

Minutes of the Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council meeting held on Monday 12th June 2023 in Aldington Village Hall at 7:30pm.

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

In attendance: Peter Setterfield PSLCC, Parish Clerk

Also Present: P New (Neighbourhood watch) and 14 residents.

1235. Apologies for absence:
Councillors R Spicer and G Taylor.

1236. Declarations of Interest:
There were no declarations of interest.

1237. Neighbourhood Watch:
See attached report.

1238. Public Participation:

A resident made a request for football goals to be made available for use on the playing field.

In response the Chairman advised that we were looking at potential positions and were due to meet with Aldington Football Club to agree this so that it does not impede upon the main pitch.

Wheatfields residents expressed their opinions with regards to the ongoing retrospective application for the pumping station in Wheatfields. They feel that the vent pipe is being ignored and that the planting scheme is not sufficient.

In response the Chairman advised that she and the Clerk had met with Officers from Ashford Borough Council in the morning on site to discuss the application. The application being considered is in respect of the planning enforcement for the boundary fence and the concrete within. It was indicated that a revised enhanced planting scheme had been received and that with regard to the odour no complaints had been received. It has been stated that whilst the works are carried out there will be disruption and any agreement for the works will have stringent conditions applied.

A resident expressed concerns regarding traffic management on Church Lane with regard to the current planning applications and that the only solution would be a temporary road closure and they were hoping that the Parish Council would support this.

In response the Chairman indicated that it was likely that the battery storage application would be placed before the Borough Council Planning committee in July but the position of the EDF application was not known, although it would be preferable if they were considered in tandem.

A resident spoke about the Stonestreet Green Solar proposals and that the consultation had gone live today and on an initial look it would seem that there are

concerns regarding the PROW network as there are very few changes to the original submission.

A resident spoke about the recent accident at the junction of Frith Road, Priory Road and Coopers Lane and the lack of visibility from the side roads and asked if a blind spot mirror could be installed.

Kent Highways will be contacted regarding this.

1239. Ashford Borough Councillor's Report:

It has been very hectic since the election setting up all of the various committees and appointing a leader for the Council. As there is no overall majority from one party discussions took place between all and an Ashford Independent has been appointed as the leader and his cabinet is made up of 4 Ashford Independents, 4 Greens and 1 Independent. I have been appointed as the portfolio holder for planning. One of the big items on the agenda will be the review of the Local Plan.

1240. Minutes:

The minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

1241. Chairman's Report:

The recent roadworks on Goldwell Lane to provide drop kerbs is not what the Parish Council expected, we anticipated that the island in the centre of the junction would be used as a refuge not a crossing yards down the road where cars park. A letter of complaint is to be sent to Kent Highways.

On the subject of Highways the disabled space outside the Walnut Tree on Forge Hill is no longer used and a request needs to be made for its removal and to extend the double yellow lines to deter parking so close to the junction which hampers visibility.

The Regulation 14 consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan has started and comments are welcomed as this will help shape the final plan. It has been noted that a ragstone wall has been demolished on Forge Hill and being replaced with a brick wall which is out of character. A review of the conservation areas is long overdue and will be looked into.

Concerns have been raised about the close cutting of some of the grass on the open areas. Going forward a review is to be carried out in line with bio-diversity requirements.

1242. Finance:

Schedule of payments:

Chq No	Payee	Purpose	Amount
1821	L Harman	Reimbursement	£53.97
1822	Aldington Village Hall	Room hire	£353.50
1823	Harmer & sons	Grounds maintenance	£1,380.00
1824	H J Hoad	Internal audit	£190.00

1825 & 1826	Staff costs		£2,375.83
1827	Aldington & Bonnington Parish Council	Deposit to open Unity Bank account	£500.00

Resolved:

1. To authorise the payment of the items in the schedule of payments.
2. To authorise the transfer of £5,000.00 from deposit account to current account.

1243. Planning Committee:

No planning applications have been received for consideration this month.

1244. General Risk Assessment:

Report ABPC/2023/003 brings to the Parish Council a copy of the risk assessment carried out as part of the end of year audit exercise;

Resolved:

1. To receive and note **Report ABPC/2023/003**
2. To receive and acknowledge the **General Risk Assessment**.

1245. Asset Register:

Report ABPC/2023/004 brings to the Parish Council a copy of the asset register compiled from the Parish Council's records.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note **Report ABPC/2023/004**.
2. To receive and acknowledge the **Asset Register**.

1246. Internal Auditor's Report:

Report ABPC/2023/005 encloses the report of the Independent Internal Auditor who has been asked to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the Parish Council's External Auditor, Mazars LLP.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note **Report ABPC/2023/005**.
2. To receive and endorse the report of the Independent Internal Auditor.

1247. Annual Governance Statement:

Report ABPC/2023/006 details the Statement on Internal Control to support the Annual Governance Statement required as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note **Report ABPC/2023/006**.

2. To approve and endorse the Statement on Internal Control for the year ended 31st March 2023.
3. To authorise the Chairman of the Parish Council to sign the Statement of Internal Control for the year ended 31st March 2023.
4. To respond “Yes” in boxes 1 to 9 of the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return subject to the adoption of Report ABPC/2023/006 which relates specifically to Box 6.
5. To authorise the Chairman of the Parish Council to sign the Annual Governance Statement.

1248. Accounting Statements:

Report ABPC/2023/007 attached the Accounting Statement for 2022/23, part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note Report ABPC/2023/007.
2. To approve and endorse the Accounting Statement at Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2023.
3. To authorise the Chairman of the Parish Council to sign the accounts contained within the Annual Return for 2022/23.

1249. Business Plan:

To review and update the Parish Council’s Business Plan circulated to members following the Parish Council meeting of 10th May 2023.

Resolved: To defer this item until the July meeting of the Parish Council.

1250. Street Lights:

Ashford Borough Council together with Kent County Council are currently undertaking a review of street lighting throughout the Borough. A number of street lights are at present owned by Ashford Borough Council and maintained under contract by Kent County Council.

The lights owned by Ashford Borough Council need to be brought up to Kent County Council Standards in order that they can be transferred to KCC saving the Borough Council the maintenance costs.

As part of the review a number have been highlighted as not necessary by KCC and/or Ashford Borough Council. With these lights it is possible that the Parish Council will be given the option to adopt these columns and become responsible for the electricity costs, maintenance and replacement as and when required.

The columns identified for Aldington are as follows:

Road name	Ward	Parish	Location	Unit No
Earlsfield	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/S 13	MEAC001

Earlsfield	Saxon Shore	Aldington	S/O 16	MEAC002
Goldwell Close	Saxon Shore	Aldington	Rear of 5 on footpath	MGEC002
Goldwell Close	Saxon Shore	Aldington	o/s ¾	MGCS001
Goldwell Close	Saxon Shore	Aldington	FP S/O 5	MGBD504
Ragstone Hollow	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/S 26	MRAA002
Roman Road	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/P J/W GOLDWELL LANE	MUDH002
Roman Road	Saxon Shore	Aldington	S/O MOUNT PLEASANT	MUDI003
Roman Road	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/S 16 WALNUT RIDGE	MUDI005
Roman Road	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/S PRIMARY SCHOOL Pole mounted	MUDH003
Roman Road	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/S 1 WALNUT RIDGE	MUDI008
Forge Hill	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/P CLOUD END	MFAY004
Forge Hill	Saxon Shore	Aldington	ADJ MISSION HALL	MFAY005
Forge Hill	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/S ST MARTINS BUNGALOW	MFAY001
Wallnut ridge	Saxon Shore	Aldington	O/S 7-8	MWEO001

The Parish Council is asked to consider if these lights are required in the first instance. If the Parish Council wish to consider adopting any or all of the lights an indication of the running costs and the maintenance costs would be required before a final decision is made as these costs and a suitable reserve would need to be factored into the Parish Council's budget when setting the precept in December.

Resolved: To take no action at this stage as the Ashford Committee of the Kent Association of Local Councils is making representations to Ashford Borough Council regarding this matter.

1251. Quarry Field, Quarry Wood and Pond:

Nothing to report this month.

1252. Neighbourhood Plan:

Hard copied of the Neighbourhood Plan and questionnaires will be available at the Aldington Hub on a Wednesday.

1253. Aldington Meadows Recreation Area:

Works to install the Zip Wire commenced today and should be completed by the end of next week.

1254. Events Committee:

Plans are well under way with the village hall booked and a number of stall holders. The organisers of the dog show have requested that the funds raised from this element be given to an animal charity. Following discussion it was:

Resolved that the funds from the dog show will be donated to the Animal Retreat.

1255. Stonestreet Green Solar:

Evolution Power launch their second consultation on the proposals for Stonestreet Green on 12th June. Members are asked to consider what steps it wants to take in terms of preparing a response.

CPRE have been invited to give a presentation on rooftop solar and this has been booked in the Village Hall on 6th July, posters and leaflets will be produced to advertise the event.

1256. Meeting Venue:

The Parish Council have been advised by the Village Hall that they have received a booking request for the 11th December for a Christmas party with entertainment for the main hall. Members are asked to decide if they wish to remain at the Village Hall for this meeting or to change the date as it possible that sound levels would mean it difficult to conduct the business which includes setting the budget for the forthcoming financial year.

An enquiry has been made for the use of the Orchard Suite at the Eco Centre which is available, however the seating arrangement would not be ideal due to the style of tables in the room which would not accommodate the usual horseshoe format.

Resolved: that the Parish Council would change the date of the December meeting to Monday 4th December in order to remain at the Village Hall.

1257. Other items for information:

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.35pm.

ALDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL JUNE 2023.

I trust everyone is enjoying the first days of the better weather after a pretty wet and dreary Spring. In fact, the sudden move to better weather, in fact a heat wave, means we have gone from all doors and windows shut tight keeping out the cold to doors and windows wide open allowing the first traces of summer in.

That requires us to just raise the awareness of if we are 'popping out' even for a short time that we secure our properties.

Burglaries in domestic properties are very low across Kent but we just don't want to present a gift to a passing "chancer and opportunist".

Of course, the risks to parked vehicles, garages, sheds, barns, and any form of external storage are always with us.

I reported in previous meetings that parking a vehicle in a rural car park or even at a railway station car park can be a risk if anything is left on show in the car.

Just deploy my 10 second rule. Park, lock the vehicle and just stand for 10 seconds and look in. If you can see anything? so can a criminal!

The rural car parks are a problem when we drive our dogs to different locations to exercise. Even items locked in the boot or glove box can be at risk. Dog walkers often lock items like handbags in the boot to save carrying them round a woodland walk. Criminals know this!

They will just smash a window to get inside the car, then sometimes even then leave empty handed. Very sadly crematorium cars parks are notorious as we leave phones in vehicles as we fear an accidental actuation during a service. Criminals know this!

Other areas of concern now are.

1. **Theft of high end make keyless cars.** Mercedes, BMWs and Audis are often targeted.

These crimes are not by chancers and opportunists these are organised criminals who scout out make, model, colour, reg number, house number and location.

They know exactly what and where and when they come to pick up the car and with a key reader laptop device in the early hours of the morning they are in and gone in about 90 seconds.

Ashford District has been hit 5 times in recent days. Safe storage of keys is essential.

2. **Theft of Catalytic Converters from vehicles.** Rural areas have been targeted recently. Why? Because the chances of meeting a patrolling police car are very small and a 999 call "crime in progress" will take travel time to respond.

Criminals work in teams of 3 or 4. A driver plus 2 in the back of the car. One operates a car jack, one slides under on a trolley and a couple of quick cuts and they are gone in seconds. The driver sits with the engine running.

Now you are wondering what the 4th person does well he is the one who stands with a pickaxe handle just to persuade onlookers not to interfere. I should add that's more of a very aggressive crime operation but thought it was worth a mention just in case.

ADVICE /CRIME PREVENTION FOLLOWS



Help prevent the theft of catalytic converters



To reduce this risk:

- mark or etch it with the vehicle identification number or a unique serial number
- secure it to your vehicle with a cat clamp, cage or wire
- park in a garage or busy, well-lit area where possible

If you see something suspicious, **report it.**

Kent Police

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**



The Rural Task Force is supporting national action against the theft of catalytic converters.

The crime continues to increase across the country, driven by growing metal prices.

Research has shown thefts have risen during lockdown. The week of action against metal crime from 19-25 April was aimed at targeting offenders and raising awareness.

Illegal waste carriers and scrap metal dealers were among those targeted by Rural Task Force officers across the county.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'This was a national operation led by British Transport Police given the increase in this crime across the country. In the week the Rural Task Force working with our partners stopped 104 vehicles of which 18 were seized for various offences. Four arrests were made, three of which were for a theft offence.

The week included visiting waste metal sites to raise awareness of the issue and to check with their compliance to the legislation and record keeping. Numerous drivers were reported for traffic offences.'

Catalytic converters have been fitted to the exhaust systems of most petrol vehicles built since the early 90s.

According to research, most thefts happen while cars are parked at home, either on the driveway or the road.

Motorists are urged to take extra precautions, parking their vehicle in well-lit residential locations, or ideally a garage, and when away from home, to look for car parks that have security patrols and are covered by CCTV.

Because thieves slide under



the car to get at the catalytic converters, parking against a wall can also help. High clearance vehicles like 4x4s, pick-up trucks and vans are particularly vulnerable to thieves sliding underneath to saw off the converter.

Catalytic converters form part of a car's exhaust system. They contain a honeycomb coated with metals which help filter harmful gases. The RAC said patrols were often called to attend cars that have suddenly become excessively noisy because the catalytic converter has been stolen. Despite being just one

component of a vehicle, their theft can result in costly repairs or a car being written off.

Sergeant Walshaw said: 'Motorists need to be aware of the increase in catalytic converter thefts and we ask them to take steps to protect vehicles. Be vigilant and report anything to us straight away, including anybody seen acting suspiciously around vehicles. We work closely with partners and car park operators and engage with scrap metal dealers to make it easier to trace sellers of stolen metal and identify any dealers who may be operating illegally.

Protect your vehicle

- Fitting perimeter security fencing can help deter opportunist thieves and slow down more organised thieves
- Good security lighting makes vehicles more visible and can act as a deterrent
- Park in a garage whenever possible
- Consider installing good quality CCTV cameras
- Security-mark and register the metal shell of the converter so it can be returned if stolen and recovered
- Where possible park a vehicle against a kerb, with the catalytic converter being closest to the kerb
- If there are a number of vehicles park low clearance vehicles to block the high-clearance ones to obstruct access
- Fit protective coverings on catalytic converters to make it more difficult to steal (car manufacturers can advise on suitable clamps and security cages)
- Have catalytic converters etched or forensically marked and put stickers in the windscreen to say this has been done

3 **Internet shopping parcels taken from doorsteps** where the risk to rural areas has increased as the delivery vans are now followed.

4 Of course, the need to be vigilant with **SCAMS** will always be with us. The important advice is to do absolutely nothing in a rush. Criminals rely on us acting quickly, in a rush without taking a moment just to think.

On your phones, if in doubt just hang up. In a letter form you have time to digest and check.

On any other method on computer, tablet and phone never rush into anything.

My guidance, and I know this sounds drastic, if in doubt do absolutely nothing at all.

My final guidance on scams is beware of persons saying they are from the police.

The police will never...

-  **Contact you to ask for your PIN or bank details**
-  **Ask to withdraw cash to hand over to them for safe-keeping**
-  **Ask you transfer money out of your account for fraud reasons**
-  **Send someone to your home to collect cash, PINs, or cards**

 **Action Fraud**
Network for UK Crime Victims
www.actionfraud.gov.uk

Bogus scammers posing as police officers know that our elderly, who lived most of their lives in far more trusting times than now, will respond positively to anyone saying they are from the police.

Especially criminals posing as officers saying “would you be able to help the police please “

These criminals will seek out our most elderly and vulnerable in the community, please be alert and vigilant.

Have you been asked to withdraw cash by the police?

This is a scam.



The police or your bank will **never**:

- ask for your bank details or PIN
- ask you to transfer or withdraw and handover sums of money
- send a courier to collect your bank cards, cash or PIN

If you are unsure about a call or visitor you have received:

- Don't give out any personal or financial information.
- Hang up or close your front door to check the caller's identity.
- If they phoned you, wait 10 minutes before you use the phone again (or use a different telephone) in case they stay on the line.
- Contact their company yourself or dial 101 for the police – do not call a number they have provided.
- Report suspicious activity straight away.



**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 you have a hearing or speech impairment, use our textphone service **18000**.
Or text us on 999 if you've pre-registered with the emergency SMS service.
www.kent.police.uk   

5 The last warning is again about **rogue traders/bogus callers**.

Once again, the rural areas have been targeted. A ploy is again to find a vulnerable person especially an elderly person living alone.

They turn up uninvited and clean an area of the roof to show what they can do. Firstly, they try to get £25 for doing a few tiles. Then they badger the resident into the roof clean for say £500. They loosen a few roof tiles and splash some bottled water around and panic the resident into thousands of pounds of needless work.



This picture was in Brabourne, Smeeth was also a target.

The next stage can become threatening and intimidating for a lonely person as they demand money.

NEVER EVER AGREE TO UNSOLICITED WORK.

If in doubt don't even open the door. If the persons refuse to withdraw ring 999 immediately. Remember you may be strong enough to resist but further down the road a vulnerable person may not be.

The annual meeting was a credit to you, and I felt it went very well. I was able to strengthen our NHW membership but as important ensure I talked the community through the risks and our work to keep them safe and secure.

It is essential we carry the community with us in all we do working to make Aldington and surrounding areas even stronger and safer in the battle against crime.

The deployment of my OPERATION GUARDIAN ANGEL to help protect our very elderly, disabled and persons with any form of vulnerability has been successful and continues to grow.

Two major issues on my radar and worry list are.

KENT POLICE NEW POLICING MODEL FOR KENT. Launched but not enough staff in place yet.

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL political make up and leadership following elections.

Both these issues are beyond my control but may well impact on my work going forwards.

I hope updates on both issues will emerge in the days around Aldington Parish Council meeting.

You will recall my solid plan I published in January, there may be doubts about how Kent Police will operate in the latter part of 2023. I am very clear and focused.

I hope that clearer details will emerge soon of the police officer who will cover this area as per the old PCSO arrangements.

As of now, PC NATALIE FAIERS is nominated to cover this area. I have worked with Natalie before and look forward to working with her again. I will be able to brief Natalie on the work we are doing together and hopefully bring her to one of the community coffee meetings to introduce her.

I conclude by thanking you all for your support as always. Aldington has a very strong and positive NHW and working together as we do it will grow stronger still helping to keep residents crime free and as important free from the fear of becoming a victim of crime also.

Take care and stay safe, secure, alert and vigilant at all times.

Peter

Peter New (peternew1@aol.com)

Kent Police Volunteer & Community Neighbourhood Watch