

Minutes of a meeting of Bilsington Parish Council held at Bilsington Village Hall on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 at 7:00 pm.

Present: Councillors; S Hudson (Chairman), M Bilham and R Thompson.

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

**1037. Apologies for absence:**

Cllr L Lawson and Cllr D Robey (KCC)

**1038. Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

**1039. Public Participation:**

A question was submitted via the Borough Councillor regarding the change of the streetlight on Bonnington Road to LED as this was mentioned some time ago yet not done. Also a request for a village gateway on Bonnington Road to slow traffic as there is no footpath.

In response the streetlight is owned by the Borough Council and maintained by KCC therefore not a Parish Council matter. With regards to the village gateway this can be added to the Highways Improvement Plan for assessment by Kent Highways, indicative cost for this being £2,600 payable by the Parish.

**1040. Kent County Councillor's Report:**

- The budget issue continues to dominate at KCC, but we will achieve a balanced budget in 2023/2024. Next year, 2024/2025, is still proving problematical, due to Adult Social Care & Health & Children's Services. This will lead to cuts in other services that will affect many people, but which are unavoidable. The Government announced last week another £500m nationally for Local Authorities to help with Adult Social Care, but this is a drop in the ocean, and although helpful, will not significantly impact the underlying issue, and its consequences.
- We have now started the project to completely revise how we approach roadworks, particularly those undertaken by the utilities. This will not be easy, but I am confident that we can improve the current unsatisfactory situation.
- Neil Baker, the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways, and I, are looking to revise our approach to Active Travel, with a view to releasing more money for basic road maintenance, especially potholes. We are also looking at new ways of actually fixing potholes.
- I am working with Linda Harman on the Aldington Solar Farm, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), and will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate, with KCC & ABC being consultees. We are hoping to make the enormous visual impact the major factor in the decision, leading to either the scheme being refused, or at least much reduced in size.

**1041. Ashford Borough Councillor's Report:**

Like KCC, ABC is very concerned about budgets. National press has in recent days made much of the news that local councils plan to increase council tax to the maximum allowed. As mentioned in my December Report, government is calculating funding for local councils based upon the assumption that they will gather funding at the maximum permitted level. In effect, if national tax cuts come in the next Budget on 6<sup>th</sup> March we will have replaced national taxes with local taxes. Please bear this in mind when conversations start about councils overcharging.

The Ashford Local Plan 2041 is now officially off the starting blocks. The Call for Sites brought forth 280 different proposed sites for a variety of uses. Planning are now logging and uploading the sites to the ABC website. They are anticipated to be made public at the end of February and discussions around what the housing strategy might be are anticipated to start in the summer. Many rounds of public consultation will follow.

Speaking of Planning, I today received Notice of the designation of TPOs on oak trees within the Ripley Scrap Yard site. I believe that you discussed the current live application to build there at your last meeting. There are 9 oak trees on the site which have all been TPO'd.

On other matters; At the end of March the contract with Biffa, the current refuse and recycling contractor, comes to an end. A new contract will commence. All current Biffa staff will TUPE across to the new Suez contract. Communication about the new contract will commence shortly. One key change is that we will move to having half the borough having their grey bins collected, and half the borough having recycling collected simultaneously. At present the 'green bins day', applies to the whole borough for a given week. This change enables equipment to be used more effectively. Collection routes will change and so collection times and even the day may be subject to change. Another change is that waste electrical items (WEE) will no longer be collected kerbside. Current refuse lorries have a small compartment for picking up WEE. There have been many complaints because, when the small bin fills up, the bin contractors are unable to collect items that are left out. You will have seen that a WEE recycling event ran in Aldington last Saturday. This is part of testing formats to see how we can collect WEE sustainably. The event in Aldington was a resounding success. People definitely embraced the convenience of having items collected locally. I hope that we will run it again.

Lastly, you may be interested to know that Ashford Borough Council was among three expert witnesses representing organisations in Kent who attended a Select Committee meeting today. They told MPs that the introduction of new EU Entry Exit System (EES) checks at UK borders later this year could have a serious effect on people living in, working in, and visiting Kent as well as those travelling through the county. ABC, KCC and Visit Kent told the committee that, as the gateway to Europe, if Kent is blocked, supply chains will also be fundamentally impacted, and therefore, the implementation of EES checks is not just a Kent problem – but a national problem. ABC also took the opportunity to point out that uncertainty about border

support and infrastructure for the new entry system could put the return of international train services to Kent in further jeopardy.

1042. **Neighbourhood Watch:**

Report attached.

1043. **Minutes:**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

1044. **Planning:**

Planning application PA/2024/0002 – Foxwood House, Brockmans Lane – Two storey extension and porch to the front elevation, two roof dormers to the rear elevation, and changes to first-floor fenestration on side elevation.

**Resolved: The Parish Council supports the application.**

1045. **Finance:**

Schedule of payments:

Staff Costs December 2023	£436.46
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**Resolved: to authorise the payment of the staff costs for December 2023**

1046. **D Day Commemorations:**

It was agreed that an event should be arranged and that investigation would be made into the possibility of a beacon being lit.

1047. **Village Hall:**

The new heating has been installed and the walls redecorated.

1048. **Other items for information:**

The Highways Improvement Plan is to be revisited.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:05pm

## REPORT TO BILSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL FEB 2024.

You saw my personal action plan I submitted at the last council meeting. The areas I would be working on and my priorities. That plan is now across the Ashford District. This month I am targeting **AVOIDABLE and PREVENTABLE CRIMES**.

Key areas that must be at the front of our prevention work under that heading are as follows.

### **Vehicles, Sheds and Garages (in rural areas we add Barns and Stables)**

We must win the constant battle to ensure residents leave nothing whatsoever on show in a vehicle when parked especially last park up for the night.

When parking I am asking drivers to adopt Pete's 10 second rule". Park a vehicle, lock it and stand and look inside the vehicle. If you can see something so can a criminal and your vehicle is at risk, and you could be a victim of crime!

Areas for residents to risk assess are....

1. Outside your home address
2. Parking at somewhere like a Railway Station where criminals will tour around as they know vehicles are there for some time. Parking in rural areas and going off for walks.
3. Visits away from home in shopping centre car parks/cinemas etc.



The worst example I can give however is the next time you attend a funeral look what is says in the car park. **THIEVES OPERATE IN THIS CAR PARK.**

Why? because we are not at our best at funerals, we dread a mobile phone going off albeit we checked it is off 10 times. We leave it in the glove box. Ladies leave handbags under the front seats. Criminals know this and they know the car will be left for about 45 minutes. **AVOIDABLE and PREVENTABLE!**

Please try to keep all outbuildings, sheds, garages, barns, and stables as secure as possible.

Especially look at shed security. Do not keep expensive items in a shed with just a nail holding the door shut.

Criminals especially in dark winter hours will be looking for easy targets like sheds and garages. Good locks and lighting can help. Chain items together in sheds, anything to slow down “chancers and opportunists”.

Protect your property	Allotment Watch area
<p>Given the opportunity, thieves will target <b>sheds and garages</b> for items such as high-value power tools and bikes.</p> <p>Take measures to protect your valuables and reduce this risk of theft.</p> 	<p>This allotment is part of the <b>Kent Allotment Watch</b> scheme</p> <p>This area is regularly patrolled by police</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep garages or sheds locked when not in use</li><li>• Consider fitting security alarms and external lights where possible</li><li>• Security mark valuable items and keep receipts somewhere safe</li><li>• Lock away tools or equipment that could be stolen or used to break in to your property</li><li>• Dispose of packaging carefully – wrapping and boxes can advertise rich pickings for criminals</li></ul>	<p>Members have taken extra security measures to keep their sheds safe</p> <p><b>Report it</b></p> <p>Online <a href="http://www.kent.police.uk/report">www.kent.police.uk/report</a></p> <p>Talk to us on LiveChat <a href="http://www.kent.police.uk/contact">www.kent.police.uk/contact</a></p> 
	<p><b>Contacting Kent Police</b></p> <p>Report a non-urgent crime online <a href="http://www.kent.police.uk/report">www.kent.police.uk/report</a></p> <p>Talk to us on LiveChat – available 24/7 <a href="http://www.kent.police.uk/contact">www.kent.police.uk/contact</a></p> <p>In an emergency, if crime is in progress or life is in danger call <b>999</b></p> <p>If deaf or speech impaired, text ‘police’ and your message to <b>60066</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.kent.police.uk">www.kent.police.uk</a>   </p>

Sadly, many of the shed break ins are carried out to steal items to fund a drug habit. Items often targeted are bikes, golf clubs, expensive fishing tackle and tools.

The next **AVOIDABLE and PREVENTABLE CRIME** is **Theft of internet shopping parcels off of doorsteps.**

Firstly, you are vulnerable to a passing “chancer and opportunist” who is passing and there is a parcel to pick up! We now must accept that delivery vans are followed so the most rural and outlying properties can be a victim of crime.

Please try to ensure safe delivery are made.



CRIME  
**Parcel thefts rise from doorsteps as gangs follow courier vans**



You will recall that last year a series of high-end keyless cars were taken across East Kent. Approximately 40 vehicles. Thankfully several of the criminals were arrested and put before the courts. Vigilant work by Neighbourhood Watch members assisted those arrests and were thanked by the crime squad.

Recently that crime has returned to Ashford District, so I am alerting all communities to be alert and vigilant and ensure the safety and security of your keys is a number one priority.



Above shows criminal approaching a keyless car. The backpack contains a form of reading device for the car keys.

It is essential that anyone seeing these events calls 999 immediately. These events were failed attempts thankfully however on this occasion these criminals toured about 10 other roads nearby.

These events were in recent weeks in Kennington and a keyless car was taken in Bethersden over the weekend 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> January.

### Community assistance

Detective Constable Scott Drake, Kent Police's investigating officer, said: 'These three men were relentless in their targeting of cars to steal and quickly take out of the county.'

'I would like to thank the local Neighbourhood Watch coordinators who worked tirelessly to obtain crucial CCTV footage and for the support of the local communities in providing important evidence in this case.'

'I am pleased our meticulous investigation saw these men arrested and charged, and they are now no longer at liberty to steal people's property.'

The sentences come two weeks after two other men were jailed for a total of five years for similar offences.

### Advice

Following the cases, drivers of cars with keyless entry systems are advised to take steps to ensure their vehicles are secure. Motorists should:

- Check if their entry fobs can be turned off overnight and store them away from any household entry points.
- Drivers can also store their fobs in special foil-lined bags, which can be bought from retailers, to prevent any unwanted communication between the vehicle and its keys.
- Make sure you don't leave your car keys visible from the outside of your home and park in a garage, secure car park or well-lit area covered by CCTV if possible.
- Consider having windows etched with the vehicle registration number or use an invisible ink marker pen to mark these details and your postcode on the underside frame of the vehicle.

For more information, visit [the advice page on our website](#).



# Preventing car and vehicle theft

Don't let thieves get an easy ride. Follow these simple rules to protect your vehicle from thieves.

## 1. Lock your vehicle

Locking your vehicle, even when filling up or parked on your drive, greatly reduces the possibility of it being targeted by an opportunist thief. Even if you have locked your vehicle, check you haven't left any windows or the sunroof open.

It is actually illegal to leave your vehicle running unattended while you de-ice it or warm it up in cold weather. If someone takes it while it's left like this, your insurer won't pay out because you won't be covered.

If your vehicle has wing mirrors that fold in automatically when locked, make sure you lock it properly. Criminal gangs are looking for vehicles like these where the wing mirrors are still out because it is clear to them that the vehicle has been left unlocked.

## 2. Keep the keys safe

Vehicles today are by and large more difficult to steal than ever, unless the thief can access your key or fob to clone them. Keep your keys safe, out of view when at home, and away from your front door. It's not uncommon for car keys to be stolen from inside your home by thieves fishing for them with a stick and hook through the letterbox.

If you're selling your car and you meet up with a potential buyer, do not allow the keys out of your sight. Your keys may be cloned by thieves and used later to steal your vehicle.



### Keyless entry

Cars with keyless entry unlock automatically when the key comes within a short distance of the car. This can be from inside a pocket or bag. If you have to push a button on your car key to open your car, you don't have keyless entry.

Keyless car theft or 'relay theft' is when a device is used to fool the car into thinking the key is close by. This unlocks the car and starts the ignition.


Thieves only need to be within a few metres of your car key to capture the signal, even if it's inside your home. This means that even if your car and home are secure, thieves can still unlock, start and steal your car.

### How to protect your keyless entry car

- When at home keep your car key (and the spare) well away from the car.
- Put the keys in a screened or signal-blocking pouch, such as a Faraday Bag and check if the bag or pouch is still working every few months.
- Reprogramme your keys if you buy a second hand car.
- Turn off wireless signals on your fob when it's not being used.

Additional physical security such as locks and immobilisers are still highly recommended.

[Section six](#) on this page has more information about this.

Additional physical security can help to prevent your vehicle being driven away even if a thief gains entry. There are a range of security rated products tested by [Sold Secure](#)  that can help, such as steering wheel locks, pedal boxes and gear stick locks.

Some of these products, tested to Sold Secure Diamond, can even resist a small hand-held angle grinder.

It's also worth speaking to your vehicle dealership about installing an aftermarket immobiliser approved by the manufacturer.

Immobilisers prevent a vehicle from starting unless the correct fob, key or activation process is used. They can be personalised so that you're the only one who knows how to unset it via a number of dashboard controls.

The above guidance will be helpful and safe storage of keys for keyless ignition cars are essential.

A key part of the Action plan for 2024 is to ensure ALL CRIMES ARE REPORTED. It allows proactive patrols to be planned. It allows the best possible crime prevention advice to be issued. It allows us to help plot crime trends and warn areas nearby. It allows us to assist officers with investigations and builds a full picture of the crime trends and extent of the crimes.



## By phone


### Emergency


**999**

Call **999** if:

- a serious offence is in progress or has just been committed
- someone is in immediate danger or harm
- property is in danger of being damaged
- a serious disruption to the public is likely

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 [emergencySMS service](#) .

British Sign Language (BSL) users please use our [video relay service](#)  where an interpreter will help you report the crime to us.

#### Silent 999 calls

If you're in danger but you can't talk on the phone, you should still call **999**, then [follow these instructions](#) depending on whether you're calling from a mobile or a landline.



## Non-emergency

**101**

Call **101** for non-emergency enquiries.

Please use [01622 690 690](tel:01622690690) if you're calling from outside of the UK. If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use our textphone service on [18000](tel:18000).

## Anti-terrorist hotline

**0800 789 321**

Call the UK Anti-Terrorism Hotline on **0800 789 321** if you've seen or heard something that you think could suggest terrorist activity.

The three main methods for reporting to the police are 999, crimes in progress or have just happened or about to happen.

101 non urgent calls to Police Force Control

Report online/live chat to Force Control.

However, in rural areas and considering travel times I urge residents to use 999 and let Kent Police Force Control room prioritise.



Thank you for your support,  
Peter

**Peter New**  
**91725 Peter New Kent Police Volunteer & Community neighbourhood Watch.**

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