ASHFORD YOU

Issue 26 | Winter 2025

YOUR BOROUGH, YOUR MAGAZINE



FLAG-TASTIC VICTORIA PARK

National accolade for our favourite green space

XMAS AND NEW YEAR BIN COLLECTIONS

COMMUNITY AWARDS WINNERS

WIN

- A free range Christmas turkey
- Anytime Fitness memberships

Ashford Borough Council

EKC Ashford College – A Beacon of Opportunity

EKC Ashford College has become a hub of the community, unlocking new opportunities and supporting more than 1,200 students and 130 members of staff.

It's inside this incredible facility, which spans across 6951 m2, where the next generation of young professionals are made.

And that's what makes EKC Ashford College, which is operated by East Kent Colleges Group (EKC Group), so special. It's that it leads positive transformation by supporting not just its students and staff, but also the wider community of Ashford.

Unlocking new potential and providing opportunities

By taking part in local initiatives, carrying out social action projects to support the community, and providing outstanding education and training so that students are ready to do their part in life beyond college, EKC Ashford College truly is a beacon of opportunity.

Just some of the incredible milestones the College has achieved over the past few years include receiving an Ofsted Outstanding rating and launching its Phase 2 Development following a £10 million investment. This new building not only includes industry-standard facilities, including Kuka robots for engineering students, but also means more people in Ashford have access to outstanding education, training and facilities.

But the state-of-the-art equipment doesn't stop there. The College also boasts an impressive commercial hair and beauty salon which is open to the public. This facility means our students get first-hand experience working in an operating salon.

The College also has an industry-standard recording studio, inspiring art studios and impressive plumbing and electrical workshops which open ample opportunities for students to unlock their skills in their chosen field.

Supporting our communities

When it comes to supporting its communities, this is something EKC Ashford College will always thrive in.

Some of the inspiring work staff and students have taken part in includes planting trees at East Stour Primary School, creating an art exhibition to raise money for the Railway Children Charity – a charity which supports vulnerable children in India, Tanzania and the UK – and much more.



What the students say

"Along the way, I've made friends and built great relationships with teachers. I would recommend the college to anyone who is thinking about joining." – Bahareh Shariati, Accounting student.

"College has helped me develop lots of social skills, especially working with different people but also being able to handle your emotions. My favourite thing about college has been the friends I've made. I came to college with a group of friends; we've stuck together throughout the course. Some days were hard and intense, but the people made it better as we all stuck by each other's side." – Rhys Manga, Business Management and Administration student.

"It's great working with real clients because we get to experience what it will actually be like working within a proper salon and we can work on our customer service alongside the technical skills we're learning. I'm really looking forward to the future; I'd love to start my own business and be able to work for myself one day." – Jessica Smith, Hair and Beauty student.



Welcome



Welcome to the latest edition of ***Ashford For You.*** Pride in our community is a theme running through this issue, with a gallery of photos showcasing the winners of our first Ashford Community Awards, presented at The Ashford Cinema recently. Launched to celebrate local champions, we were inundated with nominations putting forward individuals and organisations who have all made a real difference to their community. I am inspired by the winners' stories.

Our regular wellbeing feature continues to shine a spotlight on charities and groups who do so much to provide support and practical help to boost the wellbeing of individuals, families and others across the borough. If you are an organisation that wants to be featured in a forthcoming edition please drop a line to the editorial team at ***media@ashford.gov.uk***

Since the last edition in May, an awareness campaign has been running explaining the proposed changes to local government reorganisation and as ***Ashford For You*** went to press, councils across Kent and Medway were putting the final touches to a shared vision for the most effective structure. See our feature on p10/11 for more details.

There's also news about what's going on in Victoria Park, an update on our Local Plan, details of those all-important Christmas and New Year bin collections, and a seasonal twist to our regular What's On feature, including a roundup of local pantomimes – oh yes there is! And not forgetting more competitions with the chance to win great prizes.

Tracey Kerly

Tracey Kerly
Chief executive, Ashford Borough Council







Ashford Community Awards

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

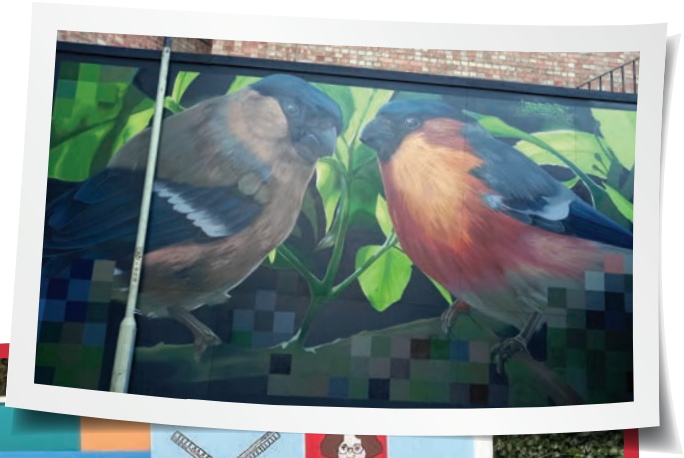
Please note: To contact us regarding a specific council service, visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/contact-us** and select the relevant category relating to your query.

Mural trail refreshed

Ashford Town Centre's much-loved mural trail has two new works of art to delight local residents and visitors alike.

Rooted is the latest mural by local artist and cheerleader for Ashford, Danielle Williamson, aka Tinybeegle. This colourful piece features historic female figures from the town, Simone Weil and Queen Marie, and celebrates some of our most beautiful landmarks. Danielle hopes to bring some joy to passers-by with this fun work representing her favourite Ashford icons.

Meanwhile, Aspire's street artwork can be found hidden round any corner, painted on walls, hoardings and whatever he deems to be a blank canvas all over the UK. We're delighted to welcome Aspire back to replace his previous Ashford wildlife scene with these beautiful Bullfinches, surrounded by Ash Leaves, that are regularly spotted in and around Conningbrook Lakes and the Singleton Environment Centre.





Borough Brief is growing

We hope everyone is enjoying our monthly editions of Borough Brief – our bitesize e-newsletter that delivers the latest news from the council straight to your inbox.
To join the thousands that have already signed up, visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/newsletter** or scan the QR code. Don't forget – we're always happy to hear your content suggestions too. Email **news@ashford.gov.uk** to get in touch.



£8.5m expansion of EKC Ashford College

Plans have been announced for the £8.5m development of a third phase of EKC Ashford College in Station Road, subject to planning permission. East Kent Colleges Group said: "Since taking on EKC Ashford College in 2020 we have seen a massive 88% growth in student numbers and now have 1,200 young learners there. We are now looking to develop a future Phase 3 at the site."



Postal vote renewal



Around 14,000 people have a postal vote for elections in our borough. Now, due to a change in legislation, postal voting arrangements must be renewed every three years. Ashford Electoral Services has contacted all postal voters for whom they have an email address and is writing out to all postal voters who are due to renew their postal vote this year.

If you're contacted and wish to continue to vote by post, you must submit a new application online or by returning a paper application. Visit **www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote** to complete an online application.

If you're unable to complete an online application, you can complete and return the paper application form by post or email. As we must manually process all paper applications we urge you to apply online if you can.

If you don't provide a fresh application, we must cancel your postal vote and you'll only be able to vote in person at a polling station. Visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/postal-vote-renewal** or email **vote@ashford.gov.uk.**

Wye Tennis Club thriving with ABC support

The growth and development of Wye Tennis Club over the last few years has been transformational.

The club has secured £10k grants from the council and with that money, they've expanded to having five floodlit courts, a padel court and a purpose-built clubhouse. Membership has grown from 149 to just shy of 700 and now the club is giving back to the local community, generously giving grants to schools and those in need. Visit www.wyetennis.org.uk.



One You Kent is moving!

The One You Kent shop in Ashford will be moving from Park Mall to The Gateway later this year to continue its mission to support residents' health and wellbeing. You can expect the same friendly, accessible services - ranging from health checks to lifestyle advice in our new flexible space. Look out for updates on our move and when you can join us at The Gateway to access free support for a healthier you.

FiveDinners is free for all residents

We've partnered with TV chef Theo Michaels to bring this weekly meal planner to you at absolutely no cost. Visit **www.fivedinners.com/mycommunity** to get started.

AMS here to help

Are you experiencing conflict at home, at work or with your family, friends or with neighbours? Ashford Mediation Service is a registered charity, and is here to help. Our services are free to Ashford residents. Our mediators will help you to work out your differences in a non-judgemental environment. Contact Melodie on **info@ashfordmediation.co.uk** or call **07845 914838**. Visit **www.ashfordmediation.co.uk**

AMS
ASHFORD MEDIATION
SERVICE



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www.bountypestcontrol.co.uk

Next stop Ashford!



Over 80,000 residents have signed the petition to bring Eurostar services back to Kent.

In September influential leaders across the country, including Ashford, came together at an event hosted at the International Station's empty booking area.

Visit our website **www.ashford.gov.uk/eurostar** and Sign the Bring Back Eurostar Petition on Change.org

www.change.org/bringbackeurotrains



Santa's Sleigh

Santa's sleigh is coming to Ashford! The Ashford Community Sleigh tours neighbourhoods during December, spreading festive cheer and raising funds for local charities. Organised by volunteers, it has become a much-loved tradition and this year's 16 routes will ensure as many people as possible can see Santa and his elves. See the routes at **facebook.com/acommunitysleigh** and **linktr.ee/acommunitysleigh**

Ellie's Baton of Hope



When the Baton of Hope made its way through Kent as part of a national campaign to raise awareness of mental health issues and suicide prevention, Ashford's Ellie Crook was chosen to be one of the baton carriers in Canterbury since the cause is close to her heart.

"It was a powerful day, so many people lined the route to support us all. I walked the Baton through the Cathedral Precincts and a highlight was when the Bishop of Dover Rose Hudson Wilkins met us to wish us well," said Ellie, who raised £1,127 for Baton of Hope.

Meetings on the move

All council meetings (including those that the public can attend in person), now take place at International House.

Our move from the Civic Centre in Tannery Lane has taken place in phases, with the final part, moving our Council Chamber, Committee Rooms and Mayor's Parlour, being completed this month.



To find out what meetings take place visit **ashford.moderngov.co.uk**. You can also view most meetings live via our YouTube channel **www.youtube.com/ashfordboroughcouncil**

Competition winners

Nearly 950 entries were received for our competitions in the last issue. The winner of a Gusbourne Estate tour and lunch for two was Bernard Farrant, while the winners of family tickets to Biddenden Tractorfest were Richard Foster, Lowri Blackwell, Olivia Coppins, Elizabeth Ashdown, Ross Curnow and Nicola Dilworth. See page 22 for our latest fantastic competitions.

BIDDENDEN TRACTORFEST

GUSBOURNE

Planning ahead

Local Plan put through its paces as council considers borough's future needs

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

Ashford Borough Council is preparing the next Local Plan for the borough. A series of public events were held as part of the formal public consultation over the summer. Further consultation is planned for spring next year.

What is a Local Plan?

The Local Plan is a document that shows how we will grow. It contains our local planning policies and helps us determine planning applications. Without it, councils are less able to prevent unsuitable development in their area.

What does it cover?

The next Local Plan for the borough will set out where development such as new homes, employment, spaces for retail, leisure and spaces for nature will be located up to the year 2042 and the planning policies that define whether development is acceptable.

Is it just about building houses?

The general principle of the plan is to encourage growth through housing and employment, but it also seeks to update planning policies, protect heritage assets and open spaces as well as nature.

What happens next?

The council will carefully consider feedback from the events, and any changes in national planning policy, before choosing sites and then coming out for another round of consultation next year.





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



Ashford's Champions!

Ashford Community Awards 2025

We are proud to showcase the winners of our first Ashford Community Awards, presented during a ceremony at The Ashford Cinema recently.

Launched to celebrate local champions, we were inundated with nominations putting forward individuals and organisations who have all made a real difference to their communities.

Ashford Mayor Cllr Lyn Suddards and Council Chief Executive Tracey Kerly honoured the winners of the awards, which were sponsored by Biddenden Vineyards and Freedom Leisure.

In addition to the Community Awards, former Ashford MP Damian Green was given the Freedom of the Borough, while Council Leader Cllr Noel Ovenden presented a posthumous award to Mick Burgess. It was collected by his partner Aline Hicks.

Here are our worthy Community Award winners...



Alan Castle BEM, Tenterden Folk Festival, won the Cultural Impact Award.



Sam Griffin, Radio Ashford, won the Local Business Champion Award.



Pride Ashford won the Inclusivity Award.



The Community Award winners.



Lisa Steward, Thorne Hedgehog Rescue, won the Animal Star Award.



Louise Moorey was Highly Commended in the Inspiring Young Person of the Year Award.



Singleton Environment Centre won the Community Space Award.



Ashford Parkrun won the Active Community Award.



David Ball won the Community Champion Award.



Richard Masefield, Tenterden Wildlife, won the Green Award.



James Willcox won the Inspiring Young Person of the Year Award.



Cllr Noel Ovenden presented a Leader's Award posthumously to Mick Burgess. Cllr Aline Hicks collected the award.



Former Ashford MP Damian Green was given the Freedom of the Borough.

Photo credit: Alan Duncan Photography



Ensuring local voices are still heard

In the biggest shake up of local government in 50 years, the government are proposing changes to how councils are run. This means in future, councils will look, sound and deliver services in a different way. This is known as Local Government Reorganisation or LGR for short.

What does this mean for Kent?

Under the current system Kent County Council (KCC) delivers some services like education, social services and roads.

Others like emptying your bins and providing council housing are provided by district or borough councils like Ashford Borough Council.

In the proposed new system, unitary councils would deliver all council services in one area. Medway Council operates in that way today.

The government think the changes will make it simpler for residents to understand how things work, and the new councils will be more efficient.

KCC, Medway and the 12 district and borough councils, would no longer exist and would be replaced by a number of unitary councils.

How are the changes being shaped?

The existing councils are working out the best way to organise themselves including how many unitary councils there should be and what areas they should cover.

Kent's proposals need to be with ministers by Friday 28 November 2025. The government will then take the decision about how many unitary councils there are and which areas they cover.

When we get a decision, work will start in earnest on combining existing councils to create the new unitaries.

Those new unitary councils are due to start delivering services from April 2028.



For more information visit www.ashford.gov.uk/lgr

Image credit: Martin Leusby



Is a local voice important to you?



While ultimately it will be the government who makes the final decision on how councils in Kent will look in future, residents are being asked about how they ensure a local voice is still heard.

When LGR is introduced, in parished areas of the borough, the parish or town council will remain and work with the new unitary council.

Should Ashford have a town council?

In the unparished areas of Ashford, (covering the town centre, Repton Park and South Ashford areas, and parts of Willesborough), only the unitary council will exist.

Parished areas will therefore retain a local voice, with the unparished areas represented by the elected unitary councillors.

Ashford Borough Council is conducting a review to find out what residents think about the creation of a town council for the unparished, urban area of Ashford.

What is a town council?

A town council has the same powers as a parish council. They can provide, maintain and support a variety of important and visible services including allotments, parks and open spaces, bus shelters and some community centres and leisure facilities.

They are made up of locally elected councillors, providing an extra voice to represent the community and be an advocate for your local area.

What would change?

Some services currently delivered by Ashford Borough Council would be transferred to the new town council.

Like parishes, town councils get their money from something called a 'precept'. This is an extra charge added to your Council Tax and collected at the same time. Town councils decide how much precept to charge, based on the services they want to offer.

We want your views –
Tell us before 5 December 2025.

Have your say at: **https://haveyoursay.ashford.gov.uk/community-governance-review** or **scan the QR code.**

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

cut out and keep

Christmas collections 25/26

Check out the 2025/2026 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 22 December	Monday 22nd December
Tuesday 23 December	Tuesday 23 December
Wednesday 24 December	Wednesday 24 December
Thursday 25 December	Saturday 27 December
Friday 26 December	Monday 29 December
Monday 29 December	Tuesday 30 December
Tuesday 30 December	Wednesday 31 December
Wednesday 31 December	Friday 2 January
Thursday 1 January	Saturday 3 January
Friday 2 January	Monday 5 January
Monday 5 January	Tuesday 6 January
Tuesday 6 January	Wednesday 7 January
Wednesday 7 January	Thursday 8 January
Thursday 8 January	Friday 9 January
Friday 9 January	Saturday 10 January
Normal recycling and refuse service resumes Monday 12 January 2026	

Garden waste collections

Garden waste collections will be suspended for the week commencing Wednesday 24 December and the week commencing Monday 6 January. Collections will resume on your normal day of collection from Thursday 8 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
Thursday 25th December	Thursday 8th January
Friday 26th December	Friday 9th January

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

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

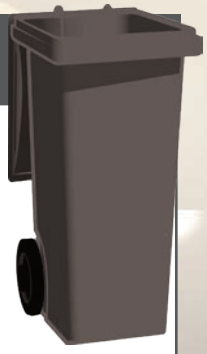
You can also follow the council on (@AshfordBoroughCouncil) and (@AshfordCouncil) for regular information updates over the Christmas period.

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 24 December and will resume normal service on Thursday 8 January.

Clinical collections

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



Turn your Xmas tree into care

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.

Year after year, this campaign continues to grow with "tree-rific" success. Last year more than 4,200 trees were collected from the Ashford, Canterbury and Thanet areas, and an incredible £78,000 was raised for local end-of-life hospice care.



Register your real Christmas tree for collection by visiting **www.pilgrimshospices.org/treerecycling**, and Pilgrims volunteer elves will take your tree away to be recycled on **Saturday 10th or Sunday 11th January 2026.**

Ashford's Allotments: Grow, thrive, connect

Love fresh produce, fresh air and the sounds of nature? Looking to join a thriving local community? Allotments are so much more than simply growing food – they offer a place to relax, connect, and enjoy the many mental and physical health benefits of gardening outdoors.

Across Ashford there are 11 allotment sites in the town and one in Wye, representing over 400 plots. Each site is supported by the Ashford Allotment Society, a volunteer-run organisation founded in 1996. The Society gives allotment tenants a voice, with each site having its own representative who attends regular committee meetings.

The Society also runs a Trading Store at the Westrees Allotments on Quantock Drive. Members and the public can buy discounted seeds, compost, bamboo canes, seed potatoes and more. Visit: **www.AshfordAllotmentSociety.org**

While most sites are full, there's a waiting list. If you're a resident of Ashford and able to dedicate time each week to maintaining a plot, you can register your interest via the Ashford Borough Council website.



Tribute to Brenda Raggett (1946–2025)

A special rose, "Brenda's Beauty", has been planted at Westrees Allotment site in memory of Brenda Raggett, who sadly passed away earlier this year.

Brenda was a dedicated member of the allotment community, volunteering for many years as site representative at Westrees and later serving as Chair of the Ashford Allotment Society.

Her unwavering commitment, kindness, and care for the allotment community touched many lives. She will be greatly missed.



Need extra storage or somewhere to park?



We have garages available to rent across the borough.

- ✓ From just £13.97 per week
- ✓ Flexible rolling tenancy
- ✓ Perfect for storage or housing a car
- ✓ Garages are currently only being offered to residents of the borough



Apply via our website: **www.ashford.gov.uk/garages**

Please note garages cannot be guaranteed watertight.

Mill View transformed

Tenants have moved into four new homes built to replace a row of houses that were badly damaged following a portable gas heater explosion at Mill View in Ashford in 2021.

The council's scheme has seen two 2-bedroom homes and two 3-bedroom homes constructed on the cleared site where 13, 15, 17 and 19 Mill View previously stood.

It was just before 8am on Tuesday, 4 May 2021 when an explosion ripped through the street, shattering windows and waking neighbours. Seven people were injured in the blast, with five taken to the William Harvey Hospital and two taken to London with what would later be described as "life-changing" injuries.

Three council-owned properties and one privately owned home were badly damaged in the explosion, which a Kent Fire & Rescue Service investigation later found was caused by a leak from a portable gas heater in one of the council homes. Alternative accommodation was provided for the people affected by the blast.

The new homes have been built to a high standard, with a focus on energy efficiency. Each has two parking spaces and heating is via air source heat pumps with underfloor heating. There are also PV panels fitted to the roofs and an EV charger fitted to each property. The high standard of insulation and energy efficiency means the homes are rated EPC band B.

Cllr Noel Ovenden, Leader of Ashford Borough Council, said: "I'm passionate about providing genuinely affordable quality housing for everyone, so I'm delighted that our Housing team has delivered a project to replace the homes that were destroyed. These homes have been constructed to a high standard, with green features and future-proof designs that can adapt to a tenant's changing personal needs."



Investing in our homes

Our track record in successfully applying for Government retrofit funding has seen us secure more money which will be used on energy efficiency upgrades to even more social homes.

The £2m from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 3 – which the council is match funding with another £2m – will help ensure that another 160 homes will be upgraded to an EPC 'C' rating.

This latest tranche of money comes two years after we secured Government funding of £5.1m. That has been spent on upgrading 500 of our most energy-inefficient homes. Our approach to deliver improvements to the shell of each building is providing the most cost-effective and least intrusive methods of raising the thermal efficiency of each one.

The improvements can include cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation, new windows and doors, loft insulation, solar panels and air source heat pumps. For tenants, the work helps to reduce energy demand and help lower bills, and results in a warmer and more comfortable home for families to enjoy.

What's On

The weather may be getting chillier but we have some hot ideas for getting out and about in the borough this winter...



Carnival of the Baubles

Our festive extravaganza is back! On Saturday 22 November, Carnival of the Baubles – sponsored by Ashford Designer Outlet – will once again return to the Ashford Town Centre, in what is a must attend event for the diary. Perfect for a family evening out, just remember to get there early due to the crowds!



United Makers of Kent Food & Creative Market

Unfortunately, there are only two United Makers of Kent Food & Creative Market days left in the calendar. The good news is that they're two of the biggest! Taking place on Saturday 6 December and again on Saturday 20 December, these two market days in Ashford Town Centre will bring together the very best food and creative arts that Kent has to offer – with a festive twist, too!



Ashford Food & Drink Festival 2026

We were thrilled to see the high street bustling with thousands of residents for the Food & Drink Festival back in June – and we can't wait to do it all again next year! Keep your eyes peeled for further developments and information, but rest assured we're looking at ways to make 2026 version bigger and better than ever.

Revelation Ashford

Looking for a gig fix? Revelation Ashford has you covered! Our local venue has four ticketed events to keep you entertained, closing the year out with Gerald Dickens – A Christmas Carol on Wednesday 19 November, Rhinestone Cowboy: The Glen Campbell Story on Friday 28 November, China Crisis on Saturday 29 November and Steeleye Span on Saturday 13 December. For all ticket info, head to their website: **https://revelationashford.co.uk/**

Pilgrims Hospice Festive Fair

On Saturday 22 November, Pilgrims Hospice will host their Festive Fair over at PGL Beyond, Grosvenor Hall in Kennington! With free parking, there's a host of Christmas goodies to be won and with food and drink stalls in supply, it's shaping up to be a great day – and all for a good cause, too. Plus, Santa will be there! Visit **www.pilgrimshospice.org**.





Aladdin at Christ Church Community Hall

Oh no he isn't! To celebrate 15 years of the Ashford Panto Society, on Friday 23 January, the first of eight panto performances of Aladdin will kick off. Also marking an anniversary is the society's Dame, who is now in her 10th year! Thanks to Hypha Studios opening up a studio space in Kennington, the society – chaired by Alan Stamp – have been able to rehearse rigorously, so it's shaping up to be a cracker. Visit **https://ashfordtheatre.com**



Jack and the Beanstalk at The Sinden Theatre

Oh yes he is! Meanwhile, over in Tenterden, Jack and the Beanstalk will be running from Saturday 13 December to Wednesday 31 December at The Sinden Theatre. Visit the theatre's website: **https://sindentheatre.com**

Sleeping Beauty at the Rylance Theatre

The panto of your dreams – that's how Blue Phoenix Productions is describing its performance of Sleeping Beauty at the Rylance Theatre in Ashford from 19 December to 3 January.
Visit **www.ashfordpantomime.co.uk**

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Give your wellbeing a boost

Whether you're in need of some personal support or if you're worried about others this winter, here are a few services that can help...

Household Support Fund



Our Welfare Officer Tracey with Tom at Ashford Town Appliances who helps deliver the white goods to residents

Funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Household Support Fund (HSF) allows us to help vulnerable households in our borough with the rise in living costs.

Once a new round of funding is announced, we use our allocation from Kent County Council to provide services such as a White Goods Scheme and an Essential Carpet Scheme.

Professionals working with financially vulnerable residents can refer residents to us for help to buy or replace, essential white goods or carpets as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for both schemes.

We are also using our HSF funding to work in partnership and provide support to local organisations. These include The Mildred Trust, Pneuma Church UK, Bright City Church and Repton Community Trust.

Recently we received 48 white goods referrals and were able to provide residents with 73 items. One resident told us that they were 'chuffed to bits' with their new freezer, while another resident who struggled to cook and was washing clothes in the sink was very grateful to receive a new washing machine, fridge freezer and cooker.

Visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/household-support-fund**

Car volunteering scheme



The Ashford Volunteer Centre (AVC) Volunteer Car Scheme offers transport support for vulnerable adults across the borough.

Coordinated by volunteers, the initiative helps residents who don't have access to a car or find public transport challenging, enabling them to attend medical and other important appointments.

Using the service is easy - you just need to be aged 18 or over, live in the borough and make sure you book with at least three working days' notice. The cost of each journey includes a £3 booking fee and a mileage rate of 55p per mile, which covers the driver's travel. There is a minimum charge of £5 per trip, and users receive a monthly invoice from AVC.

For more details and to book your trip, call **01233 665535** or email **transport@ashfordvc.org.uk**

AVC is looking for local people to join their pool of volunteer drivers so if you'd like to make a difference in your community, they'd love to hear from you!

Lily's Social Kitchen CIC



The Singleton Café at Singleton Village Hall is a friendly community space where everyone is welcome. Open on a donation-only basis, the café serves a selection of homemade cakes, drinks, and light bites in a relaxed setting.

Families will find plenty to enjoy, with a play area for toddlers indoors and an outside space filled with toys.

More than just a café, Singleton is part of a social enterprise that operates in Canterbury, Maidstone, and a dedicated catering kitchen. Together, these sites provide hands-on training opportunities for people who are neurodivergent or have additional learning needs. Trainees gain vital skills, confidence, and real-world work experience.

They welcome community groups to use the space and they have vacancies on their training programmes if volunteers want to support trainees as they learn and grow.
Email **singletoncafe@lilyscommunity.org**

Wellbeing Matters Plus/Imago Community



Local charity Imago Community provides services to support wellbeing in Ashford, including Wellbeing Matters Plus. This service supports adults aged 55+ or 18+ with complex needs.

They offer groups including creative, physical, outdoor and social activities. Based on the six ways to wellbeing, they'll support you to stay active, keep learning, give back, connect with others, enjoy outdoor activities, and care for the planet.

Imago's Come and Meet Each Other (CAMEO) project provides a 12-week programme of social events, including local trips and creative workshops. Designed to be inclusive and enjoyable, their activities support you to connect with others in a relaxed setting.

Visit **www.imago.community/support-for-adults/befriending-and-social-activities** or call **0300 373 0560**.

Different Strokes



A national charity helping younger stroke survivors and their families to reclaim their lives through active peer support.

Lisa Pearson from Ashford had an ischemic stroke in 2017 at the age of 44 and initially joined the Whitstable-based group. Attending allowed Lisa to find friendship by connecting with others who understood her experience of a stroke at a young age. Inspired by the experience, Lisa set up a group closer to home.

She opened the Different Strokes Ashford Kent Stroke Support Group in January 2025 and has created a welcoming space for survivors to share stories. The group offers peer support and activities such as yoga, seated exercise and mindfulness for working age and younger survivors.

It has a different activity every month as well as refreshments for members allowing them time to sit and chat together. The group meets on the last Friday of the month from 2-4pm at the Kennington WI Hall. Email Lisa at **ashfordkent@differentstrokes.co.uk** or follow them on Facebook.

Flying the Green Flag for Ashford

Victoria Park has been awarded its first ever Green Flag, marking it out as one of the very best parks in the country. The accolade recognises not just the park's natural beauty and excellent facilities, but also the passion and hard work of the community that cares for it.

Judges described the park as "a joy to award" and praised it as "a real community hub" with "something for all ages and abilities."

This success comes after years of improvement through the £5m+ Victoria Park and Watercress Fields Project, funded by Ashford Borough Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Visitors can enjoy a host of new facilities – from a welcoming café and community building including a modern Changing Places toilet, to a new playground, a colourful sensory garden, and a pump track for BMXers, skaters and scooter riders.

The river corridor has been opened up with a picnic area and viewing platform, while a seasonal wetland helps wildlife thrive in the heart of the park. For many, the park is far more than a green space – it's a place where people come together.

The Green Flag was proudly raised at a recent community celebration, bringing people together to mark this milestone achievement for a park that continues to flourish.





Volunteers wanted!



Volunteering in Victoria Park is a brilliant way to give back to your community, meet new people and learn new skills. You can give as much or as little time as you're able. Our volunteers get involved in a range of activities, from monitoring bats, reptiles, amphibians and water voles, to planting, pruning, seed propagation, and helping to care for our meadows, orchards and gardens. You could even help create new habitats for animals.

On 20 November, from 9.30am to 3pm, join us for a Woodland Clearance Volunteer Session. For this day we'll be opening up some of the woodland down in Watercress Fields to improve sightlines and clear a little of the undergrowth that is taking over. If you would like to attend, you should wear long trousers and long sleeves. Gloves are provided but you may prefer to bring your own. Please also bring a drink, and lunch if you are staying the whole day. Volunteers will meet at the compound before heading down to the woodland.

If you'd like to get involved, complete the **Volunteer Application Form** online and we'll be in touch within seven days. Any queries email **parkvolunteers@ashford.gov.uk** or for more information visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/volunteering-in-our-parks**





Wassail lights up winter

Visit Victoria Park on Saturday 24 January to see it transformed into a scene of celebration, as Ashford welcomes its annual Wassail—a time-honoured English tradition that honours orchard trees and hopes for a bountiful harvest ahead.

Thanks to volunteers who planted the trees, the park's orchard is a cherished community resource and from 1.30pm to 6pm, families and friends will gather to enjoy folk bands, Morris dancers, Hoodeners, drumming and a stunning fire-lit procession. There will be crafts, traditional games and plenty of entertainment for all ages. Add in the aroma of warm spiced apple drinks, and it promises to be an event drenched in good cheer.

Free to attend, the Wassail is a standout event in Ashford's cultural calendar, bringing people together, keeping local tradition alive and sharing in the beauty of our orchards. Explore the full schedule and find more upcoming events at the Victoria Park What's On page: **victoriaparkashford.co.uk/whats-on.**

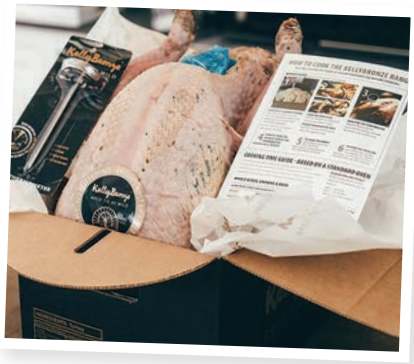


WIN a Christmas turkey from Kent Turkeys

Kent Turkeys produce free range KellyBronze turkeys on the family farm, Woolpack Corner Farm, just outside Biddenden. By allowing the birds to free range across 16 acres of pasture, they are able to graze and pick at the bugs and berries, meaning they are naturally happy and healthy.

The birds are hatched in their natural season and grow slowly to full maturity which, coupled with being free range, means they develop a natural layer of fat, as well as a more mature carcass and bone – all of which are essential for award-winning flavour and a delicious natural gravy stock.

Kent Turkeys is giving away one 6kg turkey and a delicious turkey and cranberry pie, to be collected from one of their collection points for Christmas. The winner must advise Kent Turkeys of their chosen collection point, a full list of which can be found on their website.



Kent Turkeys KellyBonze turkeys are available to order online now at **www.kentturkeys.co.uk** or by calling **01580 291792.**

Kent Turkeys

WIN two annual gym memberships

ANYTIME FITNESS

Anytime Fitness Ashford is your local 24/7 gym, conveniently located in the heart of Ashford town centre at 25 New Street. We offer a welcoming, friendly environment for all fitness levels, with more equipment than most gyms, so you'll never have to wait to train. Members enjoy our fantastic facilities including, a sauna, steam room and access to sunbed facilities with our membership.

Plus we have 2.5 hours of FREE parking, making your visit even more convenient. Whether you're just starting your fitness journey or looking to push your limits, we are here to support you every step of the way. With flexible membership options and excellent value, it's never been easier to achieve your goals at Anytime Fitness Ashford.

We are giving away two annual membership prizes to two lucky Ashford For You readers. For more information call us on **01233 802471** or visit **www.anytimefitness.co.uk/ashford**







ANYTIME FITNESS

To enter your name in our prize draw either:

* **Email** the editorial team at **competition@ashford.gov.uk** – put **Kent Turkeys** or **Anytime Fitness Ashford** 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, International House, Dover Place, Ashford TN23 1HU. Write **Kent Turkeys** or **Anytime Fitness Ashford** on the card.

We will contact the winner to request consent to provide your contact details 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 **competition is 12 noon on Monday 1 December 2025.** 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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Save money, stay warm

Condensation is a common wintertime problem. With the arrival of cooler weather, homes are at risk of moisture build-up, damp patches, and black mould. Living with damp in your home is very unpleasant and can lead to health risks and make your home an uncomfortable place to live.

To help you to deal with and prevent damp in the home, please follow HIVE:

Heating

Condensation is most likely in homes that are underheated. Try to keep temperatures in all rooms above 18°C as this will reduce condensation forming on external walls.

Insulation

Insulating your home will help:

- warm the surface temperature of walls, ceilings and windows
- increase the temperature of the home
- reduce heating costs thus allowing the home to be heated to a higher standard more affordably.

Ventilation

Condensation will occur less if you allow air to circulate. Make sure vents and airbricks are not covered or obstructed.

Excess moisture

Condensation occurs when there's too much moisture in the air. Reduce the amount of moisture that can escape into the air, such as cooking without lids on pans and drying clothes on a radiator.

Warm Homes Healthy Futures programme

In May 2025 Ashford Borough Council's Climate Team partnered with National Energy Action (NEA) to launch the Warm Homes Healthy Futures scheme. This helps residents suffering with health conditions, to live in a more comfortable, warm and energy efficient home. With a record number of people living in fuel poverty, our aim is to support residents with tailored energy advice, helping them to improve their living conditions to be more comfortable, healthy and budget friendly.

Since May we have:

- Spoken to 95 residents and practically supported 75 residents.
- Held four stakeholder/partner training sessions to support identification of people in fuel poverty.
- Conducted eight Energy Workshops speaking to over 150 residents with NHS led community groups to raise awareness of fuel poverty and provide energy advice.
- Assisted residents access other grant schemes such as the Household Support Fund and assisted residents facing energy debt.
- Provided support to those with a sight and/or hearing impairment, including providing smoke/heat detectors and CO alarms specifically for residents with hearing loss.



Case study

Thanks to one of our Eat Well Spend Less roadshows, a referral was made to our Energy Advisor involving a resident who had an issue with damp and mould in her home and was struggling with high energy bills, and all while waiting to have an operation. Our team visited, assessed her home and helped her access support. With new extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom; fixed vents and air-bricks; and loft insulation on the way, the resident is now able to have her operation and recover in a comfortable home. She told us: "Thank you so much for your help, you're brilliant and should be proud of the work you are doing. I can tell that you care and follow through with what you say you will do, thank you again for helping me."



NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION
NEA
ACTION FOR WARM HOMES

To access the scheme visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/warmhomes**

Ashford Borough Council's Climate Team has successfully bid for nearly £79k of funding from the NEA to participate in their Warm Homes Healthy Futures scheme.

Christmas at County Square

Saturday 22nd November
Love Ashford's "Carnival of the Baubles" Events & Market
Ashford Panto promotion

Saturday 29th November
Good for your Elf & Children's Panto Choir
Charity Gift Wrapping by Demelza & Pilgrims Hospices

Sunday 30th November
Charity Gift Wrapping by Demelza & Pilgrims Hospices

Ashford Sings!

Saturday 6th December
Ashford Sings! & Good for your Elf & Balloon Modeller
Charity Gift Wrapping by Demelza & Pilgrims Hospices

Sunday 7th December
Charity Gift Wrapping by Demelza & Pilgrims Hospices

Friday 12th December
Demelza School Choirs Carolathon!

Saturday 13th & Sunday 14th December
Meet Father & Mother Christmas
Charity Gift Wrapping by Demelza & Pilgrims Hospices

Saturday 20th December
Good for your Elf & Artisan Market
Charity Gift Wrapping by Demelza & Pilgrims Hospices

ROCK CHOIR

Sunday 21st December
Rock Choir & Charity Gift Wrapping by
Demelza & Pilgrims Hospices

All events and dates are subject to change.
Please see website for more details.

COUNTY SQ
Ashford