

Minutes of a meeting of Bilsington Parish Council held at Bilsington Village Hall on Thursday 16th July 2026 at 7:00pm.

Present: Councillors; S Hudson (Chair), M Bilham and A Evans.

In attendance: Peter Setterfield, Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

Also present: P New (Neighbourhood Watch)

Before the meeting commenced Cllr S Hudson signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chair to the Parish Council.

1276. **Apologies for absence:**

Councillors: L Lawson and R Thompson , ABC Councillor L Harman.

1277. **Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

1278. **Cosway Monument:**

The Parish Council were unable to make a decision as no representative from the Monument Trust attended the meeting to answer questions from the members.

1279. **Neighbourhood Watch:**

Peter New spoke about the forthcoming consultation from Kent Fire and Rescue which has been delayed as the authority committee requested further time to consider the proposals before launching the consultation.

1280. **Kent County Councillor's Report:**

Cllr Barrett did not attend or submit a report.

1281. **Ashford Borough Councillor's Report:**

Sorry that I cannot be with you this evening due to a clash with Ashford Borough Council Full Council Meeting.

The big news of the day is that the Government announced its decision on the future structure of local government in Kent and Medway as part of its Local Government Reorganisation programme. The changes will see the current two-tier system replaced by new unitary authorities from April 2028.

This announcement marks an important milestone in a process that will shape how local services are delivered across Kent in the future. While the decision provides clarity on the geography of the new councils, it is only the beginning of what will be a lengthy transition period. The new arrangements will not come into effect until 1 April 2028, and residents will continue to receive services from the same councils and staff throughout this period.

Ministers chose the 4b model, which means we will be joining with Swale and Folkestone & Hythe councils.

While this is not the option Ashford Borough Council identified as its preferred approach, we respect the Government's decision and recognise the importance of moving forward together with clarity and purpose. In my view 4d and 4b models both have merit. I'm delighted that a 4 unitary model for Kent has been selected rather

than 3 as the latter would make councillors a very remote figure to most voters, with huge wards and reduced local knowledge.

We now await further detail, which will emerge after the summer break.

1282. Public Participation:

There were no public submissions.

1283. Minutes:

The minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 7th May 2026 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

1284. Planning:

Planning application PA/2026/1213 Willow Trees, Newchurch Road – Listed building consent for the repair, reconstruction and alteration of the front boundary wall, including the formation of two vehicular access points whilst retaining the existing pedestrian entrance; removal of the remaining non-original internal masonry partition; installation of a reversible timber stud partition to create a study; and associated repair and reinstatement works using traditional materials and methods.

Resolved: The Parish Council has no objection to the proposals.

1285. Ashford Local Plan:

In 2023 Ashford Borough Council started work on a new local plan, in March 2026 the Government published regulations introducing a new planning system which includes changes to the approach in preparing Local Plans, and an expectation that Local Plans will be prepared in 30 months. The introduction of the new regulations means that the Council is unable to continue work under the old plan making system and is required to restart the plan making process under the new regulations.

The new Local Plan will be referred to as the 'Ashford Local Plan 2043'.

The Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation was published on 30th June 2026. The next stage in the timetable is a scoping consultation which is scheduled to take place between 2nd and 23rd September 2026.

1286. Folkestone & Hythe Local Plan:

Folkestone & Hythe District Council have also published a Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan Preparation on 30th June 2026. Whilst they are required to undertake a scoping consultation no specific dates have been set at this stage although it has been indicated as September/October 2026.

Whilst Bilsington is within Ashford Borough's boundary it should be remembered that Wills Lane is within Folkestone and Hythe's boundary.

1287. Finance:

Schedule of payments:

Staff costs May £533.82

Staff costs June	£436.57
Clerk's expense	£34.55

1288. **Village Hall:**

Nothing to report.

1289. **Other Items for Information:**

The Clerk was asked to contact the planning department at Ashford Borough Council for clarification on aspects of recent applications for Bilsington Priory.

DRAFT