ASHFORD FOR YOU

Issue 24 | Winter 2024

YOUR BOROUGH, YOUR MAGAZINE

CINEMA'S BRIGHT FUTURE

New era for The Ashford Cinema

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR BIN COLLECTIONS

WHAT'S ON IN YOUR BOROUGH





WIN

- Christmas trees courtesy of Hole Park
- Stour Centre annual gym membership

Ashford Borough Council

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Welcome



Welcome to the latest edition of *Ashford For You*, where extra space has been allocated in our regular What's On feature to share news of exciting events taking place around the borough, from the spectacular Carnival of the Baubles in Ashford Town Centre to exciting Christmas events in Tenterden. Not to mention family-friendly pantomimes taking place in both towns – "oh yes there is!".

I am delighted to hear that local people have been turning up in ever-increasing numbers to support and enjoy The Ashford Cinema since the council took over running it in the summer – all the evidence shows that the cinema is heading in the right direction and I would urge any Ashfordians who have not yet been there to give it a try. It really is a wonderful community asset.

We feature news of two important social housing schemes – the development of Fortis House on the Henwood estate and the start of work to build four new homes to replace properties damaged by a portable gas heater explosion at Mill View. Fortis House is an innovative temporary accommodation scheme which is now helping 23 families and individuals who were facing homelessness to get back on their feet.

There is also news about the council's impending move from the Civic Centre to International House, a spotlight on our Local Plan and what it means to you, the all-important information about Christmas and New Year bin collections and much more. Oh and not forgetting more competitions with the chance to win amazing prizes. It really is a jam-packed edition – I hope you enjoy reading it!

Tracey Kerly

Tracey Kerly
Chief executive, Ashford Borough Council



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Printed by
Printed by Walstead Press UK

Advertising Sales
Call: 01233 330543 or
Email: **media@ashford.gov.uk**

Front cover image courtesy of Ady Kerry

Get in touch!
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Email: media@ashford.gov.uk (subject line NEWS) or
Write to: Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL

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Customer Services
Email: **customer.care@ashford.gov.uk** or call: **01233 331111**
or write to us at the above address or the one below from the end of 2024.
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. **New address from end of 2024: International House, Dover Place, Ashford, Kent TN23 1HU.**

Fortis House a first for Ashford



Our commitment to helping people facing homelessness has seen the development of Fortis House, an innovative temporary accommodation scheme created on a former car park at Henwood in Ashford.

The 23 high quality short stay apartments provide a stepping stone until individuals or households who have become homeless are able to move-on to more permanent homes. This is the first-of-its-kind modular scheme for the council, delivered in partnership with British modular company ZedPods. The firm built the modules at its Peterborough factory and delivered them by road, before a giant crane lifted each of the 12 tonne units into position on top of a steel framework.

The homes boast impressive green credentials – they are highly-insulated and triple-glazed, with heat recovery ventilation and featuring 200 solar panels on the roof.

The fabric of the building is designed to create zero operational carbon home with ultra low energy consumption and running costs.

With the council facing an annual bill of more than £1m for placing homeless people in expensive B&Bs, Fortis House takes our own stock of temporary accommodation to 86 homes, further helping to tackle the scourge of homelessness in the borough.

5,000+ residents signed up – are you?

We're delighted to see so many of our residents enjoying our Borough Brief newsletter, which delivers the latest news and updates from the council, straight to your email inbox every month. Visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/newsletter** to sign up or scan the QR code.

TN card rewards shopping local

Tenterden has a new reward scheme now as Tenterden Town Council has invited the TN Card to support its town centre independents. The TN Card is run by Kent mum Jess Gibson, who created it to encourage the communities of Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells to support local.

It has more than 900 businesses from across the TN postcodes in its directory, all thanking TN card members (cardholders) for supporting local with discounts and offers. The TN card is a social enterprise and members can join for £3 a month or £25 a year, and 10% from their purchase is donated to mental health charity mind. Visit **www.thetncard.com** or download the app from your Google Play or App Store.

THE tn CARD
SHOP LOCAL. BE REWARDED

Be taxi safe

If you're out enjoying yourself in the evenings, think about your safety when it comes to getting home. Book in advance using a licensed private hire operator or hail a hackney carriage in the street. All licensed vehicles will have an ABC council licence plate fixed to the rear of the car. For tips on travelling safely by taxi visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/driver-safety**

Competition winners

Around 740 entries were received for our competitions in the last issue. The five winners of a family pass for the Kent & East Sussex Railway are Sarah Andrews, Guy Dullar, John Mitchell, Rowan Sinden and Jacqueline Stamp. The winner of two tickets to Godinton House & Gardens and an afternoon cream tea is Janet Pantrey. See page 22 for our latest competitions.

50 K&ESR 1974 - 2024

GODINTON HOUSE & GARDENS

Twinning celebrated in style



As part of Civic Twinning celebrating two important anniversaries, Ashford Twinning Association organised for guests from Bad Münstereifel in Germany and Fougères in France to enjoy a busy programme of special events and activities.

Ashford has forged strong links with mainland Europe through its twin towns, and this year sees our 60th anniversary of twinning with Bad Münstereifel and the 40th anniversary with Fougeres.

One of the highlights of the civic tour was a visit to the Kent & East Sussex Railway and a diesel ride from Tenterden to Bodiam and back, including lunch on board. The partnership between the towns goes way beyond annual civic visits. They extend to youth and school visits, exchanges between local organisations, sports clubs and groups. Visit **www.ashfordtwintowns.uk**

Tenterden welcomes Baby Basics

"Baby–basics" Tenterden

Tenterden has become the latest area in Kent to support the Baby Basics charity. It provides new mothers and families who are struggling financially or domestically with a Moses basket, containing 'everything a new mum needs for the first few weeks of her baby's life'. For details email **babybasicstenterden@churchontheweald.com**

We need more mediators

Ashford Mediation Service (AMS) is a charity offering free mediation to Ashford residents. Its volunteer mediators help families, neighbours, workplace colleagues and young people talk together and work-out their differences. It is looking for people with empathy, patience and persistence, and a non-judgemental outlook to join its team of volunteer mediators.
Email **info@ashfordmediation.co.uk** or visit **www.ashfordmediation.co.uk**

Home improvement on your mind?

If you are planning a home improvement project then your local Building Control team at Ashford Borough Council is ready to assist with local knowledge and a friendly, flexible approach.

LABC Front Door provides you with free, impartial advice and project specific information on everything from planning your project, how to choose and work with the right builder and building regulation FAQs. Email **building.control@ashford.gov.uk** or call **01233 330282**.



VE80 anniversary

Thursday 8 May 2025 will mark the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day, when Germany surrendered, bringing an end to war in Europe during WWII. For information about the national programme and advice on how you can get involved, visit **www.veday80.org.uk**

Rotary need help

The Rotary Club of Ashford is seeking new members to join a team which has recently helped Ashford Samaritans, Teenage Cancer Trust, Pilgrims Hospices and many more good causes. Email **ashford.rotary.1120@gmail.com**

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Mill View rebuild

Work is underway on building four new homes to replace houses that were damaged by an explosion at Mill View in Willesborough in 2021. Two three-bedroom homes and two two-bedroom homes are being constructed on the site where the properties stood.

It was just before 8am on 4 May 2021 when an explosion ripped through the street, shattering windows and waking neighbours. Seven people were injured. Three council-owned properties and one privately owned home were badly damaged in the blast, which a Kent Fire & Rescue Service investigation found was caused by a leak from a portable gas heater.

The new homes (see image below) are being built to a high standard, with a focus on energy efficiency, including solar panels. Measures are included that will help 'future-proof' the properties – straight stairs that would allow a stair-lift to be installed, and square shaped bathrooms so they could be converted into a wet room. Work is due to finish by August 2025.



Thinking about owning a dog? Rescue one today!

We've seen a large increase in stray and abandoned dogs having to be collected and taken to a rehoming provider. This is putting pressure on the charities that are having to find suitable homes for them. If you are thinking about owning a dog, please consider a rescue centre as the list of local charities we've included below would love to help.

Lord Whisky www.lordwhisky.co.uk

Fetcher Dog www.fetcherdog.com

Dogs Trust www.dogstrust.org.uk

Last Chance Animal Rescue www.lastchanceanimalrescue.co.uk



Council tax management made easy

Are you signed up to our Citizen Access service yet within MyAshford? It allows you to view all your council tax bills, update your personal details and find out about or apply for discounts and exemptions you may be entitled to. To find out more and register visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/myashford**

Lottery update

The Ashford Community Lottery has changed management from Ashford Borough Council to the Ashford Volunteer Centre. The lottery has been running successfully for over two years and has raised in the region of £60,000 for good causes locally. If you are a player purchasing tickets or a good cause who wants to sign up, visit **www.ashfordcommunitylottery.co.uk**

Your new MPs

Following the general election, the Ashford borough now has two MPs. To contact Sojan Joseph, MP for Ashford, email **sojan.joseph.mp@parliament.uk** and to contact Katie Lam, MP for Weald of Kent, contact **katie.lam.mp@parliament.uk**

Making International House our new home

Council moves to new offices

As *Ashford For You* magazine went to print, the final parts to the council's move from our Civic Centre office in Tannery Lane to nearby International House were being finalised.

The move is taking place in phases, with the main office move underway and due to be completed by the end of the year. For residents, this means our customer services reception will soon be found at International House, opposite the station.

There is a strong financial rationale for moving to International House. We own both buildings and significant upkeep and maintenance costs are needed at the Civic Centre over the next few years.

Christmas opening times

Monday 23 December - Open as normal 9am – 4pm
Tuesday 24 December - No face-to-face from 2pm
Wednesday 25 December - Closed Bank Holiday
Thursday 26 December - Closed Bank Holiday
Friday 27 December - Closed
Saturday 28 December - Weekend - closed
Sunday 29 December - Weekend - closed
Monday 30th December - No face-to-face services
Tuesday 31 December - No face-to-face services
Wednesday 1 January 2025 - Closed Bank Holiday



Major renovation at Tenterden Town Hall

Tenterden Town Hall is closed for an ambitious renovation project designed to transform this historic building into a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable community facility. It is due to reopen around Christmas 2025.

The project addresses issues stemming from the building's poor facilities and declining state and are aimed at ensuring its long-term future. The renovation will deliver much needed improvements, creating new event, meeting, and office spaces. For more details visit www.tenterdentowncouncil.gov.uk



Further details about our move can be found on our website **www.ashford.gov.uk/office-move**



Lights, camera, Ashford

Located at Elwick Place, in the heart of the town centre, The Ashford Cinema offers a 6-screen cinema, café, workspace and bar – an ideal space open to everyone to meet, eat, watch, and enjoy.

THE ASHFORD CINEMA

Earlier this year Ashford Borough Council announced their intention to step in and takeover operating the venue, after Picturehouse announced they would be leaving.

New look, but same warm welcome

The cinema is now under the watchful eye of industry experts, The Big Picture.They have focused on transforming the cinema with a variety of exciting new offers and events to appeal to a more family friendly and local community audience.

This has included a wider programme of films, including theatre, ballet and opera screenings, as well as a new, exciting range of food and drink.

There is now a range of offers providing great value for everyone, including **AAA unlimited monthly membership, Midweek Magic (£6.99 tickets on Monday – Wednesdays), Cinemini, The Family Ticket and Silver Screen every Thursday morning for over 60s.** There are also accessible screenings and cinema customers can also park for free for up to four hours at Elwick Place car park.



“If you are looking for somewhere to watch the latest new film release, to work from, catch up with friends over a coffee, or host an event, The Ashford Cinema is the place for you.”

That’s the view of General Manager, Ben Hammond



Councillor Noel Ovenden with Cinema General Manager Ben Hammond.

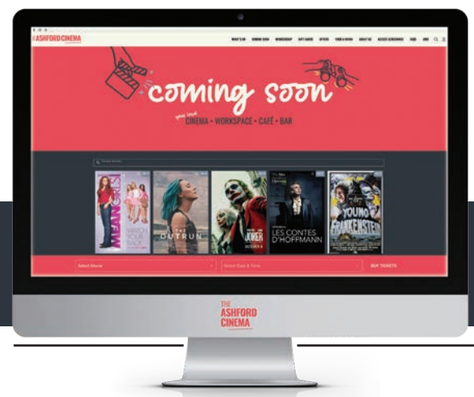
Community groups

Many local community groups have made use of the spacious foyer to hold events and activities including: **Hi Kent – Hearing impaired group meetings, Pride Ashford - art display & LGBTQ+ films, D Day – special films screenings, GenCraft beer festival, Ashfood festival, McArthurGlen’s Gala Awards, independent short films screenings, Da-Base Student showcase and monthly Nepalese screenings.**

On 7 December, the cinema will be hosting a Polar Express Pyjama Party. The event will include crafting, colouring, fun & games, and a chance to meet Santa.

Tickets are available to buy at **www.theashfordcinema.co.uk.**

There are many more activities and events in the pipeline, so watch this space - and make Elwick, the Place to visit.







“We felt it was important to act, rather than stand-by and do nothing. We stepped in for the benefit of the local community to do all we can to keep our town centre entertainment offer at Elwick Place open for business.”

– Councillor Noel Ovenden, ABC Leader.



Screen Ashford

With a forecasted need for fresh local talent in Film & TV, Screen Ashford is a pioneering initiative offering opportunities to connect, develop, and grow in the screen industry.

For Ashford-based residents eager to get a foot in the door, activities over the coming months include hands-on workshops, industry networking, Q&As and competitions, screenings, 48-hour Film Challenges, local festival development, and more.

The programme kicked off with its inaugural Summer Screen, which included a 3-Day Film School that provided a practical crash-course for emerging filmmakers of all ages and abilities.

Visit **www.screensouth.org/screen-ashford or email info@screensouth.org** to find out more.

For more information about the Ashford Cinema, visit **www.theashfordcinema.co.uk**

Our Local Plan explained

Planning affects everyone - it's important to participate in the process

Ashford Borough Council is preparing a new Local Plan for the borough. Here *Ashford For You* tries to explain more about the process, and why it's so important for us all…

Over the summer the council held a series of events about the new Ashford Local Plan, explaining when it will be prepared, what it will cover, what stage we are at, and when we will go out to formal public consultation.

The events allowed residents and other interested parties to share their aspirations for the borough, comment on matters such as the environment, future needs for local housing, jobs, green spaces, both existing and new infrastructure, as well as a whole range of other topics that fall within the remit of planning. The events also provided a forum to share any concerns.

What is a Local Plan?

Local Plans are at the heart of the planning system and provide the opportunity to shape the places that we live, work and socialise.

A Local Plan sets out a framework for future growth and development to guide and manage change over a minimum 15-year period to make sure that building is in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Once adopted, the policies within a Local Plan are used as the starting point to decide planning applications.

Why do we need one?

The government requires all local authorities to produce a Local Plan.

An up-to-date- Local Plan is supported by the latest local evidence and is the main way councils set their planning policies. The document provides the framework for planning decision making.

Local Plans that are out of date do not carry the same weight when it comes to deciding planning applications. Without an up-to-date Local Plan, councils can sometimes lack the latest policies they need to prevent inappropriate or damaging development in their area.

Why is the council producing a new Local Plan?

The Government requires local planning authorities to review Local Plans every five years. As the current Ashford Local Plan 2030 was adopted over five years ago (February 2019) it is considered 'out-of-date' according to national planning policy guidance.



In addition to planning for housing and growth within the economy of Ashford, the Local Plan also seeks to deliver different types of infrastructure, protect our valued assets such as heritage and the natural environment and help tackle climate change.

Where are we in the process for the Local Plan 2042?

Sept-Nov 2023 – Call for Sites exercise (now closed)

March 2024 – Call for sites submissions published

Jul-Aug 2024 – Local Plan explained events held

Spring 2025 – Formal public consultation of the draft Local Plan

Summer 2025 to Spring 2026 – Amends made in response to national policy changes and consultation responses

Spring 2026 – 2nd round of public consultation on draft Local Plan

Autumn 2026 – Submission to the Secretary of State (Government)

Autumn/Winter 2026 – Examination in public (by The Planning Inspector)

Winter 2026/2027 – Public consultation on any proposed changes from The Planning Inspector

Spring 2027 – The Planning Inspector's final examination report on the Local Plan is issued and the plan is formally adopted

To find out more about the Local Plan visit: **www.ashford.gov.uk/emerging-local-plan**

Priorities for the Borough outlined

The council has set out its focus for the next four years in a new corporate plan.

As we face many challenges; maintaining financial stability, serving a growing population, and tackling climate change; our aim is to make Ashford a place where people, business and nature can collectively thrive.



Three themes will support this vision:

- Planet - Working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and creating places for nature will be at the heart of everything we do.
- People - Listening and serving the Ashford community is our philosophy; we will make best use of available resources to build an equitable and fair society.
- Place - We are planning for the future of our community and to make Ashford a place people are pleased to call home and love to visit.



Please ensure bins are presented **prior to 6am**

cut out and keep

Christmas collections 24/25

Check out the 2024/2025 calendar below for the revised recycling and refuse collection dates over the Christmas period. Please note, this no longer shows what type of collection, due to the borough being on different waste collections on the same week. You can check your Christmas collections and type of collection, closer to the time by using the collection look up tool on our website at **www.ashford.gov.uk/bin-collection-calendar**

Normal collection day	Revised collection day
Monday 23 December	Monday 23 December
Tuesday 24 December	Tuesday 24 December
Wednesday 25 December	Friday 27 December
Thursday 26 December	Saturday 28 December
Friday 27 December	Monday 30 December
Monday 30 December	Tuesday 31 December
Tuesday 31 December	Thursday 2 January
Wednesday 1 January	Friday 3 January
Thursday 2 January	Saturday 4 January
Friday 3 January	Monday 6 January
Monday 6 January	Tuesday 7 January
Tuesday 7 January	Wednesday 8 January
Wednesday 8 January	Thursday 9 January
Thursday 9 January	Friday 10 January
Friday 10 January	Saturday 11 January
Normal recycling and refuse service resumes Monday 13 January	

Garden waste collections

Garden waste collections will be suspended for the week commencing Monday 30 December and the week commencing Monday 6 January. Collections will resume on your normal day of collection from Monday 13 January.

Residents who would be due a collection on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Friday 27 December can find their revised collection day below.

Normal collection day	Revised collection day
Wednesday 25 December	Friday 27 December
Thursday 26 December	Saturday 28 December
Friday 27 December	Monday 30 December

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

www.ashford.gov.uk/report-a-missed-bin

You can also follow the council on (@AshfordBoroughCouncil) and (@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

Tips for recycling more

Christmas means more cardboard boxes, any that can't fit in your recycling bin please flatten and leave next to your recycling bin for collection

Please remove ribbon and bows from your paper – maybe keep them for next year.

Unsure if your wrapping paper is recyclable? Only non-foil paper is accepted for recycling. To check, scrunch up the paper in your hands, if it doesn't spring back open then it is non-foil and can be recycled.

If you are unsure what can and can't be recycled in your green bin head to our website at **www.ashford.gov.uk/how-do-i-dispose-of** to check.

Give your food caddy a stuffing!



It is best to use what you buy but for the food waste you can't avoid use your food caddy. Your leftovers, turkey carcass, vegetable peelings, coffee grounds, tea bags and lots more can be put in your food caddy to be recycled! Need a food caddy? Order your free one on our website at **www.ashford.gov.uk/request-a-bin**

Large Item Collections

Large item collections will be suspended from Wednesday 25 December and will resume normal service on Wednesday 8 January.

Clinical collections



There will no changes to clinical collections over the Christmas period.

Christmas Tree Recycling

For the 13th year we are supporting Pilgrims Hospices 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 and Pilgrims volunteer elves will collect the tree from your doorstep and take it for recycling.

Last year more than 3,250 were collected from Ashford, Canterbury and Thanet areas and over £60,000 raised for vital end-of-life care.

Register your real Christmas tree for collection by midnight Sunday 5 January by visiting **www.pilgrimshospices.org/treerecycling** and their volunteers will take it away Saturday 11 – Sunday 12 January 2025.



Supporting our young people

Meet our Mayor of Ashford, Cllr Lyn Suddards, who began her term in office in summer 2024 and is on mission to highlight all the amazing community work that is going on to support youth in our borough...



Raised in a military family and having lived in Malaysia and Hong Kong for long periods of her childhood, Lyn Suddards started her career by training as a general nurse and then a mental health nurse and psychodrama psychotherapist.

After 35 years in the NHS she retired to Ashford from London in 2010 and in 2019, Lyn Suddards was selected by the Ashford Labour Party to represent Beaver Ward and was elected to Ashford Borough Council in 2019 and again in 2023.

Lyn's chosen charity is Sk8side, a group that offers a free service for young people and provides them with an empowering and nurturing environment where they can develop as individuals and gain skills as they go into young adulthood. Located near The Stour Centre skate park and also at the pavilion at Tenterden Recreation Ground, Sk8side provides free after school activities and a free hot meal for 8-18 year olds using a small amount of funding from Kent County Council and ABC.

Members help and support each other while developing skate boarding skills and can also enjoy other activities such as learning to cook, arts and crafts, music and various sports.

As Lyn explains: *"I have chosen this charity because of the way young people attach themselves here. Often this is the first time they have felt accepted and have a sense of belonging. The funding is inadequate for the staffing and resources we need to prevent closure, so as well as fundraising I'll be working with volunteers to promote this wonderful organisation and find more ongoing sponsorship."*

In the space of several months, more than £2,500 has been raised for Sk8side thanks to the generosity of residents, community groups, councillors from cross-parties, church members and street pastors to which Lyn is humbly grateful for.

Future visits across the borough are planned in the coming months including promoting the work of the Ashford Twinning Association with one great activity lined up that will see children from Sk8side working alongside students from Ashford's twin towns of Bad Münstereifel and Fougères on craft workshops.

Cllr Suddards is enjoying the many opportunities to continue joining our ethnically diverse communities in Ashford and embracing their respective cultures with visits planned at the Ashford Muslim Association and also marking Onam, a traditional South Indian harvest festival.

In October, she participated in the Strength in Mind event at The Stour Centre, which brought together Olympic and Paralympic athletes to inspire students from Years 11, 12, and 13. Athletes shared their journeys, focusing on topics such as mental health, setting goals, the importance of sport for wellbeing, and personal development.

A final message from our Mayor: *"Lots of people are doing many things in small and large ways to make Ashford a better place to live. If you know someone you believe just goes that extra mile, please write to me via the Mayor's office, so that I can present them with a Mayor's framed certificate either here in the parlour for afternoon tea or have a surprise event which I will be happy to attend."*

Cllr Winston Michael who represents the Goat Lees ward is Deputy Mayor of Ashford.

For more information on joining Sk8side, pop by the hub on Tannery Lane or visit **www.sk8side.co.uk**



Two happy winners at the annual Sk8side Skate Park Fest.

What's On

With a wealth of events and activities, we've got plenty to keep you entertained over the coming months.



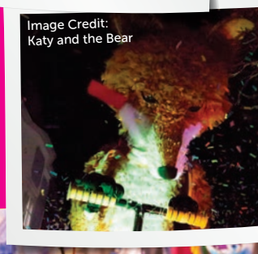


Image Credit: Katy and the Bear

Carnival of the Baubles 2024

On Saturday 23 November thousands of people will line the streets of Ashford Town Centre as this year's Carnival of the Baubles will once again kick off the festive season. This year the giant lantern parade will **start at 5pm in the Lower High Street and make its way up to the Bandstand before moving down Bank Street and ending outside The Ashford Cinema in Elwick Place.** Make sure you get there early for a fun filled day for everyone.







Image Credit: Katy and the Bear







Christmas market

Coinciding with the switch on of the town's Christmas tree lights and located on the bustling High Street, the Tenterden Christmas market will offer international street cuisine, artisan grocery foods together with handmade arts and crafts, clothing, jewellery and accessories – ideal festive gifts!

The market runs from 22-24 November, for the latest details about opening times, parking and more visit Tenterden Christmas Market! ***(zoomevents.co.uk)***

Pinocchio comes to Ashford



Head to JV H.O.M.E, the amazing performance space in Ashford's Creative Enterprise Quarter for a mesmerising adaptation of the classic tale, Pinocchio, brought to life by the Jasmin Vardimon Company. Based on the book by Carlo Collodi, this engaging production features the exceptional power of Vardimon's multi-talented dancers.

Experience a captivating blend of storytelling, dance, and visual artistry that will enchant audiences of all ages. Performances are on Thursday 12 December at 7pm and Saturday 14 December at 1:30 pm located at Javelin Way, TN24 8FN.

For ticket prices and more details visit **www.jasminvardimon.com/whats-on/** - hurry as tickets are selling fast!

Visit Santa at the Pilgrims Hospice



The annual Christmas fair held by Pilgrim's Hospices takes place on Saturday 16 November at Kingswood-Grosvenor Hall, Kennington. Visit stalls brimming with seasonal crafts and gifts, enjoy delicious refreshments, try your hand on the tombola and games. Kids will enjoy visiting Santa and his elves. Entry is £3 adults, under 16s free and there is a £4 charge to visit Santa.

Sleeping Beauty at The Sinden



Prepare to be spellbound as Sleeping Beauty spins into Tenterden for a festive family panto like no other. Join Princess Aurora, Muddles, Dame Victoria Sponge, Fairy Sparkle, Prince William and the evil Carabosse for an action-packed show, full of dazzling costumes, glittering scenery, special effects and slapstick. Tickets are on sale now, "oh yes they are!" Sleeping Beauty is on at The Sinden Theatre from 12-31 December. Visit **www.tenterdenpanto.co.uk**

It's a Revelation!

Revelation has you covered if you're looking for the best venue to support local talent AND for you to have a great night out with friends and family. Highlights this winter include Gerard Dickens – A Christmas Carol on 23 November and Discos for Grown Ups on 30 November. If you just want to get your boogie on, then don't miss the Ashford Soul Train on 13 December for an unforgettable evening celebrating the timeless legacy of soul music.

Spring will kick off with the highly-acclaimed Katherine Priddy making her way to Ashford on 15 March following her recent appearance on Jools Holland.

Country Superstars Theatre Tour – Dolly Parton & Friends and Coldplace wrap up some fabulous tribute acts on 5 April and 17 May respectively. For details and to grab your tickets visit **www.revelationashford.co.uk**

Caldecott craft fayre

A Christmas craft fayre is being held at The Caldecott Foundation in Ashford from 10am-4pm on Sunday 24 November. Visitors can enjoy arts and crafts stalls, teas and cakes. Parking and entry is free, TN25 6SP.

AIMREC festival

Ashford International Model Railway Education Centre (AIMREC) stages its annual Ashford Festival of Railway Modelling on 12-13 April 2025 at Ashford College and other town centre venues. The festival will feature 30 model railway layouts plus trade and society stands. For details visit **www.aimrec.co.uk/events**

Snow White at The Rylance



Blue Phoenix Productions returns to The Rylance Theatre, Ashford with the magical family panto Snow White. Packed with all the traditional panto ingredients Ashford audiences expect, Snow White features comedy, stunning scenery, beautiful costumes and plenty of boos and hisses.
The cast includes, Kalon Rae from The Voice UK as Prince Louise and Holly Harvey from the UK tour of Princess Live as Snow White. Ashford favourite Paul Ketley returns as Nurse Nelly with Rob Hancox as Herman the Henchman. Joining the cast are Stephanie Coates as the Wicked Queen and Charley Byrne as Muddles the Jester. Book tickets on 01233 367399 or online at **www.ashfordpantomime.co.uk**



All aboard Santa Specials

There's nothing quite like the magic of a Christmas steam train ride where your child can meet Santa, all without moving from the comfort of an allocated seat. This year the Kent & East Sussex Railway's award-winning Santa Specials are celebrating 50 years of delivering these magical experiences to families.

The 2024 packages – Gold, Silver and Bronze - include some new elements on top of all the regular ones of presents (handed over by Santa himself); family photos; entrance to the Winter Wonderland marquee and unlimited rides on the vintage gallopers at Tenterden. For Bronze ticket holders there's an on-board magician, while Silver and Gold passengers will meet Jingle and Sparkle, Santa's Head Elves, as they award Elf-ship diplomas for upholding the spirit of Christmas. Premium Gold passengers also enjoy unlimited prosecco, beer or non-alcoholic beverages, a selection of festive cakes and warm luxury mince pies served at their seats.

The 2024 Santa Specials run on Saturdays and Sundays from 30 November until 22 December plus Christmas Eve. Online booking is essential at **www.kesr.org.uk**



Photo credit: Philip L Hinton.

Create Music Village rocks!

October saw Ashford town centre alive with the sound of live music as Create Music Village returned for its third year. The core venues at Revelation, Coachworks, Low Key Taproom and The Ashford Cinema saw nationally celebrated artists, rising stars and classic pop and rock tributes take to the stage.

Explore Tenterden



Imagine being able to explore your local town on foot or bicycle and discovering the best of what it has to offer. With the Explore Tenterden walking and cycling map, you can do just that! Active Travel is a great way to get out and about, with well-signposted cycle and walking routes you can walk or cycle to many of the popular destinations in under 15 minutes.

Within cycling distance of Tenterden you have Chapel Down, England's leading winemaker and Smallhythe Place, a 16th century National Trust property. There's the Tenterden & District Museum with over 1,000 years of local history and special exhibitions. Kent & East Sussex Railway is a popular heritage railway and offers trips through the Rother Valley. **www.explorekent.org**



Above: Warehorne Vineyard at sunset; right: Brabourne Vineyard and raising a glass during a Chapel Down tour

Cheers! A trail to take you to cloud wine

Bordeaux, Napa Valley, Tuscany... Ashford and Tenterden? When talking about the finest places to taste wine around the world, it may seem a little strange to see our towns in such esteemed company, but the reputation of the region is growing.

The council secured £56,383 of UK Shared Prosperity Funding to boost the borough's hospitality sectors and visitor economy by launching '**On The Map**', a campaign that included a new digital wine trail, a wine conference, advertising screens at Gatwick Airport and business support.

And you can see why: the County of Kent is already the most awarded wine region in the country, with Kent also having the honour of being one of the country's leading wine hotspots.

Nine of England's leading producers and wineries make up The Wine Garden of England, five of which are in our borough, including Gusbourne and Chapel Down, who export globally.

In addition, Domaine Evremond's vineyard in Chilham opens to the public next spring, which will be the first French champagne house to grow vines in the UK!

There are 11 of the borough's vineyards featured on the new Cheers! Wine Trail and each winery offers their unique experience, with a story to share.

You can also factor in multiple vineyard visits in a day without a designated driver thanks to Wine Tours of Kent, who will take you through the Kent countryside on a guided tour of some of the area's award-winning vineyards, with everything from transport to accommodation taken care of.







Above: Biddenden, Kent's oldest commercial vineyard

Right: Chin, chin! Sampling at the source

Below: Gusbourne's Boot Hill Deck is some place for a glass

To find out more about the wine trail, visit
www.visitashfordandtenterden.co.uk/cheers-ashfords-must-visit-vineyards/

Could you be our next Olympian/Paralympian?

Every four years, the Olympics and Paralympics captures the world's eye, as we marvel at athletes at the top of their game making the impossible possible. But, did you know that Ashford was represented and has been multiple times before?

The latest medal winner to hail from Ashford is Callie-Ann Warrington, who won silver in the 100m butterfly S10 in Paris, while Henry Urand battled to a brave fourth in the PTS3 triathlon.

Previously, the likes of Jamie Staff (gold medal winner in 2008), Lisa Dobriskey, Jack Green and John Tilbury have represented Ashford at the Games and who knows, maybe you or someone you know may follow in their footsteps!

Thanks to organisations like Freedom Leisure, Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council and others, there are first class sports facilities across the borough, available for aspiring athletes to help maximise their talents, or for residents to just keep fit.

There's the Julie Rose Stadium, which is the perfect way to try your hand at track events, be it pole vault or the 1,500 metre steeplechase. Then there's both the Stour Centre and Tenterden Leisure Centre, which have swimming facilities in addition to a gym, a climbing wall, badminton courts and much more.

The One You shop in Ashford's Park Mall delivers free health services, support and advice including support for stopping smoking cessation, healthy weight management for adults and children, blood pressure checks and advice on a range of lifestyle issues.

We've only scratched the surface of the fabulous range of sports, keep-fit and wellness facilities available to residents in the borough, so for further information, visit:

Julie Rose - www.freedom-leisure.co.uk/centres/julie-rose-stadium

Stour Centre - www.freedom-leisure.co.uk/centres/the-stour-centre

Tenterden Leisure Centre - www.freedom-leisure.co.uk/centres/tenterden-leisure-centre

One You - www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/one-you-kent



Callie-Ann joined Team GB athletes at the Stour Centre discussing mental health and sport with local youngsters



Rural businesses get a boost

To find out more, visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/repf**
or email **prosperity.funding@ashford.gov.uk**

The council has continued to administer grants for the UK Government's Rural England Prosperity Funding (REPF) for businesses in the rural areas of the borough.

Applications remain open for grants, worth up to £15,000 each, until the end of January. Ashford's REPF grants aimed at supporting rural businesses locally are:

- Rural Green Business Grant – to provide grants to support energy efficiency or energy transition projects in commercial premises in rural areas.
- Rural Place and Provenance Grant – to provide grants to support rural food and drink producers, hospitality and tourism attractions or venues to increase productivity and sustainability for businesses. In addition, they support the creation of start-up spaces and tackle the 'Last Mile' challenge of connecting visitors into rural areas.

Earlier rounds saw six businesses receive funding for energy transition projects, such as solar panels, while 17 businesses had funding approved for equipment and installations to improve tourism and hospitality venues, as well as creating startup spaces for food and drink producers.

So far, these grants are set to lead to nearly 30,000kg of CO2 saved in the borough and a 20% average increase in rural destination visitors, as well as increased turnover, utility bills being reduced for businesses and approximately 25 new jobs created.

One successful applicant was Brabourne Vineyard, which has been able to expand its experiences and offering by using a REPF grant.

The grant enabled this new vineyard to serve food on site, which will add to their wine tasting experience and attract more customers.

Setts Wood Camping in Tenterden also received a REPF grant to help purchase more glamping tents, increasing the number of visitors they can accommodate, who in turn can boost the local economy.

Ashford Instrumentation, between Hamstreet and Ruckinge, received a Rural Green Business Grant to install solar panels on their industrial property to cut their energy bills, saving them around £140,000 over 25 years.

The panels will also save about 4,000kg of CO2 every year, which is the same as 14,000 miles in car journeys!

Grants up to £10,000 or £15,000

Funded by UK Government

30,000kg of CO2 saved every year

20% more visitors to those destinations

up to 25 new jobs thanks to the grants





WIN a Hole Park Christmas Tree!





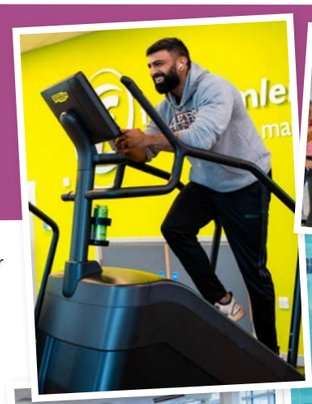
Hole Park in Rolvenden is renowned for its beautiful gardens, but did you know the estate also grows exceptional Christmas trees? Hole Park has been supplying top quality trees to homes and businesses for over 60 years – one of the few growers in Kent to sell direct to the public. Now four lucky readers have the chance to win one of their beautiful 6ft Nordman Firs to put at the centre of your Christmas festivities!

Winners must arrange collection of their tree from Hole Park, TN17 4JA before 16 December by emailing **info@holepark.com.** Prize trees are Nordman Firs to maximum height of 6ft 11ins. Stands are not included but can be purchased separately. If winners wish to increase size or choose an alternative tree species pro-rata retail charges will apply. This prize has zero cash value, is not transferable and expires on 16/12/24.

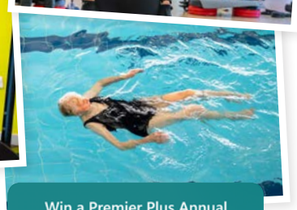




WIN a Premier Plus Annual Membership Worth £550!









Win a Premier Plus Annual Membership Worth £550 at the Stour Centre!

freedomleisure where you matter

Here's your chance to win a Premier Plus annual membership at the Stour Centre! With this incredible membership, you'll enjoy unlimited access to our state-of-the-art gym, swim sessions, and a wide range of group exercise classes. Plus, you'll get access to our innovative BioCircuit for personalised workouts, a 10% discount on racket sports, and exclusive use of Julie Rose Stadium facilities.

Our centre is all about fostering a welcoming community where people can feel good, get fit, and make connections. Enter now and become part of the Stour Centre family!

Find out more about the Stour Centre by visiting **www.thestourcentre.co.uk** or contact us at **thestour@freedom-leisure.co.uk**. Alternatively, give us a call on **01233 663503.**

To enter this fantastic competition scan the QR Code now!

To enter your name into our Hole Park Christmas tree competition:

* **Email** the editorial team at **competition@ashford.gov.uk** – put **Hole Park Christmas tree competition** 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 **Hole Park Christmas tree competition** 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 Monday 2 December 2024.**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.

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Are you interested in upskilling, retraining, or developing a new skill? You could be eligible to take one of our fully funded courses in a range of different areas.

From Green Skills to Coaching and Mentoring, our range of courses are designed to help you develop your skills and unlock future job opportunities in the area.

Scan the QR code to find out more and apply.

EKC East Kent Colleges Group

In partnership with Ashford Borough Council

Funded by UK Government

FREE Entertainment this Christmas at County Square, Ashford

30th November
Rock Choir &
Good for your Elf(s)

6th December
Demelza School Choirs

7th December
Ashford Sings &
Balloon Modeller

8th December
Girl Guide Choir

14th December
Salvation Army Band,
Good for your Elf(s)
& Magical Stilt Walkers

21st December
Meet The Grinch



22nd December
Magical Stilt Walkers



COUNTY SQ Ashford

For more information visit our
website or see our social pages
countysquareshoppingcentre.com

Events are subject to change and correct at time of publication.