

Minutes of the Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council meeting held on Monday 13th November 2023 in Aldington Village Hall at 7:30pm.

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

In attendance: Peter Setterfield PSLCC, Parish Clerk

Also present: 6 members of the public.

1309. Apologies for absence:

P New (Neighbourhood Watch)

1310. Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

1311. Public participation:

The tennis club wish to advise the Parish Council that the lights on the MUGA are of an age that the technology is obsolete meaning that replacement parts will be unavailable. Quotations are being sought and grants being sourced to replace with LED's.

A resident questioned the fact that the agenda at item 18 excluded the public but no details were given as to what was to be discussed.

The Chairman responded that it was to deal with contract matters.

Post meeting note: it is not mandatory to list matters that are to be discussed when members of the press and public are excluded.

1312. Neighbourhood Watch:

Report attached.

1313. Ashford Borough Councillor's report:

Last Thursday I drove to Maidstone to participate in the KCC consultation on their Walking and Cycling Strategy. Did you know that one of the 15 cycling routes identified as key priorities across Kent passes through Aldington? The aim is to create a cohesive cycling network which links key trip origins with key trip destinations across the County. This one links Ashford to Folkestone and is proposed to go along Bank Road and Roman Road up to the B2067 and through Lympe.... There is also a suggestion of a cycle parking area in Aldington. This could be a good thing, as in it might bring tourism through the village – but I have my concerns about the state and the safety of our lanes for cyclists. In my view KCC should be upgrading ProWs and creating Bridleways that are off road, safe and enjoyable for cycling. I encourage you all to visit <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/kent-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan>. You'll see that there are a few consultations open at present. If you want to shape the discussion; do join in the debate.

Hot off the press news from Ashford Borough Council is that we have received notification from DEFRA that Ashford Borough Council will be the enforcement authority responsible for Sanitary and Phytosanitary SPS checks at Sevington Border Control Post. (These measures ensure that food traded is safe to eat, and

that animals and plants are free from pests and disease). The Government considered that consolidation at Sevington will enable the Border Control Post to provide, on one modern and purpose-built site, checks on the whole range of goods and live animals that arrive through both the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel. It is also ideally located to support the smooth flow of goods out of both points of entry without disrupting traffic flows out of the Port of Dover. The Sevington site also brings DEFRA operations alongside those of HMRC for greater cross Government working.

This is good news for Ashford, where staff have been recruited for activities that have been constantly delayed – but the announcement will sadly have an impact on staff at the Border Control Post at Dover. It will also probably increase traffic coming off the motorway at junctions 10 and 10a.

Finally, next week there will be an extraordinary meeting of the Council to discuss the proposed move to International House. This project aims to save £1.3m for the Medium Term Financial Plan. The savings will be delivered through consolidating in one building that requires modernisation, rather than owning two buildings that require modernisation. The savings will not affect staffing or services. As part of the current Administration at Ashford Borough Council, I very much hope that Members will vote to support this move. Concerns raised have been around whether or not the move can be accomplished for the allocated budget and the impact on the Civic Centre and Council Chamber. The latter is a concern about change and about perceived status of a building. I believe that despite the current building being bespoke built for the Council in 1983, society and technology has changed much since then. With the budget pressures that all councils currently face, maintaining services for residents should be the priority.

We wait to see...

1314. Minutes:

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th October 2023 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

1315. Chairman's report:

This month I attended the Ashford KALC meeting, held in the Civic Centre Ashford. There was an update from ABC's Head of Planning and also from Ashford Volunteer Centre. The former talked about the currently open Call for Sites and preparation for the Review of the Ashford Local Plan. The latter issued a plea for people who like people to step forward as volunteers. There is a particular urgency for volunteer drivers. This scheme enables people who find using public transport difficult – or, as in our own parish, do not have public transport options, to 'book' a driver to take them to appointments etc. If anyone is interested to get involved, I can pass on details. Another topic brought by the Ashford KALC Chair – was the use of the title Chair... KALC's parent association NALC apparently discussed the issue and decreed that all meeting Chairs are in fact Chairmen. The topic brought forth several protests from female parish Chairs, yours truly included. I will personally continue to use the title Chair as I feel it is more appropriate. Anyone interested in helping to bring this archaic organisation into the modern age might like to join me at the 76th Annual General Meeting in Ditton this Saturday....

On a more local note; the main activity this month was around the Community Meeting on Solar – about which I will update you when we reach that item on the agenda. You will have noticed that I mentioned the nature of tonight’s meeting, and the status of Members of the public attending it, at the opening of tonight’s meeting. You might also have noticed that there are a couple of changes to the meeting agenda. I would like to say that I remain firmly committed to including residents in our meetings and to modernising so that we remain an approachable and inclusive parish council. However – there is a clear difference between a Parish Council meeting and a public meeting and disruption of the Parish Council’s monthly meeting and ability to conduct its business, as has happened recently, will not be tolerated. Concerns about any Parish Council business, recording of discussions or statements are able to be made within the Public Session, a standing item on the agenda, or sent in writing through the Clerk. The public are reminded that they may observe but not participate in Parish Council discussions, unless invited to do so. I hope that you agree that councillors must feel free to contribute to discussions without intimidation.

I am delighted to be able to report, for those of you who haven’t noticed, that the new equipment for the adult outdoor gym has been installed today. It is still currently fenced off, as it will of course have to be inspected and certified as safe to use before we can open it up. Thank you to the Clerk for organising.

1316. Solar:

The Chairman reported that the community meeting held on 9th November was well received. The two ladies who had been leading the stop Stonestreet Green group have decided to step down from the role now that the newly formed Aldington and Mersham support group had been formed.

CPRE have organised a site visit to the installation currently taking place at Graveney on 7th December.

Evolution Power have provided the data behind the soil analysis that was undertaken for their submission, this needs to be reviewed by a specialist consultant to ascertain the accuracy of the published results.

ADAS have been contacted and are prepared to undertake a desktop research of the information provided by Evolution Power to ensure the methodology was correctly undertaken and produce an outcome.

The Chairman proposed that we request that ADAS, as soil specialist consultants, undertake a review on behalf of the Parish Council at a cost of £2,496 excluding VAT.

Resolved: to request ADAS to undertake a validation of the Land Classification report.

Discussion was held over the possibility of the Parish Council undertaking traffic surveys on the potentially affected roads for a period in excess of the usual one week to support the Parish Council’s case. Quotations are to be obtained for consideration.

1317. Finance:

Schedule of payments

Payee	Purpose	Amount
Handyman expenses		£157.20
Freshair fitness	Deposit outdoor gym	£6,223.14
Mazars LLP	Audit	£504.00
Aldington Village Hall	Room hire	£112.50
Harmer & Sons	Grounds maintenance	£1,368.00
Westcotec Ltd	SID repair	£80.40
Ashford Borough Council	Newsletter printing	£481.68
Staff costs		£3,583.23

Resolved:

1. To receive and authorise the payment of the items of expenditure
2. To authorise the closure of the NatWest deposit account with the balance transferred to the NatWest current account
3. To authorise the transfer of £6,000.00 from Unity Trust deposit account to Unity Trust current account.

1318. Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Consultation:

Kent County Council are currently consulting on proposals for 30 new and improved walking, wheeling, and cycling routes and zones as part of a countywide plan.

Feedback on these plans is essential as it will help finalise the plan, it is noted that route 8 from Ashford to Folkestone passes through Aldington along Bank Road and then Roman Road. It is also noted that they are planning cycle parking in the village centre.

Full details of the consultation can be found at kent.gov.uk/KCWIP.

Resolved: a response would be submitted by the Parish Council regarding the safety of Bank Road for cyclists and the lack of public facilities in the village given that they are proposing a cycle parking area. Members were also encouraged to submit personal submissions.

1319. Planning Committee:

The Planning Committee Chairman reported that the Committee had considered four applications, Led By the Wild for a wildlife pond, 8 Kiln Road to replace concrete panel walls with traditional brickwork, which were approved. Land to the West of Sellindge Substation where the Construction Environment Plan was considered a number of concerns have been raised on this. Finally an application for Questeds Cottage on which further information is to be requested prior to consideration.

1320. Neighbourhood Plan:

Editing of the draft plan is now in the final stages prior to the plan being supported to Ashford Borough Council under Regulation 16. Further detail has been incorporated into the plan regarding Ragstone walls.

1321. Events Committee:

The plans for the Advent event on 3rd December are progressing well, there are only 6 vacancies on the pre-booked Santa visits although there is some flexibility on the day for drop ins. All of the stalls have been taken and all volunteers are in place.

The recent planned bingo evening was cancelled due to lack of support, this was on bonfire night.

1322. Quarry Wood:

A tree felling licence is currently being applied for in order to undertake thinning of the woodland to encourage the understorey.

1323. Quarry Field and Pond:

Led by The Wild have sown the yellow rattle seed in the area behind the pond in readiness for wild flower plugs to be sown. Photographic evidence will be required as this is a Biodiversity project showing the evolvement of the project.

Councillor Stebbings left the meeting.

1324. Aldington Meadows:

Correspondence has been received by the Aldington Meadows Residents Management Company regarding the transfer of the open spaces from the developer to the company. There are a number of issues with this in that not all of the open spaces have been listed and also there are drainage issues yet to be resolved. This has been passed to the Solicitor to take forward.

1325. Any Items for information:

It has been observed that the knee rail at Bill Deedes Way is broken and also two of the visibility mirrors.

On Boat Lane there is an area where Kent Highways undertook a repair to the railings at the side of the road, water crosses the road here in rainfall creating a hazard as well as washing material from potholes making them worse. This is to be reported to Kent Highways.

1326. Exclusion of the public:

Resolved: that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be conducted.

Councillor Stebbings returned to the meeting.

1327. Grounds Maintenance Contract:

The current contract is due to expire on 31st March 2024, given that there are plans being considered at the present time in terms of Biodiversity and improvements to the open space at Aldington Meadows.

Resolved: to extend the current Grounds Maintenance Contract to 31st March 2025.

1328. Request for financial support:

A request for financial support has been received from a Charity not based locally for the forthcoming financial year. Having reviewed the documentation supplied it was

Resolved: to not provide financial support for the financial year 2024 / 2025.

1329. Distribution of trust funds received by the Parish Council.

Members agreed as to how the funds were to be distributed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10:10pm.

REPORT TO ALDINGTON & BONNINGTON PARISH COUNCIL NOVEMBER 2023

The Three areas I will focus on for the November Council will be.

1. CHRISTMAS CRIME ALERTS.
2. GENERAL CRIME PREVENTION

INTRODUCTION TO BEAT OFFICER BRADLEY LINDRIDGE

I have already put a similar report on the web page to start to warn residents.

We will now be into the Christmas period run in and so guidance will be given to the community and again in the December newsletter.



Although Christmas is still weeks away, criminals will already be planning on the ways they can strike into the community, we must match those efforts with our prevention advice.

I will be constant and repetitive with my advice between now and Christmas.

My early crime prevention advice is when Christmas shopping. Take great care if you return presents you have purchased to a vehicle to save carrying them all around town and then go off for further shopping. Criminals know this!

They will tour car parks looking into vehicles and if they can see anything on show they may strike.

When shopping with trollies do not wander off and look at items and leave the trolley unattended with your bags. Purses are often just resting on top of shopping bags. Criminals know this!

Great care with internet shopping parcel deliveries which get left on doorsteps. Firstly, in town areas you are vulnerable to the passing chancer and opportunist who just happened to be walking by. However, secondly the vans are now followed and that means even the most rural of isolated properties are also vulnerable. Criminals know this!

CRIME

Parcel thefts rise from doorsteps as gangs follow courier vans



Some of us will be travelling early on Christmas morning, to get a flying early start we load our cars with all the presents and gifts we are taking the night before we leave. Criminals know this!

They will just walk the streets and looking into vehicles if they see rich pickings they will strike. Just get up 30 minutes earlier and load the car then!!

Santa sometimes stores presents form prying eyes in sheds and garages. Criminals know this.

Now people sometimes laugh when I say this but a good Christmas morning for the police is torrential rain. If not about 0900 hours Christmas day many front doors burst open, and children pour out with every form of new toy and present. Bikes, skates, scooters, footballs toys and games and many more gifts that Santa brought Criminals know this! About 1400 hours children are called to Christmas lunch, they would gladly miss and continue playing, however they go indoors and leave the items laying in front gardens. That is when vans drive around and just pick up anything laying there, breaking many young hearts in the process.

Burglaries are thankfully very low across the district but Christmas trees on show with presents stacked underneath may just tempt criminals if they feel residents are out.

I know Christmas is weeks away but the time to think is now and I will ensure reminders are issued up until the last days of December. Criminals are thinking now, so must we!



GENERAL MATTERS

- 1. Report all crimes and attempted crimes. Use 999 if the crimes are in progress or about to happen.**
- 2. Be alert and vigilant to every form of scam which will come by landline phone. Mobile phones, on computers, laptops, tablets or again on mobile phones. Do nothing in a rush. Check, check and check again and if still in doubt do nothing. Those scam calls can come from 3, 30, 300 or 3000 miles away. They can also come by letter and face to face on the doorstep.**
- 3. Ensure nothing is left on show in a vehicle when parking especially last park up for the night.**

Stand and look inside the vehicle, can you see anything? If you can so can a criminal.

- 4. Care with vans carrying tools and equipment.**
- 5. Internet parcel thefts. Even remote rural locations are at risk if the delivery vans are followed.**
- 6. Bogus callers and Rogue Traders. Do not agree to unsolicited work on your doorstep.**
- 7. Theft of number plates to facilitate fuel thefts at garages.**
- 8. Catalytic converter thefts**
- 9. Courier Fraud. Parcels delivered to an address and then picked up by a bogus delivery driver claiming it was a mistaken delivery.**
- 10. Distraction purse thefts in supermarkets.**
- 11. Care with selling items on platforms like ebay/marketplace where buyers say they will pay cash at your front door. Items were snatched last year and people injured.**
- 12. Care with buyers saying they will send a courier to pick up items.**
- 13. Care if purchasing a pet. Please do not send payment to a bogus dog/cat breeder on the strength of a photograph.**
- 14. Care with theft of Heating Oil from domestic storage tanks.**

Generally, with all the above crimes it is about giving yourself time to think safe and secure.

It is not just Christmas it is the weeks leading up to Christmas when people come under pressure and are hurried in their actions and that is when we are at our most vulnerable.

As always, the elderly, especially those who live alone, our disabled, those with learning difficulties and those with any form of disability who are especially vulnerable and sort out by criminals to prey upon.

A strong united community working together, alert, and vigilant can help thwart criminals on the range of crimes mentioned above.

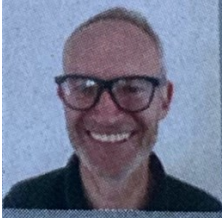
The last item to mention on crime prevention is please ensure all cases of Anti-Social behaviour and Criminal damage is reported. Especially important is the use of catapults in the community and any form or rural crime like hare coursing.

At the Community Coffee mornings I have been able to introduce PCSO IAN NORTON a member of the Rural Crime task Force in East Kent.

I have set out below the East Division Team and the two key players I expect to interact with are PCSOS Ian Norton and PCSO Debbie Bishop



Rural Crime Co-ordinator



Doug Robertson
07972 004578

East Division – 07980 978202

- PC Harry Callaghan
- PC Mike Sutton
- PC Matt Lehman
- PC Amy White
- PCSO Debbie Bishop
- PCSO Ian Norton

May I introduce BEAT OFFICER BRADLEY LINDRIDGE

The areas covered by are shown below, and you can see the size of the area.

[Downs North](#)
[Downs West](#)
[Saxon Shore](#)
[Charing](#)
[Bircholt](#)
[Wye with Hinxhill](#)
[Mersham Sevington South &](#)
[Finberry](#)
[Kingsnorth Village](#)
[Upper Weald](#)

Below are the areas and councils he will be working with.

Downs north	Chilham
	Crundale
	Godmersham
	Molash
Saxon shore	Aldington
	Bilsington
	Ruckinge
	Bonnington
Charing	Charing
Bircholt	Braebourne
	Smeeth
	Hastingleigh
	Brook
Wye with Hinxhill	Wye
Downs West	Challock
	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell
	Westwell
Mersham & Sevington south with finberry	Mersham
Kingsnorth village and Bridgefield	Kingsnorth
Upper weald	Pluckley
	Little chart
	Charing Heath
	Hothfield

I have met Brad and started to develop a working relationship with him.

Along with the Rural team I feel we have a strong platform going forward into 2024.

Stay safe, secure, alert and vigilant. Thank you for all your support as always.

Peter

Peter New (peternew1@aol.com)

Kent Police Volunteer & Community Neighbourhood Watch