 were the Printer-Hardys from Sevenoaks.

Sisters Mila and Beau decided to sign up for the 3k run with their dad Rhyse Hardy, in honour of their great nan, who has dementia.

Mila, who is 13, says: "We wanted to take part in Run, Walk or Push Against Dementia to show our love and affection for our great nan, for other people that are living with dementia, and their families.

"We made a Just Giving page explaining why we wanted to raise money for dementia. We shared it with family and friends who all donated generously."

Beau, 14, adds: "We really enjoyed the race, we felt proud of ourselves that we completed it and had a great day together! It was fun to run with our dad, to see our family at the finish line and receive our medals.

"To anyone who is thinking of signing up, you should go for it! Dementia affects so many people and taking part in this race can help them and their carers. You will feel a great sense of achievement as well!"

The girls raised a whopping £1,500 for the Sevenoaks Area Dementia Forum Community, money which will be used to help fund dementia-friendly cafés, singing groups and more.

Their mum, Nadine Printer, says: "I felt really proud of the girls when they said they wanted to take part in Run Walk or Push against Dementia. We have seen first-hand how much dementia affects families, and how having support can help the person suffering and their carers.

"Watching them run over the finish line filled me with pride. It was the girl's first charity run and it won't be their last!"

If you'd like to have a fun family day out and raise money for charity, find out more and sign up at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/runwalkpush.



Sisters Mila and Beau with their dad Rhyse complete the 2024 Run, Walk or Push



Mila and Beau, pictured with mum Nadine, are taking part in this year's event

If you want to help raise even more money for the Sevenoaks Area Dementia Forum Community, make sure to sign up to Just Giving and get your friends and family to sponsor you. Details of how to sign up can be found on the Sponsorship and donations page on the Run, Walk or Push website.

Thank you for supporting our Local Plan consultation!

Thousands of residents took part in our latest Local Plan survey, formally called the Regulation 18 consultation.

From 23 October to 11 December 2025, the public could share their views on proposed development sites, put forward by landowners, to meet the Government's compulsory housing target for the District of 1,145 new homes every year – a 63% increase on the previous target.

Residents were also asked for their opinions on the Government's new designation of 'Grey Belt' sites in the District. They could also have a say on policies to support the economy by protecting business space and high streets and providing new infrastructure such as schools, shops, health centres and improved local transport.

Around 5,000 people and organisations took part in the consultation and 1,150 people also attended one of 30 face-to-face 'Pop-up' sessions that took place at 10 locations across the District where our staff were on hand to answer questions.

We also sought the views of young people through the student council at Orchards Academy in Swanley.

You can view all the Local Plan comments on our website at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/emerginglocalplan.

As *In Shape* went to print, the comments were being analysed and considered before publication of the final draft of the Local Plan in summer 2026 for further public consultation (called the Regulation 19 Publication).

This version of the Local Plan will be submitted to the Government for examination by the end of 2026.

Cllr Nigel Williams, our Cabinet Member for Development & Infrastructure, says: "I want to thank the thousands of residents who gave up their time to take part in our most recent Local Plan consultation.

"Our priority is to protect the District as best we can, whilst delivering the homes that local people and their families need. This is despite the very challenging task of meeting the Government's housing targets along with its abolition of many of our Green Belt protections.

"The final decision relating to the Local Plan will rest with the Government's Planning Inspector."



Spring into action

It's that time of year when everything comes alive again and gardens start to bloom. If you're looking to start your next project, signing up to our Garden Waste service could make things a lot easier.

Our simple and environmentally friendly service picks up your garden waste on the same day as your rubbish and recycling and saves you trips to the tip.

Whether your garden is big or small, there's an option for you. Choose from:

- An annual permit for a 240-litre bin for £60 or a 140-litre bin for £44
- 25 garden waste sacks for £27

Apply for a permit today! Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/gardenwaste or call 01732 227000.



Reach your weight goals with One You!

Sonja Lawrence and Nicola Warren met though at our One You course and are now firm friends

Losing weight on your own can be tough, but with the right support, anything is possible.

Nicola and Sonja are two residents who signed up to our One You weight management course in Swanley. We found out how the 12-week group sessions changed their lives...

Nicola Warren, 59 from Hartley, saw a post on social media about the One You service and decided to give it a try.

Nicola says: "One You and the support from advisor Jennie has changed my life. I found the weekly group really helpful and informative."

Nicola lost just over two stone during the 12 weeks and is carrying on her healthy journey to achieve her goal of eventually losing four stone.

"I met some great people at the group sessions, especially Sonja, who I sat with. We encouraged each other and when the group came to an end, we became gym buddies.

"Sonja and I find it so helpful to have someone on the journey with you. We help push each other in the gym and encourage each other to keep going."

Sonja Lawrence, 52 from Hextable, found she put on weight after a difficult bereavement, turning to food and alcohol as a coping mechanism.

"Before I came to the One You group, I thought I was eating healthily, but just consuming a few too many sweets and too much alcohol," says Sonja.

"With help from the group, I actually learnt that I wasn't eating as healthily as I thought I was and I needed to work on portion control!"

Sonja found that it wasn't just about weight loss, it really helped with her mental health too. She found it was a great support network where the advisors not only helped them relearn food information but chatted about issues that triggered unhealthy habits.

Through the support of the group, and her new friendship with Nicola, she managed to lose three stone and become a lot more active.

Sonja adds: "I feel truly blessed to have met such wonderful people, and my life has been well and truly changed. The difference a year can make is amazing, and I thank my lucky stars to have been part of it."

If Nicola and Sonja have inspired you to make a change, contact our One You team today. Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/oneyou.

Walking for health

If you're looking for a fun and sociable way to exercise and get some fresh air, try our Steps to Wellbeing walks. They take place in Chartwell, Sevenoaks, Edenbridge, Otford & Shoreham, are usually two or three miles long and mostly explore wooded areas. Find out more and book on to a walk near you at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/walking.

Take a break at a lunch club

Older residents can come along to our friendly monthly lunch clubs to enjoy hot food and drinks and a sociable chat with others.

As well as a delicious two-course meal with tea and coffee, there will be guest presenters promoting activities and support on offer to this age group.



Hextable Lunch Club

Taking place at St Peter's Church on the third Monday of the month from 12noon to 2pm.

There is a £5 charge to attend. You will need to book and pay for your place at least seven days in advance.

You can book your place at the end of the lunch club for the following month or by **emailing communities@sevenoaks.gov.uk** or calling us on **01732 227000**.

Please put your £5 cash payment in an envelope, with your full name written clearly on the front, and take it to the Next Door Hextable café.

West Kingsdown Lunch Club

Taking place at St Edmund's Primary School on the third Thursday of the month from 12noon to 2pm.

This club is free, but you must book your place at least seven days in advance.

You can book your place at the end of the lunch club for the following month or by contacting Tammy Jukes of Egghead Catering by emailing **eggheadcatering@outlook.com** or calling **07769 327683**.

A school to be proud of!

Last November, the new **Orchards Academy building in Swanley** was officially opened with guests including our **Chairman, Cllr Lynda Harrison**.

Construction on the £33 million project began in October 2023.

The Net Zero development consists of a three-storey facility with a separate dining block and double-height sports hall.

It is highly energy efficient and benefits from plenty of natural light and a green roof to reduce overheating while providing a home for wildlife.

The sports hall was partly funded by us. We contributed £353,521 towards its construction, including £158,000 of funding secured from developers.

Orchards Academy is still undergoing work with the old school buildings being demolished and the site being landscaped to provide new grass pitches.

Once the project has been completed later this year, the new sports hall is expected to be available to local sports clubs and activity providers, outside of school times.



Cllr Lynda Harrison (left) with other guests at the opening of the new Orchard's Academy building



The new school hall partly funded by this council

Your councils are changing

Residents urged to have their say on Local Government Reorganisation in Kent

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Kent is the biggest proposed change to local councils in more than 50 years.

Right now, Kent County Council provides services such as education, social care and highways, while district and borough councils are responsible for waste collection, planning, housing and more.

LGR is about changing how councils are structured and run. In Kent, this would mean merging the 12 smaller district and borough councils and Kent County Council into fewer unitary councils. These councils would deliver all local services within their areas, similar to the model already used by Medway Council.

The aim is to make services better and councils more effective by reducing duplication and simplifying decision-making.

Ultimately, the goal is a clearer, more efficient system that works better for residents and provides value for money.

What's happening in Kent?

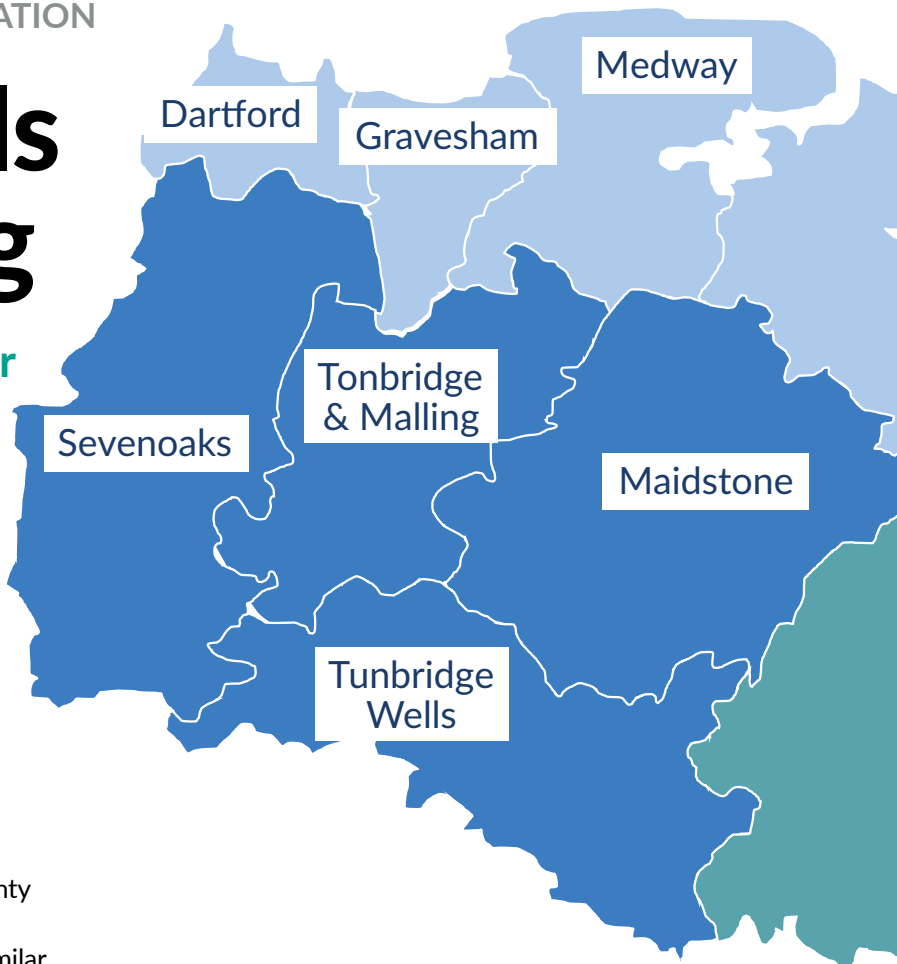
Along with all other councils across Kent and Medway, we have created a draft business case exploring the options for how LGR will look in the county.

In total five business cases were presented to the Government to consider at the end of 2025.

These ranged from one single unitary authority for the whole of Kent, to the county being split into five new unitary council areas.

Our preferred option is a three unitary council model, known as 3a, which would be made up of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells councils in the west; Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale councils in the north; and Ashford, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover and Folkestone and Hythe councils in the east.

We're supporting option 3a, alongside Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells councils and Folkestone & Hythe council. We believe this option is **Big Enough to Deliver. Local Enough to Care.**



When is all this going to happen?

LGR will take two more years to complete and there are key steps along the way.

The first milestone was 28 November 2025, when councils in Kent submitted their proposals to the Government.

From 6 February to 26 March 2026 the Government will consult with the public and stakeholders on the proposals.

In July 2026, the Government is expected to announce its decision on the new council structure. Later in winter 2026, new laws will be introduced to make these changes official.

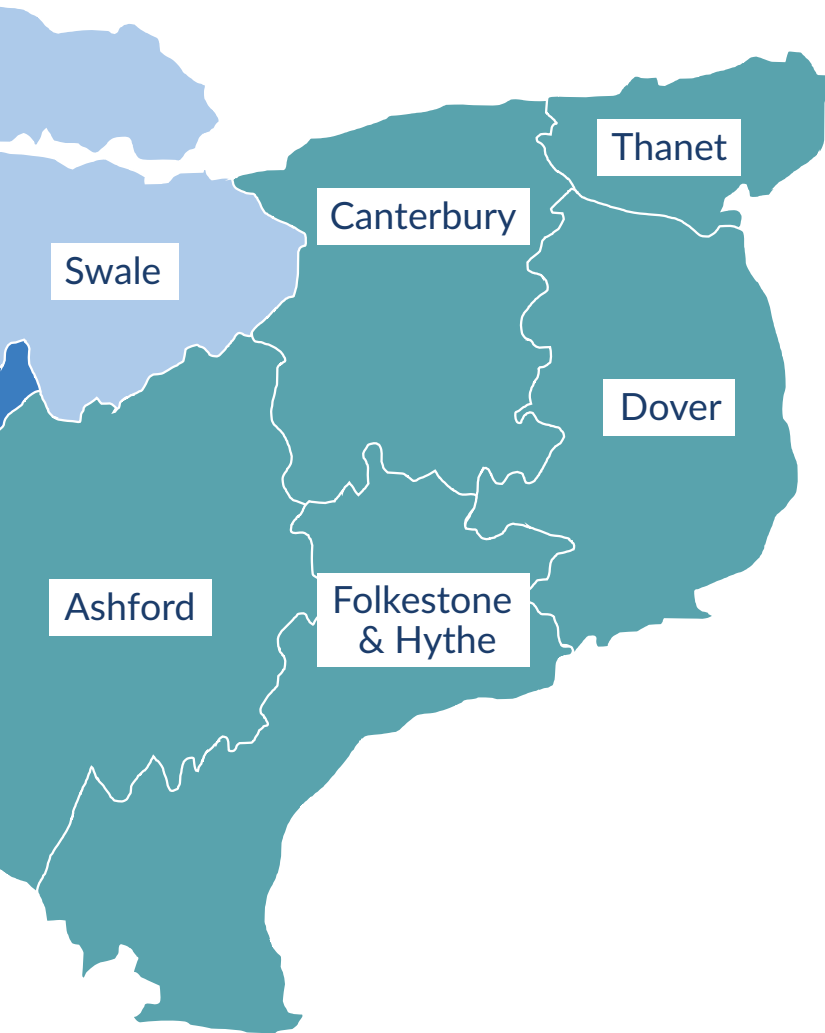
Next, on 6 May 2027, elections will be held for the new councils, and a shadow authority will be elected.

Finally, on 1 April 2028, the new authorities will take over and start delivering services.

This timeline shows how the process will move from planning to action, ensuring communities have a say along the way.

LGR Timeline





What is a shadow authority?

When new councils are created, they don't start running services straight away. After the elections, a shadow authority is set up.

This is a temporary leadership team made up of elected councillors. Their job is to prepare for the big changes ahead. They plan budgets, agree priorities, and make sure everything is ready for when the new council officially takes over.

The shadow authority will not have full powers until April 2028, but it plays an important role in making sure the transition is smooth and residents get the services they need from day one.

How will LGR impact me?

LGR will change how councils work, but for most people the impact will be how services are delivered.

Instead of having separate councils for different services, one council will handle everything in your area. This should make things simpler, reduce duplication, and save money.

Over time, there will be more joined-up services like housing, waste collection, and social care, all under the same authority.

Town and parish councils are not directly impacted by LGR.

Option 3a - Big Enough to Deliver. Local Enough to Care.

This is one of five models currently under consideration, and while it reflects our ambitions, it may not ultimately be selected as the chosen approach for the county.

We believe this model offers significant benefits that align with our vision for modern, responsive local Government.

Service and resident focused

Services will be designed around resident needs, maintaining strong community identity and local accountability, while ensuring fairness in access and outcomes across Kent.

This approach also aligns with the existing boundaries of Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, and the NHS, creating a more consistent and coordinated framework for public services. By mirroring these established structures, Option 3a supports better collaboration, reduces duplication, and ensures residents experience a seamless connection between local government and essential services.

Financially resilient and efficient

Of the models being considered, option 3a offer the greatest savings potential combined with one of the quickest payback periods.

Government consultation

As *In Shape* went to print, the Government was consulting on the Local Government Reorganisation options for Kent until 11.59pm on Thursday 26 April 2026.



You can view and comment on the proposals at <https://bit.ly/lgrconsultation>.

Paper copies of the survey are available at local libraries.



Walking football helps people with Parkinson's stay active, confident and connected

This Parkinson's Awareness Month (April 2026), Edenbridge Leisure Centre is celebrating the success of its Parkinson's Walking Football sessions, a weekly activity supporting residents to stay active, build confidence and connect with others who understand the condition.

Staying physically active is widely recognised as one of the most effective ways to help manage Parkinson's, supporting balance, mobility, coordination and overall wellbeing. Just as importantly, regular activity can boost mood, confidence and social connection.

Running every Thursday at Edenbridge Leisure Centre from 2pm to 3pm, the Walking Football sessions are designed specifically for people living with Parkinson's. They focus on gentle movement in a safe, supportive and welcoming environment. Since launching in September 2025, the sessions have grown into a close-knit group where encouragement, laughter and camaraderie are just as important as the physical benefits.

Molly Cope, Activity and Wellbeing Coordinator for Everyone Active in Sevenoaks, runs the sessions and has seen the impact first-hand.

"What has stood out most is the progress people have made - not just in mobility and stamina, but in confidence and mood," says Molly. "People who were initially hesitant have grown more comfortable on the pitch, supporting one

another and celebrating small wins together. The sense of community that has developed is incredibly special."

Participants say the sessions give them something to look forward to each week and help reduce feelings of isolation.

Phil, who attends regularly, adds: "It's something I look forward to every week. It's nice to turn up and meet friends, particularly Parkinson's sufferers, as we understand each other's difficulties. Parkinson's is a condition which can make you feel isolated, and the group helps to bring people together to support each other."

Hasan Romel, Area Contract Manager for Everyone Active in Sevenoaks District, says: "Regular physical activity can play a vital role in helping people manage Parkinson's, both physically and mentally.

"By working in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council, we're proud to offer activities that are welcoming, supportive and genuinely make a difference to residents' quality of life."

In addition to the Walking Football sessions, Everyone Active offers free memberships for people living with Parkinson's at all of its leisure centres, helping to remove barriers and encourage residents to stay active in a way that suits them.

Edenbridge Leisure Centre is managed by Everyone Active in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council. Residents living with Parkinson's, whether experienced footballers or complete beginners, are encouraged to come along and give it a try.

To find out more about options available for people with Parkinson's, contact Edenbridge Leisure Centre on **01732 442364**.



Council pays tribute to long-serving councillors

Two popular, long-serving councillors, Darren Kitchener and Gary Williamson, sadly passed away late last year.

Darren died suddenly on 12 November 2025. He was an Independent councillor who served on the District Council for more than a decade. He was also a Hextable Parish Councillor since its formation in 2008.

Gary Williamson passed away on 28 December 2025. He was a Conservative District councillor for over 25 years. At the time of his death, he was the Chairman of the Development Management Committee and had previously served on the Cabinet.

Gary spent his whole life living in Knockholt and then Halsted and was a member of the Parish Council. He ran a chain of butcher shops, including one in Sevenoaks town centre, for many years.

Our Leader, Cllr Kevin Maskell, says: "We are deeply saddened by the passing of these two wonderful councillors.

"Darren was known for his enthusiasm, kindness and compassion. He was a truly remarkable councillor who served not for recognition, but



Darren Kitchener

from a genuine desire to help others and create a better future for everyone around him."

Cllr Maskell adds: "Gary served his beloved ward of Halstead, Knockholt and Badgers Mount for over a quarter of a century. He was an energetic and highly respected champion of his local community."

"Both Darren and Gary are greatly missed, and our thoughts and sympathies go out to their friends and families."



Gary Williamson

By-elections for the two vacant District Council seats were due to take place as *In Shape* went to print.

The election for the Hextable ward took place on Thursday 5 March and Halstead, Knockholt and Badgers Mount ward is scheduled for 26 March.

The election results will be available to view at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/elections.

Helping local employers recruit successfully

If you run a business, you can get free, tailored support to make hiring easier and more effective.

We've teamed up with Tonbridge Jobcentre Plus to help local businesses with their recruitment needs.

Tonbridge Jobcentre Plus services include:

- Candidate shortlisting and pre-screening – saving you time by identifying candidates who meet your job criteria
- Interview coordination and hosting – organising interviews for suitable candidates at a time that works for you, making the process stress free

- Recruitment events and job fairs – connecting you with a wider talent pool
- Work experience placements and work trials – giving candidates the chance to demonstrate their skills while their benefit remains in payment
- Apprenticeship signposting and support – helping you build a skilled workforce for the future.

By working with Tonbridge Jobcentre Plus, you'll gain access to motivated candidates and benefit from their expertise in the local labour market.

To find out more, email rs.tonbridge@gov.uk.

FREE

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

This service offers a wide range of support around housing, health and wellbeing, welfare benefits, budgeting, debt, and much more. Partners will be available to give face-to-face advice and guidance with anything you need help with.

The service takes place at our Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1HG unless otherwise stated. No appointment is necessary, and refreshments are provided.

Our next Housing and Community Hubs are being held on:

- Thursday 16 April, 10am to 12noon
- Monday 18 May, 10am to 12noon (empty homes awareness)
- Friday 26 June, 10am to 12noon (Armed Forces Day)
- Monday 20 July, 10am to 12noon (Housing Register Allocations Policy)
- Thursday 20 August, 2pm to 4pm
- Wednesday 9 September, 10am to 12noon - (Emergency Services Day) - held at the Stag, Sevenoaks
- Friday 9 October, 10am to 12noon (World Homeless Day)
- Monday 23 November, 10am to 12noon
- Thursday 17 December, 10am to 12noon
- Monday 11 January 2027, 10am to 12noon (Housing Register Allocation Policy)



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, please contact us 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 housing, shared ownership and discount market homes.

New social housing is advertised on Kent HomeChoice (www.kenthomechoice.org.uk) and shared ownership homes are advertised on Share to Buy (www.sharetobuy.com).

Our recent achievements

In 2024/25, we...

HERO
Service

Assisted 176
residents through
our HERO Service



Moved 32 households into
suitable accommodation through
our Changing Spaces scheme



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.



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.



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 Sevenoaks 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

HERO service

The HERO Service is here to provide support to residents in the private rented sector and owner occupiers.

They can help with:

- Saving money on household bills
- Debt, rent or mortgage guidance
- Welfare benefits
- Retraining, skills and finding work
- Volunteering
- Referrals to housing and other support services

Email hero@sevenoaks.gov.uk or visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/hero

For any housing matter or concern, please call us on 01732 227000.



Gave out 177 Disabled Facility Grants, helping residents to remain in their own homes



Signed up 19 new landlords who now rent their property through our Sevenoaks Landlord Hub

New Rights for Private Renters

Residents who rent from private landlords will soon have new rights as tenants.

Last October, the Government's 'Renters' Rights Act' became law.

This new law provides private renters with greater security, rights and protections so they can stay in their homes for longer, build lives in their communities and avoid the risk of becoming homeless. It will also ensure they have access to good quality, safe homes.

There are around 7,000 private rented properties in the Sevenoaks District whose tenants will benefit from the changes.

The changes are being introduced in three phases with the first phase coming into force in May 2026. The Government will confirm the dates of the remaining two phases in due course.

Further information and support are available on our website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/rentersrights.

What the changes mean for private sector renters

Phase 1 of the Renters' Rights Act will take effect from 1 May 2026.

An end to no fault evictions

- Landlords can no longer evict tenants without a specific reason
- All tenancies will become periodic (rolling contracts) and landlords must provide written information about the tenancy to their tenants, usually through a written agreement
- Possession will only be granted under legally defined grounds, such as the landlord wishes to sell the property, rent arrears or anti-social behaviour.



Changes to rent increases

- Rent increases will be limited to once per year and landlords must give tenants at least two months' notice of a rent increase. Tenants will have the right to challenge unfair rent hikes through a tribunal
- Only one month's rent in advance can be requested once any tenancy agreement has been signed, and before the tenancy begins.

New rules on pets

- Tenants will have the right to request a pet, and landlords cannot unreasonably refuse.

Stronger protection against tenant discrimination

- The new law bans discrimination against tenants on benefits or with children
- Tenant selection must be fair and transparent, based only on financial suitability.

Information for landlords

If you rent out property, you should prepare for the changes now.

As well as new rights for tenants, the Renters' Rights Act sets out shorter timescales for evicting tenants who owe rent or carry out anti-social behaviour.

Visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/rentersrights to view the Government's 'Implementing the Renters' Right Act 2025' document, which covers all the changes.

Alternatively, use the QR code.



We hold regular Landlord Forums with guest speakers from across the property sector. We will cover the Renters' Rights Act as the next phases are introduced.

If, as a landlord, you would be interested in working with us to let your property, and receiving free help and advice, please contact our Landlord Liaison Officer by emailing slh@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Show off your blooming wonderful gardening skills!

Once again, we're supporting the '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 display your blossoming garden.

You won't need to fork out any money as entry is completely free! In fact, everyone who takes part will be given a £5 voucher to spend at any Coolings centre.

There are lots of categories available, including front gardens, allotments, businesses and schools, and brand new for this year, Young Gardener – open to anyone under the age of 15.

Above all, it is fun as all the judges are friendly and looking at ways to award points for your efforts!

Ian Hazon, an In Bloom judge for the past 11 years, says: "It's always such an immense pleasure to visit so many beautiful gardens.

"As judges, we're looking for the positives in every garden. There are a range of areas to score points including maintenance, range of stock, year-round interest, support for nature, site difficulties and so on.

"Whether you have a large or small garden, an allotment, a window box or a hanging basket and you're a



householder or you run a business, there's a category for you!"

The competition will open on Wednesday 1 April and the deadline to enter is Tuesday 30 June 2026. Judging will take place throughout July.

Full details and entry forms can be found at www.coolings.co.uk.

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

Extra resources to collar irresponsible dog owners

In recent weeks, you may have seen more of our officers, especially in areas where we've received persistent reports of dog fouling.

We've put in additional resources to help deter and catch owners who do not clean up after their dogs in public.

The staff, along with our Animal Licensing and Welfare Officer, have been regularly visiting parks and open spaces with reported problems.

In the first instance, they will speak with dog owners, who do not pick up their dogs' mess, to promote responsible dog ownership. But they can issue on the spot fines for

anyone who refuses to clean up and for persistent offenders.

Not only is dog fouling unpleasant, it also poses a real danger, especially to young children. It can cause serious illnesses such as toxocariasis, which untreated can lead to blindness.

If you own a dog, please clean up after it by using a bag or a poop scoop. As well as dog waste bins, you can use any litter bin to throw away your dog's mess, as long as it's bagged.



For tips on responsible dog ownership, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/dogs.

If you're concerned about a public area with persistent dog fouling, please email environmental.health@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Your Councillors

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

 Conservative (C)	 Liberal Democrats (LD)	 Reform (R)
 Green Party (G)	 North Sevenoaks District Independent Group (NDI)	 West Kent Independents (WKI)



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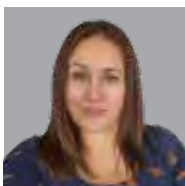
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(By election scheduled for 26 March)

Halstead, Knockholt and Badgers Mount



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(By election held
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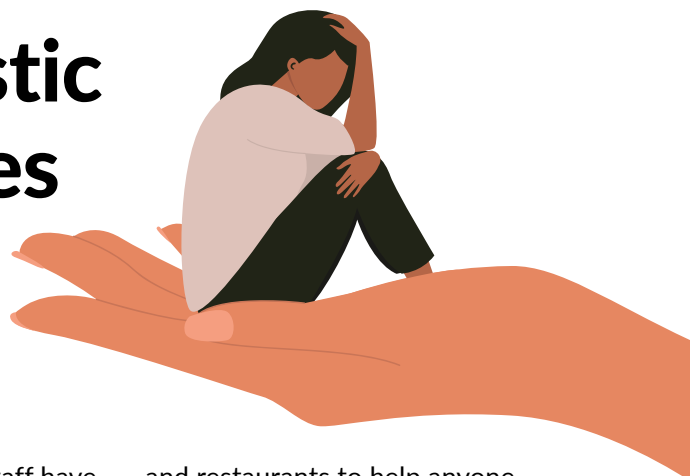
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How to contact your District Councillors

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.

Enhancing our domestic abuse support services

We are working towards a bronze Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation, the UK benchmark for how councils and housing providers should respond to domestic abuse.



As part of our application, we are strengthening our processes and policies to support male and female victims and survivors of domestic abuse. This could include moving at risk residents to safer areas or protecting their rights of tenure.

We're providing extra training for our frontline housing staff, and we have already trained colleagues across the Council to be Domestic

Abuse Champions. Many staff have also signed up to the White Ribbon campaign - this means speaking up against violence against women and girls in the workplace and beyond.

We now offer safe spaces in our reception where anyone who feels unsafe, can talk privately and securely. We also support nationwide schemes like Ask for Ani and Ask for Angela in shops, bars

and restaurants to help anyone who is feeling vulnerable or unsafe to get the support they need.

We hope to achieve our bronze accreditation in the next few months.

For more information about domestic abuse support, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/domesticabuse.

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 data.

The priorities include dealing with:

- Theft, burglary and serious violence
- Anti-social behaviour and environmental crime
- Drugs and county lines
- Domestic abuse, including stalking and harassment
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Crimes against local businesses
- 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.

Ring the bell!

If you have a security or doorbell camera, you can sign up to Kent Police's CCTV Registry to help keep your community safe!

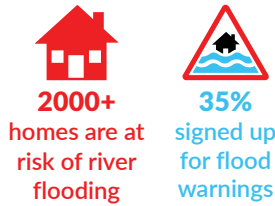


It's free, secure, and quick to register and your camera footage could be used to support investigations, bringing criminals to justice, and making your neighbourhood a safer place to live.

The police will not have access to your camera, but they may request footage.

To register, go to www.cctvregistrykentandessex.co.uk.

Living in the Sevenoaks District?



2000+
homes are at
risk of river
flooding

35%
signed up
for flood
warnings

Find out if you're at risk, visit:
gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk

Receiving flood warnings can give you valuable time to prepare. Sign up at gov.uk/get-flood-warnings

Check the latest flood risk situation: check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk

Are you at risk of flooding?

Many homes in the Sevenoaks District are at risk from river or surface water flooding. Is yours one of them?

- The average cost of flood damage to a home is £30,000
- The average cost of flooding to a business is £82,000
- You could be out of your home for an average of five months.

How can you prepare?

- Go to gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding
- Sign up for free Flood Warnings
- Create a flood plan
- Find out how to protect your property at nationalfloodforum.org.uk
- Check your insurance to see if you are covered
- Have a flood kit of essential items at home
- For help and advice call Floodline

Need further assistance?

Contact your local Flood Resilience Team at the Environment Agency:

Email: FloodResilienceKSLES@environment-agency.gov.uk

Contact us:

EA Incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60

Floodline: 0345 988 1188

gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding
and search for 'Kent Prepared'

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



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In Shape advertising

Sevenoaks District Council accepts paid-for advertising in In Shape to pay towards the magazine's production costs.

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