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ISSUE 5



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# COUNCIL OFFERS ITS SUPPORT TO SEVENOAKS TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB FOR ITS AMBITIOUS NEW PAVILION PROPOSALS

Sevenoaks Town Football Club has submitted ambitious plans for a new pavilion at Greatness Recreation Ground. The Planning Application is progressing through its normal statutory route.

Sevenoaks Town Council has been asked to consider the proposals in its position as owner of the Greatness Recreation Ground and as landlord of the Sevenoaks Town Football Club who lease the football pitch area from them.

Sevenoaks Town Council has a long-standing priority to support proposals for a new pavilion which in turn would release the current pavilion building back to the Town Council for alternative community use.

Town Councillors reviewed the proposals for the new pavilion and agreed to support these concluding that it would have a positive contribution for the Greatness Recreation Ground and surrounding area.

The Town Council also agreed to meet with Stakeholders and review its current Greatness Recreation Ground Management Plan to take into account the Football Club proposals and other proposals for the local area.

Cllr Nicholas Busvine OBE Mayor of Sevenoaks said "The STFC is a fantastic success story - not just for the results it achieves, but also for the sheer level of community involvement the club generates. The Town Council is proud to support the new pavilion project."

Paul Lansdale, Chairman of Sevenoaks Town Football Club said: "I hope the proposals will gain wider support from the local community and beyond as he explained the benefits a new pavilion would deliver. We are thrilled our plans have the support of Sevenoaks Town Council. This proposed addition to our facility would enhance the experience for all 64 of our football teams including over 1000 players, their coaches, parents, and supporters.

Our club proudly provides opportunity for boys and girls, men and women of all ages and abilities to play football and enjoy the mental health and social benefits of being physically active.

The proposals also enable us to increase our reach and accessibility within the local community, making the park an even greater open space for people to enjoy – whether they like football or not."



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## COUNCIL TAX RATE SET TO SUPPORT DISTRICT'S RECOVERY

**Last night Sevenoaks District Council passed the final part of their budget setting process, with unanimous, cross party support.**

In November 2020, the Council gave support for a 10-year balanced budget that showed savings, the protection of frontline services and future investment returns. It also made assumptions regarding council tax levels that could not be set at that time. Putting most of the budget in place early reduced the overall pressure on the Council's finances by almost £100,000.

Cllr Peter Fleming, Leader of the Council, says, "The last year has seen a huge impact on many people's lives across the District. We have seen increased numbers of households coming to the Council for help alongside supporting our local businesses throughout the pandemic.

"The Council has not been immune to the impacts of Covid-19 and over the last year the pandemic has cost the Council approaching £5m in increased costs and lost income. The government has provided significant funding, however we have

had to find in excess of £300,000 of unfunded Covid-19 related costs.

"We are making savings and delivering additional income totalling £1m without impacting the frontline services we provide to the District's residents.

We believe more than ever that we need to be ready to help and support individuals, communities and the local economy as we come out of the pandemic and start to look at the District's recovery.

"In light of the above we are proposing a very limited Council Tax increase, recognising the impacts of the pandemic, that equates for the average household to a little under £5 a year or 10p a week, this will allow us to continue our work in support of residents, businesses and the communities we serve through hugely uncertain times."

Sevenoaks District Council set its budget in November 2020 and agreed its share of the Council Tax at yesterday's Council meeting on 23rd February 2021.

## COUNCIL TACKLE EMPTY HOMES

**Homeowners and landlords were reminded of the benefits of bringing their empty properties back into use as part of National Empty Homes Week in February.**

In an attempt to help empty homeowners potentially save thousands of pounds, and improve communities affected by empty properties, Sevenoaks District Council backed the national campaign, which started from Monday 15th February.

Empty homes can attract vandalism, fly-tipping and other acts of criminal activity. These problems can often be detrimental to adjoining nearby properties. Neglected properties can cause decreased property values and can discourage investment to the local area.

The Council is working as part of the 'No Use Empty' (NUE) scheme run by Kent County Council. Since the launch of the scheme, over 6,000 properties in Kent have been brought back into use and over £32 million has been given in financial support across Kent.

Subject to certain qualifying criteria, homeowners are able to apply for loan assistance of up to £25,000 per property to carry out renovation and reconstruction work in order to bring an empty property back into use.



Cabinet Member for Housing and Health, Cllr Kevin Maskell says: "It's difficult to understand why some properties are left empty for long periods of time, often getting into a state of disrepair when they could be providing an income to their owner and much needed accommodation to people living in the District.

"We are encouraging anyone with an empty property to get in touch and see how we can help."

If you have an empty property and would like to know more about your options, email [empty.homes@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:empty.homes@sevenoaks.gov.uk) or call 01732 227000.

Find out more about the scheme [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/emptyhomes](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/emptyhomes)

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## Reg Oakley of the local RSPB group provides an update on upcoming events:

With hopefully the end of the covid restrictions in sight, the Sevenoaks Local group has finalised details of it's programme of highly appreciated zoom presentations with the following:-

Thursday May 6th 7:15pm for 7:30 start: We go to Yorkshire to explore the Bempton Cliffs Filey Bay, a Seabird Nirvana. A presentation by Mark Pearson who has extensive knowledge of the area.

Thursday June 3rd 7:15pm for 7:30 start, brings us to the final of our planned zoom presentations. Alastair McKee is bringing us an Osprey in a Shopping Bag. A cryptic title for a presentation looking how the glorious Osprey has returned from extinction in the UK and details of it's recovery in Cumbria.

The remaining question is where is the shopping bag?



These zoom presentations are free, but we do appreciate donations, you will be advised on how to donate when you apply to join the zoom meetings at 7oaksrspb@gmail.com .

We remain optimistic that in the Autumn we will resume a programme of normal meetings and field trips. Details will be forthcoming nearer the time.

In the meantime you can communicate with local bird enthusiasts at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RSPBSevenoaks/announcements>.



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## SEVENOAKS NAMED AS BRITAIN'S SIXTH LEADING RETAIL DESTINATION

Sevenoaks has been ranked sixth best retail centre in a list of the top 1000 retail destinations in the UK by Retail Property Advisors Harper Dennis Hobbs (HDH).

Sevenoaks has jumped up twenty-four places since the last Vitality List, despite restrictions and lockdowns due to the global pandemic. This is in part because of a shift in shopping habits, meaning consumers are more likely to support local shops and businesses.

The list judges the 'retail health' of a town by looking at different features, including the change in residents' movement, vacancy rates, and suitability to local consumers' demands. HDH then put together a list of the top 1,000 retail centres in the UK.

Cabinet member for People and Places, Cllr Lesley Dyball, says, "The last year has been extremely difficult for town centre businesses, they have had to adapt very quickly to changing circumstances and learn how to operate differently. Sevenoaks' independent businesses have stepped up to these challenges, providing new products and services, coupled with a safe place to shop."



To be named sixth best retail centre in country is testament to how well our businesses have adjusted and how much residents want to support local retail."

Cllr Dyball adds, "Despite the huge challenges of the last year we have seen new independent businesses open in Sevenoaks, with more to come. This is an exciting time for Sevenoaks and we are looking forward to all the shops and hospitality venues across our District reopening so our towns can continue thrive."

The HDH Vitality List was published on 8 February 2021. To find out more visit [www.hdh.co.uk](http://www.hdh.co.uk)

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# SAFER INTERNET DAY GOES ONLINE

Safer Internet Day took place on Tuesday 9th February and although it was a little different this year, twenty schools across the District still took part.

Instead of the usual workshops organised by Sevenoaks District Council and the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership, the schools took part in a day of online learning.

The theme of this year's event was the reliability of the internet and learning how to separate fact from fiction. The primary schools that took part learnt helpful tricks and tips to stay safe on the internet in a fun and engaging way.

The secondary schools' presentation went through the reliability of influencers on social media and how to spot what they are selling. This was made in conjunction with Sevenoaks District Youth Assembly.

Throughout the day, the schools shared photos of their activities and their participation certificates on social media.



Cabinet Member for People and Places, Cllr Lesley Dyball says:

"Helping young people to stay safe online is a priority for the Council. We were delighted that so many schools could take part. The internet has transformed our lives for the better, but we know there are potential risks."

"This year's event was a fun way to help young people spot fake and misleading information online. This should stand them in good stead for many years to come."

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## BUSINESSES BENEFIT FROM £33 MILLION IN GRANTS

A year after the pandemic hit the UK, Sevenoaks District Council has distributed over £33 million in grants to in excess of 5,000 local businesses in the District.

More recently, since the second lockdown in November, the Council has paid out over 3,000 grants totalling around £7.4 million, with support set to continue in line with the Government's roadmap for easing restrictions.

Cllr Matthew Dickins, the Council's Cabinet Member for Finance and Investments, says, "Our District's businesses are the beating heart of the area, providing employment, the goods and services we all need, and vibrancy to our high streets. This past year has been a period of unparalleled challenge for them and Sevenoaks District Council will continue to play its part by providing support as we count down the return to normality."

Businesses who have not applied yet are being encouraged to contact the Council as soon as



possible to see if they are eligible for the next payment cycle for grants.

To find out more about current grants and eligibility, visit [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/lockdownsupport](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/lockdownsupport)

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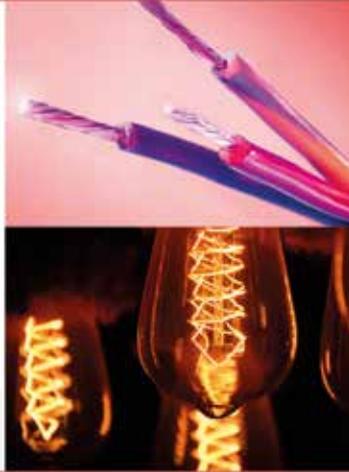


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## TRAVEL UPDATE WITH KENT TRAVEL COUNSELLOR STEVE GOSTLING

As the vaccine roll continues at a great pace in the UK, around the world the picture is more fragmented. Currently it's looking like the safest bet for a 2021 holiday is to stay in the UK.

### What will a staycation mean for you in 2021?

It's a chance to reunite with friends that we haven't seen for over a year, catching up on the things we've missed as we enjoy the activities that we love in the UK's finest settings.

It's an opportunity to make memories with our loved ones. After so much time spent apart, we're all eager to be together enjoying each other's company whether that's on a picturesque beach, in a lush green valley or in a private lodge or villa.

Rekindling our sense of adventure, more and more people have expressed their desire to reconnect with the great outdoors, getting out into the wilderness and feeling the regenerative power of nature.

Some long overdue alone time after months of home-schooling have left many parents in need of a short break to enjoy one another's company without distraction. Whether it's with a stay in one of the UK's finest spas, a foodie break at a Michelin-starred country hotel, or simply retreating to a private little hideaway on the coast, I can create your romantic couple's getaway to give you that alone time that you deserve this year.

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**An interview with senior audiologist, Sandra Rodrigues, Hearbase at Sevenoaks Medical Centre, part of KIMS Hospital**

**What is an audiologist?**

An audiologist is a clinical health care professional responsible for helping those who have problems with their hearing and balance disorders. It's a highly qualified role, and each day an audiologist could be assessing and fitting hearing aids, providing ear protection, tinnitus support and advising on balance and wax removal.



**How long have you been at Hearbase?**

I have been at Hearbase for over 7 years now and I enjoy my work, especially meeting and helping so many people in the local community, old and young, including children, from all walks of life. I am based at the new Hearbase clinic at the wonderful Sevenoaks Medical Centre, Beadle House, London Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 2JD.

**What are the first signs of a hearing problem?**

Some of the early signs are when you struggle to keep up with conversation in noisy places, when your family tell you the TV is too loud, or when you have difficulty hearing people clearly. If you experience ringing or buzzing in your ears, or head, or a feeling of blockage, these can also be early signs of hearing loss. Also, if you find you can hear better when you look into people's faces that is also a red flag and you should get your hearing tested.



**Why should I have my hearing tested?**

Not being able to hear, seriously impacts your quality of life, not to mention talking with friends, family and others. I recommend if you show any of these early signs, you should get it checked. If you are concerned about someone close to you who struggles to hear, speak to them about getting a free hearing test and why not join them to offer support if they need a little bit of encouragement?



**Why should I go to Hearbase at Sevenoaks Medical Centre?**

Well, to start, our hearing tests are completely free. This isn't unique to us, you can get your hearing tested elsewhere, but as we are expert audiologists, if we find anything of concern after your free hearing test, we will point you in the direction of specialist services quickly. We are a really friendly bunch of people and our focus is to listen and help you to manage your hearing.

**How should I look after my hearing?**

If you notice any change to your hearing, large or small, then always get it checked. Having a hearing test should be done regularly like you do with your teeth and eyes. This is important however old or young you are. If you work in a noisy place or have a history of hearing loss in your family, have a hearing test, it only takes 30 minutes.



From 1 to 5 March, Sevenoaks School hosted its annual STEM Week event under the new title, STEMagination Week. Taking the theme of creativity in science, the programme included online shows, insightful lectures and competitions for students and staff from Sevenoaks School and other local schools. Over 30 schools took part in virtual experiments and insightful talks.

The line-up of events included an interesting 3D printing session of the Bloodhound supersonic car, a slow drawing class designed to explore the power of observation, and a liquid nitrogen workshop, which left viewers amazed.

Students also had the opportunity to watch and engage with award-winning shows from Science Made Simple, which broke down the science in sport, music, bubbles and engineering.

Organised by the department of Science and Technology, the event is part of Sevenoaks School's ongoing Outreach programme, which broadens access to resources for local schools and teachers.

Guest speakers included: Dr Matthew Chalmers, editor of CERN Courier magazine, who led a workshop discussing the vital role of science communication; Professor Dame Janet Thornton, director emerita at the European Bioinformatics Institute (EBI), who hosted a talk on the interesting world of proteins; Dr Laura Hepburn, oceanographer, who spoke about her research into hydrothermal vents in the deep oceans using robotic technology, and Dr Francisco Diego, UCL, who taught younger students to "Think Universe!".



There was something for everyone with content tailored to audiences from Key Stage 1 up to Key Stage 5. The programme was created to showcase scientific innovation and inspire creative thinking in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The virtual event links will remain on the Sevenoaks School website for schools to continue to access as an ongoing STEM resource.

Dr Ali Galloni, Head of Science and Technology at Sevenoaks School, comments: "This event gives us an opportunity to explore ideas across different subject areas which may offer new perspectives. It is so enjoyable to facilitate collaboration and discussion between the external speakers, our own school community and especially the wider schools' network. We are delighted that so many have taken part in the event virtually this year."

For more information on the Sevenoaks Outreach Programme, please visit: [www.outreach.sevenoaksschool.org/events](http://www.outreach.sevenoaksschool.org/events)



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According to Nick White, chairman of Sevenoaks u3a: "When you join Sevenoaks u3a, then for £13 per person per year you get access to more than 90 Special Interest Groups and Open Interest Meetings, but also access to the whole wealth of national resources at the Third Age Trust.

Space willing, you even get the ability to apply to participate in the Groups run by other u3as in the area, sometimes for a small extra charge.

Some Groups' members share the cost of hall hire or of other facilities but for many there is no further charge. It's incredible value for money!"

**What is u3a?**

u3a is a UK-wide collection of locally-run organisations that provide a wide range of opportunities to come together to learn for fun.

There are 1,039 u3as in the UK with over 430,000 members; membership is open to everyone who's no longer in full-time work, usually retired, part-retired or nearing retirement.

The aim of a u3a is to bring together people to develop their interests and continue their learning in a friendly and informal environment.

In Sevenoaks, despite the lockdown, more than 50 of our Groups have maintained their normal schedule with online meetings through the last 12 months.

From Arts & Crafts to Wine Tasting and with Study Groups ranging through sciences, languages, photography and walking, Sevenoaks u3a members find something for everyone.

At the national level there is the National learning programme with many initiatives, competitions and challenges – creative, history, maths, crafts and so much more including Online Workshops, Tutorials, Zoom Tutorials, Events and Talks. Keep in touch with the national newsletter and the new Radio u3a on YouTube!

Sevenoaks u3a has reciprocal arrangements with Knole u3a and members can now join 20 of their Interest Groups.

Other u3as such as Westerham and Edenbridge permit our members to join their groups, if they have vacancies.

If you want to get involved but you are not yet a member – why not consider joining? You can find more on our website: [www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk](http://www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk)



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# Why You Should *make a will*

## ✓ If you are a single person

You may want your estate to go to friends and charities as well as family.

## ✓ If you are living as a couple

But officially not married, you may be treated as a single person and surviving partner may get nothing at all.

## ✓ If you are married

Don't assume 'my other half' will get everything. Brothers, sisters or parents may have a claim. Often children have a right to part of your estate.

## ✓ If you are a parent

You should consider who would look after your children in the event of your death. This is particularly important in the case of 'one parent families' and unmarried parents living together.

A valid will nominating guardians is invaluable in such cases. If no one knows what you wanted, the court will decide on the future of your children.

## ✓ If you are retired

Possibly you made a will a long time ago. It probably needs updating to include additional grandchildren.

## However, Do Not Worry If You Have Not Made A Will The State Will Decide For You

It won't be what you want and it's certain not to reflect your wishes

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How safe are your online interactions?

It's easy to share our lives with the world today. It only takes a few clicks to share those special moments with family and friends. Social media has been a lifeline for many during the pandemic. But the Information we share may end up being available to a far wider group than our immediate social circle, and with hundreds of millions of users online, unfortunately some of these people may have sinister agendas.

By sharing information about our lives, we offer potential criminals the opportunity to gather useful information about us. Even information which seems harmless may be a useful to criminals looking to perpetrate a scam.

Remember these five tips:

Friendships - When accepting friend requests be cautious. Do you know whether their profile is real, or could it be fake?

Manage your privacy settings – Only share information with people in your network.



Check the settings regularly in case there are any changes.

Never divulge personal information - Be suspicious of anyone who asks you for your information that may be used to identify you, such as a social security number.

Change your passwords frequently - Choose a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols. It's best to use different passwords for each account.

Close old accounts - Don't risk leaving personal data in an old account. Close accounts that you don't use and delete as much personal information from them as possible.



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Following on from last month's list of essential garden tools for beginners I thought I'd explain about the humble hoe.

When I first started gardening, I didn't really understand how to use one. There are a couple of varieties of hoe and they are used in different ways, and they really are your friend at this time of year.

The hoe is actually one of the most ancient garden tools and came before the plough. It's mentioned in Egyptian art, the Code of Hammurabi and in the Bible.

The reason spring is a great time to put your hoe to good use is because right now is when the annual weeds (the ones that self-seed freely and pop up all over the place every year) have started to germinate.

The aim when hoeing, aim to sever the top growth from the roots, just below the soil surface, then leave it in the sun to dry out and die. Hoeing is best done when the soil is dry as this creates a 'dust mulch' which inhibits the germination of new weeds.

I prefer a hoe with a long handle because it's better for preventing back pain. I also have a short-handled hoe known as an 'onion hoe' for closely planted areas.

A shorted handle gives more control, so you don't damage your prized plants.

It's important to note that hoeing only kills the annual weeds, not the deep-rooted perennial weeds, those need to be dug up by hand.

There is also a tool called a Dutch hoe. This is used by sweeping it smoothly over the soil so that the surface is just 'brushed'. If used correctly it slices the tops from the weeds. It's actually simple to use but you do need to practice your technique. Slice the tops of weeds by bringing the hoe towards you, altering the angle to accommodate slopes. When you turn over a Dutch hoe you can use it to make a shallow trench called a seed drill to sow larger seeds, like peas into. Larger seeds are better because they need to be covered well.

Your hoes need to be kept sharp and well maintained for maximum effectiveness. I use a metal file to both clean and sharpen, but you can buy sharpening stones reasonably cheaply and they are easy to use.

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# RAIL STRATEGY – WEST KENT IN NEED OF MODERNISATION

A new Kent Rail Strategy for the next decade and beyond has been officially adopted as Kent County Council's rail policy, having been approved by Cabinet Members.

This ambitious plan is intended to influence the provision of train services in the county of Kent well into the next decade.

The new rail strategy has been through an extensive consultation process, which generated almost two hundred responses from members of the public, rail user and rail association groups, community rail partnerships, representatives from the rail industry, and every level of local government across the county.

It sets out the requirements that Kent County Council considers are needed to support improvements to rail services to meet the expected rise in passenger levels across the High Speed, Mainline and Metro networks by 2031. The key measures outlined in the strategy are:

- Enhanced passenger services across Kent
- The delivery of rail infrastructure enhancements
- An expanded fleet of new High Speed trains
- A replacement fleet for the Metro services
- Improved station facilities and passenger communications.

The new rail strategy states that the Metro fleet serving West Kent is in "urgent need of modern, higher capacity trains which offer real benefits for these frequent commuter services".

It goes on to add that "The High Speed fleet serving North and East Kent is in immediate need of strengthening to meet the demand for these highly successful services."

KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Michael Payne, said: "We want to ensure that Kent's rail network will help deliver economic growth and continue to provide what our travelling public want and need.

"We do not pretend to know all the answers, but we do want to ensure that the voice of our residents is heard.

"The goals of this strategy mean that we are representing the needs of rail passengers across Kent. With a new South Eastern concession award expected in due course, as well as national rail policy on the cusp of further major change, we wish to make sure the voice of Kent residents is heard.



"It is also important to show our ambition for improved rail links from Kent with the rest of the south-east region, such as a through service linking Kent via Tonbridge with Gatwick Airport, as well as continuing to apply pressure for a better service between Maidstone and the City of London, at least initially to Blackfriars and eventually through to St Pancras and Cambridge."

KCC Rail Project Manager, Stephen Gasche, said: "While recognising the dramatic decrease in passenger demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the County Council is planning for the future.

"We expect that by about 2025 demand will have returned to its pre-pandemic levels, and the proposals in our new rail strategy aim to ensure Kent's rail network meets this challenge.

"Even allowing for a likely change in the number of passengers working five days a week in London, we need to plan now for future passenger growth which will in any event arise from the proposed increases in housing and population across the county between now and 2031."

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PREPARATION TIME: 15 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 25 MINUTES

SERVES: 2

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely sliced
- 120g Chorizo, sliced
- 1 yellow pepper, finely sliced
- 1 orange or red pepper, finely sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ½ tsp sweet smoked paprika
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 1 tbsp capers (optional)
- 2 large eggs (4 if you're really hungry!)
- 2 tbsp fresh chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 thick slices of bread

**METHOD**

Preheat the oven to 200°C, gas mark 6. Use a frying pan with an ovenproof handle. Heat the olive oil, then add the onion and chopped chorizo. Soften for 5 minutes. Add the peppers and cook for a further 2-3 minutes until they soften too. Stir in the crushed garlic and sweet smoked paprika, cook for another 1 minute. Pour in the tomatoes and add the capers, lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes, until the tomatoes reduce and thicken a little.

Make two or four wells in the thick sauce and gently crack an egg into each.

Place the pan into the preheated oven for 10 minutes, or until the whites are set but the yolks are still runny. Towards the end of the cooking time, toast the bread.

Remove the eggs from the oven, scatter with the parsley and serve with the toasted bread, drizzled with a little olive oil.

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