

Get your Skates on
this Christmas...
and head for Ashford's town centre



Skate on the magical
Invicta FM open air ice rink
(Charter House - until 4th January)

Shop at popular high street stores including
Debenhams, H&M and Topshop



For more information see
www.ashfordwinterfestival.co.uk

Ashford
best placed in Britain

Christmas and New Year Domestic Refuse Collections

NORMAL COLLECTION DAY
Monday 22 December 2008
Tuesday 23 December 2008
Wednesday 24 December 2008
Thursday 25 December 2008
Friday 26 December 2008

REVISED COLLECTION DAY
Normal collection
Normal collection
Normal collection
* Friday 2 January 2009
* Friday 2 January 2009

* Please place your waste out for 6.00am on these days
Collections may be up to one day later than shown
For further information please telephone
01233 331111
Normal collections resume 7.00am on
Monday 5 January 2009

NORMAL COLLECTION DAY
Monday 29 December 2008
Tuesday 30 December 2008
Wednesday 31 December 2008
Thursday 1 January 2009
Friday 2 January 2009

REVISED COLLECTION DAY
Normal collection
Normal collection
Normal collection
* Friday 2 January 2009
* Normal collection

Blue Box Recycling Collections

NORMAL COLLECTION DAY
Monday 22 December 2008
Tuesday 23 December 2008
Wednesday 24 December 2008
Thursday 25 December 2008
Friday 26 December 2008

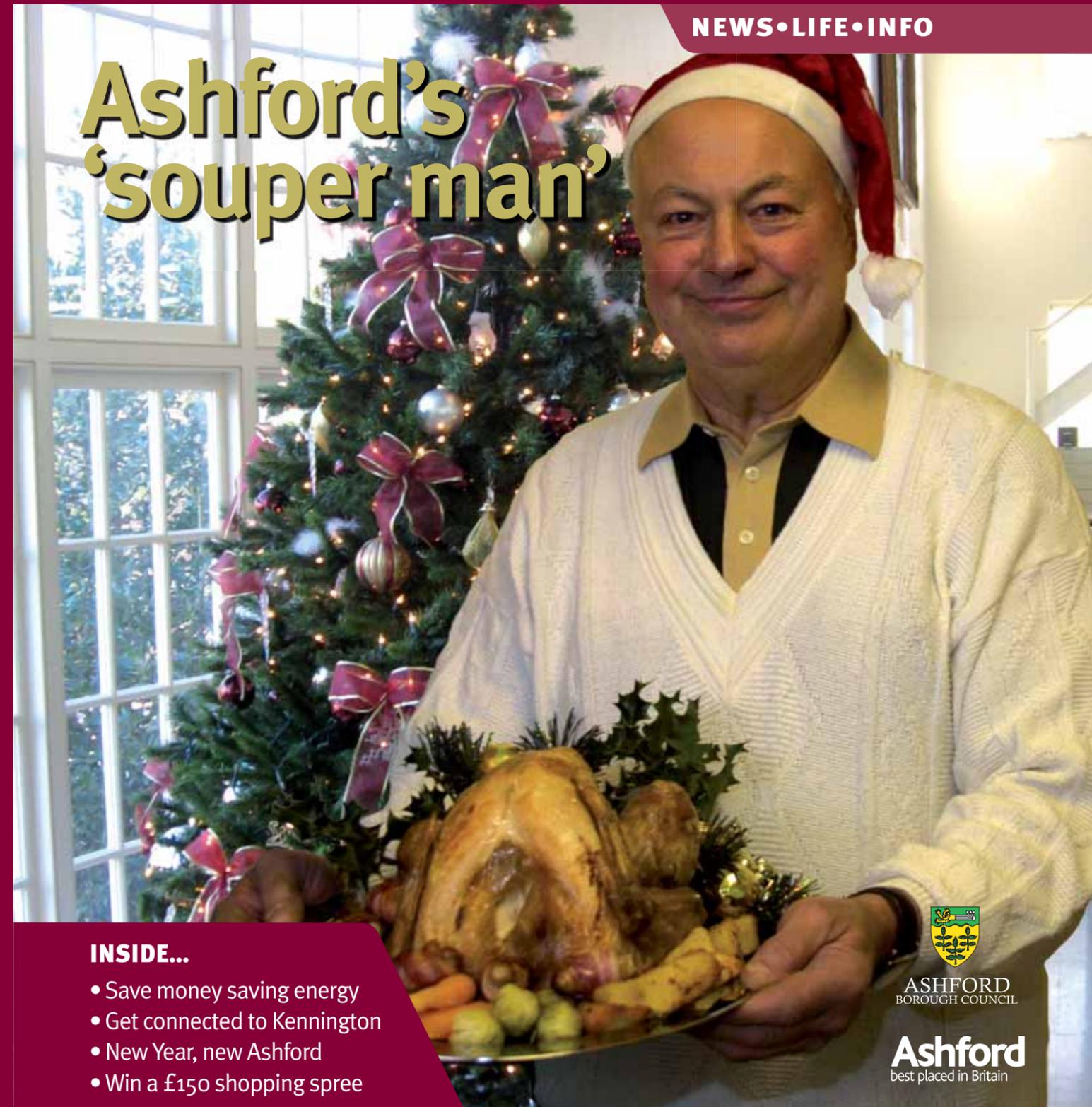
REVISED COLLECTION DAY
Normal collection
Normal collection
Normal collection
Thursday 8 January 2009
Friday 9 January 2009

Collections may be up to one day later than shown
For further information please telephone
01233 331111

NORMAL COLLECTION DAY
Monday 29 December 2008
Tuesday 30 December 2008
Wednesday 31 December 2008
Thursday 1 January 2009
Friday 2 January 2009

REVISED COLLECTION DAY
Normal collection
Normal collection
Normal collection
Friday 2 January 2009
Normal collection

Ashford's 'souper man'



INSIDE...

- Save money saving energy
- Get connected to Kennington
- New Year, new Ashford
- Win a £150 shopping spree



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ashford
best placed in Britain

Welcome **Ashford** voice

Welcome back to Ashford Voice, your borough magazine delivered straight to your doorstep. It's full of features on living, working and enjoying life in Ashford and the surrounding communities.

In this edition you can see how much hard work and dedication goes into running a soup kitchen by meeting Ashford's very own 'souper man', Cyril Bishop. There are also regular features, including the way we work with 'A day in the life of...'; where we live in 'Your community' with a focus on Kennington; and what to do when you're out and about – see 'What's on'.

Plus, there's New Year, new Ashford, a look ahead to the exciting plans that will be unfolding in 2009. And looking into the New Year, we're searching for stories for our Spring magazine – so please get in touch!

With several outstanding facilities in the borough, are you a future sports star or Olympic hopeful? Are you dreaming of following in the footsteps of Ashford-born gold medal winner, Jamie Staff?

We're also calling on the residents of Woodchurch. Do you have any stories about what makes up life in this idyllic village? It's your turn for your community to have its say.

If you want to share your voice on these topics, or on any other aspect of life in the borough, please get in touch.

On behalf of everyone at Ashford Borough Council, we'd like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.



If you would like a copy of Ashford Voice in large print or audio format please ring **01233 330209** or visit **www.ashford.gov.uk**

Did you know you can read your borough magazine online? Go to **www.ashford.gov.uk/voice** to read Ashford Voice via PageSuite.

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News in brief



Town centre expansion complete

Work on transforming the former ring road into a series of two-way streets has been completed and visitors to the town centre are really starting to see the benefits.

The scheme - a national first and the largest of its type in the country - will open up the town centre again, making it a more attractive, pleasant environment with street cafes and shops facing onto new, tree-lined streets.

By removing the constraints of the former ring road, the town centre will be able to expand beyond the old boundaries, and support future developments that will benefit the town as it grows.

Ultimately, the changes will make the town centre a vibrant, attractive destination for residents, shoppers and businesses.

Ashford makes the big screen

A short film called 'Opportunity Ashford' has been made to promote Ashford to a wide range of people, including new investors and the local community.

The film was first screened at the 'Ashford's on track' business breakfast, held at the British Library, St Pancras, London in September 2008. More than 60 property developers and businesses had a sneak preview and saw how they can benefit from investment opportunities in Ashford.

Local residents had a chance to view the



film at an event held in the County Square at the end of October. To view 'Opportunity Ashford' visit www.ashfordbestplaced.co.uk/ontrack.



Free Sunday parking

During the run up to Christmas, Ashford Borough Council is once again waiving Sunday car parking fees this December.

You can park for FREE in all of the council's car parks across the borough. The first free day is on Sunday 7 December 2008. Free parking will continue on the following Sundays 14 and 21 December.

Gateway to Tenterden



Gateway, Kent's innovative way to access public services, opens the Tenterden branch this December. Following the success of the Ashford Gateway, which celebrated its third birthday in October, the Tenterden Gateway will offer council information, such as housing advice, along with other public services,

including the library and tourist information.

The Tenterden Gateway will also house the Post Office, bringing vital community functions under one roof.

The official opening, with activities and family fun day events, will be held on Friday 30, and Saturday 31, January 2009 – everyone is welcome.



Ashford athletes Jamie Staff & Lisa Dobriskey

Ashford's sporting heroes

The council hosted a civic ceremony in October to honour sporting heroes from in and around the borough, with past, present and future stars gathering to help celebrate the achievement of Jamie Staff, who won a gold medal at the Beijing Olympics.

Jamie was presented with a special award by the Mayor of Ashford, Cllr John Link, at the ceremony held at the Ashford International Hotel. Earlier in the day he took time to visit his former schools, The North and Smeeth Primary before making an appearance at Sk8Side to help promote Active Ashford.

Invicta FM Ice World brings sparkle to the town



Grab your sense of humour and a steady pair of legs for this exciting addition to Ashford's festive events this Christmas. This amazing outdoor ice rink will be located in the grounds of Charter House from 14 November to 4 January. 22 metres long and with the capacity for 120 skaters, the ice rink is sure to provide a popular draw to the town.

It's just one of the events being co-ordinated by the Ashford Town Centre Partnership to promote the town and builds on the Ashford Winter Festival, held on the 28 and 29 November where Ashford town centre's streets hosted a continental and local food, arts and crafts market together with food demonstrations and street entertainment.

See page 18 for details of other events taking place in the town in the run up to Christmas or visit www.ashfordwinterfestival.co.uk

Energy savings

With rising energy bills, an economic downturn and cold winter nights already here, many residents will be feeling 'the pinch' at this time of year.

Ashford Voice takes a look at some of the ways we can all save energy, do our bit for the environment and cut our utility bills at the same time.



Top five energy-saving tips

1 Switch off appliances

Many electrical appliances use up to 70% of their energy on standby mode. By not leaving your TV and computer on standby, turning off lights you don't need and unplugging your mobile phone charger, you could save around **£82** a year.



2 Use energy-saving lightbulbs

Not only do they use up to 80% less electricity than conventional bulbs, they last six times longer and can save you **£7.50** a year on electricity bills per bulb.



3 Insulate your house

Did you know that around a quarter of household heat is lost through the roof of an uninsulated home? This is easily fixed by draught-proofing windows and doors, plus you can save even more heat (and money) by putting in cavity wall and loft insulation.



4 Master your thermostat

Turning your central heating thermostat down by just 1° can cut your heating bills by up to 10% and save around **£30** a year.



5 Do a home energy check

Go to www.energysavingtrust.org.uk, answer some simple questions about your home and receive a free, impartial report telling you how you can save up to **£270** a year on your household energy bills.



Cut the queues, travel in twos!



kentcarshare

Kentcarshare is a free, secure, Internet-based service that allows you to register your journeys, and find passengers or drivers to share with.

The potential cost savings of sharing a journey just once or twice a week are substantial.

For more information visit www.kentcarshare.co.uk



Calculate your footprint

Ashford is leading the way in addressing the environmental impact of its growth plans, according to a new report.

The report used ecological footprinting to look at the environmental impact of the planned growth in Ashford and to prioritise actions to minimise this impact.



Ecological footprinting is used to measure how our lifestyles affect the planet. It is calculated by how much land and sea are needed to provide us with the energy, water and materials we consume in our everyday lives.

It looks at what we buy and consume, the energy we use and what we do with our waste.

To see what your individual footprint is visit www.footprint.wwf.org.uk



Savings on tap

A south Ashford project is investigating ways of reducing water use in the home. Several householders who have taken part have already seen a reduction in their water bills.

Mrs Westbrook, of Charminster in Washford Farm, was happy to sign up.

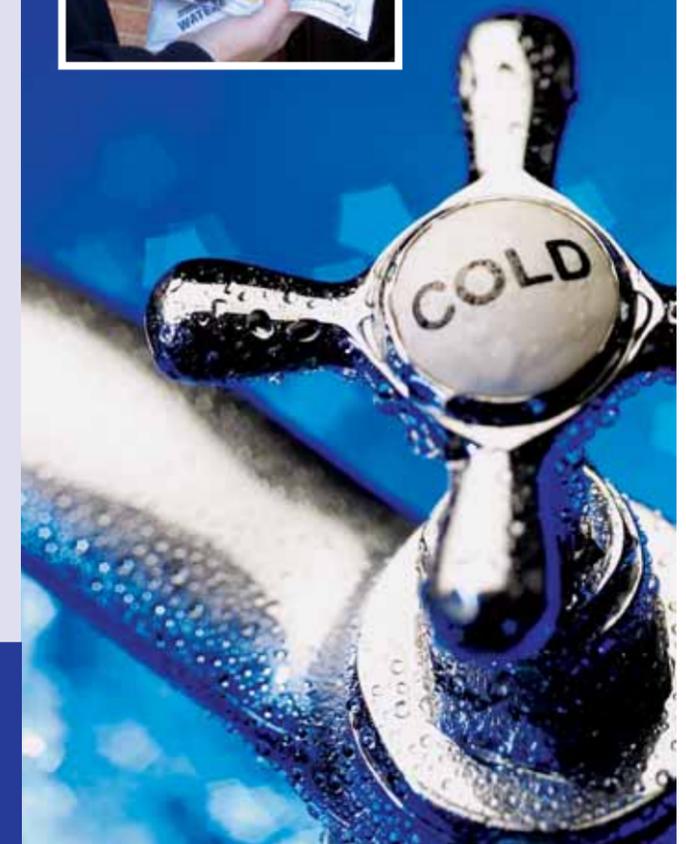


My water bills were already coming down due to the water meter we had fitted 18 months ago, but we have seen a further reduction since taking part in the project.

We have also received some useful advice on other water saving techniques to try out. It is amazing how much you can save just by thinking about the amount of water you waste each day.

For more information on the project visit www.ashfordbestplaced.co.uk

For more advice on water saving visit www.southeastwater.co.uk or www.environment-agency.gov.uk



Your community: Kennington life



Key facts

Population: 9,590

Commerce: A diverse range of businesses including many based at Eureka Park, a prime business location.

School: Primary schools include Kennington C of E Primary; Downs View Infants and Phoenix Community Primary School. There is one secondary school, The Towers School.

Services/facilities: Pubs and take-away restaurants; restaurants linked to pubs and hotels; and churches of most major denominations.

Recreation/clubs: Eureka Leisure Park and the Julie Rose Stadium. Scouting Association groups, Kennington Football Club, WI, Youth Forum and many more.

Halls for hire: Bockhanger Community Centre, Bybrook Road, Kennington, Ashford, Kent TN24 9JE

Goat Lees Community Hall, Trinity Road, Kennington, Ashford, Kent TN25 4AB

Julie Rose Stadium, Willesborough Road, Kennington, Ashford, Kent TN24 9QX

Kennington WI Hall, 228 Faversham Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 9AN

Doctors' Surgery: New Hayesbank Surgery, Bybrook

Constituents Wards: Kennington, Bockhanger, Bybrook, Little Burton Farm

Councillors' details:

Bockhanger: Cllr. Michael Claughton, Wisden, 29 Maidstone Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8UA. Telephone: 01233 635969
Email: michael.claughton@ntlworld.com



Bybrook: Cllr. Mrs Marion Martin, 36 Christchurch Road, Ashford, Kent TN23 7XD. Telephone: 01233 628811
Email: marionmartin168@btinternet.com



Kennington: Cllr. John Kemp MBE, 90 Lower Vicarage Road, Kennington, Ashford, Kent TN24 9AP. Telephone: 01233 624162
Email: kempkempjfk@aol.com



Little Burton Farm: Cllr. Norman Ayres, 11 James Allchin Gardens, Kennington, Kent, Ashford, Kent TN24 9SD.
Telephone: 01233 620767



"The Kennington area is growing at a pace. We want to stay connected to the concerns of our expanding communities and always want to hear from those living in the area."

Kennington Community Forum

St Mary's Church Hall, Church Road, Kennington, Kent TN24 9DQ.
Telephone: 01233 628894 Contact: Pat Boorman
Email: kencf@ashford.gov.uk

Meetings normally held on the last Tuesday of every month (except December) at 7pm. All residents and businesses in the area are welcome.

Kennington connected to the community

Kennington is a thriving Ashford suburb. The catchment stretches from Junction 9 of the M20 at Eureka Leisure Park to the area surrounding the Julie Rose Stadium and encompasses Bockhanger, Bybrook, Little Burton Farm and the original village of Kennington (often referred to as "Old Kennington").

Housing expansion since the 1960s has led to the development of large residential communities which blend well together yet retain their own sense of identity. Kennington's growing popularity helped it to become the location for Kent's largest combined cinema and leisure complex at Eureka Park.

Old village holds appeal

Visit old Kennington (Kennington means "King's town") and discover a rich and varied heritage. Small shops have been serving the needs of local residents for decades. And that strong sense of community is self-evident in the 1st Kennington Scout Group. Up and running for over 50 years, it is battling to find the £300,000 needed for a new hut. Group Scout Leader Mike Cullen commented; "Scouting started in Kennington in 1911. We need space to expand and investment in a new HQ would provide a facility available for the wider community. This



type of initiative is well-placed within a much-loved community."

Sporting traditions upheld

Sporting life is thriving with Ashford Rugby Club, Ashford Hockey Club and Kennington Cricket Club all having their homes here. Kennington Football Club dates back to circa 1885 and is proud to nurture the oldest junior club in Kent. The impressive Julie Rose Stadium is an international-standard athletics stadium helping to develop Ashford's sporting talent of the future.

Design 'n' build for Bockhanger

Bockhanger is benefiting from a £1m investment in the refurbishment of ten blocks of flats. The successful design will rely on the participation and commitment of residents who have been in consultation with Ashford Borough Council. Feedback from them and the wider community will continue to shape the development.

Community centred

The Community Centre in Bockhanger is a base for all community wardens within the borough and hosts a range of activities for all ages. Bockhanger Centre Manager, Jackie Critcher said: "Most local families have held some sort of party or event here over the years. As a non-profit making trust we try to keep charges reasonable to help groups who may not otherwise be able to afford to use the venue."

Kennington voice

The Kennington Community Forum is the voice of the entire suburb. They lobby and comment on plans for the area and try to raise funds for local projects, working closely with Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council.

Chairman, Pat Boorman explains: "There are pressures to build on what open land is left and we want to make sure there is something for everyone. Key priorities are to try and secure an improved local bus route; conduct repairs to Kennington's war memorial and garden of remembrance; and implement a crossing near the Towers School."

Successful projects include traffic calming measures; redeveloping the local town square in Bockhanger; cycle racks outside the Co-op in Faversham Road; and a youth shelter on The Ridge.

What next for Kennington?

The Kennington Community Forum wants to ensure that there are more facilities for young people and to progress work with the Little Burton Farm Youth Forum. To find out more about Kennington and the Kennington Community Forum visit www.ashford.gov.uk.

If there's a part of the borough you'd like to see featured in Ashford Voice please let us know by email: voice@ashford.gov.uk

Useful links:

www.ashford.gov.uk www.ukvillages.co.uk www.kenningtonfc.co.uk www.1stkenningtonscouts.org.uk

A day in the life of...

We go behind the scenes to find out who makes sure that what you eat in Ashford is safe and hygienic.

...a Food Safety Officer

Gavin Richardson, 39, has 16 years of experience working for environmental health food safety, four of which have been spent at Ashford



Amanda Wilson, owner of J&A Wilson Game, Smeth

If in doubt, talk to the Food Safety Officers. I really can't fault them, they're so helpful and always on the phone if you need them. So many people are terrified of Environmental Health but they're just normal people.

Borough Council. His experience makes him well-placed to ensure the food you buy from the shops and restaurants in Ashford meets the required food safety standards.

Describe an average day?

No two days are the same. Normally I start in the office, catching up with some paperwork and emails, which is the worst bit, but from then on anything could happen.

Tell us more?

My team is responsible for registering and inspecting food preparation premises and assessing them for hygiene and food safety standards. So I spend a great deal of time out and about carrying out food hygiene inspections; taking food samples and inspecting for licensing and health and safety requirements.

How do you promote 'best practice'?

A big part of the job is educating and encouraging businesses to follow best practice. So I spend a lot of time advising them how they should be operating to reach the best possible standards.

Can businesses receive training?

We run food hygiene courses and provide training on our 'Scores on the Doors' and 'Safer Food Better Business' initiatives. I also explain the benefits of good training and encourage owners and managers of premises to ensure that they and all their staff take advantage of the training on offer.



'Scores on the Doors'

Just over a year ago Ashford Borough Council launched a brand new scheme which gives consumers the chance to make informed choices about where they eat or buy their food.

'Scores on the Doors' provides the public a way of finding out about the food hygiene standards of local food businesses which are given a star rating based on how well they meet food hygiene criteria with the results available on the Internet. The better the standard, the higher the star rating.

The council's Food Safety Officers inspect over 700 premises across the borough including restaurants, cafés, pubs which serve food and takeaways, all of which have been given a score on how well they perform in terms of hygiene, building structure and overall attitude towards complying with the law. The scores range from 5 stars (excellent) to no stars (very poor).

You can also find out how clean your child's school canteen is, which are the best rated butchers, caterers and farm shops – even the food hygiene standards of mobile sandwich vans.

As a result of 'Scores on the Doors' the council has seen the percentage of excellent (5 star) food businesses increase from 3.3% to 12.6%. But more importantly the number of very poor (zero star) businesses has decreased with only four premises now falling within the very poor category and those are now the subject of focused enforcement activity.

Another indicator of the success of the scheme is that a survey of 23 randomly selected local food business showed that 80% had improved their ratings following the introduction of 'Scores on the Doors'.

Whether you are dining out, looking for local produce or grabbing a sandwich on the go, you can do it in confidence by checking out www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk



How do you handle complaints?

Part of my job is to investigate and pursue complaints against food establishments and I can take enforcement action.

Does your job put you off eating out?

Not at all. My first food inspection was at a slaughterhouse which led to me becoming a vegetarian for a short time, but the lure of bacon butties brought me back to my senses before too long!



Costas Constanti, owner of Londa, Ashford

I was quite surprised how helpful everyone was – we met before my business opened and they sat for hours talking me through all the legislative areas I wasn't sure on. They answered all my questions and sorted all my doubts.



Jeanette May, proprietor of Indulgence Chocolate Lounge, Tenterden

Environmental Health were so helpful in setting up my 5 Star 'Scores On The Doors' rated business, it was unbelievable. The 'Scores On The Doors' rating is great, as it allows customers a potential insight into the food business that has never been there before.



For more information visit www.ashford.gov.uk/foodsafety or call 01233 331111



From left to right Bob, Shirley, Cyril and Barbara

Ashford's very own 'souper man!'

If Christmas is a time for giving, then we think we've found Ashford's most generous fellow here in Cyril Bishop – President of the Ashford Volunteer Bureau and lynchpin of the weekly Ashford soup kitchen. We caught up with the people behind the weekly warm-up for Ashford's community in need.

Who's welcome at the soup kitchen?

The soup kitchen is open to anyone who may need it. We have a strong community spirit, with some people visiting us on and off for a good few years. It's for those who may have fallen on harder times, or who are a bit down on their luck. But all the people who come here are lovely, and are always well behaved. They know the rules. To be honest, the only crazy people here are the volunteers!

And where does the food come from?

A lot of our equipment and food is donated. The volunteers bring food, and are always very generous with their money. We receive a lot of help from local churches and schools, especially at Harvest Festival time. Ashford Borough Council has given us some saucepans and a filing cabinet in recent years and the William Harvey Hospital has also passed on money from donations, but

we don't want for much.

Tell us a bit about you?

I am officially Cyril Bishop BEM (British Empire Medal), awarded to me for 22 years of social welfare working in the Army. This wasn't the only time I've met royalty as last summer my wife and I were recommended by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent to attend the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. What a day, even a sting by a royal wasp on my ear couldn't spoil it for us.

They say behind every great man is an even greater woman, and this can certainly be said here at the soup kitchen. Cyril's wife Shirley is just as important to the group and helped set up the soup kitchen 20 years ago. Shirley is there with Cyril every week – deciding the menu and making sure everything ticks over. They form the backbone of the Ashford soup kitchen.

Ashford's voluntary sector

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer? Or do you have designs on your own community projects or voluntary groups?

To volunteer your services, or find out anything about volunteering in Ashford contact: **Sue Sawyer** on 01233 665535 or email suesawyer@ashfordvb.fsnet.co.uk

Voluntary Organisations, Ashford Borough Council – **Simon Bannister** – 01233 330474 – simon.bannister@ashford.gov.uk



Cyril Bishop

Facts and figures

- Serves an average 12 bowls of soup a week for the past 20 years - 12,480 bowls of soup!
- There are three volunteers on duty to help Cyril and Shirley.
- Cyril reckons over 100 different people have helped over the past 20 years.
- These volunteers give up around three hours of their time a week.
- 9,360 hours dedicated to the soup kitchen over 20 years – not including Cyril and Shirley's time.

The Ashford soup kitchen takes place every Thursday night from 7pm at the Centrepiece Methodist Church on Bank Street, Ashford.

It is set-up and run under the 'Churches Together' banner, an Ashford partnership between all the churches in the borough.

Volunteers and donations are always welcome.



New Year, new Ashford

Ashford on track: 37 minutes to London in 2009

2009 will be a big year for Ashford. Despite concerns over the economy, there are plenty of reasons to be cheerful about Ashford.

High-speed in half the time

Next year will see the introduction of high-speed domestic rail services to London. The journey time to the capital will be halved to an amazing 37 minutes.



These fast services linking Kent to St Pancras will make Ashford even more attractive as a business location and a natural choice as a place to live. Ashford's location and outstanding communications

links has led many to believe that it is better placed than other towns to weather the economic downturn.

In support of the growing interest in the area, millions of pounds of Government funding are being directly invested in the town to provide improved retail, leisure, commercial and transport facilities. As a result, interest from developers remains keen.

New jobs, new opportunities

More than 1,000 new jobs were created in the past year, providing a further boost to the town's economy. What's more, the opportunity to train in highly-skilled sectors is also on the rise.

Hitachi, which opened its state-of-the-art train maintenance centre in October 2007, is just one employer giving the town's school and college leavers the chance to join an apprenticeship scheme.



Space in high demand

Significant private sector investment continues at the Eureka Business Park, where the first phase of new office accommodation is 97% let. A further high quality new office building (the Herald) is nearing completion and has already attracted strong interest.



As an added boost, retail giant Waitrose (part of the John Lewis Group) is to create 140 jobs at its new 15,000 sq ft store opening in 2009 in Repton Park.

These distinctive commercial developments are excellent news for Ashford and confirm the town's appeal to developers and potential residents alike.

They also help meet the needs of an expanding and aspiring local population by providing first class facilities and significant new career opportunities.

It's easy to see why Ashford is on track for 2009



How will Ashford benefit from high-speed services?

Fast speed: "This will strengthen Ashford's position as a business destination and will enable many of the park's businesses to travel to London much more quickly. It will also make Ashford more desirable for current London workers." **Tristram Gethin, Director at Quadrant Estates and developer of Eureka Park.**

New people: "Not only will the new service benefit existing businesses and residents but it will help to attract many young people and families down to Ashford where they can improve their quality of life." **Jo Richards, Marketing and Corporate Manager, Hillreed Homes**

Bright future: "This gives the town unequalled advantages in business development. Ashford will be able to look forward to a prosperous future." **Jo James, Chief Executive, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce**

Business friendly: "This offers a great 'plus factor' in the expansion of Ashford. People will want to relocate here because of the link, which means greater footfall and, more importantly, greater opportunities for local businesses." **Viv Kenny, Town Centre Partnership Co-ordinator**



International Ashford

As Ashford continues to grow and prosper, so does its International Association.

We review their open day which celebrated and promoted the many different cultures in our borough.

From Kurdish folk dance classes to African fashion shows, Chinese New Year celebrations and Gurkha parades for Remembrance Sunday, Ashford is becoming a truly international melting pot for cultural events.

The International Association represents a collection of up to nine ethnic groups. And according to Jennifer Fothergill from the Ashford Integration Project, 'social cohesion' is more than just a popular buzzword; it represents a network of volunteers which plays an important role in the social fabric of Ashford.



Helen Lee, pictured third from left, writes the monthly newsletter for the Ashford International Chinese Association:



Our association began life as a social gathering, but our group now has over 100 members, of all ages, meeting weekly. We encourage our members to gain the trust and confidence to go out and interact with the wider Ashford community.

The Sagarmatha Gurkha & Nepalese Community have very clear objectives for their group. Gomba Sherpa is the current chairman:

We want to promote understanding and goodwill to all communities in Ashford. We often hold presentations and talks for schools and community groups, such as the Scouts. Local activities, like the Ashford Carnival and 'Around the World Festival', are an important way for us to help get our message across and raise awareness of our culture.

Shafi Khan, pictured far right, is a founder member with Ashford Asian Society:



Like many other groups, we are a voluntary organisation and rely on donations to help us to meet our aims of promoting cultural and charitable programmes for the benefit of residents in Ashford and surrounding areas.

Simon Bannister, Neighbourhood Development Officer at Ashford Borough Council, works closely with our many different cultural groups:

The support from SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) in housing the Ashford Community Network at International House, as well as the continued partnership of Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council, is critical to the success of the Ashford Community Network. It allows us to work with the ethnic and cultural groups and assist with their communication and integration.

Further information about the voluntary sector

Ashford has more than 850 organisations, mostly charities, providing over £150 million worth of services each year, with over 12,000 people volunteering at least once a month.

Ashford Borough Council
 Email: simon.bannister@ashford.gov.uk
 Website: www.ashford.gov.uk
 Tel: 01233 330474

Ashford Integration Project (Kent Refugee Action Network)
 Email: jen@kran.org.uk
 Tel: 07970 590476

Cultural Groups

Ashford International Chinese Association

Tel: 01233 620668
 Email: aica@hotmail.co.uk

Sagarmatha Gurkha & Nepalese Community

Tel: 07854 030165
 Website: www.gurkhacommunityashford.co.uk

Gaxmudian Association

Tel: 0845 426 9697
 Email: gaxmud@aol.co.uk

Ashford Asian Society

Tel: 01233 622286
 Website: www.ashfordasiansociety.co.uk

Kent Black & Minority Ethnic Network

Tel: 07967 108728
 Email: shafikhan686@hotmail.com

Ashford Malayalee Association

Tel: 01233 630922
 Email: ama.ashford@yahoo.co.uk

Bells of Revival

Tel: 01233 631361
 Email: rmangula@aol.com

Azayca and Blade Entertainment

Tel: 01233 636022
 Email: azayca@hotmaillive.co.uk



A: Photos by Patrick Singmin - psingmin@gmail.com B: Photos by Brian Marsh

What's on

Find out more about other local events on www.ashford.gov.uk/events

Orchestra Cache Salsa Band

Saturday 13 December

Equator presents the Orchestra Cache Salsa Band with an evening of pure, red-hot salsa! Celebrate the start of the festive season with a high-energy salsa evening. Cache is lead by Cuban singer Felix Gonzalez, a born entertainer.

Tickets: Ashford Tourist Information Centre

Call: 01233 629165

www.shivanova.com

Brake Hall, Ashford School, East Hill, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8PB

Looking forward to December

Weald of Kent Art Group Christmas Exhibition

Monday 1 to Sunday 7 December
Call: 01580 241904



Ashford Music Society: Alec Frank-Gemmill live at Norton Knatchbull School
Monday 8 December
Call: 01233 623700

Ashford Choral Society: Handel Messiah, Wye Church
Saturday 13 December
Call: 01233 622081

Ashford Music Society

Amy Dickson and Catherine Milledge

Monday 9 February

Amy Dickson made her concerto debut in Australia at the age of 16 and soon embarked on an international career as a soloist. Amy has won many international competitions, and was the first saxophonist to win the Gold Medal of the Royal Overseas League Competition. The varied programme will include works by Milhaud, Rachmaninov, James MacMillan and George Gershwin.

Tickets: £10 (adult); £3 (child under 16)

Brenda McCormack, Macatbumbles@aol.com, 01233 622971

The Norton Knatchbull School, Hythe Road, Ashford, TN24 0QJ

The Frith Piano Quartet

Monday 16 March

This Quartet was formed in 2001 by four talented soloists who also enjoy playing chamber music with like-minded colleagues. When they come to Ashford they will play piano quartets by Mozart, Walton and Mendelssohn – it should prove to be a great finale to the 2008/9 season.

Tickets: £10 (adult); £3 (child under 16)

The Norton Knatchbull School, Hythe Road, Ashford, TN24 0QJ



Keep the children entertained through the school holidays at the Active Leisure Trust Academy. Morning, afternoon or all-day sessions are available.

Stour Centre (01233 663505)

Christmas holidays – events for kids:

December

- 11 – Arts & Crafts
- 23 – Christmas party
- 29 – Sportswall and dance mats
- 30 – New Years fit fun challenge

February half-term – events for kids:

- 16 – Super swim special (over 8s only)
- 17 – T-shirt design centre
- 18 – Sportswall and dance mats
- 19 – Funky frames
- 20 – Splash time workout (over 8s only)

Julie Rose Stadium (01233 613131)

December

- 22 – Arts and crafts
- 23 – Christmas party
- 29 – Julie Rose Stadium has talent!
- 30 – New Year's fit fun challenge

February half-term

- 16 – T-shirt design centre
- 17 – Fit fun
- 18 – Funky frames
- 19 – In2athletics
- 20 – Street dance

Before you go

Saturday 13 December and Sunday 14 December

A new collaboration between artists Gerard Bell, Lucy Cash and Katie Hims. This show is for an audience of twelve and lasts for 50 mins. (Venue to be confirmed)

3.00pm and 5.00pm

Tickets: Ashford Tourist Information Centre

Call: 01233 629165

Get your Skates on this Christmas... and head for Ashford's town centre

If you're looking to entertain the family, grab a bargain for Christmas - or just enjoy the festive season for some fun - Ashford town centre won't disappoint.

Invicta FM Ice World brings sparkle to the town

Friday 14 November to Friday 4 January

Invicta FM brings Ice World to the town centre at Charter House this year. Open from 4.00pm - 10.00pm weekdays and 10.00am - 10.00pm weekends. From 17 December it will be open 10.00am to 10.00pm everyday. Costs £6.95 per person per hour including skate hire. Listen to Invicta FM for details of competitions and special outside broadcasts.

Christmas carols

Saturday 6 December
11.00am and 4.00pm

Local community choirs and bands will take to County Square's malls, providing a super-sized dose of festive cheer.

Festive frolics and Bjorn the bear

Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 December
11.00pm - 4.00pm

High jinks and festive frolics come to County Square this weekend. Check Bjorn's appearance times on www.countysquashoppingcentre.com



Santa's little helpers come to town

Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 December

Need some help with your shopping? County Square has a bevy of beautiful helpers on hand to wrap your gifts* and provide shopping inspiration. On Saturday enjoy performances by burlesque girl band Adora and fifties-inspired Doo Wop Dolls. On Sunday stop and listen to the HB Soul Gospel Choir and the HV Singers. For more details visit www.countysquashoppingcentre.com

* Small charge for wrapping service to cover the cost of materials. Any profits will be donated to Demelza House Children's Hospice.

Smarden's Christmas party: an evening of madness with 'One Step Behind'

Saturday 20 December, 7.30 pm

Tickets: £12.50 (Smarden Post Office)

Call: 01233 770628

Smarden Charter Hall, Smarden, Nr. Ashford

A magical Christmas at the Rare Breeds Centre

Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 December
Thursday 18 to Tuesday 23 December

Tickets: £7 (adult); £9 (children – includes gift); £5 (under 3s) **Call: 01233 861493** **Booking essential**

Meet Santa in his NEW Winter Wonderland Woodland Grotto, hear his stories, meet his reindeer and collect your special present! Have fun joining in with the 'One Man' Pantomime performances! Try to find Santa's postbox and leave your Christmas list in his fairytale starlit maze! Plus, 'Meet the Animals' and 'Creepy Crawlies'. And for mum's and dad's there are mince pies and mulled wine.

Port Lympne Wildlife Park

Boxing Day walk and New Year's Day safari

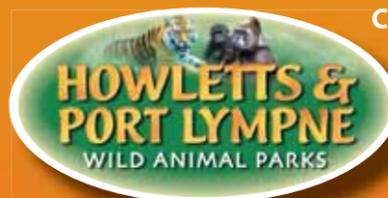
Friday 26 December, 10.00am and 12 noon

Tickets: £12 (adult); £9 (children, under 4s free)

Call: 01303 264 647

Bookings: In advance, groups of 6 or more will get a £2 discount per person

Go on a guided winter walk through the park or a special safari around the 60 acre reserve where zebra and giraffe roam free. A guide will be on hand to answer any questions about the animal and the conservation work. Plus, enjoy a complimentary cup of soup to warm you up in the conservatory restaurant. The walk and safari last approximately 90 minutes and you will be free to spend the rest of the day in the park.



Christmas enrichment workshop

10.00am and 12 noon. Dates on request.

Tickets: £12 (adult); £9 (children, under 4s free)

Call: 01303 264 647

Bookings: In advance, groups of 6 or more will get a £2 discount per person

Help make the animals a Christmas present! The enrichment centre will be running workshops over the festive season. You will be able to make a special present for one of our animals and then see it put in the enclosure. Workshops will last approximately one hour. You will then be free to roam the park at your leisure for the rest of the day.

Your council

Decent homes for vulnerable people

Do you receive a means tested benefit, such as Council Tax Benefit, Child or Working Tax Credit, or Pension Credit? Are you disabled and receiving Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance? If so, you could be eligible to apply for a grant to help improve your property.

Ashford Borough Council will be providing an estimated £1million in grants to improve homes in the area, with initiatives covering everything from energy efficiency to major and general repairs.

Owner-occupiers, first-time buyers, and private sector landlords and their tenants are the main groups that this funding is aimed at helping.

To find out more please call the **Private Sector Housing Team** on **01233 330220**.

Housing Strategy

Following a rigorous consultation process, the council's vision for local housing has now been adopted for the next three years.

The 'Housing Strategy' sets priorities for action until 2011, working in partnership with other organisations to help ensure that all residents in the borough have access to a suitable home and related support services.

You can view the document online at www.ashford.gov.uk/housingstrategy. Alternatively, you can request a copy by calling **01233 330688**.



Homelessness

If you are worried about homelessness and need help, contact **Ashford Borough Council's Housing Team** on **01233 330688** or visit www.ashford.gov.uk to find out what help is available. If you're calling outside of normal office hours, please ring **01233 629911**.

Samaritans

Samaritans is available 24 hours a day to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

You can visit the local branch of Samaritans at:

22 Queen St
Ashford
Kent
TN23 1RG
Telephone: 01233 610000
www.samaritans.org/ashford

You can also call the national helpline on **08457 90 90 90** or go to their website, www.samaritans.org

Community Safety Partnership

The 'Community Safety Partnership', a group made up of representatives from Ashford Borough and Kent County Councils, Police, Fire and the Primary Care Trust (NHS), have completed work on the document that provides the framework to achieving a safer society.

The strategy for 2008 – 2011 includes a tactical delivery plan that sets out four key objectives:

- Safer socialising at night time
- Reducing the level of domestic abuse
- Tackling criminal damage
- Measures for anti-social behaviour.

You can view or download a copy at www.ashford.gov.uk/communitysafety

Recycling

There are facilities available throughout the borough to recycle most materials. For more information, and to find a recycling centre near you, please visit www.ashford.gov.uk/recycling

This is the place to go to recycle trees, and any other green waste.

Cobbs Wood Industrial Estate
Brunswick Road
Ashford
Kent
TN23 1EL



Opening Hours:
Monday to Saturday: 08:00 - 16:30
Sunday and Bank Holidays: 09:00 - 16:00
Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day.

Licensing

A quick reminder to all those planning New Year's Eve events for the public or with a view to making money. If your event involves music, dancing or the sale of alcohol remember the last date you can submit a Temporary Event Notice is Friday 12 December. If you need any advice please contact the **Licensing Section** on **01233 330578**.

Don't miss the last post this Christmas

Royal Mail's recommended last posting dates for the UK are:

2nd Class – Thursday 18 December
1st Class – Saturday 20 December

For other services, including Parcelforce and worldwide distribution, please visit the Royal Mail website for more information, www.royalmail.com



In an emergency

The chances of being caught up in a major emergency or disaster are small but what should you do in such a situation?

Your common sense and instincts will usually tell you what to do. However, it is important to:

- Make sure 999 has been called if people are injured or if there is a threat to life
- Not put yourself in danger
- Follow the advice of the emergency services
- Remain calm and think before acting. Try to reassure others
- Check for injuries – remember to help yourself before attempting to help others
- Check on vulnerable neighbours who may need your assistance or tell the emergency services who they are.

If you are not involved in the incident, but are close by or believe you may be in danger, in most cases the advice is to:

- Go inside a safe building
- Stay inside until you are advised to do otherwise
- Tune in to local radio or TV for more information.

Of course, there will be exceptional situations when you should not 'go in' to a building, for example if there is a fire. Otherwise: **GO IN, STAY IN, TUNE IN.**

For more information on what to do in an emergency, visit www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk.



Get in touch

How to contact Ashford Borough Council

Telephone	01233 331111 8.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Thursday 8.30am – 5.00pm Friday
Typetalk	01233 330744
Out of Hours/Emergency	01233 629911
24 hour Payment Line	01233 330625
Fax	01233 645654
Email	customer.care@ashford.gov.uk
Online	www.ashford.gov.uk
Post	Ashford Borough Council Civic Centre, Tannery Lane Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL
Visit	Customer Contact Centre, Civic Centre 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Thursday 9.00am – 4.30pm Friday
Out and about	Ashford Gateway, 19 Park Mall, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8RY Tel: 0845 8 247 247 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm Saturday Tenterden Gateway, 2 Manor Row, Tenterden, Kent, TN30 6HP Tel: 01580 762558 9.00am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm Saturday Gateway online Email: info@ashfordgateway.co.uk Online: www.ashfordgateway.co.uk

Council services and useful information

Kent County Council	
Website	www.kent.gov.uk
24 Hour Helpline	0845 8 247 247
Environment & Waste	0845 8 247 600
Highways and Transport	0845 8 247 800 <i>(including roadworks, pot holes and street lighting)</i>
Kent Libraries	01622 671411
Social Care & Health	0845 8 247 100
Trading Standards	01622 221012
Emergency Services <i>If it's an emergency dial 999, otherwise, use the numbers below:</i>	
Kent Police (Ashford & Tenterden)	01303 850055
Community Safety Unit	01233 660747
William Harvey Hospital	01233 633331
Leisure & Tourism	
Stour Centre	01233 663503
Julie Rose Stadium	01233 613131
Kingsnorth Recreation Centre	01233 503846
Ashford Tourist Information Centre	01233 629165
Courtside & Ashford Mini Soccer	01233 896511
Other useful phone numbers	
Ashford's Future	01233 330812
Citizens Advice Bureau	01233 626185
Environment Agency <i>(polluted ditches and watercourses)</i>	0870 8 506506
Fraudline (benefit fraud)	0800 026 2456

Christmas and New Year opening hours Normal hours apply unless stated below.

Civic Centre	Tenterden Gateway	Ashford Gateway
Wednesday 24th December: <i>Closed</i>	Wednesday 24th December: 9.00am – 12.30pm	Wednesday 24th December: <i>Closed</i>
Thursday 25th December: <i>Closed</i>	Thursday 25th December: <i>Closed</i>	Thursday 25th December: <i>Closed</i>
Friday 26th December: <i>Closed</i>	Friday 26th December: <i>Closed</i>	Friday 26th December: <i>Closed</i>
Wednesday 31st December: <i>Civic Centre open as usual, telephone lines close at 5.00pm</i>	Wednesday 31st December: <i>Closes at 4.00pm</i>	Thursday 1st January: <i>Closed</i>
Thursday 1st January: <i>Closed</i>	Thursday 1st January: <i>Closed</i>	

Ashford Borough Council Committee Meeting Dates

December	Monday 22nd - Overview & Scrutiny	February
Tuesday 2nd - Overview & Scrutiny	January	Tuesday 3rd - Audit
Wednesday 3rd - Audit	Thursday 8th - Executive	Wednesday 4th - Planning
Thursday 11th - Executive	Wednesday 14th - Planning	Thursday 5th - Executive
Tuesday 16th - Joint Transportation Board	Tuesday 20th - Overview & Scrutiny	Tuesday 17th - Overview & Scrutiny
Wednesday 17th - Planning Committee		Thursday 19th - Council
Thursday 18th - Council		Wednesday 25th - Planning

Competitions

Win £150 to spend at County Square!

New Year, fancy a new you? So how about splashing some free cash in the January sales? At County Square there are more than 50 stores to find that must-have bargain.



Whether it's fashion from M&S, Debenhams, Next or River Island; toys from Hawkins Bazaar and ELC; or a great deal on your summer holiday from First Choice and Thomas Cook, you're sure to find that something special.

And to help you kick-start 2009 in style, we're offering £150 of County Square shopping vouchers to spend in January.

Find out more and visit www.countysquashoppingcentre.com

To win, simply answer the question, fill out the form and return it to: **County Square Competition, Ashford Voice, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL.** Closing Date: 31 December 2008

Q Find something perfect for you from a choice of how many stores at County Square?

A
A: 0-25 stores
B: 25-50 stores
C: 50+ stores

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Postcode: Tel No:

Email:

Tick if you wish to receive further information from Ashford Borough Council and partners involved in the plans for Ashford's Future.

Q What date is St Valentine's Day?

A

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Postcode: Tel No:

Email:

Tick if you wish to receive further information from Ashford Borough Council and partners involved in the plans for Ashford's Future.

Celebrate at lovely Elvey Farm

Love is in the air this Valentine's Day, and to help you romance your loved one you could win a three-course meal and bottle of house wine at the Kentish farmhouse restaurant, Elvey Farm, Pluckley on any Wednesday or Thursday in February 2009.

Find out more and visit www.elveyfarm.co.uk

To enter, answer the question, fill out the form and return it to: **Elvey Farm Competition, Ashford Voice, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL.**

Closing Date: 11 January 2009



Free prize draw: membership at Ashford Leisure Trust

Get fit for 2009 and get a year's free membership for one at each of our sites in Ashford. This includes full use of the gym, group fitness classes, swimming during public opening times at the Stour Centre, the running track at the Julie Rose Stadium all for free, plus discounts off various other activities.



To be in with a chance, simply fill out the form and return it to: **Ashford Voice, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL.**

Closing Date: 31 December 2008

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Postcode: Tel No:

Email:

Tick if you wish to receive further information from Ashford Borough Council and partners involved in the plans for Ashford's Future.