



Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the Ashford Residents Association (ARA)

Held at Ashford Baptist Church, Church Road, Ashford 10.00 to 12.00

Saturday 25th April 2026

Overview

Our 5th meeting of the members took place once again at the Ashford Baptist Church, which again served as an excellent venue.

On what was an unexpectedly glorious sunny morning, we were treated to 3 very good speaker sessions, and feedback from those in attendance – both immediately after and in the days that followed – was that it was a very informative meeting.

Once again, we would like to thank our hosts at the Baptist Church for accommodating us and in particular Bex for all of her on the day support to get us ready for a prompt 10.00am start.

Meeting Attendees

67 Attendees - This number was down on the January meeting attendance numbers. Good weather may have played a part!

Councillors in attendance –Rebecca Geach, Katherine Rutherford & Jo Sexton.

To be honest we had expected all the councillors to be out canvassing for the forthcoming elections to the new unitary authority (12 days later), so to have this representation was to be applauded.

Cllr Boparai had intended to attend but had to offer his apologies on the morning due to a family emergency.

As ever, we are always thankful that these Councillors can spare their valuable time to attend our meetings. Going forward we will still look to invite the existing councillors, who will continue to operate in a parallel year with the new elected councillors post on 7th May. All new Councillors will also be invited to attend.

Our next meeting – after consultation with those in attendance will now be scheduled for end September to avoid the peak holiday season.

AGM

The Association is obliged to hold an Annual General Meeting for members to:

- Review the Operational Year.
- Review Financial Position.
- Confirm / Elect Committee members to office.
- Set objectives for the next year.
- AOB

The AGM will be held at the Ashford Baptist Church on the evening of Wednesday 27th May. The meeting will start at 7pm and we have booked the hall for 2 hours to ensure ample time to cover any issues / other business.

This being said we do not believe the meeting will require the said 2 hours given the agenda above.

Attendance is open to all Paid up members – we look forward to seeing any of those members at this meeting.

Membership Update Saturday 25th April 2026

At the point of writing, we are pleased to confirm that Paid Up members now total more than 170.

Without Resident funding we cannot operate – Hall Hire, IT Costs, Printing Costs, Insurances... the list goes on, but with this improvement in our financial position we are in good position to continue our work through 2026.

AGENDA

10.00 – 10.10 Welcome / Housekeeping

Welcome, Fire Evacuation & Introductions

10.10 – 10.45 “How to avoid becoming a scam victim” Bill Cunningham

10.45 – 11.25 Policing Update

Thea Jackson - Surrey Police Sergeant - Ashford Update

Marianne Ashford - Surrey Police – PCSO Ashford

11.25 – 11.45 Surrey Fire & Rescue Service Safeguarding Team

White Watch – Fordbridge Fire Station

11.45 – 12.00 **AOB/CLOSE**

How to Avoid becoming a Scam victim! Attached presentation to the email.

Bill Cunningham, who works with Trading Standards in Surrey, walked us through a presentation which we have included with these minutes.

Safe to say that what he had to say had everyone listening attentively and even the savvy would have learnt something from his session.

Key take aways for me: -

Fraud now makes up 40% of all Crime!!

Sadly, victims of fraud often become repeat victims

There are scams that catch all ages.

We can become victims on our doorstep, on our phone, responding to postal offers as well as online.

Be wary when you hear the words “Can you Confirm ”or “Would you please verify” and “Can you just validate”.

Be suspicious of the following:

Pressure to make decisions now

Requests to give your bank details. We phone banks, banks don't phone us.

Use of words "Unique" or "Last Minute" and "Special offer just for today".

Beware requests to:

Click a link

Click a Download

Allow the person the other end to take control of your PC

Scams that frequently make the headlines include:

Parcel Delivery Fee requests,

Fake messages on say WhatsApp from a purported family member who has lost their phone and need help.

Holiday Insurance Calls

HMRC Winter Fuel Allowance overpayments

What can we do?

Be suspicious

Be mean

Rely on that gut feeling

Buy slowly

Ignore surveys – giving away information unnecessarily

Delete emails rather than clicking the unsubscribe button

Never reach a retailer via a social media site – always stay on the retailers buying site.

Ignore notifications/ calls regarding Direct Debit failure / Account frozen.

Bill's key recommendation was to sign up with a body called Friends Against Scams.

This can be reached using this link – www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk

Engagement from the audience was excellent – clearly a topic that is a worry to most in the room.

Police – Ashford Update. Attached presentation to the email (Part of their Spelthorne Safer Neighbourhood Team initiative).

Once again, we were delighted to have Sgt Thea Jackson and PCSO Marianne Ashford attending our meeting, to provide their latest quarterly update.

At the previous meeting we were told that the Operation Chariot initiative, that included their "**CLEAR > HOLD > BUILD**" strategy was due to be implemented imminently and the numbers that were feedback to the audience (once again) were very well received.

CLEAR -Phase 1

Targeted Arrests of known perpetrators.
Disrupt the Gangs.
Seize Drugs / Weapons.
Close Drug Dens.

HOLD – Phase 2

Maintain High Vis patrols.
Monitor Threats.
Civil Enforcement.
Secure Premises.

BUILD – Phase 3

Invest in Services.
Support Families.
Youth Engagement.
Empower Residents.

Phase 1 has been deployed and continues to be ongoing. Post meeting the Residents Association attended a Police Community Engagement event outside the Baptist Church in front of the Tesco Express attended by around 8 Police. This visibility is essential to reinforcing messages and they even arrested a habitual shoplifter in Sainsbury's on the day which was a plus.

Phase 1 takes a lot of putting together. The Police alone would be unable to create outcomes. It required pulling together the following bodies to attack on many fronts, and that kind of co-ordination takes time.

- Neighbourhood Enforcement Team
- Vanguard
- Casualty Reduction Officers
- British Transport Police
- SWT Revenue Protection Team
- Council & Police Licensing Teams
- Surrey CC Parking Enforcement Team
- Immigration
- Trading Standards

Still the weakness caused by the lack of any security gates at Ashford Station is playing a role, but by focusing on known individuals using the Railway to get in and out of Ashford they were successful in being a nuisance to these people.

The resultant numbers are in the pack attached but to repeat here:

- 63 Arrests
- 108 Charges
- 16 Remands
- 35 Stop Searches
- 25 Drug seizures
- 11 Vehicle seizures
- 23 Out of Court disposals (untaxed cars etc)
- 3 Warrants executed
- 3 Weapons seized

Current Crime Performance

- Recorded Crime DOWN 11.7% (1535 cases compared to this time last year of 1738)
- Solving more Crime 16.6% of all reported crime is detected and that double the national average.
- Detection rate re Shoplifting has doubled – 31.7% of shoplifters referred to Court or OOC.
- Reports of Burglary DOWN 29%
- Reports of Vehicle Crime DOWN 34.3%
- Violent Crime DOWN 12% with an 11% detection rate.

Surrey Fire & Rescue Service Safeguarding Team. See leaflet attached to email.

Inviting the Fire Brigade to any event is always fraught in the knowledge that they may not turn up, or may have to leave early, due to a shout. Thus was the situation at this meeting but somehow, they were able to arrive just in time from an early call-out but were then called away as our meeting closed when they were taking many one-on-one conversations with members of our audience.

As it was, the session with White watch was eye-opening for many.

Fordbridge Station covers a residential footprint over 100,00 residents. Even today they are called out 250+ times a year to fires in Spelthorne. Road Traffic Accident callouts are only slightly higher.

White Watch were keen to remind us of things to look out for:

- Switching off Appliances at night – leaving chargers on all night is deemed high risk as the batteries tend to get very hot.
- Big warning regarding use of the old square block 3 plug adaptors – these are high risk again due to overheating (use of an extension gang strip with safety trips are much safer).
- Use of petroleum-based products on faces was flagged. Overnight creams with this base get onto pillows and sheets and do not wash out fully which – in the case of a fire – can make those items highly flammable.

The Firemen were also happy to offer free safety home visits, and they also have 10-year Fire Alarms that they are happy to provide for free and will even help with install where appropriate.

Because the team had to depart quicker than they would have liked, we agreed that we would act as the go-between for any resident that wishes to follow up with the brigade. For further information see details on our website or just email us at info@ashfordra.co.uk.

AOB - Close

1) Forthcoming Election

Because of the election on the 7th May we were holding this meeting during a period of Election Purdah which means we were not allowed to discuss matters with councillors that could be construed as electioneering.

2) Andrew McLuskey invited the Association to pick up the notion of applying for a Neighbourhood Health Centre – a new initiative created by the current Government. It was agreed that we would indeed pick this up and will report back to members in due course.

The meeting ended at 12.00pm promptly.

The Committee wish to record its grateful thanks to all those Residents who attended and look forward to seeing them at our next meeting in September.

REMINDER - Ashford Residents Association AGM on Wednesday 27th May at 7.00pm.