



Ashford Residents Association (ARA)

Quarterly Meeting (1/25)

Saturday 14th June 2025

St Matthews Church, Ashford

Attendees:

John Dickens, Chair

Julie Holman, Secretary

Penny Kielty, Treasurer

Residents of Ashford TW15

Invited Guests:

Lincoln Jopp, MP for Spelthorne

Cllr Joanne Sexton, Leader of Spelthorne Council

Cllr Katherine Rutherford

Cllr Michelle Arnold

Cllr Harry Boparai

Cllr Denise Turner Stewart

Simon Lowe, Surrey County Council

Louise Morton, Surrey Council Communications

Sergeant Thea Jackson, Staines Police

PCSO Ruby Pyne

1. **Introduction:** John Dickens (JD) opened the meeting with a welcome and thanks to everyone for their attendance. John introduced the MP for Spelthorne, Lincoln Jopp and invited him to address the residents.
2. **Lincoln Jopp, MP:** Mr Jopp thanked the committee and residents for allowing him to speak and gave a brief background on his election as Spelthorne MP in July 2024, his move to live in Sunbury with his family, his role as a Champion for Spelthorne and apologised that he had to leave early to open the Shepperton Village Fair.
 - 2.1 **Crime in Ashford:** Acknowledgement of the increase in crime and anti-social behaviour in the area, especially in Boots and Sainsbury stores located in Ashford High Street. Mr Jopp had spoken with Matthew Walton (Borough Commander for Spelthorne), who advised there was a low number of reported incidents, so the message was for retailers to report all crimes. There is a plan to target Staines High Street, but Mr Jopp urged the Commander to focus on Ashford, as the message from residents is things are bad, but police say it's better. Mr Jopp urged residents if you see a crime, report it.
 - 2.2 **Adult Gaming Application (old Barclays building):** Mr Jopp said he was disappointed with the outcome and that the Spelthorne Borough Council application 'has gone wrong', that he had made representation

but the Government appointed Planning Inspector has approved the current application.

- 2.3 **Finally:** Mr Jopp gave a short report on his recent appearance on Prime Ministers Questions, but he was reminded that our meeting has cross party representation to support the residents and is not a political meeting. A brief discussion on the cost pressures hitting our retailers on the high street and a request to follow Lincoln Jopp on Facebook (search *Lincoln Jopp MC MP*) or you can contact him directly by email (lincoln.jopp.mp@parliament.uk).

- 2.4 **Questions for Mr Jopp (LJ):** (*Apologies if your name was not heard by the secretary*). **Question from RESIDENT:** "I live in social housing and I witness anti-social behaviour every day, i.e. noise and drug related incidents. I report everything I see, but there is never any action and it feels like the perpetrators get more protection. What do you suggest I do?" **Response from LJ:** "Keep reporting and write to me to raise the issues at a higher level."

Question from RESIDENT: "A notice has appeared on the old Barclays Bank building, connected to their application for the adult gaming licence, please can you ask Spelthorne Borough Council to remove it, because it's misleading and threatening." **Response from LJ** "I will defer that answer to Cllr Joanne Sexton, Leader of Spelthorne Council". **Response from Cllr Sexton** "the notice has already been removed."

Question from RESIDENT: "I live in Woodthorpe Road and I did report some nuisance children. The police attended and dealt with the problem, so reporting does work." **Response from LJ** "thank you for reporting this and telling us it worked."

Question from RESIDENT: "As our MP, if the devolution of Surrey goes with 2 or 3 unities, how can you ensure that Ashford is not forgotten, because it feels like Ashford is the forgotten part of Surrey?"

Response from LJ: "Interesting question? When you are asked where you live, how many of you says Spelthorne? I bet you all say Ashford Middlesex? I have to explain where I represent. Ashford is getting better treatment than others and I don't see us getting less support. I will fight for you. Ashford has a special place in my heart; I used to play baseball here when I was a nipper and I'm walking around trying to find the old ground. Please do tell me, if you know where it is!!"

Question from RESIDENT: "As a neighbourhood watch coordinator, I am telling you that the requests to report and keep reporting on crimes for the statistics are not helpful, our elderly and vulnerable residents fear reporting because of intimidation and repercussions. The police are not being placed in our area, we are not being heard, what are you doing about it?" **Response from LJ:** "I know too many residents are intimidated and do not report. Years ago, Crime Stoppers was set up,

so please report through Crime Stoppers on **0800 555111**, as this is a safe and anonymous way to report crime.”

Lincoln Jopp could not take any more questions as he had to leave for his next engagement. The Chair thanked Mr Jopp for his attendance.

3. **Ashford Town Placemaking Project, Surrey County Council (SCC)**: John Dickens (JD) welcomed Simon Lowe (SL) from SCC to the meeting who would be presenting some key issues and insight into what was going on for Ashford. Mr Lowe explained that the Placemaking Project is about looking at where we live and trying to make improvements, by talking and engaging residents from Ashford as part of their stakeholder group. The focus includes looking at problems facing the high street, retail impact, traffic movement and environmental issues. The presentation pack was informative and contained a great deal of information, but unfortunately is not available to be shared with these minutes, as the Project is a work in progress and is hoped to lead to improvements for the town.
 - 3.1 **Current Focus**: Spelthorne Borough Council and Surrey County Council are working in partnership for this project. They have their own priorities and objectives; by increasing their focus on the wellbeing and health of residents to maximise on future opportunities. Over the previous three years, the project gathered information by talking to residents on the high street and at events like the Christmas Market. Questions asked included what residents like, feel, not like; Provision for Young People; Safer Roads; More Green Spaces; Digital QR Approach; What do you use Ashford for; Greater Variety of Shops; Reduction of Anti-Social Behaviour; Creating a Stronger Community Spirit.
 - 3.2 **Ashford Today Feedback**: Space doesn't Work; Feels like two high streets; Pollution is high; Safety Concerns; People don't want to socialise in Town 'hang out'; Need Space for Movement of Vehicles. **We need** – More Enticing Space; More Markets; More Greenery; Use Space More Effectively; New Crossing Points; Need to Feel Safe
 - 3.3 **Proposals**: A draft slide was shown and included Need to Maximise Space; Utilise Area Outside Library Move Efficiently; New Crossing Points; On Event Days, use parking areas to create more space and then return to parking; Create a New Heart of Town Centre.
 - 3.4 **Next Steps**: More to come; Continue to take on feedback from Stakeholder Groups, i.e. representatives from Ashford Wide and Local Councillors. The next key stage is the formal Public Engagement which will see a further public consultation take place in the Autumn to share design thinking and encouraging challenge to enable a final proposal to be produced.
 - 3.5 **Questions for Simon Lowe**: (*Apologies if your name was not heard by the secretary*) **Question from Greg Neall**: “One of your contributors to this project, is a lady in a wheelchair. What are you doing for the

vulnerable residents?” **Response from SL:** “Yes, lots of input from that lady to including improvements to footway space, making them flatter; Improve Crossing Access; Reduce Vehicle Speed; Make Space More Accessing for Everyone. *(This lady is part of the stakeholder forum that meets every month in Ashford).*”

Question from RESIDENT: “Proposals sound wonderful, but how is this going to be paid for? Are our rates going to increase?” **Response from SL:** There will not be an increase in rates, Surrey County Council is financially healthy and have funding for the design. Spelthorne Borough Council will produce a business case for funding. Obviously with the Devolution of Surrey, we do not know what the new organisation will decide if they want to proceed with the plans.

Question from RESIDENT: “So it probably won’t happen?”

Response from SL: If approved, yes it will. **Question from Cllr**

Harry Boparai: “Agree, yes sounds great, but if no connection with shops liaising with Council planning department, Spelthorne Council can’t do anything to stop or control this?” **Response from Cllr Joanne Sexton** “Council cannot control, because we do not own the buildings in Ashford, like we do in Staines. Ashford shops are privately owned. These proposals have been worked on for over four years and I hope that whatever Unitary we get from the Devolution outcome (at the end of October), we will get a good outcome and this design will add value to the town. One of the issues of trying to add more green space, even a tree, is very complex, due to the utility’s infrastructure within the town.” **Question from RESIDENT:** “If the proposals for the

demolishment of Ashford MSCP go ahead, whilst lovely to see an alternative use of the space, but what about the impact on local roads adjacent to the high street, for parking, what provision has been made?” **Response from SL:** “There is one objective, that there no net change to the number of parking spaces. A holistic view is proposed with all residents in new housing development, to replace MSCP, will have a dedicated parking space with additional parking with a two-hour parking limit in high street.” **Question from RESIDENT:** “I don’t see a need for additional crossing in the high street. There are four sets of lights and anymore would choke the traffic flow and cause more pollution. Need to address the illegal parking on the pavements and double parking. No-one stops this.” **Response from SL:** “Feedback has been the lack of space to cross the road and there are mobility issues. Parking issues will improve with additional yellow lines.”

Response from Cllr Joanne Sexton: “I am very aware of the illegal parking problems and I do regular walk arounds in Ashford. I constantly report all issues directly to SCC Parking Enforcement Team and you can do, if you see something either call them **0330 175 5930** (only 9am-5pm) or email:

surreyparkingenforcement@NSLServices.co.uk and they will respond.”

This completed the presentation from Simon Lowe and John Dickens thanked him and his colleague Louise Morton for attending our meeting.

4. **Sergeant Thea Jackson, Staines Police**: John Dickens welcomed Sergeant Jackson and PCSO Pyne to the meeting.

Sergeant Jackson gave a very comprehensive view of her role and the issues in Spelthorne, these are condensed as bullet points below, due to the volume discussed.

- Sergeant Jackson has been in Spelthorne for six months.
- Meeting lots of residents.
- Chasing shoplifters.
- Looked at the questions pre-submitted (*as attached*) from the Ashford Residents Association and has a full understanding of everything that matters.
- Gave an example of her own personal experience of anti-social behaviour and understands the impact on reporting crimes and intimidation. Clearly stated that everyone has a right to feel safe and be safe in their own home.
- Acknowledged residents concerns about lack of police presence.
- Agreed the crime numbers are decimated and they are trying to address, but resources are pulled into other areas like mental health impacted crime.
- Aware concerns around: Youth Crimes, Face Coverings, Scooters, Drug Dealing, Shop Lifting.
- Ashford top of North Surrey Crime Hotspots in the area.
- Largest crime is Shop Lifting. In Staines it is organised crime, high end goods stolen to order. In Ashford, steal out of necessity, i.e. bread, milk, nappies.
- Higher level of deprivation in Ashford, which is highest in Spelthorne.
- Ashford Train Station with no ticket barrier, provides quick and easy access to the area.
- Unfortunately, agencies do not talk to each other, so difficult to coordinate response.
- Crime more likely in areas that look run-down and unfortunately, that is Ashford.
- Not a lot to do for the youths of the area and the Youth Centre is not attracting those who choose crime.
- New initiative **Clear Halt Build** being piloted in Redhill. Military style process used to clear insurgents. Three phase approach from September will include: Targeted Arrests, Seizure of Weapons and Closing Drug Dens.
- 9% decrease in Ashford

- Planned three-month phase of targeting crime with focus on:
 - Clear out criminals
 - Safer streets and homes
 - Increase police presence
 - Improve resilience in community
 - High Visibility Patrols
 - Work with Spelthorne Borough Council and Surrey County Council
 - Investment in Services
 - Youth Engagements
- **Cllr Harry Boparai stated:** “Acknowledge lack of resources, but police are working hard and a few years ago businesses worked together in Sunbury and Ashford to crack down on some of the issues. Police need names of criminals who are linked to the area.”

Sergeant Jackson continued, that they are working on a new model for Spelthorne with focus on:

- Police officers should be using their powers to Arrest, Fine, Issue Warrants.
- PCSO's are part of the engagement, they are the eyes and ears of the community, seeing what is going on during their patrols and reporting.
- More plain clothe operations which are robust, effective and low value crimes are addressed.
- Get perpetrators enrolled in programmes to stop them committing further crimes.
- Anti-social behaviour review.
- In last six months, there has been more investment and the Chief Constable's priorities are:
 - Anti-social behaviour.
 - Operation for violence against women and girls, including stalkers who follow women home.
 - Shoplifting including protecting the shop assistants in their workplace.
 - Working with Bronze field Prison, due to excessive number of drugs being taken into the prison by visitors.
 - Driving offences (no tax or MOT).
 - Police being more visible to public/residents.
 - New APP designed for police to record crimes and show successful arrests.
 - New initiative coming to tackle individuals with face coverings, which are not for religious purpose.
 - Focus on catapult usage.
 - Police will have more powers to act.
- What we are doing now:

- In Ashford, 22% of reported crimes have been solved; National average is 10%, so that is good.
- Look at where crimes are being committed, had to pick Staines due to more reported crime.
- Sign-off now given to focus on Ashford with two police patrolling at set times from Thursday through to Monday.
- Request residents to continued to **Report**, the police need to know what is happening in Ashford.

This concluded Sergeant Jackson's presentation and was followed by questions from the residents:

RESIDENT: "Very encouraging that Ashford will receive the attention it requires, but Ashford is not just small shoplifting item crimes. The Chief Constable made it clear that shop lifting is shop lifting, all crime needs to be reported. In Sainsbury's I asked the manager why he didn't report all the thefts from the store. His response, *"if I reported everything, I would not have time to serve customers!!"* Residents won't want to attend events etc, they don't feel safe. Police shouldn't under estimate the view of residents on shoplifting. Need to 'meet the beat', as they have in Sunbury and Shepperton." **Post Meeting Note: Meet the Beat did take place in Ashford on Wednesday 18th June.**

Response from Sergeant Jackson: "Agreed with the statement made and acknowledged that Sainsbury's are not reporting all the shoplifting incidents. The police are adapting new tactics and using plain clothe police to address these incidents. Please also feed back to your PCSO Ruby Pyne to ensure crime areas are being covered."

Question from resident: "Do you as police officers feel supported by the judicial system, is the court system taking too long?" **Response from Sergeant Jackson:** "Yes, provisional teams are supportive, the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) have got quicker and there is a new model to manage our huge caseloads."

John Dickens thanked Sergeant Jackson and PCSO Ruby Pyne for their attendance and support to the Ashford Residents Association.

5. Any Other Business

- 5.1 **Frequency of Quarterly Residents Association Meetings:** John Dickens asked residents how often they would like these meetings and a vote was taken in favour of four per year, with a request to mix up the day and time of the week. The next meeting will be **Saturday 20th September 2025 from 10 am to 12 pm**, venue to be confirmed.
- 5.2 **Spelthorne Partnership Assembly Meeting, Spelthorne Borough Council** to be held on **Monday 30th June from 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm** at Spelthorne Council Offices, Knowle Green, Staines.
- 5.3 **Fordbridge Park:** John Dickens reported that the work has concluded in the park, Cllr Joanne Sexton, Cllr Chris Bateson, Karen Mall and John Dickens will do a full Fieldwalk on Saturday 28th June to complete

a tick-back that issues have been completed will Spelthorne Council do a final sign-off.

- 5.4 **Ashford Classic Car Event:** Greg Neall from Ashford Wide, advised there are three big events held in Ashford Town during the year which include the **Classic Car Event, Remembrance Sunday Service and Christmas Market.** All of these require a great deal of organisation to be successful, but they need additional volunteers to run smoothly and ensure the safety of the public. **Request to residents** to volunteer their time for the **Classic Car Event on Sunday 7th September at Clockhouse Lane Park.** Please consider giving two or more hours on the day, anything you can manage for a variety of roles to fit your own skills. **Please contact** chair@ashfordra.co.uk to sign up and help this community event.
- 5.5 **Final RESIDENT questions: Resident:** "I live in Parkland Grove and run the Neighbour Watch. We used to receive a monthly crime report for the area; can this be re-instated?" **Response from Sergeant Jackson:** "Yes, I will look at getting the report back out to the Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators." **Resident:** "Why is there no path over Clockhouse Lane bridge, it is so dangerous to cross on foot?" **Response from Cllr Joanne Sexton:** "I have met with the Deputy Council Leader for Hounslow, because half of the bridge is in Spelthorne and the other half in Hounslow and the land is not owned by Surrey County Council. I can assure you that I have exhausted every conceivable option for putting a path over the bridge with the only outcome costing in excess of £8 million. I would ask your all, with the current strain on costs within the borough, particularly to the welfare budget, would residents like the Council to spend that amount on one path? I am sorry, but I have tried everything and unfortunately there will not be a path put over the bridge." **Resident** "Sergeant Jackson, thank you for your passion and commitment to the policing of our town. Is there a plan to engage with local schools, to target the youth and try and discourage a life of crime?" **Response from Sergeant Jackson:** "Yes, there is a plan for two more Youth Engagement Officers, including an Inspector, two Sergeants, eight Neighbourhood patrols and ten PCSO's. We engage with local youth before they engage in crime and they do as much as they can. Recently participate in a rounder's tournament with two secondary schools and members of the police, it was a fun day and good to have the kids ask us questions and for us to try and direct them down the right path. One problem is, we do not know where these kids who commit crimes come from, we need to get them identified so that we can talk to the parents to try and avoid further police involvement. We are also building links with Brentford Football Club as a way to work with kids and keep them away from crime."

Adult Gaming Centre Application – Cllr Joanne Sexton: “Spelthorne Council are aware and recognise the concern of residents about the application for the Adult Gaming Centre, in old Barclays Bank Building. The current application is not valid and the applicant has been informed of the process to follow and details will be communicated to residents at a later date. As you know, they applied and were refused three times by Spelthorne Borough Council, unfortunately the Government Planning Inspector approved it, with certain hours stipulated. This is an ongoing situation which requires further committee approval.”

Finally

We’d like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended the meeting on Saturday 14th June. It was truly wonderful to see such a strong turnout, your presence made all the hard work and months of planning by our dedicated committee volunteers feel incredibly worthwhile.

We understand that some attendees felt the venue wasn’t ideal. However, we are very grateful to Father Stuart, who generously allows us to use the church free of charge. He also takes time out of his busy schedule to join us and manage the microphones and sound system, which we deeply appreciate. We would also like to extend our thanks to the presenters and councillors who generously shared their time and insights.

If we are to consider alternative venues in the future, it’s likely that we would need to cover rental costs. That’s why we kindly encourage those who haven’t yet paid the £5 annual membership fee to do so via our website: <https://ashfordra.co.uk/membership> (scroll down to the “Membership Subscription” section). If you encounter any issues with the payment link, please don’t hesitate to contact us directly.

As a non-profit organisation, your membership fee helps support the costs of events, meetings, communications and general operations. Our board is made up entirely of volunteers who are committed to serving the community, and your contribution plays a vital role in sustaining our efforts.

If you'd like to provide feedback on the meeting, you can do so here [\[https://forms.office.com/e/ZkwQa6GJGY\]](https://forms.office.com/e/ZkwQa6GJGY)(<https://forms.office.com/e/ZkwQa6GJGY>) or with the QR code below on your mobile.

John Dickens closed the meeting,

Attachment 1

QUESTIONS FOR GUEST SPEAKER - RUBY PYNE

(PCSO – Specialist Neighbourhood Team)

These have come from a recent Poll of the Associations Members, which covered a wide-ranging list of issues not just Police subject matter. The Poll had 50 Respondents from our membership list of 150.

None of these questions I suspect will be new to you, but would you please look to address in your presenting slot which will be a 30-minute slot from 11.00 – 11.30am

I have attempted to batch these into topics so do not feel compelled to answer each question individually.

Having attended previous meetings my aim here is to provide the Residents with an honest appraisal of what Policing means today, and essentially give them a reality check of what it is and what it isn't.

- 1) All of the choices you give are of major concern. Mostly caused by lack of Police presence. We need Bobbies back on the beat!
- 2) There seems to be a lack of Police presence in Ashford
- 3) Can there be a permanent police station/office in Ashford? It would be a comfort to have a point of reference to hand. This did apply in the past and there was a community feel.
- 4) Why are there so few police around? We have so much anti-social behaviour, car and bike thefts, hooded youths on e-scooters stealing phones, regular car meets resulting in dangerous road races on the A308 etc. Ashford just isn't safe anymore.
- 5) Given that the AI Overview for crime in Ashford states that the overall crime rate here is considerably higher than the Surrey average (with 102 crimes per 1000 people compared with 61 crimes per 1000 people for Surrey overall) what can be done to bring the figure down?
- 6) Is it illegal to ride bikes on the pavement?
Are e-scooters illegal on Surrey roads?
Cars that have explosive exhausts are they illegal?
If so, what action is being taken to resolve the situation?
- 7) I live on church road in Ashford and every morning Tuesday to Saturday I am woken up at 5am by someone on a very loud motorcycle. I've reported this to the police who've recommended that I use noise cancelling headphones as there's nothing they can do.
Is there anyone else who's bothered by –
a) this noise pollution in our own homes and
b) the audacity of the police in actually acknowledging that they won't step in to tackle this antisocial behaviour?

- 8) I have reported a few times about teens with slingshots shooting at properties and animals or on bikes wearing balaclavas. All you get from the Police is a reference number. Not only is this antisocial behaviour but some sort of programme needs to be put in place so these teens realise this behaviour will ruin their lives
- 9) I am a local neighbourhood watch coordinator, and we used to receive a monthly crime summary from the police. We were told this is no longer available due to funding cuts. Can we please ask the police representatives to confirm if this can be restarted, as many of the residents in my area found it informative.
- 10) What is a PCSO? What do they do and what can't they do?
- 11) Is there a Police policy to NOT arrest & Charge under 18s who seem to have a flagrant disregard for the law?
- 12) What is the current Police view regarding brazen shoplifting in our High Street?
- 13) Would like drug dealing addressed at Fordbridge park, Police stated that their officers do go over the park regularly, well my wife and I with friends walk there every day and have never seen the Police doing a patrol over there.

Please be advised 2 additional CCTV signs have been installed at the location Clockhouse Park after this was raised at the first meeting. Update still required from Police as to these concerns across both Parks.