

ASHFORD

FOR YOU

Issue 22 | Autumn/Winter 2023

YOUR BOROUGH, YOUR MAGAZINE



PARK LIFE

Victoria Park Extravaganza

ASHFORD COLLEGE EXPANSION

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR BIN COLLECTIONS

WIN

- A stay in a Shepherd Hut
- A wine tasting for four people

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Welcome



Welcome to the latest edition of *Ashford For You*, an issue which covers the autumn and winter period. As has been widely reported, the council needs to make budget savings and the decision has been taken to reduce the frequency of publication from four to two editions per year. While we are disappointed that we are unable to publish the magazine as often, the good news is that our monthly residents' e-newsletter continues to grow, with around 2,000 residents now subscribing to receive it. For details of how to sign up to receive the latest news see page 6.

Our focus on ensuring that residents are at the heart of everything we do has sharpened even further with the launch of two initiatives – MyAshford and the Citizens' Panel. MyAshford is a new online customer portal, which gives residents access to the various service accounts that can be held with us, all in one secure location. For more details on setting up see page 5.

A Citizens' Panel has been launched to encourage residents to give their views and opinions on services and issues that affect the borough. The aim is to consult the panel up to six times a year and provide regular updates on what changes to services have been made because of the feedback received. Citizens who sign up will be able to share opinions and take part in consultations to provide their views on various topics of interest to residents. For details see page 8.

Residents turned out in droves at the Victoria Park Extravaganza, a celebration of the multi-million pound investment in new facilities in one of Ashford's most popular green spaces. See our photo spread on pages 16/17, and learn more about other events planned for the borough in our special feature on pages 10/11.

Tracey Kerly

Tracey Kerly
Chief executive, Ashford Borough Council



Contents

News	4-6
K&ESR appeal launched, Eurostar campaign, MyAshford customer portal and more	
Pub is the rural hub	7
Pubs are the heartbeat of our rural communities	
Council update	8
Launch of Citizens' Panel, Civic Centre move latest	
Education focus	9
Ashford College extension	
Events	10-11
Carnival of the Baubles, Food & Drink Festival and town centre events	
Environment	12-14
Christmas and New Year bin collections and more	
Housing news	15
Winter gas safety tips, repairs update and tenants' survey	
Victoria Park Extravaganza	16-17
Thousands of people turned out for our celebration of the new-look park	
Mental health and wellbeing	18
The work of our Welfare Advisory Group and Bear Force in focus	
Tenterden Leisure Centre	19
Investment in new facilities and equipment	
Meet the Mayor	20
We catch up with Cllr Larry Krause	
Watch out for the scammers!	21
Tips on staying safe online and focus on Kent Savers	
Competitions	22
Win a stay in a Shepherd Hut and a wine tasting for four people	

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Our new-look Victoria Park in Ashford

Get in touch!

To comment on this magazine, to tell us what you'd like to see more of and maybe to submit an article of your own:

Email: media@ashford.gov.uk (subject line NEWS) or

Write to: Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL

nextdoor AshfordBoroughCouncil

[ashfordboroughcouncil](https://www.youtube.com/ashfordboroughcouncil) @Ashfordbc ashfordcouncil

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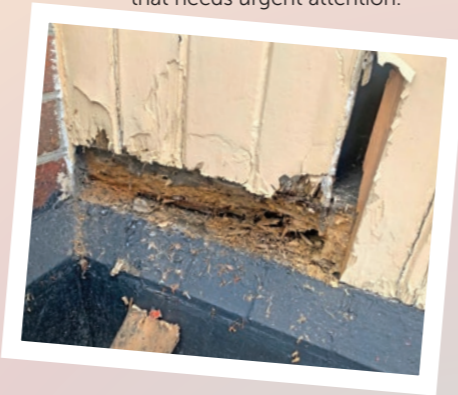
Find your borough councillor: www.ashford.gov.uk/councillors

Please note: To contact us regarding a specific council service, visit www.ashford.gov.uk/contact-us and select the relevant category relating to your query.



Photo 1: (Left to right) K&ESR General Manager Robin Coombes; and Fund patrons, Mayor of Tenterden Cllr Sue Ferguson and Coronation-appointed Baron of the Cinque Ports, Tenterden, John Crawford, standing on the town station platform with the former Chilham signal box visible behind them.

Photo 2: Some of the deterioration that needs urgent attention.



Fund to help K&ESR protect historic landmarks

The Kent & East Sussex Railway has set up a Heritage Buildings Fund as part of an appeal to help safeguard its most precious and historic buildings.

The priorities are restoration work for the weatherboarded Tenterden Town station building (which houses the booking office, ticket hall and gift shop) and the former Chilham signal box (situated at the station). Built in 1903 and 1895 respectively, these iconic, mainly wooden, structures have withstood the ravages of time but are now showing signs of decay.

A £21,000 grant has been awarded to the K&ESR by a charitable trust which directs some of its grant making to charities protecting precious heritage assets. However, with estimates that the full restoration costs could exceed £40,000, another £25,000 is needed to ensure all work can be undertaken within the next 12 months.

While complex restoration work will be undertaken by specialist contractors, some tasks will fall to K&ESR volunteers. Around 250 hours of volunteer effort will be required, removing layers of old paint, repairing rotten wood and applying coats of new paint.

Donations can be made via the Support Us page of the K&ESR website and by text message. Special donor packages has been created to attract businesses support.

K&ESR will be celebrating a special birthday in 2024 – **50 years** since it ran its first passenger services as a heritage railway. Celebrations throughout the season include a special recreation of the inaugural train services that transported the first passengers in 1974. An anniversary Gala will feature a range of attractions and activities. Keep an eye on www.kesr.org.uk/donate for details.

Welcome to the Tudor Peacock

Renovations are underway on the late 14th century premises of The Tudor Peacock, Kent's newest food and drink offering in historic Chilham village square. The Tudor Peacock tasting rooms, shop and bar will feature wines from Kent including award-winning sparkling that confirms our chalky soils match those of Champagne, France.

The Tudor Peacock is due to **open in November** in a stunning medieval building that is being restored to show original features hidden for centuries. The venue will offer guests the ability to taste, learn about and buy wines from all the producers in Kent's Wine Garden of England, while also showcasing other independent estates from across the county.

Follow us on Instagram @thetudorpeacock and Facebook @The Tudor Peacock.

Photo (above): from L-R, Christian Magg, Greg Taylor, Nick and Jeanine Mogford



Amazing Grace



Grace Ball is pictured receiving her stripes as she becomes the first female sergeant at Ashford Sea Cadets since the detachment was formed.

In addition to passing her national promotion board, Grace has acted as Mayor's cadet during which time her duties included doing readings at events attended by the then Mayor of Ashford

Jenny Webb. She has also gained her Drummer's qualification, been part of the winning band at area competition and finished a highly commendable third in the solo drummer competition. "Grace is an exceptional young lady and a credit to the cadet services in Ashford," said Jenny Webb, who is also President of Ashford Sea Cadets.

Do you sing in the bath?



Ashford's award-winning harmony singers, The East Kent Chorus, are inviting anyone who wants to learn to sing beautiful Christmas Carols, in four part harmony, to **join their rehearsals** for Christmas and on stage at a candle lit **Christmas Carol Concert** in December.

Zoe Peate, director of choirs in Sussex, will take the first rehearsal on the **26 October**. Jon Hayward, musical director, wants anyone who has not sung before or only in the bath, to discover the joyful experience of making beautiful harmony and the health and friendship benefits this can bring.

Sign up by contacting Barry on secretary@eastkentchorus.com or call **01233 632317**.

Panto time. Oh yes it is!

Blue Phoenix Productions returns to The Rylance Theatre, Ashford this Christmas with the magical family pantomime *Cinderella* from 15 to 30 December.

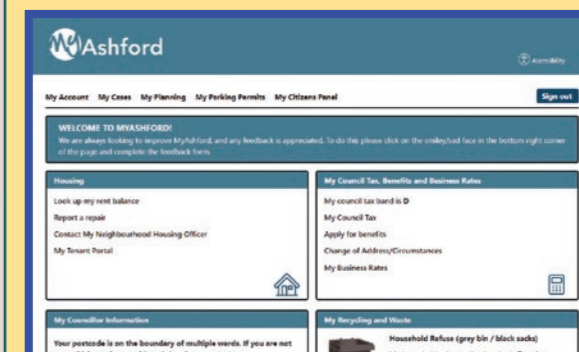
Cinderella is the hilarious family pantomime suitable for all ages, with a full professional cast and an ensemble of local children. With tons of comedy, stunning sets, spectacular costumes, and musical numbers aplenty.

Tickets available at www.ashfordpantomime.co.uk



Online services all in one place

MyAshford is a new online customer portal, which gives residents access to the various service accounts that can be held with us, all in one secure location.



You can view council tax details, upcoming bin collections, local councillor details and apply for parking permits – all through one dashboard.

To set up a MyAshford account, visit www.ashford.gov.uk/myashford/

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“Bring back Eurostar!”



The council has continued to campaign for the return of Eurostar services to Ashford and we welcome and support an initiative by local people to achieve the same goal. Here is a message from them:

“We are a group of proud Ashfordians who loved and benefited from the Eurostar servicing in Ashford and Ebbsfleet to other European cities. In 2020 Eurostar dropped its service to Ashford and Ebbsfleet International stations because of the pandemic and it has never resumed, although it still runs to and from London St Pancras.

We are on a mission to bring it back and we need your help. If you would like the Eurostar servicing our Kent International stations again please sign our petition at www.change.org/bringbackeurotrains, this already has 30,000 names and will help us get more exposure and raise a valid case to the powers that be. If you would like to get more involved, share any information or help in any way email info@bringbackeurotrains.com”

You've got mail

Thousands of residents are now enjoying our newsletter and we wanted to say thanks to all of you who have subscribed. It's ideal if you want to get the latest news and info from us direct to your email inbox, so why not sign up to keep yourself updated on what's going on in the borough: www.ashford.gov.uk/newsletter



Competition winners

More than 650 entries were received for our competitions in the last issue. The winner of the £600 County Square prize bundle is Kat Ludkins of Ashford, who is pictured with some of her prizes along with son Joey. The winner of the baby photography package prize is Clair Willcocks of Ashford, while another 20 entrants win runner up prizes. See page 22 for our latest competitions.



New Tenterden Business and Tourism officer

Welcome to Virginia Hodge who has taken over as the new Tenterden Business and Tourism Officer.

Virginia's role is to provide information, advice, and guidance to Tenterden businesses and tourism organisations, to promote the town as a hub for local people, visitors, and tourists, and to develop links with the borough council and with towns/villages in the surrounding district.

She's also seeking to develop initiatives and projects to promote and enhance all the business and tourist opportunities Tenterden has to offer. "Please contact me if you want to meet to discuss any ideas, advice, or guidance I can provide for your business," said Virginia. Contact Virginia by email towncoord@tenterdentowncouncil.gov.uk or call **01580 762271 / 07915 226568**.



Photos (clockwise from left): General Manager Bee Lewis (right) and supervisor Sam Buckman with some of the fresh coffee and homemade cake on offer at the George. Photo: Gregallenphoto.com; Christine Hopwood is one of the first local artists whose work is being displayed at the George. Photo: Alison Miles

Rural Community pubs

Historic freehouse The George in Bethersden, which was bought by the community after locals raised £300,000 in just three weeks in 2022, has taken its community enterprise to a new level by opening a café.

The George Café launched in June, a month after the pub reopened, and is helping to bring even more local people together by providing an opportunity for those living alone, mothers and toddlers, families, the elderly and groups to meet and socialise in a welcoming space. The café supports local suppliers such as Bloss Coffee and Pluckley tea.

Home-workers can use the WiFi while enjoying the café's fresh coffee, range of teas and homemade cakes from the village's bakers, while the work of local artists is regularly displayed on its walls. The café was opened with a grant from Pub is The Hub, the not-for-profit organisation that helps pubs diversify and provide essential local services.

The George is open Wednesday to Sunday as a drinks-only pub, with the café operating Wednesday to Saturday 10am to 4pm. There are plans to extend trading hours as well as re-launch the pub's restaurant once its kitchen refurbishment is complete and a chef is recruited.

Visit www.georgecommunity.com



Photo: The George Café is creating new ways for locals to connect. Photo: Gregallenphoto.com

Where the pub is the hub...

Ashford is blessed to have many traditional country pubs full of character and rural charm, many of which act as social hubs for the local community. Good examples of these can be found in the Isle of Oxney.

We all know that pubs were among the hospitality businesses that had a tough time during the pandemic. Sadly, a few did not survive but a good many weathered the Covid storm and have come out the other side determined to make up for lost opening hours while we were in lockdown!

In the Isle of Oxney, there is a choice between the historic and traditional Ferry Inn near Stone, two newly refurbished pubs in The Black Lion in Appledore, where new owners are breathing fresh life into an established hostelry, and The Swan in Wittersham where they have transformed the bar and dining room into a welcoming, friendly place to drink and socialise.

The Thai food at The Swan on Friday nights is always excellent and The Black Lion is the perfect place to watch televised sport or play a few board games, as well as the place to be at events such as the annual Appledore Flower Festival where they set up a popular seafood stall outside the pub. The Ferry Inn offers a warm welcome to visitors from near and far, and is the perfect place to watch the sunset.

Across the Isle of Oxney, the pub really is the hub...

@theswaninnwittersham

@blacklionappledorekent
@ferry_inn



Council close up.....

Citizen's Panel launches to find out residents' views, plus the latest on our potential office move

Your views matter

A Citizens' Panel has been launched to encourage residents to give their views and opinions on services and issues that affect the borough.

The aim is to consult the panel up to six times a year and provide regular updates on what changes to services have been made because of the feedback received.

We are looking for a cross section of local people to engage with us. Citizens who sign up will be able to share opinions and take part in consultations through online surveys and polls to provide their views on various topics of interest to residents.



Civic Centre relocation update

As *Ashford For You* went to print, councillors were due to discuss the latest proposals to move the council's offices from the Civic Centre to nearby International House.

In the spring, the council announced it was looking at this idea as part of wider budget saving proposals. A consultation took place during the summer with various stakeholders including residents, councillors, staff, and tenants.

There is a strong financial rationale for looking at moving to International House based on building and maintenance costs that will be required at the Civic Centre over the next few years and capacity within the council owned office building.

If approved the move is likely to take place in phases during 2024. We will keep residents up to date on progress, but for now, it is very much business as usual.



To sign up to the Citizens' Panel visit www.ashford.gov.uk/citizens-panel
Further updates on our potential move will be provided on our website www.ashford.gov.uk



College expansion

As we went to press, EKC Ashford College was putting the finishing touches to its £10m Phase 2 extension, with students enjoying the excellent new facilities at the Station Road site.

It's an exciting time of expansion at Ashford College, with the new engineering hub in the extended building allowing 250 extra students each year to enjoy the quality education on offer there. The new wing provides cutting edge facilities for those looking to study Business, IT, and Engineering, particularly enhancing the teaching of the Government's T Level qualifications. The college has already seen significant growth in student numbers, rising from just over 630 in 2020 to almost 1000 this year.

An extra 11 staff have been recruited to deliver the new courses at the college.

EKC Ashford College is part of the East Kent Colleges Group, whose CEO Graham Razey said: "There's a real and pressing need for additional high quality technical and vocational education places within the community served by our Ashford College. By investing in the college

we are providing new opportunities for young people to develop the range of outstanding skills that meet local employers' needs."

One T Level qualification is equal to three A Levels. The two-year programmes offer a balance of classroom learning and work experience and industry placements, where 80% is classroom-based and 20% is on a 45-day work placement. The substantial work placement ensures students develop the skills employers need, enabling them to progress seamlessly into the career of their choice – or higher education – when they finish.

T Levels are based on the same standards as apprenticeships, so they have been designed by employers and approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. To be eligible students need to be 16 to 19 years old and have achieved the equivalent of 4 GCSEs.

Visit www.ekcgroup.ac.uk/colleges/ashford-college



Looking back at Summer 2023...

Ashford town centre was a buzz of activity over the summer with the launch of the first Food and Drink Festival, a Dino Trail and the return of the temporary furniture on Bank Street and Middle Row.

During July, we celebrated our food and drink businesses and there was certainly a lot to enjoy! From the launch party at Coachworks which saw Il Pakkero hosting pizza-making demonstrations to cupcake decorating at The Little Teapot, a Mama-Mia themed cocktail night at Itaca's to a Summer Beers and BBQ Festival at Curious Brewery – there was something for everyone.

Highlights included AshFOOD! Festival at Elwick Place which was a weekend of family-fun including food and drink stalls, live entertainment, and competitions; and an Evening with Wine Garden of England and Boys Hall at Revelation Ashford which saw guests sample seven tastings from vineyards across Kent accompanied by food pairings courtesy of the team at Boys Hall. A huge thank you to our town centre businesses who ran brilliant events and offers and to everyone involved – it was a lot of fun.

Speaking of fun, August saw Loyal Free's Dino Trail come to the town centre, where younger residents could take part in a roar-some Jurassic adventure by scanning QR codes in business windows. The feedback was hugely

positive, and we cannot wait to bring another trail to town.

While in town, we hope you enjoyed the temporary seating that returned in Bank Street and Middle Row? This year, local artists from Craftship Enterprise CIC (Made in Ashford) decorated the furniture in colourful designs which complimented our murals and the bunting that adorned the streets!

Paint by numbers:

- Five prepping and painting hours
- 13 local artists working on the project
- One work experience person volunteering
- 35 litres of paint
- 45 individual furniture pieces painted
- One local paint stockist and paint expert (Steph from Nest in Evegate)



Got something Broken?

Tenterden's new Repair Café is here to help!

Pop into Tenterden's new Repair Café and have any of the following items repaired for FREE (although donations are welcome):

- Small wooden furniture
- Small electricals and mechanical items
- IT equipment
- Clothing and jewellery
- Bikes
- Toys

When:

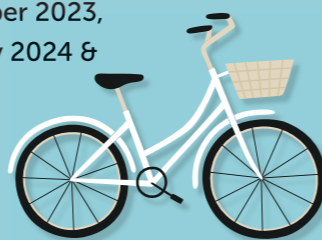
21 October 2023, 25 November 2023, 27 January 2024, 24 February 2024 & 30 March 2024

Time:

1pm to 3.30pm

Where:

The Scout Hut, Bells Lane, Tenterden, TN30 6EX



Ashford's CARNIVAL OF THE BAUBLES

JOIN US ON

SATURDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2023 FOR:

**CHRISTMAS LIGHTS | GIANT BAUBLE PARADE | MUSIC
FAMILY WORKSHOPS | FESTIVE MARKETS | SHOPPING OFFERS**

Visit: loveashford.com



Tenterden Christmas Market

The Tenterden Christmas Market, organised by Market Square Group, will be returning to Tenterden High Street from Friday 24 November to Sunday 26 November 2023 and will coincide with the switch on of the Christmas Tree Lights on Friday 24 November.

The market will bring together international street cuisine and artisan food together with ethically traded and handmade arts and crafts, clothing, jewellery and accessories. So come along to get your Christmas gifts, stocking fillers and hamper items.

When:

Friday 24 November – 12pm to 8pm
Saturday 25 November – 9am to 7pm
Sunday 26 November – 10am to 5pm

Where: Tenterden High Street

For all information, visit mytenterden.co.uk

Sponsored by Ashford College

Ashford Festival of Railway Modelling

The Ashford Festival of Railway Modelling will be taking place over the weekend of 6 and 7 April 2024. Three venues in the town centre - Ashford College, The Elwick Club and Parish Rooms - will host around 50 model railway layouts alongside trade and society stands.

Ashford Museum will open its doors over the weekend and there will be a photographic exhibition in Ashford Gateway Plus which will celebrate 140 years of the Maidstone East to Ashford Railway.

Adults (over 16s): £10;

Under 16s and carers: Free

For full details visit AIMREC's website from the end of October 2023: www.aimrec.co.uk

This event is Autism friendly



Please ensure bins are presented prior to 6am

cut out and keep

Christmas recycling & refuse collections 23/24

Check out the 2023/2024 calendar below for details of your refuse and recycling Christmas collection dates. Please note, this will be the only printed copy sent to your home - you can check your collection dates closer to the time by either keeping this copy, or using the bin collection lookup calendar and viewing this page on our website here www.ashford.gov.uk/bin-collection-calendar

Week	Normal collection day	Revised collection day
Recycling	Monday 18 December	Monday 18 December
	Tuesday 19 December	Tuesday 19 December
	Wednesday 20 December	Wednesday 20 December
	Thursday 21 December	Thursday 21 December
	Friday 22 December	Friday 22 December
Refuse	Monday 25 December	Saturday 23 December
	Tuesday 26 December	Wednesday 27 December
	Wednesday 27 December	Thursday 28 December
	Thursday 28 December	Friday 29 December
	Friday 29 December	Saturday 30 December
Recycling	Monday 1 January	Tuesday 2 January
	Tuesday 2 January	Wednesday 3 January
	Wednesday 3 January	Thursday 4 January
	Thursday 4 January	Friday 5 January
	Friday 5 January	Saturday 6 January

NO CHANGES THIS WEEK

Normal Service will resume Monday 8 January 2024

Bulky collections & garden waste

Bulky waste collections will be suspended for the week commencing Monday 25 December and the week commencing Monday 1 January, and will resume from Tuesday 9 January. Garden waste collections will be suspended for the week commencing Monday 25 December and the week commencing Monday 1 January, and will resume on your normal day of collection from Tuesday 9 January.

Clinical collections

Normal collection day	Revised collection day
Monday 25 December	Saturday 23 December
Monday 1 January	Tuesday 2 January

Clinical collections return as normal from Monday 8 January 2024.

Missed bin collections can continue to be reported via the usual Report It channel:

www.ashford.gov.uk/wastecollections/reportmissedbin/

You can also follow the council on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/AshfordBoroughCouncil) (@AshfordBoroughCouncil) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/AshfordCouncil) (@AshfordCouncil) for regular information updates over the Christmas period.

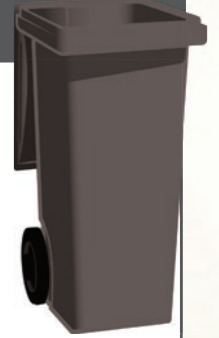
Green bin

- Christmas cards
- Tin foil & foil serving trays
- Champagne, wine & beer bottles
- Non-foil wrapping paper
- Cardboard boxes
- Sweet/chocolate tins
- Mince pie foil cases



Grey bin

- Tinsel
- Broken decorations
- Bubblewrap & soft plastic packaging like cellophane
- Foil/shiny wrapping paper
- Champagne & wine corks
- Polystyrene



Remember.... Do the scrunch test!

- Christmas definitely means more cardboard boxes, any that can't fit in your recycling bin please flatten and leave next to your recycling bin for collection
- Only non-foil paper is accepted for recycling, so to check, scrunch up the paper and if it doesn't spring back open then it is non-foil and can be recycled
- Please remove ribbons and bows from your paper – maybe keep them for next year



Give your food caddy a stuffing!

Use your food caddy for your leftovers, turkey carcass and all your food waste from sprout tops to carrot and potato peelings!

Visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com for handy leftover recipes.



Christmas Tree Recycling

Support Pilgrims Hospices with this special fundraising campaign which offers real Christmas tree collections from homes across the Ashford borough.

Simply make a donation of your choice when registering your real Christmas tree for collection and Pilgrims volunteer elves will collect the tree from your home and take it for recycling.

Every year this campaign is breaking the previous year's record. Last year more than 3,150 trees were collected from Ashford, Canterbury and Thanet areas and an amazing £57,000 raised for vital end-of-life care.

Register your real Christmas tree for collection by visiting: www.pilgrimshospices.org/treerecycling and their volunteer elves will take it away Saturday 13 – Monday 15 January 2024.



Who's ready to carve out some fun?

Last year it was expected 39.9 million pumpkins were to be bought in the UK for decorating and of that 22.2 million pumpkins would go to waste, left uneaten. That's £32.6 million worth of edible food.

Don't miss the trick...and treat your family to more of your pumpkin this Halloween. Pumpkins are tasty, versatile, cheap, nutritious, delicious, grow abundantly in the UK, and can be cooked a number of ways.

There are lots of delicious recipes from traditional pumpkin soup, roasted seeds for snacks and for the more adventurous a coconut pumpkin cake. You can find these recipes and more on www.hubbub.org.uk/eat-your-pumpkin.

Last year the Woodland Trust put out a plea for the public to not leave left over pumpkins in local woodlands. Pumpkins take a long time to break down as they rot, they damage delicate woodland ecosystems, attract rats and can be fatal to animals like hedgehogs.

You can feed animals like birds in your garden by hanging your pumpkin from a tree or on bird feeders above ground level, or donate them to a local wildlife centre.

When your pumpkin is beyond reuse please place it either inside your food caddy or if it doesn't fit on top – no need to put it in a bag, loose is fine, and our crews will collect it.

Please do not place them in your brown garden waste bin. Food waste is recycled by a different processing method and facility from garden waste.



Will your children grow out of or want a new costume when it comes to next year?

You could donate this year's costume to a friend, family member, neighbour or a charity shop for another child to use next year.



Recycling on the go #InTheLoop

Let's boost recycling in Ashford Town Centre by recycling our empty plastic bottles, glass bottles and cans in the nine new dual recycling and general waste bins which have popped up in various locations around the high street.

We are also working with Litter Lotto, who on their app are offering a monthly jackpot prize of £200 during October and November in addition to their usual prize giveaways.

Simply take a picture on the Litter Lotto app putting your recycling or general waste into one of the town centre bins to be entered for a chance to win! Head to www.loveashford.com for more information.



Breathing new life into historic site

The former Kent Wool Growers (KWG) site near Ashford International railway station is set to be given a new lease of life after being bought by our Housing development team. Work is underway on a plan that is likely to include homes, commercial space, a community hub and areas of green space. Bordered by the Great Stour river to the east, the site is part of the Commercial Quarter.

The site represents a rich slice of Ashford's heritage. Historically known as the Tanyard, it had been used as a tannery as far back as the 17th Century. Formerly occupied by KWG, the site includes the Grade II listed Whist House dating back to 1707.

The scheme could include a number of one, two and three bedroom apartments and four bedroom townhouses, parking bays concealed in undercrofts beneath gardens, and a community and cultural hub. A public consultation is due to be held in early 2024, ahead of a planning application expected later in the year.



David Weir, Director at On Architecture (right) discusses preliminary plans for the site with Council Chief Executive Tracey Kerly, Cllr Bill Barrett, Portfolio Holder for Homes and Homelessness and Council Leader Cllr Noel Ovenden.

Listening to our tenants

Our Housing service has recruited two Tenant Engagement Officers, the main aim of their role is to enable meaningful engagement between tenants and the team, to ensure that tenants can positively influence how we deliver services.

They will help us design our services for and around tenants and ensure we keep a customer-focused attitude. For one of our officers their priority over the next two years is to support the retrofitting programme of 727 council homes to make them more energy efficient.

Repairs service taken in house

Taking the repairs service for our 5,000-plus social homes under our wing is likely to save money and provide tenants with an improved and more efficient service. The provision of a day-to-day responsive repairs service will move from contractor Equans to the council's new in house team on 30 November.

We believe that by bringing repairs in house it will save the council around £700,000, plus achieve a significant increase in tenant satisfaction levels as we have more control over the service. We know there is room to improve and we feel this is an opportunity to do just that.

Tenants are reminded that they are responsible for safety checks on any gas appliances they own and operate in their home. Tenancy agreements do not allow the use of portable gas heaters in council homes, due to concerns about the maintenance, safety and storage of combustible gas heaters.

If you have any concerns about damp and mould in your home email damphelp@ashford.gov.uk for help. Damp can cause mould growth on walls, furniture and clothes. Damp also encourages the development of dust mites, which along with mould growth, can increase the risk of respiratory illness. Dampness in the home may be caused by several things, but most frequently it is caused by condensation.

As we went to press, our annual tenants' satisfaction survey was being conducted. It asks your opinion on how we handle complaints, your view of our service and much more. Once the responses have been collated and analysed, we will publish the results so watch out for further details.

We will soon be introducing an improved version of the tenants' portal with new features. From the portal you can already view rent statements and make payments, request a new rent card, request a repair and view repairs, update personal details and send our housing team a message. If you haven't signed up then visit www.ashford.gov.uk/tenants-portal

Welcome to Victoria Park

Victoria Park opened on 23 July with an Extravaganza, to celebrate the work the project had completed so far and Mr Harper's birthday. Some of the new and improved facilities include a huge new playground with a climbing frame, swings, trampolines, a zip-wire and more.

There is a sensory garden filled with colourful and fragrant plants, a seasonal wetland area created in the heart of the park to allow the river Stour to breathe, and new access, improved seating, surfacing and lighting at the fountain piazza.

Youngsters have been enjoying a pump track designed and built by the team behind the London 2012 Olympic BMX track, to be used by BMXers, skaters and all other mini-wheel users. A community building has been built with a brand new café – Harpers Café, with outside seating, modern toilets including a Changing Places facility and a refurbished nursery. There is also a community space compound for the growing number of volunteers.

Final works include

- A zigzag platform for the wetland
- Ecological improvements to the river, including a new Otter Holt (in a secret location!)
- More stag sculptures and new interpretation boards

- Resurfacing of the multi-use games area
- Reinstatement of the Christchurch Road gates
- Finishing of the new entrances
- New river picnic space with additional benches and a viewing platform



Do you want to be a part of the legacy?

Volunteer – Volunteering at Victoria Park offers a unique opportunity to contribute in a range of ways, from conservation and gardening to events and more, with training available. It's also a chance to learn new skills.

Friends of Victoria Park – Friends of Victoria Park are a group of residents who volunteer their time to contribute to the upkeep, conservation and community of the park. They are always open to new member applications.

To find out more visit www.victoriaparkashford.co.uk

Sponsor a bench – If you would like to dedicate a bench to a loved one we have a number available. Visit www.ashford.gov.uk/sponsor-a-bench-in-victoria-park

Looking to the future

Work is going on behind the scenes to see how the park is developed in the future to maintain the legacy and community involvement. More details soon.



You Said...

"The new park is amazing and just an amazing addition for Ashford."

"The play park is so much better too with things for all ages."

"I took my son to the bike track yesterday and he loved it so much. He is only seven and there were much bigger boys there and they were all well behaved and considerate towards each other. My son loved it and can't wait to go back. It was so nice to see it so busy and seeing kids enjoying it so much."

"The new play park is amazing and a total hit. Well done everyone."

Caring for the community

Ashford Borough Council's Welfare Advisory Group has provided a number of local community groups and charities with funding to support those most financially vulnerable in the borough.

Woodchurch's All Saints Church is one of these with their Here to Help scheme, providing a range of support including a food bank, fresh produce stall, delivery of food boxes and the distribution of supermarket vouchers to those identified as in need.

The food bank appreciates donations of non-perishable food items and toiletries. Find out more: www.bhhw.org.uk/heretohelp

Repton Community Trust's Food Rescue Project utilises surplus and unsold food for their projects including The

People's Pantry Food Bank, Community Shop (social supermarket), Good Mood Food recipe bag scheme, food deliveries for vulnerable people and 24hr food lockers.

Through the funding they employed a member of staff to co-ordinate the food recovery process and redistribution, helping to prevent food waste from farms, allotments, supermarkets and food producers and their food donations have increased on average by 1.7 tonnes per month. Find out more: www.reptonct.uk/about

For more advice and support visit our dedicated Cost of Living section on our website at www.ashford.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help

Bear Force - A force for good

Following the loss of his son Andrew to suicide in 2013, Richard Bland wrote Bear Force. The book has been adapted and used by parents, carers, schools and children's organisations to raise awareness of the need for children of all ages to speak out about their worries and to help adults give them the time and a safe space to listen.

Bear Force helps children to verbalise their emotions, talk and be heard. There's also an interactive website where children can get creative, learn how to relax, follow teddy bear Wing Commander Andrew Bland (AB) on his adventures around the world, find support and become member of the Bear Force.

Ashford's Ellie Crook, Ambassador for Bear Force, said: "I've chosen to support this charity because I want to raise awareness around mental health. I love meeting new people to share the Bear Force love and making children and young people happy."

Ellie hopes to open Bear Force safe spaces within the community. Find out more at www.bearforce.org.uk, donate via <https://app.collectionpot.com/pot/bearforce/>, follow on [@bear_force01](https://twitter.com/bear_force01) or email Ellie at bearforceellie@gmail.com



Fit for the future

Tenterden Leisure Centre is getting an exciting renovation to transform the gym and add a brand-new indoor cycling studio.

Recognising the need to upgrade the centre's facilities, the investment will meet the local community's growing demand for accessible, high-quality fitness equipment. The refurbishment project is being funded by Ashford Borough Council.

The centre is managed by Freedom Leisure, a not-for-profit leisure trust that also manages the Stour Centre, the Spearpoint Pavilion and Julie Rose Stadium, on behalf of Ashford Borough Council.

A host of improvements includes:

- The latest indoor cycling bikes in a brand new Virtual Spin Studio

- New gym equipment utilising all the latest technology
- New flooring and a fresh new look and feel
- Gym based group fitness classes
- Brand new air conditioning for the studios

Prior to this renovation the centre also recently had improvements to the roof, solar panels installed and redecoration of the poolside flume area.

Chris Ashley, Freedom Leisure's Area Manager, said: "We are extremely excited about this project and improving the fitness offer at this very popular centre so we can continue our mission to 'improve lives through leisure'."

Updates on the project can be found on the Tenterden Leisure Centre Facebook page or at www.freedom-leisure.co.uk

Meet our Mayor

Australian-born Cllr Larry Krause is especially proud of being the new Mayor of Ashford as he becomes the 50th person to hold the prestigious title.

Downs West ward member Larry was first elected to Ashford Borough Council in 2015. Born and raised in Brisbane, he worked for many years in finance and sales before moving to Ashford in 2001. Cllr Krause became a borough councillor following some gentle encouragement by other councillors and after 10 years as a Parish Councillor in Hothfield.

Cllr Krause is focusing on encouraging the rebuilding of communication and to raise support and awareness for the reconnection between the borough and the community it serves.

His chosen charities are Men in Sheds, a mental health wellbeing initiative from Ashford Volunteer Centre and also the Friends of William Harvey Hospital. Both support people in helping to making their lives better. Cllr Krause is working alongside their team of volunteers to raise funds for new equipment and activities and increase the awareness that they both need to gain support to continue their work.

Larry added: "It's a real honour and privilege to serve as mayor in this extra special year as we celebrated His Majesty the King's Coronation.

"Let's all look forward and celebrate a positive future while considering the greater care of our own future along with open dialogue on ways to better talk to each other politely. As I get out and about across our great borough to visit our diverse communities, I am doing everything I can to preserve, protect and improve our green spaces and talk about not just what the council can do for you but also how you can make a difference for everyone.

"My wife and I attend as many events as we can. It's been an absolute pleasure meeting and thanking so many volunteers, who all help to make our community better and stronger."

Cllr Krause's wife, Revd Dr Sue Starkings is the Mayor's Chaplain and is part of the Ashford clergy. Although now retired, she still conducts services in the Westwell with Calehill Parish Group. Cllr Lyn Suddards has been appointed as the new Deputy Mayor.



At Goat Lees Primary School to present a Mayor's Achievement Award

Meet my team

Hello everyone, I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself and my fellow Cabinet members, along with what specific areas we'll be focusing on. We look forward to getting to work on collaborative and inclusive decision making for the benefit of all borough residents.



Cllr Noel Ovenden (pictured) -
Leader of Ashford Borough Council and Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Resource

Cllr Steve Campkin -
Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Transport

Cllr Bill Barrett -
Cabinet Member for Homes & Homelessness

Cllr Simon Betty -
Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Investment

Cllr Linda Harman -
Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing Delivery & Communication

Cllr Heather Hayward -
Cabinet Member for Performance and Direction

Cllr Dawnie Nilsson -
Cabinet Member for People & Services

Cllr Kate Walder -
Cabinet Member for Recreation and Public Spaces

Cllr Liz Wright -
Cabinet Member for Communities & Health

For more information visit
www.ashford.gov.uk/meet-the-cabinet

Don't get scammed!

Buying products and services online around Christmas is a convenient way to shop but remember that there are individuals out there who use this specific time of year to target vulnerable residents. Here's five top tips to stay safe not only during this time but also throughout the year...

Redelivery scams

Avoid clicking on links that you receive via text message that mention about redelivery of Royal Mail, Evri or other courier parcels. Clicking on these links could take you to a scam website where you'll be asked for payment details.

Amazon scams

Amazon will never ask you to provide payment information for products or services over the phone. This includes Prime memberships, gift cards or 'verification cards' as some scammers call them. If you're ever unsure about the status of your account, go directly to www.amazon.co.uk

Take action or be cut off scams

Scammers send texts, emails and phone calls stating that your account will be suspended or deleted unless you click the associated link to reinstate your account/membership/mobile service. These links are often a fraudulent link which are aimed at luring you into providing your payment information or login credentials. Always double check email links before you click by hovering your mouse over the link to see the full URL, or if on mobile holding down the link with your finger which should tell you if it's safe to click into or not.

Two step verification

It's easier than you think for someone to steal your password. Protect banking, online shopping and social media accounts with an extra layer of security. If two-step verification or authentication is available for an account, the option to switch it on is usually found in the security settings for the account.

Create a secure password today

Did you know that weak passwords can be obtained by a criminal in seconds? One thing you can do right now to ensure that all your passwords are secure, is by combining three random words to create a password. The longer and more unique your password is, the harder it will be for someone to access it.

Also remember if an offer sounds too good to be true, it most probably is!

For information about staying safe online, visit the National Cyber Security Centre at www.ncsc.gov.uk.

Avoid loan sharks by getting your finances in shape with Kent Savers!

Saving is the best way to avoid needing to borrow but we all need some extra help from time to time, and Kent Savers' loans are designed to do just that.

You may have existing loans, credit cards or overdrafts that have become expensive with the current cost of living pressures, or you may just need some extra help to smooth out the cost of household goods or buying school uniforms.

Kent Savers offers loans on a "save as you borrow basis". Regular savings soon build up into a nice pot, helping towards your financial goals and building a fitter future. Set up a savings plan, save while repaying a loan or just deposit money when you like - it's up to you!



"We have 5,000 members but want to help more people. Our aim is to offer fairly priced, affordability-tested, ethical loans to help prevent families falling victim to loan sharks who are unregulated, illegal lenders; they entice people into a debt trap, seeming at first to be doing you a favour but things can quickly turn nasty.

"We urge people to apply to Kent Savers who offer a safe and sustainable way to borrow and to save money. We help people where we can, or refer them to other sources of support in Kent." Kathy Cox, Deputy Chair of Kent Savers.

To find out more visit www.kentsavers.co.uk or scan the QR code above.



WIN

an overnight stay for two in a Shepherd Hut



Nestled amid the picturesque countryside of Kent, McCanns Brewery near Tenterden is steeped in the centuries-old traditions of this historic region. It is located just above Hukins Hops, a 120 year old family hop farm where hop growing forms an iconic part of our local landscape and heritage.

Our brewery isn't just a place where beer is made; it's a haven for enthusiasts and curious minds alike. We will soon be welcoming visitors to embark on guided

tours, where they can witness the magic unfold in our state-of-the-art brewing facility. The Hophouse Taproom, with its warm, rustic ambiance, invites you to savour our latest creations straight from the source.

Whether you're a seasoned beer connoisseur or a newcomer to the world of craft brewing, McCanns Brewery invites you to embark on a journey of flavour, history, and camaraderie. Come, raise a glass with us, and be part of the legacy that is McCanns!

Win an overnight stay for two people in one of our Shepherds Huts on site, plus an opportunity to sample our selection of craft beers made on site in our brewery. The prize can be taken Monday to Wednesday nights between January and the end of April 2024.

For more information call **01303 760957** or email **office@mccanns.beer** or visit **www.mccanns.beer**

WIN wine tasting for four people at The Tudor Peacock



Following extensive renovations to the late 14th century premises of The Tudor Peacock, Kent's newest food and drink offering in historic Chilham village square is preparing to open its doors to a discerning public. The Tudor Peacock tasting rooms, shop and bar will feature wines from Kent including award-winning sparkling that confirms our chalky soils match those of Champagne, France.

The Tudor Peacock is due to open in November in a stunning medieval building that is being restored to show original features hidden for centuries. The venue will offer guests the ability to taste, learn about and buy wines from all the producers in Kent's Wine Garden of England, while also showcasing other independent estates from across the county.

To celebrate the opening, The Tudor Peacock has teamed up with *Ashford For You* to offer a wine tasting for four people. The prize can be taken anytime between 1 January to 31 March 2024. Follow us on **Instagram@thetudorpeacock** and **Facebook @ The Tudor Peacock**. Email **contact@thetudorpeacock.co.uk** or call **01227 231558**.

To enter your name into our Shepherd Hut draw or The Tudor Peacock draw either:

* **Email** the editorial team at **competition@ashford.gov.uk** – put **Shepherd Hut competition entry** or **The Tudor Peacock competition entry** in the subject heading and include your full name, postal address and email. Please include a contact phone number.

* **Send a postcard or sealed envelope** with your name, address, email and contact phone number to: *Ashford For You* magazine, Communications, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford TN23 1PL. Write **Shepherd Hut competition entry** or **The Tudor Peacock competition entry** on the card. We will contact the winners to request consent to provide your contact details to the prize sponsors to enable you to claim your prize.

Terms & conditions: 1. The competition is open to UK residents aged 18 years or older except employees of the Promoter, their families, agents or any third party associated with the competition. 2. The closing date of the competition is **12 noon on Thursday 30 November 2023**. Entries received after this time will not be included. The prizes are non-transferable and non-refundable. There are no cash alternatives. 3. By accepting the prize you also agree to be bound by standard terms and conditions specified by the prize providers. Only one entry per person. Editor's decision is final. Ashford Borough Council is the data controller for the personal information you provide us and this will be used to circulate our magazine and keep you up-to-date on recent news and events. Collecting and processing of your personal data is being conducted relying upon the legal basis of consent. You have the right to remove your consent at any time by sending 'unsubscribe' to **media@ashford.gov.uk**. The option to unsubscribe will be offered each time we contact you. We will not share your information with any third parties unless we are required or permitted to do so by law. Your information will be held for as long as we produce a residents' magazine and you stay subscribed. For more information about your data protection rights see our data protection pages at **www.ashford.gov.uk** or contact the Data Protection Officer, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford TN23 1PL.



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