

Minutes of the Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council meeting held on Monday 10th February 2025 in Aldington Village Hall at 7:30pm.

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

In attendance: Peter Setterfield PSLCC, Parish Clerk.

1589. Apologies for absence:

Cllr H Stebbings.

1590. Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

1591. Sellindge Synchronous Condenser:

For the upcoming month the following activities will be taking place on the Sellindge Grid Services site:

- Church lane traffic management / closure in place for the installation of DNO cable to the site. Works are in conjunction with UKPN
- DNO ducting installation on site as well as establishing levels at the site entrance
- Removal of vegetation / interference clashes at the front of the site in preparation for AIL deliveries. Please note that the deliveries are not due in the coming ¼ however, we are removing vegetation now, so not to disturb any wildlife or nesting birds
- Temporary works installation at the front of site will also take place – ground bearing pressure establishment for the site to accept AIL axle loads
- Installation of precast troughs in the EHV switchyard area
- Main Sync Con foundation pour, the usual watchman will be put in place at Roman Road on the relevant days
- Continuation of smaller site foundations, cooler bund and transformers

1592. Solar:

The Planning Inspectorate appeal in respect of the EDF application on Church Lane is currently taking place, two of the reasons for the refusal of the application have fallen away as they have been dealt with by the applicant. The outstanding issues are on visual impact and heritage buildings, a decision is expected early March.

The NSIP application for the Stonestreet Green Solar Farm is progressing to an accompanied visit to the area and two further hearing dates have been booked for the 25th and 26th February on the subject of battery storage and Public Rights of Way.

1593. Public Participation:

There were no public submissions.

1594. Neighbourhood Watch:

Report attached.

1595. Ashford Borough Councillor's Report:

The EDF Planning Inquiry requested into the Ashford Borough Council planning Decision on the East Stour Solar application in Church Lane commenced on Tuesday last week and continues this week. I attended the first day. The Church Lane residents group was represented and spoke in evidence, as did another resident and myself. The Planning Inspector's Decision is anticipated to be ready in early March.

You will have seen on the news that Kent County Council was unsuccessful in its bid to be included in the Devolution Priority Programme that would have seen elections for Mayor of Kent in 2026. This means that elections for KCC councillors will go ahead on 1st May. It does not mean that devolution and reorganisation will not happen in Kent. Devolution in England was a Labour Party Manifesto promise and a programme is underway to reorganise and simplify Local Government across all parts of England that currently do not have a Mayoral Strategic Authority structure in place. Ashford Borough Council received a letter from Jim McMahon, Minister for Local Government and Devolution last Friday to set out a timetable by which Kent councils must put forward an Interim Plan and Final Plan for reorganisation to create a single tier structure of councils, reduce cost and enable future devolution to occur. The first deadline, for an Interim Plan is 21st March. Final Plan must be submitted by 28th November. Elections for the new Shadow Unitary Council are anticipated to be held in either 2027 or 2028 with existing councillors staying in place long enough to ensure a smooth handover.

Discussion about this topic has of course, dominated discussions in the Council and between councillors recently, however, normal Council business continues to run the services we all expect. For me this particularly includes progressing the next Ashford Local Plan. Working together with other councils is not new to Ashford – we do it all the time both on a councillor and on an officer level. The recent new waste contract for bins and street cleaning is a good example, where Ashford, Maidstone and Swale cooperate to reduce the cost by offering a single larger contract to the selected provider.

1596. Minutes:

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13th January 2025 were submitted, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

1597. Chairman's Report:

Since we last met we have had a major fire in the parish which has resulted in the total destruction of Handen Farm. Having seen that the owners used their own tragic experience of fire in a remote rural location to place a very powerful message on the NSIP Stone Street Green Solar page, I made contact to thank them and enquire of their well being. Their statements are more powerful than anything we could say and I think their willingness to share their experience for the potential benefit of the community is remarkable. In the exchange that took place on making contact, I discovered that the owners had some needs that we, as a Parish Council, could easily address so I took the liberty, with the Clerks permission, of purchasing some items to make their situation more comfortable.

Like many people I have been very dismayed to see the untidy pile of bags in front of the LBM Clothes and Shoes recycling box outside Aldington Fire Station. It is has been a disgrace that I am relieved to see has today been cleared. I phoned LBM over 2 weeks ago to ask for this recycling container to be emptied. It is not the responsibility of the Parish Council to manage this facility as it is organised by the Aldington Fire crew as a fund raiser for Kent Fire Fighters charity. The untidy pile of bags mounting up in front of the container is a concern, though. I would like the Council's opinion on what we should do to prevent this happening again and would like to discuss at the end of our agenda tonight.

I'm pleased to report that the stars finally aligned and the clearance of Quarry pond took place this weekend. We've had such difficulty, what with the weather and people's availability, to get this job done this winter. What a difference a few men with their machines can make! After two years of inactivity, the pond itself is visible at last. It looks brutal and, as the forecast below zero temperatures did not materialise, the ground all around the pond has been turned into a quagmire by vehicles and by the team tramping over soggy ground. All the spoil has been kept onsite, as is recommended best practice. Colin had strimmed down all the brambles behind the pond and everything removed has been dropped there to rot down, or for critters to find their way back into the water, eggs to hatch etc. We now have a clear base from which to work to improve the pond and it's surrounding area and to consider the viewing platform that we aspire to install.

Lastly – I would like to bring some correspondence to your attention: Aldington Primary School PTA made contact to ask to use Reynold's Playing Field for car parking for their Summer Fete on 29th June. The email says; "In recent years we have been able to use the Reynolds field for parking and would hope that we could start this again."

I am not aware of Reynold's Playing field ever being used as a car park. Can I have your thoughts please?

1598. Finance:

Schedule of payments:

Payee	Purpose	Amount
Staff costs		£2,952.93
Harmer & Sons	Grounds maintenance	£990.00
Aldington Village Hall	Room hire	£130.50
L Harman	Reimbursement	£222.40
G Taylor	Reimbursement	£100.71

Resolved:

- 1. To authorise the payment of the items in the schedule of payments.**
- 2. To authorise the transfer of £3,000.00 from deposit account to current account.**

1599. Planning Committee:

Two applications were considered, Postling Green, Roman Road replacement outbuilding which was supported, and Sea Glympse on Frith Road two storey front extension and replacement garage, creation of first floor with dormers to front and rear and changes to fenestration following demolition of existing garage and rear extension, which there was no objection subject to compliance with dark skies policy.

Councillor Weatherall left the meeting.

1600. Community Resilience Planning:

Councillor Guy reported:

As part of the Community Resilience Plan, we need to identify a temporary community shelter and a community coordination point. In many instances, these are located in different buildings but in Aldington and Bonnington, the obvious place for both is Aldington Village Hall.

On Monday 3 Feb, I attended that Village Hall Committee Meeting and gave a brief outline on what the Community Resilience Plan is intended to do. They agreed that the village hall was a suitable venue and would like to know what they should be considering in order to make the village hall resilient in the case of a local disaster.

Specific considerations:

Hazard assessment:

Local climate and weather patterns (strong winds, floods from heavy rain, field or house fires)

Seismic activity (earthquakes – not applicable to Aldington and Bonnington for the foreseeable future)

Geological conditions (landslides – not applicable to Aldington and Bonnington for the foreseeable future)

Structural design:

Reinforced concrete or steel frames for strength – to be reviewed

Flexible connections to absorb shock – to be reviewed

Elevated foundation for flood-prone areas – to be reviewed

Roof design to withstand high winds– to be reviewed

Site considerations:

Drainage systems to manage stormwater runoff – to be reviewed

Vegetation management to prevent erosion – to be reviewed

Location away from high-risk areas – at the top of the hill so as far away from the high risk areas

Utility systems:

Backup power generation (solar panels, generators)

Water storage systems – to be reviewed

Redundant communication systems - to be reviewed

Building materials:

Durable materials resistant to damage from wind, water, and fire – to be reviewed
Recycled and sustainable materials for environmental resilience – to be reviewed

Accessibility and functionality: – to be reviewed
Easy access for maintenance and repairs – to be reviewed
Adaptable layouts to accommodate changing needs – to be reviewed
Emergency egress routes – to be reviewed

Post-disaster considerations:

Rapid repair and restoration plans – to be considered as part of Community Resilience Plan
Community resilience strategies – to be considered as part of Community Resilience Plan
Insurance coverage for disaster recovery – to be considered as part of Community Resilience Plan

Next step – put together a project team to review the template and begin completion of the Community Resilience Plan.

1601. Events Committee:

On 26th February there will be an Eat Well and Spend Less & Wellbeing Roadshow at the Village Hall between 10:00am and 2:00pm.

The Summer fete is booked for 24th August, the Chair is looking to build a team of volunteers to assist with the organisation and running of the event.

1602. Quarry Field and Pond:

The Contractor cleared the pond of the parrot weed at the weekend, unfortunately the weather conditions have resulted in the surrounding area becoming damaged from the use of the machine. The area has been fenced off to allow the ground to recover.

1603. Aldington Meadows:

Report ABPC/24/018 provides some background information with regards to a request received from Firstport Ltd regarding the maintenance of the open space to the rear of the Meadows.

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note Report ABPC/24/018**
- 2. To request Councillor Harman to liaise with the planning department at Ashford Borough Council as to the process that has to be followed.**

1604. Items for information:

The Charity clothes collection container in the front of the Fire Station has raised concerns as it was recently full and a number of sacks had been placed on the ground in front of it. Whilst this is not Parish Council property the Clerk was requested to write to the Fire Station requesting that measures are put in place to prevent a reoccurrence as such deposits are treated as fly tipping.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:25pm.

DRAFT

REPORT TO ALDINGTON & BONNINGTON COUNCIL JANUARY 2025

May I open by saying I hope all councillors and your families had a wonderful Christmas and may I wish you all a very Happy Healthy New Year.

I apologise I am unable to be with you this first meeting of 2025, as I am at another meeting.

At the next meeting in February, I will bring forward my personal action plan for 2025 and how it fits into the overall strategy and picture for Aldington.

Well done! for producing a newsletter and thank you for the space, it provides a vital communication to residents many of which may only have a landline phone

Throughout 2024 the Community events in the village hall were another essential link in the overall Neighbourhood Watch strategy. The coffee mornings on Wednesday have been fantastic and I will support them whenever I can, and try along with you, the council, to get some younger residents to pop along.

In late 2024, at another council's meeting, I had a bruising and frank exchange with the senior officer for Ashford Police and one of my points I raised was the complete lack of attendance at both Parish and Community Council meetings. Sadly, my challenges and questions led to the officer making a complaint which I robustly defended. My record and performance are there to be examined by anyone. It is unacceptable to me for the hours I put as a volunteer in that since the launch of the new Policing Model for Kent Police in June 2023 we have not had a Beat Officer visit the council. Colleagues from the Rural Team have enjoyed coming to the coffee mornings but the lack of attendance at council meetings in 18 months by a Beat Officer is unacceptable. Yes, crime is low, but I wanted an officer bedded in and settled and known before a number of larger projects in the area take off.

I was disappointed to be told by KALC representatives that the attendance at their meetings has also dropped away in the last 3 months of 2024. These are incredibly important meetings I am at a loss that officers cannot attend.

Sine me raising the issues I have now heard that at last some councils are being approached to forward their meeting dates for 2025. Also, a new list of officers covering areas is on the police web site.

If you type in Saxon Shore on the Kent Police web site, the following comes up.



Saxon Shore

[View on a map](#)

I await to see how the year unfolds.

DRAFT

Katie Reed Sergeant
Brandon Harris PCSO
Ricki Apps PCSO
Adele Tyrer Temporary Sergeant
Catherine Stevens Community Liaison Officer - PSE
Emmanuel Dalli PC
James Murrell PC
Jason Bushell Acting Inspector
Josh Wheatley PC
Scott Packman PC
Tim Moody PC

As always thank you for all your support both for the Neighbourhood Watch work and for me personally and I look forward to seeing you all very soon

Regards

Peter

Peter New

Community Neighbourhood watch.