

Minutes of the Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council meeting held on Monday 12th February 2024 in Aldington Village Hall at 7:30pm.

Present: Councillors; L Harman (Chair), R Boulding, L Guy, P Hannabuss, H Stebbings, G Taylor, S Wagstaff and J Weatherall.

In attendance: Peter Setterfield PSLCC, Parish Clerk.

Also present: P New (Neighbourhood Watch) and 4 residents.

1369. Apologies for absence:

There were no apologies for absence.

1370. Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

1371. Public participation:

A resident reported that some posts had been inserted into the verge at the junction of Frith Road/Bank Road which are very close to the carriageway. This will be reported to Kent Highways.

A question was asked why the newly planted tree on Reynolds Playing Field had been dug up and replanted the other side of the footpath on Quarry Field. This matter has been passed on to the Reynolds Playing Field Charity for consideration/action.

1372. Neighbourhood Watch:

Report attached. Congratulations were passed on for the highly successful Hub and for the recent recycling day.

1373. Ashford Borough Councillor's Report:

The Ashford Local Plan 2041 is now officially off the starting blocks. The Call for Sites brought forth 280 different proposed sites for a variety of uses. Planning are now logging and uploading the sites to the ABC website. They are anticipated to be made public sometime early March and discussions around future housing strategy are anticipated to start in the summer. Many rounds of public consultation will follow.

Council will finalise council tax setting at Full Council on 7th March. Given that we are a council with no over all control, we anticipate that there will be a robust discussion as there are a variety of views, as always, on this topic and it is a subject that lends itself to political point scoring.

The current refuse and recycling contract with Biffa finishes at the end of March. The new contractor will be a company called Suez. All current Biffa staff will TUPE across to the new Suez contract. Information about the new contract and how it will affect us will start shortly. One key change is that we will move to having half the borough having their grey bins collected, and half the borough having recycling collected simultaneously. At present the 'green bins day', applies to the whole borough for a given week. This change enables equipment to be used more effectively. Collection routes will change and so collection times and even the day may be subject to change. Another change is that waste electrical items (WEE) will no longer be collected kerbside. Current refuse lorries have a small compartment for picking up

WEE. There have been many complaints because, when the small bin fills up, the bin contractors are unable to collect items that are left out. You will have seen that a WEE recycling event ran in Aldington last Saturday. This is part of testing formats to see how we can collect WEE sustainably. The event in Aldington was a resounding success. People definitely embraced the convenience of having items collected locally. I hope that we will run it again and am due to discuss how this might happen with the ABC recycling manager next week.

The Picture House in Elwick Place has been in the local news this week, as Picture House, a part of Cineworld, pulled out of running the venue. ABC have stepped in temporarily in partnership with a specialist consultancy to keep the venue open in the town centre. A revue of current operations, revenues and opportunities is currently being undertaken. The first change you will see will be a re-branding of the venue, which will launch under a new name. Hopefully we will find out what this will look like in a few weeks time.

Lastly, you may be interested to know that Ashford Borough Council was among three expert witnesses from Kent who attended a Select Committee meeting on 31st January. ABC, KCC and Visit Kent told the committee that, as the gateway to Europe, if Kent is blocked, supply chains will also be fundamentally impacted, and therefore, the implementation of EES checks is not just a Kent problem – but a national problem. ABC also took the opportunity to point out that uncertainty about border support and infrastructure for the new entry system could put the return of international train services to Kent in further jeopardy.

1374. Minutes:

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8th January 2024 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

1375. Chairman's Report:

As of last weekend, the Children's Library Kiosk is back in use. Thank you very much to Colin for not only replacing the broken panes of glass but also giving the whole kiosk and internal shelving a fresh coat of paint. I have today replaced the last batch of books and Ginny and I will have the signage replaced over the coming few days. Several residents have already commented favourably and I very much hope that the increased public awareness will deter further vandalism.

As you all know, discussing dogs and dog fouling is not my favourite topic. Last week there was much social media discussion about the poo-bag dispensers on Reynold's Playing Field following a slight hiccup in the filling of them. I'd like to thank Lyn Earnshaw who kindly continued to fill up the Reynold's dispenser until the stock of bags held by Dave Earnshaw ran out. This having now happened, we fortunately have a new volunteer in the form of Mr John Taylor who, together with his daughter Sarah will now make sure that the bag dispensers on both Reynolds and Aldington Meadows recreation areas are kept filled up. Whilst this is an expense to the parish, I believe that it is preferable to the risk of even more dog fouling of the public areas. It also means that some kind souls, who love dogs and the community, have bags available to clear up after the less responsible dog owners. Not that this should be necessary but unfortunately is.

Preparations for the new wild flower seeding and planting behind Quarry pond has unfortunately provoked adverse reaction from some. The stakes and ropes installed by Led by the Wild have been pulled out several times and the explanation signs discarded. I consider that this is the action of a person who considers the stakes dangerous rather than wanton vandalism. I will raise a discussion about alternative, maybe more permanent solutions in the later agenda item for Quarry Pond and Field.

Lastly, I am glad to see that the burst pipes at both ends of Roman Road are now repaired. Despite grumbles from some the road closure at the Post Office end was for the prescribed 4 days of the permit and the repair was carried out in that time. Emergency repairs are just that; inconvenient but highly necessary. Whilst on the topic of the Post Office end of Roman Road. I have also seen grumbles about the revisions to the Calleywell/ Roman Road junction. The key board warriors have suggested that large or long vehicles are having to mount the pavement to enter Calleywell from Roman Road. If any one sees this occur please could you record and let us know? The junction revisions were carried out by KCC Highways and so should be suitable for all vehicles but if there is evidence to the contrary, I would like to know about it. I have not seen any such incident myself. The Clap Hill junction with Roman Road gives me greater concern, frankly. Also on the agenda this evening is the setting of a date for a meeting to be held in public to discuss items we would like to place on the parish Highways Improvement Plan.

1376. Solar:

The EDF application on Church Lane is out to consultation until 10th March.

Evolution Power has submitted another round of limited consultation this morning. We haven't had chance to look to see exactly what it is about, but the consultation runs until after our next meeting so we will respond next month.

The Chair has this month met with ecologist Martin Newcombe and been in further correspondence with KCC Highways via KCC Councillor David Robey.

Report from the Aldington and Mersham Support Group:

1. Derek Burles of our group made a presentation to the Parish Council Meeting on 15th January. This provided an outline of the draft submission which the group had been preparing for some time which contests the adequacy of the Statutory Consultation process undertaken by Evolution Power/EPL001.
2. We made a written submission and request for funds to the clerk last month seeking the council's approval to meeting the quoted fixed fee of Counsel for providing advice on our draft submission which we had submitted to him. The quoted fee was £1500 plus VAT.
3. We explained to the council the rationale behind obtaining advice at this stage ahead of the DCO application – principally because this would be the only opportunity to get the applicant to think again about the design of the scheme and in particular the Scale, Location and Cumulative Effect. Once the application proceeds to Examination the opportunity to materially alter the proposal is strictly limited.

4. After discussions between members of our group and the parish council at this meeting, the council agreed, by a majority decision, to meet only 50% of the quoted fee and subject to being provided with a copy of the completed document in the form submitted to EPL001 and ABC before making the agreed contribution.
5. Having obtained the required advice from Counsel the submission was made by email to both EPL001 and ABC on 31st January 2024. Both parties have acknowledged safe receipt by email. The following day we arranged for a copy of the submission to be emailed to the council's clerk.
6. Members of our group met with CPRE in the village on 22nd January. We were able to give them a good idea of the scale of the scheme from numerous vantage points during the visit. This was a follow-up to an earlier meeting we had with them late last year at Cleeve Hill Solar, Faversham where CPRE have been (and continue to be) heavily involved and because of this have good first-hand knowledge of this sort of solar NSIP proposal. We are working closely with them and hope for their strong support in what we are trying to do.
7. We are in the process of preparing a hardcopy update on the stage now reached in the work we have been doing which we propose to hand-deliver to each household in the parish. Among other things, the update will provide everyone with the means of obtaining a copy of the submission we have made if they so wish. They will be given an email address to contact.
8. The update will also give details of the next community meeting at which we will be able to provide much more information, answer questions about the next steps and importantly extend an invitation for those who are prepared to volunteer their services.
9. We are liaising with Mersham (and Smeeth and Brabourne) parish councils – each of which have also received a copy of our submission. We are hopeful that the points we have raised will resonate with them and that they will lend their support by making appropriate representations. It would be very helpful if members of these communities are also willing to volunteer assistance.
10. We are in the process of developing a budget cost for engaging the expertise we will need – whether or not the submission we have made results in a requirement for a further statutory consultation phase.
11. We recognise that we are going to have to find ways in which we can raise funds and as we have stated previously, our hope and expectation is that we will obtain support from the Parish Council (and indeed other parish councils) as part of an overall fundraising endeavour.
12. Elsewhere, EDF have now submitted further documentation to ABC in relation to their proposed 49.9MW scheme. The details are on the planning portal. Observations and comments are invited before the end of February. The planning application number is 22/00668/AS. Despite EDF being non-responsive to enquiries about what has happened to their application over the last year it would appear from an initial appraisal of the new documents that have suddenly emerged that very little has changed over this period other than the completion of an archaeological dig report.

Jerry Newson Chair AMMSG gave a report from Derek Burles regarding his resignation from the group on health grounds and about other matters. On behalf of AMMSG Jerry publicly thanked Derek for his considerable efforts and support and wished him well in recovering to full well being.

1377. Finance:

Schedule of payments:

Payee	Purpose	Amount
J Tennant	Adequacy submission	£900.00
Ashford conservatories	Door at village hall	£1,300.00
Staff costs		£2,809.15
Harmer & Sons	Grounds maintenance	£990.00
M Gibbs	War Memorial garden	£95.97
Treeventures	Tree survey	£760.00
Aldington Village Hall	Room hire	£144.00
Handyman expenses		£251.67
G Taylor	Reimbursement	£130.66

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and authorise the payment of the items of expenditure**
- 2. To authorise the transfer of £5,000.00 from deposit account to current account.**

1378. Finance, Quarterly review:

Report ABPC/23/011 brings to the Parish Council an update on its financial standing against its budget at the end of the third quarter of the financial year.

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note report ABPC/23/011**
- 2. To receive and note the financial position at the end of the third quarter of the financial year.**

Councillor Taylor left the meeting.

1379. Planning Committee:

Three applications were considered by the committee:

Bank Farm, Bank Road change of use and conversion of agricultural unit to Storage and Distribution the application lacked information as to the type of storage, the number of vehicle movements and that the Fire Authority had not been consulted.

Land South of M20 Church Lane, the EDF application for a solar farm a further objection submitted on the grounds that previous concerns had not been addressed.

Goldenhurst Farm, Giggers Green Road further information as to whether battery storage was to be installed, routing of cable and permission from Network Power is to be sought.

1380. Neighbourhood Plan:

The Statutory consultation period is coming to an end and the Inspector has been appointed. Ashford Borough Council will be submitting the plan together with its and other responses to the Planning Inspector in due course.

1381. Highways:

The Parish Council is due to review its Highways Improvement Plan in the coming weeks. It is recommended that a public meeting is held to ascertain the views of residents before compiling and submitting the plan to Kent Highways for approval.

Resolved: A meeting will be held on February 26th to discuss highways issues and determine the priorities for the Highways Improvement Plan.

1382. Events Committee:

The Village Hall events committee have arranged a number of events over the coming months. The Parish Council will be organising a litter pick on 16th March and will be arranging the Summer Fete on 11th August 2024.

1383. Quarry Wood:

The tree survey has been completed and has identified some trees that need attention, quotations for this work are being sought.

1384. Quarry Field and Pond:

The yellow rattle seeds have been sown and plug wild flowers will be sown towards the end of March. Discussion was held regarding making it clear that this area was separate from the main field with the possibility of installing a post and rail fence.

Arrangements will be made shortly to undertake the clearance of the parrot weed in the pond which will be done by hand.

1385. Aldington Meadows:

Clearance of the old tennis court is now underway with the vegetation being removed from site.

1386. Otterpool:

Progress on this development has slowed as Folkestone and Hythe District Council have reviewed their long term financial provisions and determined that they need to work with a partner to enable the scheme to be delivered. The team, although scaled back, are currently working on drawing up the s106 agreement in readiness for when a partner is appointed. The plans for the waste water treatment works are being developed as this needs to be in place at the outset.

The team are currently developing their A20 strategy for improvements between Sellindge and Junction 11 of the M20 although this will be phased in line with any building works.

1387. Any items for information:

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:05pm

REPORT TO ALDINGTON & BONNINGTON PARISH COUNCIL FEB 2024.

You saw my personal action plan at the last council meeting. The areas I would be working on and my priorities. That plan is now across the Ashford District.

This month I am targeting AVOIDABLE and PREVENTABLE CRIMES.

Key areas that must be at the front our prevention work under that heading are as follows.

Vehicles, Sheds and Garages (in rural areas we add Barns and Stables)

We must win the constant battle to ensure residents leave nothing whatsoever on show in a vehicle when parked especially last park up for the night.

When parking I am asking drivers to adopt Pete's 10 second rule". Park a vehicle, lock it and stand and look inside the vehicle. If you can see something so can a criminal and your vehicle is at risk, and you could be a victim of crime!

Areas for residents to risk asses are....

- 1. Outside your home address**
- 2. Parking at somewhere like a Railway Station where criminals will tour around as they know vehicles are there for some time. Parking in rural areas and going off for walks.**
- 3. Visits away from home in shopping centre car parks/cinemas etc.**



The worst example I can give however is the next time you attend a funeral look what it says in the car park. **THIEVES OPERATE IN THIS CAR PARK.**

Why? because we are not at our best at funerals, we dread a mobile phone going off albeit we checked it is off 10 times. We leave it in the glove box. Ladies leave handbags under the front seats. Criminals know this and they know the car will be left for about 45 minutes. **AVOIDABLE and PREVENTABLE!**

Please try to keep all outbuildings, sheds, garages, barns, and stables as secure as possible.

Especially look at shed security. Do not keep expensive items in a shed with just a nail holding the door shut.

Criminals especially in dark winter hours will be looking for easy targets like sheds and garages. Good locks and lighting can help. Chain items together in sheds, anything to slow down “chancers and opportunists”.

Protect your property

Given the opportunity, thieves will target **sheds and garages** for items such as high-value power tools and bikes.

Take measures to protect your valuables and reduce this risk of theft.



- Keep garages or sheds locked when not in use
- Consider fitting security alarms and external lights where possible
- Security mark valuable items and keep receipts somewhere safe
- Lock away tools or equipment that could be stolen or used to break in to your property
- Dispose of packaging carefully – wrapping and boxes can advertise rich pickings for criminals

Allotment Watch area

This allotment is part of the **Kent Allotment Watch** scheme

This area is regularly patrolled by police



Members have taken extra security measures to keep their sheds safe

Report it

Online www.kent.police.uk/report
Talk to us on LiveChat
www.kent.police.uk/contact



Contacting Kent Police
Report a non-urgent crime online www.kent.police.uk/report
Talk to us on LiveChat – available 24/7 www.kent.police.uk/contact
In an emergency, if crime is in progress or life is in danger call **999**
If deaf or speech impaired, text 'police' and your message to **60066**
www.kent.police.uk   

Sadly, many of the shed break ins are carried out to steal items to fund a drug habit.

Items often targeted are bikes, golf clubs, expensive fishing tackle and tools.

The next AVOIDABLE and PREVENTABLE CRIME is

Theft of internet shopping parcels off of doorsteps.

Firstly, you are vulnerable to a passing “chancer and opportunist” who is passing and there is a parcel to pick up! We now must accept that delivery vans are followed so the most rural and outlying properties can be a victim of crime.

Please try to ensure safe delivery are made.



CRIME

Parcel thefts rise from doorsteps as gangs follow courier vans



You will recall that last year a series of high-end keyless cars were taken across East Kent. Approximately 40 vehicles. Thankfully several of the criminals were arrested and put before the courts. Vigilant work by Neighbourhood Watch members assisted those arrests and were thanked by the crime squad.

Recently that crime has returned to Ashford District, so I am alerting all communities to be alert and vigilant and ensure the safety and security of your keys is a number one priority.



Above shows criminal approaching a keyless car. The backpack contains a form of reading device for the car keys.

It is essential that anyone seeing these events calls 999 immediately. These events were failed attempts thankfully however on this occasion these criminals toured about 10 other roads nearby.

These events were in recent weeks in Kennington and a keyless car was taken in Bethersden over the weekend 27th/28th January.

Community assistance

Detective Constable Scott Drake, Kent Police's investigating officer, said: 'These three men were relentless in their targeting of cars to steal and quickly take out of the county.'

'I would like to thank the local Neighbourhood Watch coordinators who worked tirelessly to obtain crucial CCTV footage and for the support of the local communities in providing important evidence in this case.'

'I am pleased our meticulous investigation saw these men arrested and charged, and they are now no longer at liberty to steal people's property.'

The sentences come two weeks after two other men were jailed for a total of five years for similar offences.

Advice

Following the cases, drivers of cars with keyless entry systems are advised to take steps to ensure their vehicles are secure. Motorists should:

- Check if their entry fobs can be turned off overnight and store them away from any household entry points.
- Drivers can also store their fobs in special foil-lined bags, which can be bought from retailers, to prevent any unwanted communication between the vehicle and its keys.
- Make sure you don't leave your car keys visible from the outside of your home and park in a garage, secure car park or well-lit area covered by CCTV if possible.
- Consider having windows etched with the vehicle registration number or use an invisible ink marker pen to mark these details and your postcode on the underside frame of the vehicle.

For more information, visit [the advice page on our website](#).

Preventing car and vehicle theft

Don't let thieves get an easy ride. Follow these simple rules to protect your vehicle from thieves.

1. Lock your vehicle

Locking your vehicle, even when filling up or parked on your drive, greatly reduces the possibility of it being targeted by an opportunist thief. Even if you have locked your vehicle, check you haven't left any windows or the sunroof open.

It is actually illegal to leave your vehicle running unattended while you de-ice it or warm it up in cold weather. If someone takes it while it's left like this, your insurer won't pay out because you won't be covered.

If your vehicle has wing mirrors that fold in automatically when locked, make sure you lock it properly. Criminal gangs are looking for vehicles like these where the wing mirrors are still out because it is clear to them that the vehicle has been left unlocked.

2. Keep the keys safe

Vehicles today are by and large more difficult to steal than ever, unless the thief can access your key or fob to clone them. Keep your keys safe, out of view when at home, and away from your front door. It's not uncommon for car keys to be stolen from inside your home by thieves fishing for them with a stick and hook through the letterbox.

If you're selling your car and you meet up with a potential buyer, do not allow the keys out of your sight. Your keys may be cloned by thieves and used later to steal your vehicle.

Keyless entry

Cars with keyless entry unlock automatically when the key comes within a short distance of the car. This can be from inside a pocket or bag. If you have to push a button on your car key to open your car, you don't have keyless entry.

Keyless car theft or 'relay theft' is when a device is used to fool the car into thinking the key is close by. This unlocks the car and starts the ignition.

Thieves only need to be within a few metres of your car key to capture the signal, even if it's inside your home. This means that even if your car and home are secure, thieves can still unlock, start and steal your car.

How to protect your keyless entry car

- When at home keep your car key (and the spare) well away from the car.
- Put the keys in a screened or signal-blocking pouch, such as a Faraday Bag and check if the bag or pouch is still working every few months.
- Reprogramme your keys if you buy a second hand car.
- Turn off wireless signals on your fob when it's not being used.

Additional physical security such as locks and immobilisers are still highly recommended.

[Section six](#) on this page has more information about this.

Additional physical security can help to prevent your vehicle being driven away even if a thief gains entry. There are a range of security rated products tested by [Sold Secure](#)  that can help, such as steering wheel locks, pedal boxes and gear stick locks.

Some of these products, tested to Sold Secure Diamond, can even resist a small hand-held angle grinder.

It's also worth speaking to your vehicle dealership about installing an aftermarket immobiliser approved by the manufacturer.

Immobilisers prevent a vehicle from starting unless the correct fob, key or activation process is used. They can be personalised so that you're the only one who knows how to unset it via a number of dashboard controls.

The above guidance will be helpful and safe storage of keys for keyless ignition cars are essential.

A key part of the Action plan for 2024 is to ensure ALL CRIMES ARE REPORTED.

It allows proactive patrols to be planned. It allows the best possible crime prevention advice to be issued. It allows us to help plot crime trends and warn areas nearby. It allows us to assist officers with investigations and builds a full picture of the crime trends and extent of the crimes.



By phone

Emergency

999

Call **999** if:

- a serious offence is in progress or has just been committed
- someone is in immediate danger or harm
- property is in danger of being damaged
- a serious disruption to the public is likely

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use our textphone service **18000**.

Or text us on **999** if you've pre-registered with the [emergencySMS service](#) .

British Sign Language (BSL) users please use our [video relay service](#)  where an interpreter will help you report the crime to us.

Silent **999** calls

If you're in danger but you can't talk on the phone, you should still call **999**, then [follow these instructions](#) depending on whether you're calling from a mobile or a landline.

Non-emergency

101

Call **101** for non-emergency enquiries.

Please use [01622 690 690](#) if you're calling from outside of the UK. If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use our textphone service on [18000](#).

Anti-terrorist hotline

0800 789 321

Call the UK Anti-Terrorism Hotline on **0800 789 321** if you've seen or heard something that you think could suggest terrorist activity.

The three main methods for reporting to the police are 999, crimes in progress or have just happened or about to happen.

101 non urgent calls to Police Force Control

Report online/live chat to Force Control.

However, in rural areas and considering travel times I urge residents to use 999 and let Kent Police Force Control room prioritise.



Thank you for your support,

Peter

Peter New

91725 Peter New Kent Police Volunteer & Community neighbourhood Watch.