



Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the Ashford Residents Association – (ARA)

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

Saturday 24th January 2026

Overview

Our 4th and final meeting, of this our 1st year of existence, saw us move location once again.

Having held our 1st 2 meetings at St Matthews Church, followed by our 3rd meeting at the Salvation Army Hall, we were very pleased to move to a more centre-of-town location and would like to offer our grateful thanks to the administrators of the Ashford Baptist Church for allowing us to use their facility.

The general feedback from attendees was that the venue was excellent and we thank Bex for all of her on the day support to get us ready for a prompt 10.00am start.

Meeting Attendees

84 Attendees - This number was down on the September meeting but, given that meeting was dedicated pretty much exclusively to the emotive topic of HMO's, and we had affected residents in attendance from Sunbury & Shepperton, a reduction was expected.

Councillors in attendance – Michelle Arnold, Chris Bateson, Harry Boparai, Rebecca Geach, Greg Neall, Katherine Rutherford & Jo Sexton.

We are always thankful that these Councillors can spare their valuable time to attend our meetings.

Whilst Councillors obviously represent the same Residents that this Association seeks to support, we are very conscious that Councillors already commit a substantial amount of their personal time to fulfil their roles as Councillors, so the fact that they make time for a Saturday morning Residents Association meeting is to be applauded.

Special mention to Councillor Geach for attending with her young children – thank you. It would have been easier for you to excuse yourself, but you were most welcome.

Future Meetings

Post meeting, the Management Committee have proposed seeking a more long-term arrangement to use the Baptist Church for our meetings and effectively give us a more permanent home.

We have been working with Cllr Neall to secure agreement from Greene King regarding the use of the rear car park at the former Royal Hart site for our meetings. Despite efforts to obtain a firm commitment ahead of the meeting, we have not yet been successful. However, we will continue to engage with them in the hope of reaching an agreement.

Membership Update

At the point of writing, we are pleased to confirm that Paid Up members now total more than 160, which is significant progress on the membership position as at the end of the 2025, where we had lots of Residents signing up, but very few had paid the membership fee.

We fully accept & acknowledge that only offering online payments was a principal cause of non-payment. We always did think that a greater majority of those signed up were happy to help cover the Association costs, and that proved to be the case. Thank you to all of you that worked with us to get us back onto an even keel.

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 a good position to continue our work through 2026.

Meeting Agenda

10.00 – 10.10 Welcome / Housekeeping

Welcome, Fire Evacuation & Introductions

10.10 – 11.20 Q & A Session – Policing

Thea Jackson - Surrey Police Sergeant - Ashford Update

Lisa Townsend - Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner

(Incl Questions pre submitted via Peoples Poll)

11.20 – 11.30 – Neighbourhood Watch

Alan Howell - Surrey Neighbourhood Watch Chairman

11.30 – 11.45 – Healthwatch Surrey

Katharine Newman - Healthwatch Surrey

11.45 – 12.00 Close

AOB

Q & A Session – Policing

Ironically the Police Officers (Sgt Thea Jackson-Sedgwick & PCSO Marianne Ashford) arrived as the meeting began, having been detained responding to an incident in Church Road on their way to the venue.

We have a 2nd PCSO who supports the TW15 Area being Gary Brett who used to cover Stanwell. These officers have a regular updating slot at all our meetings and provided the latest overview which (as ever) went down very positively.

New to our meeting was Lisa Townsend, who is our elected Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC). The PCC Role is a politically elected role. Lisa is a Conservative Party PCC and is serving her 2nd term having been originally elected in 2021 and was duly re-elected in 2024.

The PCC's primary duties include setting the strategic priorities for policing, ensuring that the police effectively tackle crime and managing the police budget.

The position was established in November 2012, replacing the previous Surrey Police Authority.

The Labour Government announced just before our meeting that all PCC's would cease to exist in 2028. Lisa was good enough to share with us her thoughts regarding the current state of policing in Surrey.

Rather than quoting verbatim I have included below the link to the Surrey PCC Website that talks to her priorities through to the end of her tenure in 2028 – “Police and Crime Plan for Surrey (2025 – 2028)” [Police and Crime Plan | Police & Crime Commissioner for Surrey](#)

There is a sign-up section on this link to receive regular updates from the PCC – Residents are strongly encouraged to do so.

The job is enormous at many levels, but Lisa was extremely candid about the challenges with regards to policing Surrey and her contribution was very well received.

The actual Police update was presented as a PowerPoint presentation. Sadly, they were unable to share that deck with us. What they were able to do was share the key messages and I have included these as an Appendix to these minutes.

It is important that the Police continue to attend and provide their updates as it is far too easy to believe that Ashford has become something of a lawless town, but every time they stand up and present their side of the story, it always seems to uplift and offer hope.

Think all Ashford / Spelthorne Residents are acutely aware of the fact that we top some of the worse stats in Surrey & Nationally on a per-capita basis, but the types of crimes need to be put into perspective.

The 'Clear, Hold, Build' strategy in Surrey is a three-stage, multi-agency initiative designed to tackle serious, organised crime and anti-social behaviour in targeted areas. It involves intensive police enforcement to clear criminals, sustained patrols to hold the location, and community improvements to build long-term resilience. There has been a recent increase in police presence in Ashford and particularly in Church Road plus a Live Facial Recognition (LFR) van was deployed in Ashford to identify and deal with outstanding offenders for retail crime, anti-social behaviour and drug offences.

If You See It - Report It! Every report counts towards more Police focus in ASHFORD. No matter how minor you think it is REPORT IT! Non-urgent and non-immediate incidents Call 101 or use the online form

<https://www.surrey.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

Certainly, the initiatives listed below prove that Ashford is being prioritised by Surrey Police, and that can only be a good thing. Nobody is trying to whitewash, and stats are stats but in a difficult funding period the PCC was keen to reiterate that Surrey remains the safest county in the UK.

These screenshots are current from the Surrey Police Website for Ashford.

Crimes and priorities

Top reported crimes in this area

Crime map

Our priorities

Top reported crimes

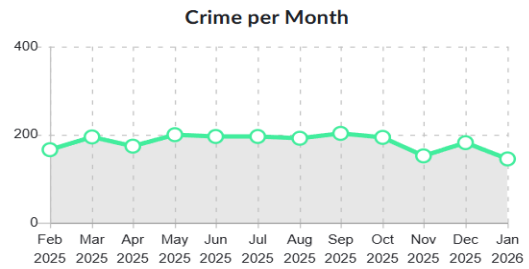
Most commonly reported crimes during Jan 2026

Violence and sexual offences	48
Shoplifting	21
Anti-social behaviour	18
Public order	12

[Crime prevention](#)

Crime levels in your area

Crime for last year



[View as a list](#)

Top reported crimes in this area

Crime map

Our priorities

Click on a hotspot to see more details. Alternatively, [view as A-Z list](#).



Crime type and time period title

All Crimes (145)

January 2026

145 crimes were reported here in January 2026

Violence and sexual offences	48
Shoplifting	21
Anti-social behaviour	18
All other crime	58

Priority:**Action taken:**

Shoplifting - Increased theft from shops (including Petrol Stations) and in some cases threats/violence towards hardworking staff who work in them.

Issued 20 February 2026

we are continuing to patrol and work with the shops that are being the most affected. We have been able to identify more and more shoplifters and come to positive outcomes as there has been an increase/ a steady number of reports that have come into us.

Actioned 20 February 2026

Anti-social behaviour - Youth related ASB / vehicle use such as speeding, E-scooters and poor driving / Use of catapults / use of face covering in particular balaclavas

Issued 20 February 2026

PCSOs and PCs, are continuing to patrol the areas that are most affected by anti-social behaviour. We are working with the people that are involved in anti-social behaviour.

Actioned 20 February 2026

Drug related harm - Targeting drug dealers and associated violence in particular knife crime.

Issued 20 February 2026

PCSOs and PCs have been working closely with the people who are the most affected. We are also working with the appropriate agencies to help these issues.

Actioned 20 February 2026

Serious acquisitive crime : Burglary/Robbery - Burglary from residential properties. Street robberies..

Issued 20 February 2026

PCSOs and PCs have conducted house to house in the Ashford area to speak to residents. We have been able to speak to them about burglary and how they can best protect their home. We have been able to give them out leaflets. This was also an opportunity for them to speak to us about any suspicious activity in the area.

Actioned 20 February 2026

The hour-long Policing session was very well received. The PCC attendance at our Residents meeting was publicised on the PCC website and I think all parties got something out of the session.

Neighbourhood Watch

Alan Howell is the Spelthorne co-ordinator for Surrey Neighbourhood Watch Association (SNWA). Alan gave a presentation explaining how Neighbourhood Watch works with the Police, residents, local authorities, and other agencies to ensure everyone comes together to make their communities safe.

SNWA provides local leadership, strategic direction, advice, governance and guidance to Neighbourhood Watch borough teams, Coordinators, and residents to prevent crime, to reduce the fear of crime, and to improve the wellbeing of law-abiding citizens.

Spelthorne has a number of Neighbourhood Watch Groups (NWG) and in the new devolved world – post demise of Spelthorne & Surrey Councils - the new operating model makes provision for NWG's, Resident Associations & Parish Councils (where relevant) to take a much bigger role in working with the new authority to facilitate dissemination of information up and down the chain to ensure Residents have a vehicle to get issues raised.

[‘Fantastic news for residents’ as borough policing team solves 85 per cent of all shoplifting reports - Neighbourhood Watch](#)

Healthwatch Surrey

Katharine Newman came to promote the good work that she is doing as part of Healthwatch Surrey, and the survey around Health & Wellbeing.



The poster is for a Healthwatch Surrey survey. It features a teal background with a white box containing survey questions. To the right of the questions is an image of two hands held together, palms facing each other, with a bright light shining between them. Below the questions is a QR code and a URL. At the bottom, there is contact information for the Helpdesk and a statement about Healthwatch Surrey's mission.

healthwatch
Surrey

- Are you aged between 50 – 66?
- Do you live in Surrey?
- What do you do to look after your health and wellbeing?
- What makes this difficult?

Please complete our survey:
Scan the QR code
Or use the link below
<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/HWSyhealthwellbeing25-26/>

Survey closes 31 January 2026.
3 people who complete the survey will be selected at random to receive a £20 Love2shop voucher.

Need a paper copy or want to share your thoughts in your own words?
Please get in touch with our Helpdesk:
Phone: 0303 303 0023 SMS/WhatsApp: 07592 787533

Healthwatch Surrey champions the voice of local people to shape, improve and get the best from NHS, health and social care services.

Katharine wears several hats and we would be keen for her to come back to do a longer slot especially given the age demographic in Ashford.

Please go to the main Healthcare Surrey website @ [Home | Healthwatch Surrey](#) for more information.

It will be interesting to see where this important service will be post devolution and the demise of the existing Surrey Authority, but given these seem to be national initiatives across counties, it is to be hoped that it will be funded to continue its work.

Close – AOB

1) Devolution

Councillors reminded Residents that the decision has been made regarding the placing of Spelthorne into the new West Surrey Authority. Elections will be held on early May (7th) to elect the new Councillors which will see the number of elected representatives for Spelthorne reduced to a 1/3rd of its current number.

There has been a lot of debate around the carrying over of debt into the new administration. West Surrey will comprise the following local authorities –

- Guildford Borough Council
- Runnymede Borough Council
- Spelthorne Borough Council

- Surrey Heath Borough Council
- Waverley Borough Council
- Woking Borough Council

It is important that all Residents with a vote use that vote. This is possibly the biggest impacting local authority election for over 50 years. What happens on May 7th will probably shape the next 50 years.

Many of our Councillors have decided not to stand again, and we may also lose some of the hardworking Councillors who have chosen to re-stand.

Our next meeting on Saturday 25th April will take place just two weeks before the election, during which we will be operating under election purdah. This means that no canvassing can be carried out by any Councillors in attendance. Given this, the committee recognises that those standing for election will likely be focusing their efforts on canvassing in the streets of Ashford. Therefore, we will structure the meeting so that it is not dependent on Councillor participation.

2. HMOs

This subject will not go away. The Council (Post Meeting) announced a public consultation on a proposed Supplemental Planning Document that is intended to work alongside the Local Plan (still to be signed off at Government level) and which aims to offer some relief where HMO applications are made in areas deemed to be in “High HMO Density”.

This Consultation ended the end of February and we await its conclusions.

3. Potholes & Highways

The dreaded Potholes have made a strong appearance this winter and conversation was had around the fact that these are a matter for Surrey County Council who have the Highways budget and not the Spelthorne Borough Council.

Councillors went to great length to confirm that all Potholes reported to them had been formally reported / registered with the relevant Highways team, and these will get addressed on a priority basis.

Comment was made regarding Fordbridge Road being on temporary lights again – this time for the replacement of paving with tarmac pavements. This follows on the back of similar exercise in Village Way area. Residents felt that the Potholes were more of a priority than paving, but I guess it is what it is.

It was also mentioned that Ashford was seemingly under siege from temporary traffic lights.

The meeting ended at 12.00pm promptly.

The Committee wishes to express their sincere thanks to all Residents who attended, and we look forward to welcoming them again at our next meeting on 25 April.

Check out our website for news and updates <https://ashfordra.co.uk/>