

Town October 07



# Borough Update

Your Maidstone Borough Council Newsletter



see page 3  
for a chance to win  
a £250 luxury  
Christmas Hamper

## Encouraging wildlife in our parks and open spaces

Picture by Kevin Duvall. Taken at Kent Wildlife Trust's Marden Meadow Reserve.

### Free bulky rubbish service

Maidstone council refuse lorries are out most weekends collecting bulky household rubbish from locations in your area. Take your refuse to the Weekend Freighter Service at the times shown:

#### Saturday 27th October

1015 - 1100 Barming. Abingdon Road  
1315 - 1515 Shepway. Westmorland Road  
1400 - 1515 Town Centre. County Road

#### Sunday 28th October

1500 - 1530 Park Wood. Park Wood Parade  
1530 - 1600 Park Wood. Bicknor Road

#### Saturday 3rd November

0745 - 0845 Barming. Green Way  
0900 - 1000 Bower Mount Road  
1015 - 1115 Lower Road. Foster Clark Estate  
1130 - 1230 Loose. Lancel Lane  
1315 - 1515 Loose. Broadoak Avenue  
0745 - 0845 Buckland Road  
0900 - 1100 Queens Road  
1115 - 1215 Fant. Hackney Road  
1300 - 1515 Barming. Springwood Road

#### Sunday 4th November

1500 - 1600 Shepway. Northumberland Road  
1615 - 1715 Shepway. Nottingham Avenue

#### Saturday 10th November

0745 - 0845 Barming. Terminus Road  
0900 - 1100 Penenden Heath. Woodcut  
1115 - 1215 Penenden Heath. Heathfield Road

#### Sunday 18th November

1000 - 1100 Victoria Street. By the allotments  
1115 - 1215 Ringlestone. Calder Road  
1300 - 1445 Ringlestone. Moncktons Avenue  
1615 - 1715 Allington. Trevor Drive

#### Saturday 24th November

0745 - 0845 South Park Road.  
0915 - 1015 Park Wood. Lockham Farm Avenue  
1030 - 1115 Park Wood. Wallis Avenue  
1315 - 1415 Shepway. Highland Road  
1430 - 1515 Park Wood. Queen Elizabeth Square

#### Sunday 25th November

1400 - 1500 Allington. Newbury Avenue

#### Saturday 1st December

0745 - 0845 Loose. Linton Road  
0900 - 1030 Loose. Anglesey Avenue  
1045 - 1200 Loose. Broadfield Road  
1245 - 1345 Tovil. Brenchley Road  
1400 - 1515 Tovil. Forest Hill

#### Saturday 8th December

1100 - 1200 Mangravet. Grove Road  
1215 - 1315 Mangravet. Woodside Road  
0915 - 1015 Park Avenue.

#### Sunday 9th December

1000 - 1145 Allington. Newbury Avenue

The household waste recycling centre at Burial Ground Lane, Tovil, Maidstone is open Monday to Saturday, 8am to 4.30pm, and Sunday and Bank Holidays, 9am to 4pm.

For more information about our bulky rubbish services, including paid for doorstep collections, visit [digitalmaidstone.co.uk](http://digitalmaidstone.co.uk) or call the cleansing hotline on 01622 602162



## Satisfaction with Maidstone on the up

The latest national survey of England's citizens has shown over 60% of Maidstone's residents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the borough council. This was one of the highest figures in Kent and puts the council amongst the top authorities in the country when compared to bigger county and unitary councils. Maidstone's current score of 61% is up six points from the last survey in 2003.

The latest survey shows that satisfaction with:

- Cleanliness is up to 75%;
- Planning is up to 70%;
- Waste collection is at 88%;
- Parks and open spaces is at 76%; and,
- Benefits is up to 78%.

The result also mirrors the views of other external assessors following on from the Audit Commission's 'Excellent' judgement in 2004. Recent inspection reports have recognised that 'the council has strongly improved its performance against its strategic priorities over the last year' and 'is taking significant steps to improve its value for money for residents.' Satisfaction with the handling of complaints was still lower, even though it had improved since the last national survey in 2003.

The council is not complacent and will be looking at all the comments that were made to identify where there is room for improvement. The Leader of the council, Cllr Fran Wilson, said: "The latest survey results are positive for the council and show that we are getting better across the borough. We want to provide quality public services for residents and it is good that people generally recognise what and how well the borough council is delivering. It also reflects the hard work of all our staff and councillors that has gone on since the last survey in 2003 and which we will continue."

Borough Update is produced up to six times a year in the Downs Mail newspaper. It is written, edited and designed by the council's communications team, London House, 5-11 London Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8HR. Email: [pr@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:pr@maidstone.gov.uk).

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. It is typeset by DesignZero6 and printed by Uckfield Press.

If you are visually impaired and would like the newsletter text in large print, please call us on 01622 602807, and we will be happy to send you a copy.



Council Leader Fran Wilson

## Help set our budget

Maidstone Borough Council is asking for your help to plan next year's budget. "This year we want residents to become involved in the budget and make their priorities known"; said Fran Wilson, Leader of the Council.

"It is always difficult to maintain and improve the services the public want against a background of cuts in government grants. We have decided to provide extra recycling services so we expect to have to make some big savings in council spending," she said.

A lot of the information from central government will not be available until later in the year but the Cabinet has decided it must plan to make budget cuts of £1.5 million.

It hasn't decided where to find the savings or if to invest in improvements to services, other than recycling, and that's why the Cabinet wants to involve Maidstone residents.

A new online budget planner will allow everyone to work out their own ideal council budget for 2008-09. The budget simulator will be available for residents to use on home PCs or elsewhere.

Fran Wilson explains: "Residents will be able to complete the budget simulator at home or at their library or council reception. We'll be going out to talk to our partners and residents throughout October and early November to find out everyone's preferences for next year's budget."

The budget planner allows you to find out about different areas of the council's work and how much it costs. You can then decide how you would allocate the money across the services for next year by reducing or increasing the budget.

The simulator shouldn't take more than a few minutes to complete. The results will be used to inform the council's budget and spending priorities for next year.

## Be a good sport

Do you know a young person who has done something special in the world of sport? Then why not nominate them for one of the borough council's Youth Sport Achievement Awards?



The annual awards recognise

sporting efforts and achievements – and you don't have to break a world record to qualify. Judges will also be looking for young people who have shown a positive attitude to sport.

Schools, clubs, parents and friends have until the end of November to nominate teams, clubs or individuals.

Call 01622 602222 or email [sportsandplay@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:sportsandplay@maidstone.gov.uk) for a nomination form.

Everyone who completes Budget Simulator on the council's website – [www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk](http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk) - or who writes to Fran Wilson, Maidstone Borough Council, 5-11 London Road, Maidstone ME16 8HR will be entered into a free draw to win a Marks and Spencer Christmas hamper, worth £250, or one of two runners up prizes, courtesy of the Mall Chequers, Maidstone.

The winners will be drawn by Fran Wilson from all those who enter by Monday 5 November. The hamper will be delivered to the winner in time for Christmas.



One entry per Maidstone Borough resident – Not open to Maidstone councillors or council employees.

## On our way to becoming carbon neutral

Maidstone Borough Council is working hard to become carbon neutral by 2010. Over the last few years we have made big strides as far as conservation and sustainability go:

- Reducing the use of fossil fuels for our vehicles and the heating and cooling of our buildings;
- Using electricity from sustainable suppliers;
- The Leader of the Council, Cllr Fran Wilson, is a champion for climate change and will lead initiatives both locally and across Kent;
- We have worked with young people across the borough and have given them a 'Primrose Promise' – every primary school child was promised that by the time they reached secondary school, Maidstone would be carbon neutral; and,
- We have developed a strategy which takes on board the views of local people, organisations, businesses and environmental agencies.

For more information contact Jim Boot on 01622 602246 or email [jimboot@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:jimboot@maidstone.gov.uk)



## Bird boxes

Owls, Crows and Jackdaws could soon be a common sight in the borough again, under a new

scheme to introduce bird boxes in the town's parks and open spaces. Maidstone council and the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership will be installing bird boxes, made by Maidstone prisoners, to attract larger birds at sites such as - Archbishop's Palace Gardens, Brenchley Gardens, Clare Park, Cornwallis Park, Mote Park, Penenden Heath, River Len Local Nature Reserve, Shaw Close open space, South Park and Whatman Park.

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So close  
but yet  
so far...



▲ It may seem a long way to come just to walk the dog, but Socks appreciates his trip to the park from Gillingham. His companions Jeremy Hyde and Georgina Hopson clearly believe that Mote Park is special enough to justify the journey.

► This youngster is just 18 months old but already knows that Mote Park is the only place to feed the ducks – or geese in this case! Mum Ilse brings him over from home in Boughton Monchelsea to meet his feathered friends and then play in the park.

Looked at on a map, Mote Park is about as close to Maidstone's bustling town centre as any self-respecting green space would want to get. Drive through the gates, though, and you could be a hundred miles or more from traffic, shops, people and crowds.

Set around a sheltered, 30-acre lake, Mote Park is a calm and tranquil green space that offers a perfect opportunity to relax, unwind and enjoy the scenery.

At the same time, the Maidstone Council-run facility offers a huge range of activities, from the controlled aggression of rugby at one end of the scale via a leisurely round of pitch and putt to the even more serene hobby of sailing model boats – or perhaps even rowing your own.

A late summer's afternoon in the park reveals the wide range of people who have discovered this secret haven so close to, and yet so far from, the county town.

Boys on bikes on their way home from Maidstone Grammar School pedal past mums pushing babies in buggies, while afternoon runners knock off a few miles in traffic-free scenery.

Families feed the ducks on the lake and then stroll through to the nearby play area for a ride on the swings, leaving optimistic anglers sitting in the sunshine waiting for that bite.



Dog walkers stop for a chat or admire the graceful model boats gliding across the water, controlled from the bank by electronic wizardry; in the distance a lone paddler enjoys his solitude in the centre of the lake, disturbed only by the odd well-fed duck.

The 18-hole pitch and putt course is popular, while on Sundays and bank holidays throughout the summer visitors can enjoy a ride on the model train operated by the Maidstone Model Engineering Club.

Mote Park is home to Maidstone's popular leisure centre, but swimmers and other visitors who don't take the time to walk the short way from the centre past the children's play area and into the rest of the park are missing a treat.

The landscape of the park owes much to the hard work of Glendale staff who look after the 478 acres of grass and trees.

Before many of us have silenced our alarm clocks, Contracts Foreman Chris Wooding and his band of three park workers are up and about looking after the park.

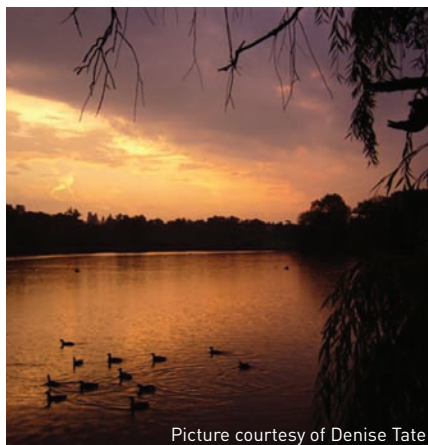
Tackling litter is one of their biggest tasks, while grass-cutting and tending the football and rugby pitches keep them especially busy throughout the summer, but for Chris and his long-serving team it is a matter of pride to make sure the park stays in tip-top condition.

It is a labour of love that is repaid by the enjoyment that this oasis of peace gives to the thousands of people who walk the banks of the lake, find a quiet spot to sit and read a book in the sunshine, pursue their hobby or meet up with friends.

Mote Park is also home to the Mote Cricket Club and hosts Kent County cricket matches, while the Cafe in the Park is on hand to provide refreshment to walkers, cyclists, mums, anglers, pitch and putt enthusiasts, joggers, students, model boat sailors, toddlers, engineers and the many others who have discovered the delights of Mote Park...



▲ What better place to catch up on some reading in the sunshine than Mote Park. Student Vita Pesecka is studying English and loves the peace and quiet of the park.



Picture courtesy of Denise Tate

▲ One had just got away – or at any rate been emptied from the keep net back into the cool of the lake - when our photographer caught up with Louis Buels from Barming.

Now semi-retired, Louis got back into fresh water angling when he brought grandchildren Emile (8) and Jacob (10) to Mote Park to have a go. Like all youngsters they only lasted so long before heading off on their bikes – so Louis tried his luck with a whip and immediately landed an 8.5 lb bream!

"This is great fresh water fishing with plenty of bream and carp – and it's a fabulous place to sit and enjoy the sunshine," he said. And the grandchildren still enjoy it too.



▲ Harry Hunt is another park user who thinks nothing of travelling from his home in Brabourne, the other side of Ashford, to pursue his hobby in such pleasant surroundings.

**Mote Park has a thriving group of Friends whose aim is to protect and enhance this fabulous facility. To find out more about the Friends or to join and play your part, contact Maidstone Borough Council's Debra Collick on 01622 602191.**

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### Good news for Mews alleyway



An alleyway filled with litter, broken furniture and other rubbish has been tackled by Maidstone Borough Council, after land owners ignored an enforcement order.

The Mews alleyway off the High Street, owned by the Town and Country Housing Group, has been a long term problem area creating an eyesore for passing shoppers, residents and businesses.

After several attempts with the local Multi Agency Partnership Group to come to an informal agreement with the land owner, Maidstone Council issued the Town and Country Housing Group with an enforcement order to clean up the alleyway and keep it tidy in future.



However the order was ignored and after 28 days Maidstone Council took matters into its own hands and had the alleyway cleared. All costs will be recharged to the Town and Country Housing Group.

The alleyway will be monitored and any further works carried out will be charged to the land owner.



### £40k boost for youth forum

Maidstone Youth Forum is celebrating news of a £40,000 grant towards a town centre youth venue.

It has been working hard to raise money for a youth café and with the £40,000 grant from the Government's Youth Capital Fund, administered by KCC, it now has a total of £55,000. To find out more visit - [www.maidstoneyouthforum.com](http://www.maidstoneyouthforum.com) - or contact the Community Development Officer at Maidstone Borough Council, Julia Fraser, on 01622 602795.

### Cleaner Safer Greener

Maidstone Borough Council is teaming up with Mid Kent Police and Maidstone Housing Trust to tackle anti social behaviour.

It is part of a new campaign to create cleaner, safer, greener neighbourhoods that communities can enjoy. Environmental crime and anti social behaviour will not be tolerated.

Multi-agency teams will work to deal with things such as fly tipping, abandoned cars and graffiti, as well as talking to residents and local councillors about what they think and how they would like to see the area improved.

### Call for costumes

From feather boas to riding gloves and men's ties to French berets, Maidstone Museum needs your help! The museum is looking for items for the popular Dressing Rooms area of the Costume Gallery, and needs adult costumes, accessories and jewellery. If you would like to donate items that portray a period in time and are in good condition, contact Fiona Woolley at Maidstone Museum on 01622 602838.

## Wetherspoons – Setting the standard for recycling

One of Britain's leading pub chains, JDWetherspoons, is setting the standard for recycling and sustainability.

Their two pubs in Maidstone – Society Rooms in Week Street and Muggletons in the High Street – both contribute to the amazing record that the company achieved over recent years. Successes include:

- developing the first carbon-positive warehouse in Daventry;
- actively reducing the number of road miles made each year by delivering supplies and picking up recyclable materials in the same lorry;
- recycling around 45,000 litres of oil from water;
- recycling 2,800 tonnes of cardboard;
- 4,000 tonnes of cans and plastic bottles are recycled each year; and,
- recycling 20 tonnes of bubble wrap!



Tim Heathfield, Manager of the Society Rooms said:

“We all receive training about recycling and we encourage ideas to improve further.”

## Clean Sweep 2007 Help us in the fight against litter

Are you fed up of fly tipping? Irritated by litter? Tired of graffiti? Then why not join in our next borough-wide Clean Sweep and help tackle the problems in your area?

From Tuesday 30 October – Tuesday 11 December Captain Clean is organising an Autumn Clean Sweep, and is looking for volunteers to lend a hand. Individuals, residents associations, community groups and parish councils are all welcome to help, and whether you can spare an hour, a day or more your contribution will be much appreciated. We will supply you with litter picks, gloves, sacks and high visibility jackets.

If you or your organisation would like to take part please contact Captain Clean's team at Maidstone council on 01622 602281.



### Better ways to pay

**Direct debiting** It's easier to pay council tax and business rates by direct debit.

**E Citizen** View your council tax, business rates and benefits online any time, day or night at - [digitalmaidstone.co.uk](http://digitalmaidstone.co.uk). Follow the E Citizen links from the home page to register.

**E Billing** Soon you will be able to receive your bills electronically, reducing the amount of paper we use. Watch out for further updates in Borough Update, or call the council tax hotline to leave your details now.

**Council tax hotline - 01622 602003**

### Benefit cheats beware

The net is really closing in on benefit cheats and the public have had enough too. Last year there was a 30% increase in the number of cases reported for suspected fraud. As a result Maidstone council staff investigated more than 500 cases. Many benefit cheats had their benefits stopped or reduced and 52 people were prosecuted, paid a fixed penalty or received a formal caution.

Everyone who commits benefit fraud is made to pay back all the benefits they falsely claimed.

If you think someone is committing benefit fraud, don't stand for it, go to [digitalmaidstone.gov.uk](http://digitalmaidstone.gov.uk) or call the confidential hotline on 01622 602196.



### Fostering

Have you ever thought about fostering or wanted to adopt?

Foster carers and adopters can be from all walks of life, single, married or living with a partner, with or without children. They need to be healthy, have a real interest in helping children and able to offer a child a stable, secure life in a loving family.

Kent County Council is looking for caring people, who have a spare bedroom and are able to offer a home to older children. In particular they would like to hear from potential carers from black and minority ethnic communities.

The benefits include financial rewards and comprehensive training, along with supervision and professional support from a specialist social worker.

Many children in foster care need adoptive families. Parenting an adopted child is different to parenting a birth child. Whilst the love may feel the same, adoptive parents need extra knowledge and preparation to help a child understand their past. Many children need an adoptive family who can help them with their special educational or health needs. All need a family forever to help them cope with the past and live life to the full in the future.

The Adoption Service is holding an Open Day on Saturday 10 November at Oakwood House, Maidstone from 10am-4pm. Staff will be on hand to answer questions. You can also call 0845 330 2968 or visit [kentfostering.com](http://kentfostering.com) or [kentadoption.com](http://kentadoption.com) for more information.

# Hazlitt in the spotlight

## Dance of Ireland

Friday 19 October 7.30pm  
£15, £14 concs

## Hazlitt Youth Theatre Musical

Tuesday 23 to Saturday 27 October  
7.45pm

£6 to £12 (Pay What you can preview night on Tuesday 23 October)

## Pinocchio

Sunday 28 October 2.30pm  
£8.50, £6.50 concs, £25 family

## The Bacchic

Wednesday 31 October 8.00pm  
£10, £8 concs, £6 party

## Forces Sweethearts

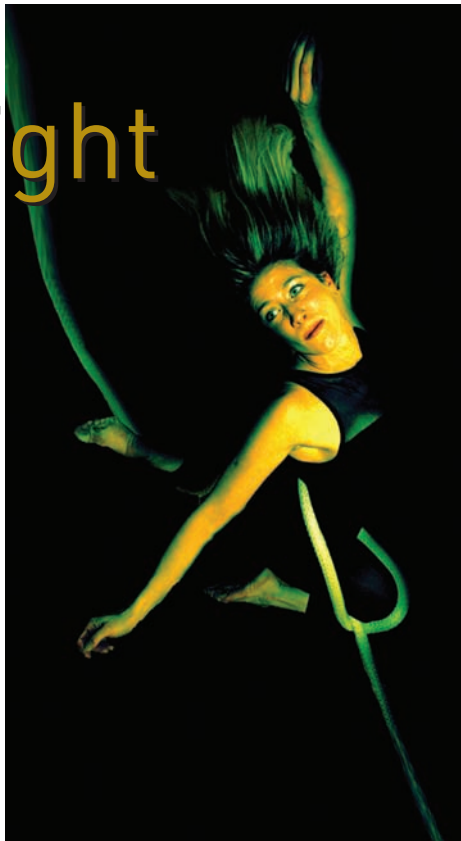
Wednesday 21 November 2.30pm  
£10, £9 concs

## Michael McIntyre

Thursday 22 November 7.30pm  
£12, £10 concs

## Holly at Christmas

Friday 21 December 7.30pm  
£14m £13 concs



**Maidstone Film Society** has started its season of thought-provoking films – pick up a brochure or ring the membership secretary 01622 672307.

**Book early for our fabulous, star-packed panto 'Sleeping Beauty'.**

Visit [hazlitttheatre.co.uk](http://hazlitttheatre.co.uk) or ring the box office on 01622 758611.

## Autumn activities at Maidstone Museum

### Contemporary Gypsy – A Local Response

An exciting and colourful photographic exhibition, celebrating the lives and traditions of three gypsy families in Kent, will run until 2 December. The exhibition features photographs and oral accounts from several local Gypsy families. Local schools also worked alongside a Gypsy artist to produce their own artistic responses to the lives of travellers, and art work by children from Detling, Westborough, Ulcombe and St. Mary's Laddingford Primary Schools complement the exhibition. Admission FREE.

### World War 1 and 2 Open Day

On Saturday 3 November from 10am to 3pm re-enactors and history groups will commemorate Remembrance Week. You can bring along your photographs and family items from these periods for experts to identify or explain. Children will be able to get 'hands on' with equipment and try on uniforms. This is a FREE event.

Storytelling, activities, arts and crafts abound during October and November – for details call 01622 602838 or visit [museum.maidstone.gov.uk](http://museum.maidstone.gov.uk)

## Council meetings online

Most council meetings will now be web-cast and can be viewed online at [digitalmaidstone.co.uk](http://digitalmaidstone.co.uk).

## Next meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Full Council will be at 6.30pm on Wednesday 12 December in the Council Chamber at Maidstone Town Hall. Residents can

present petitions and ask questions, if they give prior notice.

Council Leader, Fran Wilson, will report on current issues and the leaders of the other groups will respond. The leader, cabinet members and committee chairmen will also answer questions from councillors and the full council will debate and decide on the important business of the day.

## What's On!

Autumn Half Term Holiday Fun  
22-26 October  
Museum of Kent Life, Cobtree  
01622 763936

Henry's Horrid History  
22-28 October  
Leeds Castle  
01622 765400

Autumn Signs  
23 October  
Tyland Barn  
01622 662012

Family Fun Day  
25 October  
Tyland Barn  
01622 662012

Halloween Youth of Generation Gig  
26 October  
Mote Hall  
0797 6363761

The Halloween Experience  
27 October  
Museum of Kent Life, Cobtree  
01622 763936

Pumpkin Weekend  
27-28 October  
Garden Organic, Yalding  
01622 814650

Bonfire & Fireworks Spectacular  
3 November  
Museum of Kent Life, Cobtree  
01622 763936

Mythical Firework Spectacular  
3-4 November  
Leeds Castle  
01622 765400

Maidstone Choral Union  
– Autumn Concert  
10 November  
Mote Hall  
01622 204160

The Start of Christmas  
15 November  
Fremlin Walk  
01622 356280

Santa comes to Town  
17 November  
The Mall Chequers  
01622 691130

Festive Fair  
17-18 November  
Leeds Castle  
01622 765400

Christmas Lights Festival  
18 November  
Maidstone town centre  
01622 678777

Graham Clarke Studio Open  
24 November  
Up the Garden Studio, Boughton Monchelsea 01622 743938