

IN BUSINESS

NEWSLETTER
JAN/FEB
2004

Check our website for information: www.sevenoakschamber.com
E-mail: info@sevenoakschamber.com Tel: 01732 455188

January is the time for committing to paper all those good intentions, which you know, will improve your business.

Unfortunately, many New Year's resolutions are shelved before the January and February are over in favour of "business as usual", and the opportunity to make real improvements is lost. Don't let this happen again this year!

Here is a list of New Year's resolutions all small businesses should aim to adopt:

Get your tax return in on time. The chancellor gets his hands on enough of your hard-earned money –don't end up paying a fine as well.

If tax/VAT is going to strain your cash flow this year, ensure your budget for it next year. Open a designated deposit account and move cash into it regularly.

If tax returns are a problem, consider investing in a computer accounts program. Sage is the industry standard, but less costly and user-friendlier software is available.

Diversify - over reliance on a few major customers can leave you exposed if a client fails or simply changes buying patterns.

Go home! Over 50 per cent of business owners/managers say they would like to devote more time to their families and hobbies. Aim to get the work/life balance right.

CAR PARKING CHARGES REVIEWED

You may have read in the local newspaper that the District Council are reviewing its parking charges to come into effect on 1st April, 2004.

Charges will be increased in Blighs Meadow, Buckhurst, Suffolk Way and South Park. Long stay parking in Buckhurst 1 and Pembroke Road will be £3. Seasonal ticket charges are also included in the review. A new charge is being introduced for evening parking in the town centre car parks between 6.30pm and 9.30pm of £1.

Some on street charges are being introduced in areas such as Dartford Road, High Street, London Road and South Park and lower Hitchen Hatch Lane.

There will obviously be an impact on business and the Chamber would like your comments in readiness for the next Parking Review Group meeting. Either email or write to us with your views.

Client Alert

The recent use of e-mails as evidence in judicial proceedings, such as the Hutton inquiry, highlights the permanence of e-mails and the risk of using the technology without giving proper consideration to what is being written.

With the increase in the use of e-mails comes the potential for abuse: recent research has suggested that sending pornographic e-mails is now one of the three most common reasons given for dismissing employees. Employers can also be held legally liable for the content of their employees' e-mails. It is therefore, vital for employers to ensure that employees use e-mail and the internet responsibly, but can an employer monitor its employees' e-mails to check how their IT system is being used?

The Data Commissioner has recently published its guidance on monitoring in the workplace "The Data Protection Code on Employment Practices".

The Code

Part 3 of the code gives guidance to employers for complying with the Data Protection Act 1998(the "Act") in relation to monitoring at work.

The Code does not impose any new obligations upon an employer as a data controller but compliance with the Code is regarded as good practice." Personal Data" is broadly defined under the Act and any monitoring of e-mails is, therefore, likely to be seen as "processing" personal data under the Act.

If the monitoring will involve the processing of personal, or sensitive personal data, then certain principles of data protection should be complied with including ensuring that data is fairly and lawfully processed and only processed for limited purposes.

The Code suggest carrying out an" impact assessment" if e-mail monitoring is to be considered by an employer to see whether the monitoring envisaged will comply with the Act. An impact assessment would involve identifying clearly the purpose behind the monitoring arrangement and the benefits it is likely to deliver as well as considering whether there is likely to be any adverse impact on the rights of the employees.

If monitoring is considered justified, the business' employees will need to be given information concerning the nature of the monitoring. The Code stipulates that an employer should avoid opening e-mails, which appear to be private or personal in nature.

Legislation

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000(RIPA) prohibits interception of communications on a private telecommunications system without legal authority. The consent and acknowledgement by an employee that monitoring may take place is, therefore, crucial. The least that an employer should do is put in place a properly drafted e-mail and Internet policy explaining that monitoring will take place and get each of its employees to sign such a policy.

For further information on the above legislation please contact Warner's Solicitors
01732 770660

A Light hearted look at Women Drivers

Driving to the office this morning on the motorway looked over to my right and there was a woman in a brand new BMW doing 90 miles per hour with her face close to her rear view mirror putting on her eyeliner!

I looked away for a couple of seconds and when I looked back she was halfway over in my lane still working on that makeup!!

It scared me (I'm a man) so much that I dropped my electric shaver, which knocked the bacon roll out of my other hand. In all the confusion of trying to straighten out the car using my knees against the steering wheel, it knocked my mobile from my ear, which fell into the coffee between my legs, causing it to splash and burn me, causing me to scream, which made me drop the cigarette out of my mouth, ruined my shirt and DISCONNECTED AN IMPORTANT CALL

WOMEN DRIVERS!!!!!!!!!!!!

Archer Express Cleaners mark 30 years trading

Archer's Dry Cleaners in Sevenoaks is celebrating its third decade in business.

They first opened in Sevenoaks in 1974.

To mark the special occasion it is offering a 30% discount on various items, from school uniforms to curtains, throughout the anniversary year.

Ahmet Satrettin, took over the company from his uncle explained

"We have lasted this long because of the service we offer and the complete clothes care we provide. If it is physically possible we will do it. We are one of the longest established companies here in the High Street and probably one of 10 who have made it to 30 years of business. We have brought this business into the 21st century with the latest technology. We are going to keep going as we have done for the last 30 years and continue to give the customers what they want to the best of our abilities".

Archers Express Cleaners

11a London Road, Sevenoaks Tel: 01732 456814

Let us help you rent out your property

Landlords who are keen to let out their property without the trouble of looking for tenants can take advantage of a scheme run by Sevenoaks District Council.

The Private Sector Lettings Scheme aims to provide more accommodation for single people and families who have a connection with Sevenoaks District by providing landlords with rent in advance, deposit bond or both.

The Council is currently looking for landlords with property to let in Kent and East Sussex.
The benefits for landlords are:

Properties can be let quickly without the expense of advertising.
Where eligible, rent can be paid direct to landlords.
To secure a tenancy one-off rent in advance payment is made by cheque direct to the landlord.
The security of a deposit bond.
The Council has a list of people ready and waiting to rent accommodation.

While the Council can provide basic ongoing advice to landlords as part of the scheme, it cannot provide a property management service.

Landlords who have a property available to rent or who would like to know more about the scheme should call Jill Wagner on 01732 227465
E-mail jill.wagner@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Streetwise self-defence

Streetwise self-defence is an introduction to basic self-defence principles such as Avoidance, Evasion and Dissuasion as well as basic self-defence techniques.

Streetwise is simple and easy to learn.

Streetwise is not a martial arts class.

You will not be required to wear white pyjamas to train (jeans and T-shirt will be fine).

Streetwise isn't a fitness class; the focus is on self-defence.

The classes are very useful for anybody who has interaction with the public or concerns about self-protection as many of the techniques taught are from realistic self-defence scenarios, which can be adapted to any situation.

All welcome

First Lesson Free

Sundays at 5.30 – 7.00pm from 11th January at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre or call 07771 517739

Making Streets Safer

50 retailers in Sevenoaks now have new radios as members of the newly established Sevenoaks Community Partnership Initiative.

The Partnership has been set up to reduce crime and make Sevenoaks town centre an even safer and more pleasant environment for shoppers, visitors and residents.

The scheme builds on the “Shopsafe” and “Pubwatch” schemes and enables retailers to talk to the CCTV control room, each other and the town centre constables using the Partnership radios. The Sevenoaks District Council CCTV control room is linked to the Police Control Room.

Another benefit of the scheme is information sharing, where photographs and information about known offenders are circulated to all scheme members. The ultimate deterrent to shoplifting and anti-social behaviour is the use of exclusion notices, which can be issued to prevent offenders entering the premises of all scheme members.

Training on issues such as credit card fraud, personal safety and human rights are also an integral part of the scheme and available to all members.

The scheme has been set up with £10,000 funding from the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership and a loan from Kent People's Trust and is hoped to extend the scheme to other parts of the District in due course. The project is based at Sevenoaks Police Station and is backed by Kent Police.

Meet the Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

If you have a particular issue/problem please contact one of the following board directors.

Carol Robinson	Company Secretary
Vanessa Yamin	Administrator
Edgar James Irving	Consultant
Jeremy Treliving	Sheffords Chartered Surveyors 13 London Road, Sevenoaks Tel 01732 450866
Jenny Ambler	Manager of Floss Agency 103b London Rd,Sevenoaks Tel1732 459155 E-mail jenny.ambler@flossagency.co.uk
Mark Rosser	Partner at Warner's Solicitors 16 South Park, Sevenoaks Tel 01732 747900 E-mail mark.rosser@warners-solicitors.co.uk
David Tudor	Small Business Manager Barclays Bank S'Oaks 80 High Street, Sevenoaks Tel 01732 585010 E-mail david.m.tudor@barclayscorporate.com
Helen Page	Manager of Sevenoaks Business Services Ltd 15 Lime Tree Walk, S'Oaks Tel 01732 746600 E-mail admin@lime-tree.freeserve.co.uk
Tony Klein	Independent Fin Advisor, AWK Asset Mngmt Shoreham Road, Otford. Tel 01959 553680 E-mail awkam@exchange.uk.com
Paula Blair	Marketing Consultant, Broughton Blair Ltd Pippins, Farley Lane, Westerham 01959 569526 E-mail conatct@broughtonblair.co.uk

Office Telephone/Fax number 01732 455188
The Quadrant, 5 Victoria Road,
Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1YD.
www.sevenoakschamber.com
E-mail: info@sevenoakschamber.com

New Members

BMC Telecommunication Solutions

Welcome to Mr Mark Tuvey the proprietor of BMC Telecommunication Solutions. Mark is very happy to advise you on all your business and personal telecom services. Mark specialises in finding the least expensive mobile phone solution available. His company also deals in all Telecom services including Broadband and Video Conferencing.

Telephone 01732 450250 or E-mail tuvey@bmctele.com

Telecom House, 123 Wickenden Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 3NR.

Jonathan Syer Photography

Jonathan Syer is a local photographer who enjoys taking Architectural and interior commercial photographs.

Do you need a new company brochure? Give Jonathan a ring on 01732 762168 or look at his Webb page on:

www.jonathansyer.co.uk

Dogs in Action Security Ltd

A very warm welcome to Roger and Jane Fermor who run Dogs in Action Security Ltd. Roger and Jane are based at 10 Shenden Close, Sevenoaks, TN13 1PQ. They run a professional Security Service of uniformed Dog handlers and highly trained guard dogs.

For more information on your security requirements contact them on 01732 740535 or their Mobile 07973711834

Or E-mail them at JanshowGSD@aol.com

Lawrence Insurance Group

Doug Parry of Lawrence insurance is keen to discuss with you any of your insurance requirements. The Lawrence Insurance Group is based at 43/45 High Street, Sevenoaks, TN13 1JF.

Telephone 01732 740777

E-mail Doug.Parry@lawrencegroup.co.uk

The Royal Oak Hotel

Are you looking for a choice restaurant to entertain clients or maybe an ideal venue for a wedding reception? Look no further than The Royal Oak Hotel, The Coach House, High Street, Sevenoaks TN13 1HY. Telephone 01732 740774

E-mail carolyn@brook-hotel.co.uk

West Kent College Sevenoaks IT Learning

West Kent College IT Learning Centre is based in Tubs Hill House, London Road, Sevenoaks.

Telephone 01732 458071. Do you or your colleagues need some up to date training or just a brush up on your rusty IT skills? Give Tim Clark a ring or E-mail him on sevenoaksit@wkc.ac.uk for more information.

First Office Systems

First Office Systems was established in 1991, the company supplies and supports printers, copiers, facsimile machine and telephone systems. They are Canon Solution Partners and AVAYA Authorised Business Partners. Being fully qualified and resourced to supply and support the full range of Canon printing and

imaging systems and AVAYA telecommunications systems. They are British standards institution registered firm and provide service and support to an ISO 9001; 2000 defined quality standard. For further information regarding the goods and service provided please call 01892 516339 or visit our website at www.firstoffice.co.uk

Crime Drops by 7% in Sevenoaks District

Recently released crime statistics show that, from April to September 2003, there was a fall of 7.28% in all crime across Sevenoaks District.

In total 3,617 crimes were reported to the police – 284 crimes fewer than the same period in 2002 and they included significant reductions in burglary, shoplifting and vehicle crime.

Robin Hales, the Chair of the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership and Chief Executive of Sevenoaks District Council, says "I am delighted to see this encouraging fall in recorded crime. It demonstrates that the close working of the Community safety Partnership on over 80 projects and initiatives is having a direct impact on crime in the District".

Cllr Keith Loney, the Council's Cabinet member with responsibility for Community safety, was also pleased to hear this good news and adds; "Sevenoaks District is traditionally a low crime area and everyone is working hard to keep it that way".

Successes of the Partnership to date have included obtaining and maintaining four Anti- Social Behaviour Orders, cleaning off graffiti, removal of abandoned and untaxed vehicles, securing four Police Community Support Officers to work in the District, youth offenders making reparation in their communities and the setting up of the 24-hour racial incident reporting line.

The Partnership also oversees over £90,000 of Home Office funding which is being used on a number of projects including working with a community-led group in the Sevenoaks, Greatness and Hillingdon areas, District-wide anti-dugs operations, a contribution to the Edenbridge skate park and the Youth Zone van, which is widely used across the District.

For more information on the work of the Community Safety Partnership can be found by visiting: - www.sevenoaks-csp.org.uk

NETWORKING EVENTS: Lunch 19th March with guest Michael Fallon MP member of the Select Committee investigating "Costs to Business". An opportunity to have your questions answered. Invitations will be posted shortly, but enter the date in your diary.

Check the interactive calendar for joint events with the West Kent Chamber & Bromley Focus Group.

Do you fancy helping the Sea Cadets?

A new Sea Cadet Unit is in the process of being set up in Westerham, Kent.

The Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) is a voluntary nautical youth organisation for boys and girls. Its fully enrolled Sea Cadet members are aged between 12 and 18 years.

Junior Sea Cadets Section may also be established locally for those between 10 and 12 years of age.

The aim of the Sea Cadet Corps is to help young people towards responsible adulthood by encouraging valuable personal attributes and high standards of conduct, using a nautical theme based on the customs of the Royal Navy.

In order to facilitate these aims, the unit needs two things, a Management Committee and Unit Staff.

The Corps is an extremely worthwhile hobby, which provides enjoyment for all who join in. For further details e-mail fullerkd@westkentscc.freeserve.co.uk

Or telephone Mr Fuller on 01732 824776.

BE AWARE

Kent residents who receive uninvited visits by traders offering to carry out work on their properties are being urged to contact KCC's Trading Standards Unit.

Trading Standards have reported a rise in complaints about such traders who offer to carry out work like tarmacking, paving, roofing, guttering and gardening. In many cases such people then persuade householders into parting with large sums of money for sub-standard and often unnecessary work.

To help, trading standards needs accurate information about the extent of the problem and who is involved. Residents aware of tradesmen making "cold calls" in their area should try to obtain the following:

Date, time and place.

Type of service being offered.

Vehicle details.

Any name, address or telephone number known.

Any basic description of the traders concerned.

Trading Standards urge consumers to:

Never let a stranger into the home.

Always ask for identification.

Always use a door chain.

Ask the caller to return when there is someone else present.

Always obtain a written estimate.

Always obtain more than one quote for a job.

Contact trading Standards with any information on 01732 525289 (A message may be left outside of normal office hours)

Note: Kent County Council Highways never sell leftover tarmac to the public when they have completed roadworks.

Highland Printers

A brief resume

Highland Printers is a 15-year success story, established in 1988, Highland has maintained a reputation for a high quality, keen priced, superb service.

They can produce a wide range of print, from your office stationary to the full-blown lavish four-colour brochure. A few years ago they added the production

of sell adhesive labels, either on flat sheets or reels, on whatever material you care to think of.

Highland have staff with over 30 years experience in the printing and paper industries and are more than happy to pass on advice on print processes and paper qualities, enabling you to have the most cost effective and

professional results. They also offer a computerised design service; which can only make life easier.

They also offer the latest in digital copying both colour and black and white and are agents for Redman office furniture.

Give them a call on 01732 762131 or E-mail highlandprinters@aol

Protecting Young Workers

Young workers can be an attractive source of labour for businesses, which need a flexible, part-time workforce to cope with the extra business the sunshine months can bring – but there are clear rules about exactly what they can do.

Children as young as 13 years of age can be employed for shelf stacking, waitressing, hairdressing, cleaning and shop work.

The law states that children between the ages of 13 and 16 can work a maximum of 35 hours a week during their summer holiday breaks but only 12 hours during school term and two hours only on a Sunday.

The local education authority issues work permits to children who are about to start a part-time job and keeps a register of young workers employed by local businesses. It is essential that employers abide by the law. They could be fined up to £1000 if they employ a child without obtaining a permit – even if it were a family member, the child would not be covered under employer's liability insurance.

When young people reach the age of 16 and receive their National Insurance numbers, they and their future employers presume they have reached an age at which they can work the same hours as adult but this is not the case. Sixteen year olds who have not yet completed their GCSE year 11 at school still fall under the child employment legislation; whether or not they have received their National Insurance number.

For further information please contact Kent County Council's Local Education offices:

East Kent 01227 772992.

Don't short change Kent

Government cash to the tune of £10 billion is needed before Kent can cope with the new housing that the government is insisting should be built in the county, councillors have said. The county's Cabinet has backed a report which said the money would be essential for new schools, roads, public transport, health, sports, leisure and community facilities before the 120,000 extra homes planned for Kent by 2021 could go ahead.

Having been given legal advice that the government's house-building targets could not be challenged through the courts, the County Council has agreed instead to demand "cast iron Guarantees" that the money for new facilities will be provided before the homes are built. The county's firm stand received a boost when a report on a cross-party group of MPs backed many of the concerns it had already highlighted.

The Select Committee report pinpointed worries about protecting the environment and the need to provide jobs alongside housing in order to avoid increased commuting. Crucially, the Select Committee also raised a question mark over whether or not the money was available across government to pay for the high quality schools, roads, hospitals and other facilities that would be needed. KCC is insisting that it must be available before work starts.

The Select Committee said that developing so many properties in one of Europe's most densely populated areas could place excessive demands on the environment, and accused ministers of failing to assess the health, education and transport needs of the new communities properly. The Select Committee Chairman, Labour MP Andrew Bennett said, "It could create characterless urban sprawl, rather than the vibrant communities which the government wants".

Kent County Council Leader Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart said the select Committee had "echoed the many concerns Kent County Council has already expressed."

Stressing KCC's determination to achieve quality homes and low impact on the environment, he added: "The county council's view is a firm "no" to dormitory estates, "no" to building on the cheap and "no" to building across the Garden of England. It is a "yes" to maximum use of previously used land and top-notch community facilities, including 10 new schools, at a cost of £700 million".

Those views are also reflected in the draft Kent and Medway Structure Plan that will go on deposit for public consultation later this year.

The structure plan maps Kent's future and provides the ground rules for vital issues such as where housing is to be located, mineral extracted, environmental protection, strengthened, transport priorities decided and the economy boosted. The deposit draft which is due to be made public in September provides, for the first time, much stricter rules designed to ensure that money for infrastructure such as roads, schools, community facilities and drainage is put on the table before developers are allowed to start building. The public will be asked to play a full part in ensuring Kent and Medway Councils have got it right when a consultation programme is launched

Kent's Four key Tests

Kent's countryside, traditional villages, market towns and environmental heritage must be protected and enhanced.

All development must be of the highest quality.

The necessary investment for infrastructure must be secured.

New jobs must go hand - in - hand with new houses.