



The TW15

Newsletter of the Ashford Residents Association

May 2025 – 1st Edition

Welcome!

If you are receiving this Newsletter, it means that you have signed up to the new Ashford Residents Association.

We were created at the end of February at a meeting of 50 or so Residents, who were interested in creating a new Residents Association (RA), following the wind down of the last remaining RA which represented the Ashford North area, which also picked up the South Stanwell area, just north of the A30 by Ashford Hospital.

Graciously hosted by Father Stuart at St Matthews Church and chaired by Barry Muggeridge, it was agreed to create a new group that would seek to represent all residents in the Ashford TW15 Postal District and the following Management Committee (after some post meeting adjustments) were duly elected:

Chair	John Dickens	chair@ashfordra.co.uk
Treasurer	Penny Kielty	treasurer@ashfordra.co.uk
Secretary	Julie Holman	secretary@ashfordra.co.uk

After two productive hours of listening to those in attendance, it was clear that Ashford is feeling vulnerable.

- A High Street in seemingly constant decline.
- Lack of any visible Policing on the Streets.
- Perpetual Shoplifting with little recourse.
- Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Parking Challenges with poor enforcement.
- Pressure on services such as GP Surgeries.

However, there is unequivocally a strong and passionate pride within the Residents there present, who want to turn the tide and help the Town **that we all call home**, move forward and hopefully thrive.

To this end, the Committee Members agreed to stand this Association up and take on the quest of engaging all residents of Ashford (over 22,000 of us). We hope to get Residents on board and help drive the Association to be a representative group, which has a seat at the table of change, working with all Stakeholders, including our local elected representatives within both Spelthorne Borough Council and Surrey County Council.

So, what has happened since our first meeting in February?

Getting Established

The Committee has been putting in a lot of hours getting operational.

We have signed off on a new Constitution and with this as our base, we have completed the formalities of Registering with Spelthorne Borough Council as a Residents Association and have additionally set up new Banking Facilities.

Using the email contacts from the first meeting, we immediately sent out relevant announcements and news from the Borough and County Councils, as a pre-cursor to setting up other communication channels.

Penny, from the beginning, has single-handedly set up the necessary Email Accounts under the ashfordra.co.uk identifier and has followed this up by creating an Ashford Residents Association group on the “Next Door” network App. Most recently Penny has built, enhanced polished and launched our very own Website which is getting a lot of very good feedback from those who have gone onto the site.

Our **Website** can be found at this address or by clicking on link below: (on your keyboard the link may require you to press the bottom left “CTRL” Key before Clicking)

<https://ashfordra.co.uk>

In addition, we have set up a **Facebook** page, identified as Ashford Residents Association and this has started getting momentum. For those of you who have already requested to join, please invite all and any of your friends who reside in the TW15 Post Code to also join.

The Main focus of the Committee is very much around spreading the word and getting people to join us. With numbers we are louder. We will have more doors open and we will hopefully get those in office to take us seriously, as an organisation for change that needs to be heard.

Our main Communication vehicle is intended to be the Website, but we will ensure that all three mediums are kept up to date and relevant.

Representing the Residents

Spelthorne Partnership Assembly

Now that we have been formally recognised by the Council, our details are now published on the Council Website.

As part of this recognition, we will now receive an on-going invitation to attend the Spelthorne Partnership Assembly, a very useful group which brings together all the Residents Association's across Spelthorne, who are given the opportunity to raise their issues and concerns before every meeting, the Council then seeks to invite the relevant stakeholders to that meeting to provide answers to those questions.

The forum is not exclusive to Residents Associations, but this Forum is their opportunity to engage with the Council to seek answers.

Ashford Stakeholder Working Group

Following our creation, we attended the initial Working Group Meeting of this Group which has its terms of reference set by Surrey County Council.

This is an initiative that is looking for ways to make positive changes to certain Surrey townships, where it is felt it is best needed.

Simon Lowe who chairs this Group has kindly agreed to give us an update on progress at our next Residents meeting to be held on Saturday 14th June.

There are no guarantees that the final recommendations will get approved or funded, but the initiative has good intentions and we are pleased to work with it.

Barclays Bank Premises – Change of use Appeal to become an Adult Gaming Centre

The opposition to this change has been sizeable, long before this Association was created. However, members of the Committee attended this appeal with around 60 other concerned Residents, to voice our opposition to the Government appointed Inspector who chaired the appeal hearing. We did offer our position as a Residents Association along side many eloquent speakers who all opposed the granting of this appeal

As we all know, despite his acknowledgement of the sheer size of local opposition, he found no reason to decline the appeal and therefore he was somewhat compelled to approve it.

This process moves on to the Licensing stage for a Gaming License, which will be reviewed by the relevant committee at Spelthorne Borough Council, but we need to be realistic as to the likely outcome here.

The Inspector did reduce the hours of opening for the new operation to between 9.30am – 11.00pm against the request for 24-hour opening, but this was probably no more than a tactical request from the word go.

Banking Hub

As we have communicated previously, we submitted an application for a Banking Hub in Ashford, which is managed by the LINK organisation a group set up by all the major banks to manage Bank ATMs essentially.

Despite initial enthusiasm, after they completed their review of our TW15 area, they concluded that given we are more than adequately supplied with a number of ATMs in this area, there was no requirement to consider a Banking Hub.

We had specifically stated that we were already well served with ATM's and that it was all the ancillary services that we were struggling to get access to, but this Cash Accessibility would seem to be their primary driver for creating such a hub.

If the situation changes, we will of course seek to go back and resurrect our case.

Working with other Ashford Groups

As part of spreading the word to encourage more people to join us, **Penny** has created and sent poster media to all the Churches, Schools, Sports Clubs, Golf Club, Community Associations, Youth movements and Scout Groups, asking them all to share with their audiences. We have about 25 or so of these who all share the same objective of trying to improve the lives of Ashford Residents.

We already have an established link with the **Ashfordwide** organisation, who do an amazing job of working with our local businesses to help with such things as putting up all the flags, through Church Road and Woodthorpe Road for all the various events across the year. These include organising the Remembrance Day event at the War Memorial, helping the Rotary Club run its Classic Car event, buying and erecting the Christmas Tree in Church Road and running the very popular Christmas Fayre, all at their own expense.

We attended their recent AGM and a takeaway was the idea of creating a better network between both Ashfordwide, the Residents Association, any Neighbourhood Watch organisations in the postcode, any quasi-representative groups (like Fordbridge Park Residents Group) and the Rotary Club. All of these groups at various times, need volunteers and with a broader volunteer base we can hope to keep these groups functioning and help to prosper.

Where we really want engagement and representation, is with all those young people who are choosing to call Ashford their home and who see Ashford as the best place to raise their families, they are the ones with most to gain from regenerating a sense of pride in this town.

To this end we are keen to work with the schools and the churches to get a hook and let this important group of people help pass on the word. We are getting some posters and leaflets printed to hit these key groups and will track how successful that initiative is.

What's next?

Residents Association Meeting

We are preparing for our next meeting together on Saturday 14th June, which will again be held in the Church at St Matthews, in Church Road Ashford from 10am until 12pm. Once again, many thanks to Father Stuart for facilitating use of the Church.

We have two guest speakers.

We have already advised that Simon Lowe will be giving us an update on the Stakeholder initiative, regarding some potential improvements to Ashford High Street / Church Road.

In addition, we have Ruby Pyne who is one of the PCSO co-ordinators within Spelthorne and who is currently based at Staines Police Station. She will come and provide us with an overview as to the challenges they face supporting Ashford and to this end, we will soon be

sending out a separate request for your areas of concern / interest and we will then collate those responses to submit to Ruby so that she can ensure these are covered in her slot.

We have invited all 12 of the Ashford Borough Councillors and 3 County Councillors to this event and hope as many as possible can attend. We have also invited **Lincoln Jopp**, our MP to attend and his office have confirmed that he will be able to attend the first hour, before departing to open the Shepperton Fair which was a prior engagement.

We hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us, in what will be a full two hours.

Broadening the Membership Base

As we have already alluded to, within the Committee we are investing heavily in time and effort in getting more Residents engaged to sign up to the Association, either via Facebook, Next Door or the Website or indeed any combination of the three.

What we do need is those of you receiving this Newsletter to act as our evangelists and to reach out to your families, neighbours and friends to encourage them to join the quest.

The reality is that apathy has become the biggest killer of Community enthusiasm. We are all guilty of wanting to know everything, but not wanting to contribute, this is not sustainable. If we don't fight against the demise of Ashford, then the only thing that is inevitable, is that demise. **It's as simple as that.**

So please, spread the word. The pace of sign ups over the last week, would suggest we are on to something with this Association, but we need to maintain momentum and that comes from you.

Moving to a Membership Model

Residents Associations have to fund themselves. We have submitted a funding request to the Councils CIL Fund, but there is no guarantee of success and thus far our start-up costs have come from the residual monies that were held within the last Residents Group – ANRA.

The Committee are members like everyone else and there is an expectation that Residents Associations should cover their running costs (on a not-for-profit basis) from Members contributions.

All our content on the Website is currently free to view. In three months, we will create a member's only area where all the new content will be accessed.

In line with other Spelthorne based Residents Associations, we are looking to set an annual membership Fee at £5 per postal address / family.

A payment facility is up and running now on the website, alongside a separate donation facility for those who wish to fund the organisation in additional ways. These are a simple Credit Card and PayPal process which should be familiar to many, if not most of you.

Our primary costs are Hall Hire, IT, Website Hosting, Microsoft Email Subscriptions and Printing. Without ongoing funding this is unsustainable so Membership commitment will guarantee ongoing business, but if we can't raise funds to cover then the Association will cease to exist. Thankfully we are already seeing new joiners sign up and volunteer payments which is gratefully received.

Upcoming Events

VE DAY 80TH Anniversary Celebrations

These are this weekend and there will be several road closures in Ashford, across this Bank Holiday, which may affect your travel.

We have already circulated a list of these closures across our existing communication channels.

Spelthorne Partnership Assembly

This is on Monday 19th May at the Council Offices between 6pm and 8pm. If you have any questions that you want us to submit on anything Ashford related, we will collate and submit to the Council for consideration. We will be attending as the RA and will report back post this meeting.

Ashford Stakeholder Working Group

This is on Wednesday 7th May at the Ashford Congregational Church. We will be attending as the RA and will report back post this meeting.

Ashford Residents Association Meeting

As above, this will take place on **Saturday the 14th of June** in the church of St Matthews, Church Road, Ashford from 10am to 12pm. Agenda to be distributed before the meeting and Minutes afterwards.

Thanks for your ongoing support & Best Regards

JD

John Dickens

Chair

chair@ashfordra.co.uk