

Minutes of a meeting of Bilsington Parish Council held at Bilsington Village Hall on Thursday 18th December 2025 at 7:00pm.

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

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

Also present: P New (Neighbourhood Watch) and 1 resident.

1218. Apologies for absence:

Cllr L Lawson, Cllr L Harman (ABC) and Cllr B Barrett (KCC)

1219. Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

1220. Neighbourhood Watch:

Report attached.

P New gave his unreserved thanks to the Parish Council for the support given to him in his role.

1221. Kent County Councillor's Report:

Cllr Barrett has offered £500 of his available grant monies to the Parish for a specific project. The Clerk to take forward requesting a contribution to the village gateways.

1222. Ashford Borough Councillor's Report:

I'm sorry that I cannot be with you tonight due to the clash with the last full Council meeting in Ashford Borough Council.

It's been a frantic year and I'm sure, like me, you are all in need of a break.

Following on from last month's meeting, I have submitted the Ward Grant request and you should shortly hear back from the ABC Grants Funding team.

The Council had Extraordinary meetings at the end of November to debate the options presented for Local Government Reorganisation of Kent and Medway. The majority support was for a 4 unitary councils model and the preference was for 4D, known as the Medway model. This has now been submitted as Ashford's preference, though the decision as to what happens will be made by Government. Option 4D, proposes 291 councillors (there are currently 648 district and county councillors), which was the highest of all the options. It is controversial because it proposes creating new unitary councils along highways rather than taking existing council boundaries. It would see the Romney Marshes being severed from Folkestone and linked to Ashford, which I think makes sense for our community, which is quite closely linked to the Marshes, despite the different district councils. We wait to see what the Minister decides and hope to know in late Spring 2026.

I, ofcourse, have continued to be very active with regards to updating the Ashford Local Plan. I was recently interviewed by BBC Politics South East on the topic of housing delivery. This week the Government published revisions to the National

Planning Policy Framework. I've yet to absorb the details, the majority that have received national attention will not affect Bilsington. There may be wider planning policy implications that hinder or enhance our ability to deliver a revised Local Plan. I hope not as we desperately need to improve our Five-Year Housing Land Supply to deter speculative applications such as the recent Hallam's one on Cotton Hill.

New things are on the way in Ashford. One of my biggest frustrations as an elected Ashford Cabinet member is just how slowly the wheels of change turn! Last month, in Planning Committee, the planning application to demolish Park Mall was approved. Most of the traders formerly located there have now relocated, some more happily than others. Demolition will commence in the New Year and ABC's Economic development team are active to find a development partner to regenerate the site with. It is undeniable that retail has changed for ever, Covid speeding up online shopping habits that have killed the high street. New, mixed use development of our town centres is vital and this is the first step towards that. Changes in the NPPF mentioned previously focus on development on brownfield sites – which is exactly what we will have in Ashford in the New Year. The cost of site clearance is often an inhibitor for developers. In this case ABC is clearing the site which will hopefully make it an attractive proposition that will quickly find interest.

Yesterday evening, December's Planning Committee approved the application for a ferris wheel at the Designer Outlet and a broader user of the retail units beneath the Ashford Cinema. Both are aligned to the need to change the offer in our town centre and to attract visitors. The ferris wheel or 'Observation Wheel' as the application calls it) will be in place from 1st July to 1st January and dismantled in between.

You will have seen that Aldington & Bonnington Parish Council are pursuing a Judicial Review of the Stonestreet Green Solar decision. This is subject to public support – by which I mean financial support, as no parish council has endless funds. The grounds relate to inconsistent decision making, as the EDF appeal of Ashford's refusal of their East Stour Solar was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate for heritage impact, which the same institution recommended the Stonestreet Green proposal without amendment, despite part of the site also being in the setting of the Grade I listed St. Martins Church and creating substantial harm to public footpath AE474 which links Aldington to its church. I hope that you will feel able to support your neighbouring parish in calling out the bullish approach being taken by government and to share the campaign with friends and family. I also encourage you to write to our MP Katy Lam. Whilst Bilsington itself has not had to cope with the solar issue, there are now huge solar developments both above and below your village.

1223. Public participation:

A resident requested the support of the Parish Council in a issue that he has come across when requesting a street name board be placed at the Marsh Road end of Tar Pot Lane. Street naming department at Ashford Borough Council have stated

that according to Land Registry this is Kitsbridge Lane clearly an error as ordnance survey show it as Tar Pot Lane. It was requested that the Parish Council write to the Borough to resolve the issue.

1224. Minutes:

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 6th November 2025 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

1225. Highways:

The Highways Improvement Plan is due for review and councillors were asked to consider what matters they would like to take forward it was agreed that improved signage on Ruckinge Road and the crossroads should be a priority.

1226. Planning matters:

Planning application PA/2025/2059 Hamilton Farm, Stonecross Road – lean-to extension to existing hangar (retrospective)

Resolved: whilst the Parish Council has no objection to the application it is disappointed that this is a retrospective application.

Planning application PA/2025/1843 Ragstones, Newchurch Road – Proposed single-storey side extension to form a garage.

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

Planning application PA/2025/2232 Blackberry Cottage, Ashford Road – Proposed single-storey rear and side extension.

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

1227. Finance:

Schedule of payments:

Staff costs November	£482.66
Clerk's expenses	£19.15
S Hudson (Xmas tree)	£120.00

Resolved: To authorise the payment of the items in the schedule.

1228. Budget 2026 / 2027:

Report BPC/25/09 concludes the budget making process for 2026 / 2027 and makes recommendations to enable the Parish Council to set its precept for 2026 / 2027 and to notify the tax collecting authority, Ashford Borough Council, in accordance with statutory legislation.

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note Report BPC/25/09**

2. To determine the Parish Council's budget for the 2026 / 2027 financial year as set out below
3. To confirm the Precept for 2026 / 2027 in accordance with the provisions in Sections 39, 41 and 49A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 at £10,936.00
4. To authorise the Parish Clerk to sign the precept demand on the Borough Council.

Staff costs	£6,100
Clerk's expenses	£300
Audit	£55
Insurance	£550
Subscriptions	£400
Donations	£30
Room Hire	£181
Website	£150
Xmas tree	£120
Highways Improvements	£1,450
Contingency	£1,000
Defibrillator	£300
IT Replacement fund	£200
Bank charges	£100
Total	£10,936

1229. **Meeting dates for 2026:**

The meeting dates for 2026 were agreed as follows:

12 February 2026

26 March 2026

7 May 2026

16 July 2026

17 September 2026

12 November 2026

17 December 2026

1230. **Village Hall:**

Nothing to report.

1231. **Other items for information:**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:30pm.

REPORT TO BILSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL DEC 2025

Very sadly my December report will be a revisit of my November Christmas campaign and report. So many crimes across the district that were warned about in that document have occurred.

Thankfully, that has not occurred to the best of my knowledge in your Parish.

Elsewhere the routine thefts from vehicles, vans, sheds, garages, outbuildings and internet parcels off of the doorsteps have risen as predicted.

I am also concerned that there has been a spike in actual burglaries.

I am driving home crime prevention advice across the whole area.

I will verbally update you at the meeting on several matters since November meeting.

Importantly I am finishing my work on my 2026 personal NHW Action Plan which I will present at the January meeting.

The most important part of this report however is to thank you all for your sound solid support for me personally and the Neighbourhood Watch work. We cannot quantify what indeed we have prevented or will prevent in the future.

Also, the work you undertake to support the community and drive community cohesion and development.

As we move into a period of uncertainty with the future of Government reorganisation, I cannot stress enough how much our working relationship and your work as a Parish Council will be the strong base for us to go forward on.

I will work to engage with PC Stuart Picton to build a similar relationship. I have had several phone calls with him but have yet to meet face to face.

May I close by wishing you all and all of your families a very Happy Christmas and a Very Happy Healthy New Year

Peter

Peter New. Community Neighbourhood Watch