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Published by the KM Group, a family-owned company. Chairman: Geraldine Allison, Medway House, Gainsbury Close, Thomas Longley Road, Medway City Estate, Strood, Rochester ME2 4DL. Registered at the Post Office as a newspaper. Printed by Trinity Mirror Printing, St Albans Road, Watford.



Andy Waller, director at Waller Building Services, hands the keys to Swale Skills Centre principal Clayton Laker, watched by guests and students
Picture: John Westthrop. FM4006692

New skills centre opens doors to students

The new £1.3 million Swale Skills Centre has opened its doors to students.

An official opening ceremony for the building, in St Michael's Road, Sittingbourne, was held on Thursday when principal Clayton Laker was handed the keys by builder Waller Building Services.

The new college, designed by Kent Design Studio, will provide more opportunities for Swale's young people in

subjects such as catering and hospitality, and hair and beauty and complements the existing Swale Skills Centre.

It features a cafe and restaurant, backed by MasterChef presenter Gregg Wallace and overseen by resident chef Oliver Ross, and a state-of-the-art kitchen where up to 16 students can be trained.

There are also two salons, called Headturners, and

a treatment room where people will be able to receive treatments from students

under the supervision of hair and beauty therapists, as well as classrooms and IT suites.

Mr Laker said: "This new college represents the biggest change in the options available to the young people of Swale in many years."

"The broad range of courses that we offer is complemented by a growing apprenticeship

programme, developed in partnership with local businesses."

The courses will be delivered by the Swale Academies Trust, which includes Westlands and Sittingbourne Community College.

Others at the opening included trust principal Jon Whitcombe, SCC head Fiona Trigwell and Sittingbourne and Sheppey MP Gordon Henderson.

'Corbyn has created new boost for us'

The leader of Swale council's Labour group has welcomed the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the new party leader.

Cllr Roger Truelove says there is a great deal of support at local level for the veteran left-winger, who was chosen to lead the party on Saturday after winning nearly 60% of the 400,000 votes cast by members.

Mr Corbyn's victory has created tensions in the top of the party, with more than half-a-dozen shadow cabinet members resigning within hours of him taking up the role.

Cllr Truelove praised Mr Corbyn's election for "creating a renewed interest" in the party. He said: There has undoubtedly been a mood in the party and among supporters for something more distinctive in opposing the Conservatives.

"I have no doubt some of the Corbyn messages will get refined, such as the opposition to Nato.

"We have a duty now to be an effective opposition and to do this we must be united and we must be tolerant of the range of views in the party on some matters."

The Sittingbourne and Sheppey Labour Party had backed Yvette Cooper for the top job.

■ What do you think of the new leader? Email sittingbourne@thekmgroupp.co.uk or write to us at, 44 High Street, Sheerness, ME12 1NL.

910 burglaries reported in past 32 months

Raiders breaks into

