

MARGATE TOWN COUNCIL



Writer
Emilia Ong

Margate is one of the few towns across the country still lacking a town council. Right now a campaign is underway to establish one. Find out what exactly is being proposed, and how to back it

Another day, another overflowing bin, another abandoned building. Another mound of fly-tipped waste spilling onto the pavement, another pile of dog poo to dodge, another rant about it all on Facebook.

So much, so Margate.

With so many problems beleaguering the day-to-day life of the town, you might think that the community would jump at the chance to change things. And yet the proposal for a new town council, which was announced back in May 2021, is still in search of supporting signatures. "In fact," says Heather Keen, councillor for Cliftonville West and deputy Mayor, "out of the 3,100 signatures required to make the town council happen, we remain only about halfway there."

This feels surprising, especially given that the need for cleaner streets and improved public facilities seem, anecdotally at least, to figure high on the list of long-standing community complaints. "People are not happy," Cllr Keen agrees. "Filthy streets spoil Margate for residents as well as tourists, who are an important part of the local economy. We need more bins, more cleaners... just more presence overall."

It's possible, of course, that the obstacle lies in the fact that people simply don't understand what's being proposed. After all, what actually is a town council? And, er, don't we already have one? ►

The answer to the second question is easily given: no. No, we don't. Thanet District Council is not the same as the proposed Margate Town Council. They would be two distinct entities.

"Margate is a rarity insofar as we only have charter trustees," explains Cllr Keen. "Charter trustees are required by law if there's no town council in place, but the problem is that there's very little they can do." There are seven charter trustees for Margate, each an elected Thanet District councillor representing one of Margate's seven wards. In the absence of a town council they have limited decision-making powers for the town.

By way of example, Cllr Keen cites trustees' inability to acquire property. "We'd love to be able to look at preserving historic buildings. Take Pierremont Hall in Broadstairs. Until it was acquired by their town council, it was deteriorating, but now it's been completely regenerated, and is an asset to the community."

"People get frustrated," she acknowledges, "because they want things done - of course they do. But legally the role of a charter trustee is extremely circumscribed. Our hands are tied."

Were those ties to be loosened, Cllr Keen has plenty of ideas regarding where the money might go. "Look at our parks!"

she exclaims. "What we need to be doing is making them into really nice places for families and friends to go and enjoy themselves in the open air."

*
The worry is that without a town council Margate is getting left behind: the improvements which other local areas (with town councils) have made are tangible. In Ramsgate, extra street cleaners are now in circulation, while in Birchington, the town council there has taken great strides in improving the sea front.

"We really need a town council here now," Cllr Keen states. "In and around Margate there's so much happening that we should, and could, be capitalising on, but we're missing out."

This is not the first time that a proposal has been put forward. Back in 2014 public consultations were held, but the outcome was a town council for Westgate, not Margate.

"I suppose people might be feeling a bit disillusioned," Cllr Keen says. "They think that Thanet District Council should be doing the work they want done, and they don't want to pay more."

Because, oh yes, it will cost more. A little more, at any rate. "At present the charter trustees receive £9.18 out of your annual council tax," Cllr Keen explains. "If a town council was formed, that

"In and around Margate there's so much happening that we should, and could, be capitalising on, but we're missing out"

£9.18 would stop, and we'd charge a new precept [ring-fenced charge]."

How much? "It's difficult to say exactly," she says, "as it will depend on which issues the town council take on. A reasonable amount to start off with would be about £20 a year. It's never going to be a huge fee."

Cllr Keen stresses that she understands that many are already overstretched, and that any extra expense is unwelcome. "But consider," she says, "at the moment you're already paying a tenner, for which you get virtually nothing. And those receiving benefits would continue to have the charge covered for them."

*
The current proposal will not progress any further if those crucial 3,100 signatures are not collected. "Initially we set November last year as an anticipated deadline," Cllr Keen says, "but it became

clear we weren't going to meet that."

So the campaign continues. "There's no cut-off point as such," she says, "but obviously we're eager to get things going. In the end, though, it's the electorate's choice. I might think the town council's a great idea, but ultimately it's down to the people."

To that end, she mentions that one of the real benefits of having a town council is that anyone can put themselves forward to be a councillor. "That's what's great about it," she says. "It's not just about whoever a certain political party puts forward. Town councillors don't have to have any political affiliation at all."

"The wonderful thing is that Margate already has a real wealth of community champions. These are the people we need representing our interests. Not remote figures, but people we already know and trust - approachable people who know what the area needs."

"I'd like to send a message to everyone out there feeling jaded," she concludes. "This is for you! I often hear that TDC are hard to get through to, inaccessible, unresponsive, literally far away. Well, here's the remedy for that: a town council made up of local people, working to meet local needs quickly and efficiently, as defined by you."

Find out more and sign the proposal at margatetowncouncil.co.uk

curve
coffee

ROASTERS

Cafe & Store

1D UNION ROW | MARGATE

coffee, treats & good times



Scan to
find us!



@curveroasters
curveroasters.co.uk

candle making workshops
candle making workshops
candle making workshops
candle making workshops

MILKWOOD

botanical candle making workshops + workshop gift cards.

Weekly at August, 9 Love Lane, Margate Old Town.

book at milkwood.co @milkwood_margate @august_margate

TRY SOMETHING NEW THIS SPRING

Writer
Emilia Ong

Images courtesy of
Businesses

It's not hard to make a case for learning something new: we're repeatedly told that engaging with novel activities can improve our mental and physical health, reduce stress, increase confidence, and generally enhance our quality of life. But what happens when everything around us - whether we've learnt it ourselves or not - feels old, done, boring? It can be tempting to slump: to stick to what you know, and tell yourself that the effort to change things up would be pointless.

But why resign yourself to another evening in with your phone? Especially as this spring there's a wealth of fresh, creative classes going on around town. Here, we highlight some of the more unusual among them. Remember, new skills are just the thing to invigorate and enliven tired souls. Here's to that.

KINDRED HOUSE

Opened during 2020, Kindred House is something of a rare beast: a guesthouse which aims to provide people not only with a place to stay, but with a refuge. Somewhere, says founder Natasha Lawless, where guests can "connect, be creative, and learn".

With this in mind, Natasha hosts year-round seasonal workshops, pop-up events, talks and creative retreat weekends, all of which are open both to guests and non-guests alike.

Some of the more esoteric offerings planned for this spring include workshops in shibori indigo dyeing, sashiko jacket embroidery, quilting, textile printing and making jewellery out of reclaimed metal and wood. "The aim," says Natasha, "is to invite our guests to be active participants in cultivating our community. The workshops play a key role in the spirit of the house, helping to craft an environment that actively celebrates connection and creativity."

Natasha, whose background is "very

much rooted in design", explains that "learning new skills is a simple and positive way to meet like-minded people, as well as foster a greater sense of wellbeing and improve self-esteem. Plus, there's that sense of achievement!" She adds that when people take some time out, slow down and start working with their hands, a small transformation takes place: "They begin to connect not only with others, but with themselves." Which, in this moment of streaming and smartphones, is not at all something to be taken for granted.

Check out the full programme of workshops at kindred-house.com



MOSAIC WORKSHOP

"It was like falling in love!" exclaims Suzanne Wright, founder of a new range of mosaic workshops which are now running in Westgate. "I was living in Holland at the time, and attended a mosaic workshop in a beautiful little town called Alkmaar. And that was it! Love. I headed to Italy to learn with a professional."

There, Suzanne spent her days "living, breathing, and sleeping mosaic" with renowned artist Luciana Notturmi. She returned to Holland to set up her own mosaic business, but unfortunately it didn't work out. So seventeen years after leaving the UK she returned - aged 54 - to pursue a graduate degree in design. After which she tried again.

This time it worked. But just when the mosaic business was going well, Covid hit. "Everything stopped," she says. "Time literally stood still. It was the second time my mosaic world had been turned upside down... But my love, passion and desire never stopped, even when those close to me said it was doomed to fail."

Luckily for us! "I've been astounded by the response this time round," Suzanne says. "My students have been as young as four and as old as 86. I've taught in Dutch and in English, in schools and privately. I've had big groups of 'hens' drinking champagne, I've had groups of men as well as women. I run parent and child workshops, giving families quality time together. There's nothing I can't handle. I'm a fully trained special educational needs (SEN) manager of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) students, and I've also completed mosaics with students in wheelchairs... I thrive on seeing my students smile."

Classes run at the St Michael's Community Centre (Mermikides, Greek Taverna) on Canterbury Road, generally on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, with a Saturday slots for parent and child workshops. "It's a lovely cosy venue," says Suzanne, "with wheelchair access and good lighting." There's also four-week courses planned for April.

Nervous about trying it? Don't be. "I've seen someone who has said 'I can't draw' finish up with a masterpiece," says Suzanne. "My forte is to inspire you, to bring out the best in you. And I can, believe me!"

Find out more details on Suzanne's Facebook page, Modernmosaics, or you can email her directly at zanne.wright@gmail.com



◀ "Queen Charlotte" by Geoffrey Chambers

MAMMALESQUE BURLESQUE

Yes, you read that right: burlesque. That means, says founder Elizabeth Powell, "fun, feathers, great music, and like-minded women!"

If to the shyer among you that sounds a little intimidating, be reassured that Mammalsque is, as Elizabeth puts it, "an inclusive burlesque experience". It's fundamentally important to her that the classes are accessible to all ages, abilities and confidence levels. "I started Mammalsque after I became a mother in 2018," she says. "At the time I was beginning to feel a little unseen by my husband - even, in fact, by my friends. Motherhood is *hard*. So I took the decision to elevate my mental wellbeing and that of others through the art of dance."

Initially she had just three people in the class, but now, she says, "I am packing out the studio. But I want to spread the message to more women!"

Elizabeth, who worked as a professional showgirl until 2019 ("all over the world, from the Ibis budget hotel to millionaire superyachts," she laughs), explains that burlesque is a wonderful way to get in touch with yourself. "It helps you feel confident in your own skin, whatever your dress size. All women are beautiful!" she exclaims. "I want to promote body confidence in a safe space. Anyone can come, especially those who feel like they can't. Because they *can!* That's the point. To show yourself you can. To *know* that."

Just before the 2020 lockdown Elizabeth gave birth to a second child and, at the same time, became a single mother. She says that it's been "quite a journey. But Mammalsque brought me back to myself. All I hope for is to do the same for others."

In the spirit of accessibility, Elizabeth has also decided to launch a burlesque class for men. "Guylesque" - a dancing-in-heels class - has mainly been developed in response to, but is not exclusively for, the LGBTQ community. "To all the boys who love a strut - join us!"

Mammalsque runs on Tuesdays from 7 to 8pm, and Guylesque on Wednesdays at the same time. Both classes take place at Silvers. Get all the info on Instagram [@mammalsqueuk](https://www.instagram.com/mammalsqueuk)



EVERYONE CAN DRAW

"Most people," says Geoffrey Chambers, artist and teacher behind the Everyone Can Draw programme, "have enjoyed drawing at some point in their lives, but somewhere along the line, something (or someone) took the fun out of it..."

It's a story many people will recognise. Oh, we might say wistfully, *I used to draw when I was younger, but...*

Well, here is the opportunity to change that story. Geoffrey's classes, which take place at the People Dem Collective HQ, are the joyful remedy to negative past experiences of judgement or critique.

"It's a chance to claim the fun back," he says. "You don't have to be an artist or even want to be one - the class is open to everyone. It's an inclusive, diverse group, centred on wellbeing. On any given day you'll see beginners, intermediates and experts, all benefiting from being together in a safe and open space."

If this sounds a bit like art-as-therapy, you wouldn't be far wrong. Geoffrey is a charismatic teacher, determined to, as he says, "tackle the inner critic head on."

"We don't just draw," he says, "we paint, we sing, we dance. We draw in the wild, we do life-drawing, we explore

unlikely objects. It's about loosening old demons, and creating a new, positive set of attitudes towards your creativity."

Geoffrey, who describes himself as an "expanded arts practitioner", is himself a painter, writer, film-maker and musician - you might have seen some of his work in the Turner Open Exhibition earlier this year. "In my own practice I like to investigate identity and belonging," he says. He has studied painting in Brazil, drawing in Hawaii, and recently completed an MA at Goldsmiths. In other words, if you join the class, you couldn't be in safer hands.

"Just give it a try," Geoffrey says. "The tools are easy to use, and I keep the sessions as affordable as I can." Alternatively, if you fancy something even more informal, Geoffrey also hosts monthly Drunk Draw sessions at Faith in Strangers. Again, these evenings are designed to loosen people up around drawing. "It's a lot of fun," says Geoffrey, "and the context helps people feel freer about making that first mark."

Everyone Can Draw costs £120 for an eight-week course, or you can drop in to one of Geoffrey's Sunday sessions for £10 each: email geoff3chambers@gmail.com or call 07480 421 414 for details. You can find the dates of the next Drunk Draw on Instagram [@drunkdraw1](https://www.instagram.com/drunkdraw1)



HAIR & SKIN MARGATE

PROFESSIONAL PAMPERING IN CENTRAL MARGATE

Since 2018, Jo Tolley and her team have been providing advanced, tailor-made beauty and aesthetic treatments using the latest technologies and products. Now, following an extensive refit and rebrand, the salon has expanded: think two floors dedicated to creative cuts, facials, aesthetics, spa days, barbering, and more. We find out just what just what the team are doing to keep moving from strength to strength.

"It's great to have a nickname," says Jo, laughingly. "It's definitely one I approve of." And so she should. Known affectionately by locals as "Thanet's Super Salon", Hair & Skin's moniker is well-earned. "My hope has always been to offer all treatments under one roof," Jo explains. "It's not just about convenience, it's about comfort too. That little touch of luxury. Knowing you can come to Hair & Skin for a few hours or a whole afternoon, have a coffee—or something stronger!—and treat yourself from top to toe."

The salon, which is located just a few metres from the sea-end of the High Street, is characterised by an air of indulgence-meets-friendliness and fun. "We've put a lot of love and thought into the design," says Jo, who recently refurbished the premises in an Art Deco style. "We wanted it to be comfortable, but also unique and luxurious."

To that end, the salon is also home to both a garden and a licensed bar. "People tell us how much they look forward to coming," says Jo. "It's not just

about the treatments—although of course"—she laughs—"they're important too. But it's also about the social aspect. During the summer months, you can relax in the garden in between treatments, and in winter we have a big table with magazines and hot drinks, where people can gather and chat. It's a mini community really."

Working across four key areas—beauty, skin, aesthetics, and hair—Hair & Skin's specialist team offers some of the most cutting-edge solutions to your hair and beauty needs. "Cuts, colour, balayage, perms: we've got it all," Jo says. "Each of our stylists has between seven and twenty years of experience behind them, so you can trust they know what they're doing." If you're after bolds and brights, monochromes, or rainbow colours, there's also a fashion-colourist specialist on the team. "She's fab," Jo says. "And we've just added a fantastic new nano-keratin treatment, which works across all hair types to smooth hair and relax curls. You can get that dead-straight look you've always wanted," she says, "or add a little body."

Beauty-wise, think lash lifts and tints, eyelash extensions, waxing, brow tints, spray tans, gel manicures, and spa pedicures. To help you achieve that perfect look for nights out and special events, there's also a specialist MUA on hand. "And that's just for starters!" says Jo. "In the skin department we do a range of facials, including micro-needling and LED treatments. Injectables, fillers and medical-grade peels are administered by our medical nurse Sam.

Oh, and did I mention our 24-karat gold leaf facial?"

It should be noted that Hair & Skin is not just for the girls: in the Manzone, the team provide bespoke treatments created specifically with men in mind. This is important, says Jo, because male skin has its own needs and conditions. "We've got a dedicated barber, male-only grooming treatments, and... a beer fridge!"

As you would expect, every guest at Hair & Skin receives a full consultation before any treatment. "That way we can tailor-make a plan that works for you," says Jo. "It's vital to match the right products to your individual skin and hair," she adds. "We use only the best brands, including Paul Mitchell, Moroccan Oil, GHD, Goldwell, PCA skin, and Medik8."

Jo explains that the team have also just launched a few new services for 2022, including the forward-thinking Sustainable Cut & Dry. "It uses only vegan products," she says. "That means cruelty-free, organic, carbon neutral products, which are packaged in bio-based plastic."

If this sounds innovative, it is—but it is also characteristic of the team's consistent energy and invention. "And what else?" Jo muses. "Oh yes! We're doing Spa Saturdays now! You can come with a friend, each have a warm lava shell facial followed by a back, neck, and shoulder massage, then get together for lunch and prosecco, and just chill."

That sounds like just the thing following a long winter. Jo agrees. "People are always telling us how nice it is to go somewhere genuinely friendly, and not at all intimidating. We're a little family really, we all made it through the last couple of years together and now, when you come in, you'll just see everyone chatting and laughing." She adds that she makes it "a point to have different music on all the time! You never know what it's going to be. It could be 90s hits, rock n' roll, or Disney classics," she laughs. Which just about sums Hair & Skin up: fantastic treatments, yes, but also service with a smile.

**For more information visit
hairandskinmargate.com
or call 01843 297307**

7 High Street, Margate, CT9 1DL



book here!



MARGATE MERCURY



MARGATE COOKERY SCHOOL

Whether your lockdown cookery skills have been getting you down or you already fancy yourself a dab hand in the old kitchen, newly launched Margate Cookery School may have something for you. “Classes,” says Kate of Hantverk & Found, “will be rigorous but fun,” suitable both for those acquiring new skills and for those building on existing ones. “We’ve got dumpling- and gyoza-making classes planned, pasta-making classes, a cocktail class for St Patrick’s Day. Then there’s the introduction to fermentation and preserving, lessons in pastry-making, wine tasting, food writing... and that’s just to begin with.”

That sounds like a lot already! “It is quite a broad spread,” Kate laughs, “but we’re going to be a full-on cookery school. This spring we’re starting with one-off

classes, but eventually we hope to have courses that build on skills over a period of time.”

Kate, who along with Harry and Simona of Bottega Caruso, had been “talking about the idea for a cookery school for a while”, explains that the idea for the venture began to take more solid form during the pandemic. “We were thinking of ways to link up all the wonderful independent restaurants in Margate at a time when eating-out was impossible,” she says, “and also asking ourselves how we could support local chefs.” Unfortunately the launch was delayed at the beginning of the year by all the uncertainty around Omicron. But, Kate stresses, the Cookery School will not just be a summer thing: it’s really about getting people to visit Margate year-round. “We want to extend the season,” she says. “Fingers crossed, the whole town will benefit.”

For full info about classes, visit margatecookeryschool.com



OUMA'S 189 Northdown Road



DAYTIMES
Tues - Sat 10am to 5pm

EVENINGS
Mon & Fri 6.30pm to 10pm

@oumas_margate
oumas.co.uk