



# The Ashtead RESIDENT

Spring 2025  
Issue 36

**Working for Ashtead since 1945**

## FROM THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

### *A year of change – and more to come!*

**W**hile the Ashtead Residents' Association was without a Committee last year, Mole Valley District Council received the final requirements from the Planning Inspector to make its draft Local Plan 2020–2039 'sound'. The Plan was formally adopted on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – nine years after the process began.

Within weeks, several major planning applications were submitted, including a proposal for a battery energy storage system in the Green Belt next to the Ashtead Common SSSI, and near the National Nature Reserve. It involves cutting a level area about the size of two-and-a-half football pitches into sloping land above Rye Brook. A decision is expected in May.

An outline proposal followed for land between Ermy Way and the M25 – allocated in the new plan – for 260 homes, three traveller pitches, and open space. Then came an early indication of plans for the Exxon/Premium Credit site, earmarked in the plan for 140 homes but now proposing 360 units, including five-storey buildings.

Both sites would add to already serious congestion at the Leatherhead Road junction, raising concerns for schoolchildren in Grange Road and traffic at the Knoll Roundabout, already pressured by M25 movements. Junction 9 improvements are reportedly gaining traction again, especially with a second Gatwick runway likely. If built, the BESS could obstruct

upgrades to the eastbound M25 exit. Two previously refused applications have gone to appeal – Ashtead Garden Centre, the last Green Belt buffer between Ashtead and Epsom, and Murrey's Court, where a long-designated housing site is now proposed for a 66-bed care home and 60 supported living units, accessed via residential roads.

Meanwhile, areas such as Barnett Wood Lane, Woodfield Lane, and Leatherhead Road – labelled Development Opportunity Areas – face potential infill and densification.

Nationally, Government proposals for Local Government reorganisation may place Ashtead within an East Surrey Unitary Authority, reducing local representation to just two Councillors – its lowest since 1894.

It would be unfair to single out individuals on the Committee – so many have done so much to get the ARA back on its feet and active again. But Membership Secretary Peter Williams and his wife Jenny have created a new database already containing 600 email addresses, allowing better communication with members.

Past Committee Member David Baker continues to maintain our website and lead efforts to manage issues around the level crossing, despite Network Rail's ongoing lapses in communication. Special thanks go to our President, Larry Unthank, for his skilful leadership in rejuvenating the ARA Committee.

And lastly, sincere thanks to WINGS (Women's Institute New

Generation) and the Ashtead Yarnies for their seasonal decorations on the village's letter and pillar boxes that bring colour, charm, and smiles during the darker months.

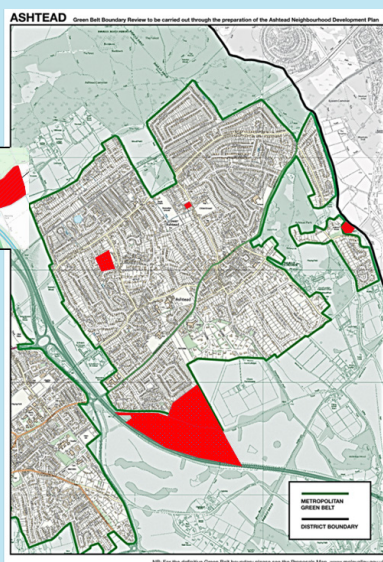
**Alan Bradley**  
(Acting Chairman, Ashtead Residents' Association)

### *Ashtead's pillar boxes get a cozy makeover*



# PLANNING REPORT

**T**he Ashtead Residents' Association (ARA) serves the village and its residents on a voluntary basis, representing the interests of the local community. With a strong commitment to Ashtead, the ARA seeks to maintain and enhance the experience of living and working in the village. As Ashtead evolves, we remain focused on achieving the best outcomes for its future while respecting the character and needs of the community.



*Green Belt boundary review to be carried out through the preparation of the Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan*

Our work includes input on matters relating to Mole Valley District Council (MVDC), Surrey County Council proposals, planning, highways, Ashtead station and rail crossings, historical monuments, schools, and other local issues. A key part of our role is reviewing every Ashtead planning application submitted to MVDC on a weekly basis. We assess these against National Planning Policies, the Mole Valley Local Plan 2020-2039, and the Ashtead Neighbourhood Plan. Where proposals may affect our core objectives, we submit

letters of representation to either support or object.

This year has seen a surge in major applications. The new Labour government's commitment to 'Get Britain Building Again' coincided with the adoption of the MVDC Local Plan in October 2024. The Local Plan identifies four plots in Ashtead for residential development: two at Ermyrn Way; the potential redevelopment of Ashtead Library in Woodfield Lane; and land at Murrey's Court, which was refused in 2024 and is now at appeal. The Marsden Nursery site is also at the appeal stage.

The alignment of national policy and MVDC's site selections appears to have prompted these applications. While our focus is Ashtead, we're also monitoring large developments in Leatherhead, including Bull Hill and the Swan Centre, which could affect local roads, healthcare, and education. These projects are expected to add around 450 dwellings to the area.

## Summary of ARA activity Spring 2025

This year has already seen a considerable amount of activity in relation to the four key sites mentioned above. Had these applications come forward over a longer period of time, the impact may not have been so evident. This coincidence has added to the ARA concerns that the cumulative impact on Ashtead could be considerable.

Some of the applications that have now been submitted are proposing numbers of dwellings in excess of the allocations made in the MVDC Local Plan. This is, of course, the landowners' prerogative, but there is a risk that the local infrastructure will not be able to cope.

## Murrey's Court

The MVDC Local Plan includes a potential allocation of 30 dwellings on this plot. The application submitted back in 2023 proposed 60 assisted living units and a 66-bed care home. The development was refused planning in March 2024. The planning officers' refusal stated the reason to be overdevelopment of the site, which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The landowners subsequently submitted an appeal in September 2024, after which the ARA submitted a letter of representation offering constructive comments and reasoning for objecting to the development.



*Proposed residential development at Murrey's Court, Agates Lane for 30 dwellings*

At this moment, the ARA understand that the appeal is likely to be debated in late April 2025. We will attend and speak at the hearing. This matter will be resolved at the appeal hearing with the applicant either securing consent or not. We will continue to monitor this case and will keep you informed as it reaches a conclusion.

## Land south of Ermyrn Way

On this plot, MVDC Local Plan has made an allocation of up to 270 dwellings along with a community building and Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

The developers submitted the first stages of quite a complex planning application in January 2025. They have indicated that they intend to seek permission for the same quantity of up to 270 dwellings together with the other uses set out in the Local Plan.



*MVDC Local Plan for the land south of Ermyrn Way*

The ARA has submitted a letter of representation and the application is now being considered by MVDC planning officers. The application submitted in January was an outline application and once this has been determined a further more detailed application is likely to come forward. The ARA will



again monitor this major application and continue to comment as this progresses.



*Allocation of 140 dwellings and at least three Gypsy Traveller pitches together with an office space*

### Land at Ermy House

MVDC has suggested an allocation of 140 dwellings and at least three Gypsy Traveller pitches together with an office space. An initial application was submitted in February 2025 requesting MVDC to determine whether a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was required or not. This application made reference to 360 dwellings being proposed, which is considerably more than the 140 allocated in the MVDC Local Plan. The ARA issued a letter of representation in early March 2025, highlighting the increased number of units proposed and also the proximity to the other sites in the near vicinity that will have a cumulative impact on the local area and amenities.

MVDC determined this initial application in March 2025 and has advised that no EIA is required. It is now likely that the developer will issue an outline application in due course, we do not currently know the timing of this but will continue to monitor the situation and react accordingly.

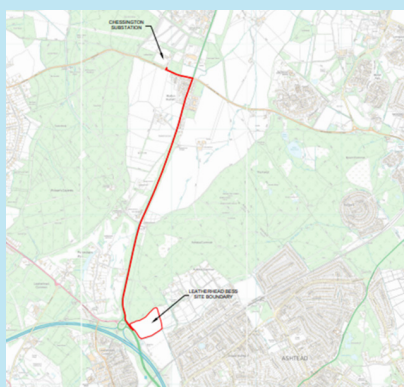
### BESS land north west of Barnett Wood Lane

Another major application was also submitted back in October 2024. This involves the construction and installation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility, underground cabling, access track, landscaping, biodiversity enhancement and ancillary infrastructure and equipment, security fence and gates.

The plan shows the site and the extent of works along the A243 between the M25 roundabout and Chessington. If approved, a cable is to be laid to link the red plot to the Chessington electrical sub station.

Whilst the site is close to the M25, it is also in the Green Belt and is in close proximity to neighbouring homes in Heathfield Close, Caen Wood Road and Oakhill Road.

Operational noise, fire risk, and potential pollution are major concerns in this very important and sensitive location. The



*Site and extent of works along the A243 between the M25 roundabout and Chessington*

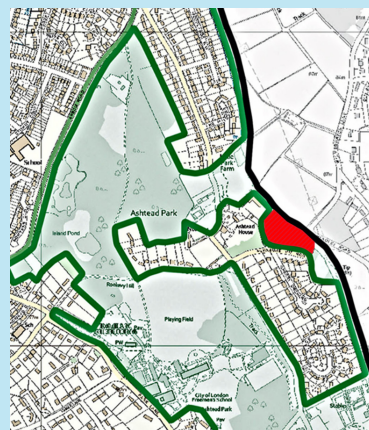
site is in a sensitive location and the ARA has written to object to this development. This application is currently being considered by MVDC planning officers and we currently have no further news.

### Marsden Nursery, Pleasure Pit Road

This application has been under consideration since 2022. The planning officers refused the application in January 2024 and the applicant submitted an appeal in July 2024. The appeal hearing has now been fixed and is to be held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. The ARA has been objecting to the development due to the potential harm to the Green Belt, the loss of employment and local amenity, plus the risk that this leads to further merging of Ashted and Epsom.



*Schematic layout of equipment*



*The Marsden Nursery application*

### Other planning applications

In the first three months of 2025, around 50 planning applications have been submitted across Ashted. Each has been reviewed by the ARA, resulting in seven letters of representation.

Through this work, we aim to support residents by helping maintain the unique culture and character of Ashted, while also recognising the need for managed change. Most householder applications require no formal comment and are best addressed through neighbourly discussion to ensure a smooth planning process.

However, it is worth noting that the MVDC Local Plan has designated Leatherhead Road, Woodfield Lane, and Barnett Wood Lane as 'Opportunity Development Areas'. This raises the risk of losing detached homes to higher-density terraced housing. We will monitor these areas closely and respond if the character of the neighbourhood is at risk.

Our key focus remains on larger developments now in the pipeline. The Ashted Neighbourhood Plan supports more affordable starter homes and options for downsizing. However, the MVDC Local Plan and national policy have placed Ashted in a precarious position. Our infrastructure is already under strain and needs investment to support both current and future populations.

If these larger developments must go ahead on the village's periphery, we will continue to comment and lobby to ensure they are appropriately scaled, offer a suitable mix of tenure, and remain affordable for all – from first-time buyers to those looking to stay in the village long-term.

### Craig Beresford, ARA Planning Lead

# MOLE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT



It's a pleasure to share this update with you in this edition of *The Ashtead Resident*. Your local Councillors have been working on a wide range of matters – from constituency work supporting individual residents and their families, to securing the best possible outcomes for Ashtead, and fulfilling our responsibilities within Mole Valley as a whole.

The public toilets in the Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall car park have now been fully refurbished. At a time when many councils are closing public conveniences, this is a welcome improvement for users of all ages and a testament to the effective lobbying by your Independent Councillors.

Residents will be aware of the Government's intention to merge District and County Councils into new Unitary Authorities. Cllr. Chris Townsend reports on this in more detail. In principle, we support the concept of a single council, as it should offer greater efficiency, cost savings, and faster decision-making. Regardless of the views submitted by existing councils, it's clear the Government will determine the final model. It has already cancelled the County Council elections due this May, on the basis that Surrey County Council will be abolished – saving an estimated £1 million.

Regrettably, a similar amount – approximately £1 million – has been lost due to serious failings by Mole Valley District Council officers. This was kept confidential at senior levels for some time, but Ashtead Councillors Mary Cooper and Gerry Sevenoaks deserve credit for insisting the matter be made public. Both threatened to resign their positions as Chairs of the Audit and Scrutiny Committees, which would have disrupted council operations.

The loss stemmed from the Council's failure to notify the tenant of two large commercial properties in Curtis Road, Dorking, within a required four-month window of its intention to implement a rent review. This was stipulated in a "time of the essence" clause in a lease from 1972. As a result, the Council was unable to increase the rent. It later sold the freehold to the tenant at a reduced price due to the missed review. A public report initially blamed two IT systems for the oversight – something we challenged. Alarming, we were told that Administration Councillors did not take part in the internal investigation. We share residents' concern at how this was allowed to happen.

We also opposed this year's Council Tax rise. None of us supported the budget, which included millions earmarked for work on Pippbrook House and the Dorking offices, as well as the removal of allotment fee concessions for students, pensioners, and those on low incomes – all approved by the ruling group.

Residents may also recall the accident at the Queen Elizabeth Recreation Ground playground, when a ground-level trampoline broke while in use. We're especially grateful to the resident who quickly erected a barrier after the council contractor had only used incident tape. We had been raising concerns about the playground's poor condition for some time. The current administration had ended the rolling playground refurbishment program introduced when Ashtead



(Above) The Ashtead level crossing – vital for access to over 600 homes north of the railway line (Below) Air ambulance services are committed to supporting emergency access north of the railway line when the Ashtead level crossing is blocked

Independents were in coalition, but our lobbying has led to a positive outcome. Though details remain confidential (by decision of the Administration), we've received assurances that repair work will go ahead. A significant allocation of Strategic CIL funding – generated from local development – is expected to support improvements and expansion. A public consultation is due within months.

We've also been working with residents over concerns about potential damage to trees and grass verges along Barnett Wood Lane and Craddocks Avenue due to the proposed cycle route. Many recall the cost and disruption of the Leatherhead Road cycle lane. We've been assured the current scheme is at a pre-consultation design stage and that public feedback will be important in deciding whether it proceeds. Once plans are available, we'll encourage residents to share their views.

We recently attended a local meeting on the level crossing barrier and thank David Baker and Peter Westgarth for organizing it. We raised questions about emergency service protocols and suggested hosepipes be stored in the Corporation of London building for use by firefighters using smaller vehicles if the barrier is stuck. We welcome Surrey Fire & Rescue Service's plans to engage more with the community on fire safety and thank the Ashtead Common Rangers and South East Coast Ambulance Service for their help in establishing a 4x4-accessible ambulance route across the Common. We also applaud David, Peter, and the ARA for coordinating with the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance to ensure access for residents north of the railway line in emergencies.

As always, your Ashtead Independent Councillors hold a monthly drop-in advice surgery on the first Saturday of each month from 2-4pm at Ashtead Library – please do come along if you have an issue to discuss. We also run the Alley Action Volunteers that morning from 10am-12pm, helping to clear vegetation and keep local alleys safe. Please get in touch if you'd like to join us – and thank you to all who already do.

**Cllr. Chris Hunt**  
(Leader, Ashtead Independents)





# SURREY COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT



The Labour Government announced in February that local government is set to change in Surrey (and many other counties) with the introduction of Unitary Authorities. These 'Unitaries' would take on all the responsibilities currently split between County Councils and District or Borough Councils.

The pace at which this is being pursued is particularly rapid. Surrey County Council (SCC), along with all of its District and Borough Councils, was asked to submit initial proposals to the Minister for Local Government and Devolution by the end of March, with more detailed submissions required by May this year.

The Conservative administration at SCC has indicated a preference for two Unitary Authorities covering Surrey, while some Districts and Boroughs have proposed a model with three. Both options were submitted to the Minister by the March deadline. Councils have now been advised that more detailed analysis on these options must be submitted in May before a decision is made on which proposal will go forward. Any final decision will be made by central Government, based on the evidence provided. It is hoped that some public feedback or consultation will follow during the summer, although this has yet to be confirmed.

One of the key issues influencing the shape of the new Unitaries is the level of debt held by some District and Borough Councils. The Government has made clear that it will not assume responsibility for this debt, complicating discussions about how best to group councils into new Unitary structures.

As a result of this wide-ranging reform, the scheduled SCC elections in May 2025 have been postponed. Elections for new Shadow Unitary Authorities are expected to take place in May 2026. Councillors elected at that time would serve alongside existing SCC members throughout 2026/27. From 2027, the new Unitaries are expected to take full control of local services, with Surrey County Council and all District and Borough Councils being formally dissolved.

There is also a strong possibility that a Mayoral Combined Authority, including a directly elected Mayor for Surrey, could be introduced. If so, elections for this role would likely take place in 2027 or 2028.

As you can see, these changes are dramatic, potentially confusing, and certainly challenging – but it is clear that the Government is committed to moving forward with this restructuring and will be taking the lead on most, if not all, of the key decisions.

**Cllr. Chris Townsend**

*(Ashted Division, Surrey County Council)*

## FRIENDS OF ASHTEAD RYE MEADOWS WETLANDS

After a long, drawn-out exercise in legal formalities, 14 acres of Ashted Rye Meadows have been generously gifted by the previous owners, George and Daphne Burnett, to Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT). The Trust is now officially taking over management of the Meadows, but will work closely with the existing volunteers, who will continue their twice-monthly sessions maintaining the hedges, fields, gates, bridges, ditches – and of course, the Rye Brook itself.

Mr and Mrs Burnett's support for the Meadows since its inception will continue through a grant made to the Community Foundation for Surrey, which will provide annual funding to cover the volunteers' ongoing costs.

The volunteers are looking forward to collaborating with SWT, which is currently developing a management plan. We hope this will include projects previously considered, such as re-establishing meanders in the brook and removing willow root weirs.

In addition to the 14 acres of Rye Meadows now owned by SWT, the Trust will also manage the larger acreage to the north, bordered by Ashted Woods Road. These are the fields currently rented to horse liverys. Combined with Rye Meadows, they contain long stretches of hedgerow that will require careful management over a period of around three years.

The volunteers have already begun hedge laying, which can be seen alongside Footpath 24, north of the bridge from Jack Adams Field, and along Ashted Woods Road. We've received very positive feedback from regular walkers using these routes. As the accompanying picture shows, the team



*The dedicated team of Friends of Ashted Rye Meadows Wetlands, continuing their vital conservation work in partnership with Surrey Wildlife Trust*



is justifiably proud of their work – particularly as, for many, hedge laying was a completely new experience. We're already looking forward to returning to this task in the autumn. Our thanks go to Ashted Common for supplying the stakes and binders used in the process.

For more information about how Surrey Wildlife Trust and Ashted Rye Meadows will work together in the future, come and visit our stand at Ashted Village Day (8<sup>th</sup> June from 11.30am -5pm).

**David Baker**



# ARA MEMBERSHIP IN A DIGITAL WORLD

**T**he Ashtead Residents' Association (ARA) has been running as a lobbying organisation on behalf of Ashtead's residents for 80 years but is losing potential members to social media because of the near-instant feedback it offers.

## New interactive survey and alert service

For 2025, we have been making a big effort to learn members' current views on all the topics important to residents. The internet has allowed us to add a service based on online alerts and interactive surveys using email. This is why we are asking all current and new members who have an email address to provide it to us, along with permission to use it to keep them up to date. In addition, the survey results will give us much more credibility with the organisations that we are trying to influence on your behalf.

Each adult member of your household can use their own email address to express their individual opinions, or one address can be shared by several members.

## New members' website area

Each member whose household has paid the nominal sum of £2.50 and given us their email address is being given access to an exclusive area. Here, survey results will be available, as well as up-to-date information about the progress of current campaigns such as planning matters.

## Voting

This year, we are asking for the names of each adult member who wishes to have a personal vote at the ARA's meetings. In time, this could allow some form of online voting to be agreed upon and added to our constitution,

which would overcome the limitations imposed by the capacity of the Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall.

## Mobile Road Stewards

We don't want residents who have no access to the internet, or who are just not confident with online payments, to be left behind. To solve this problem, we have some volunteers who are willing to come to your house if you ask us for help. These Mobile Road Stewards will enter your details into our systems and will accept cash if necessary.



*The pond on Barnett Wood Lane*

## Helping your neighbours

Many of our long-standing volunteer Road Stewards, who mostly cover a small local community, are nobly carrying on – but may not now be making house calls without being invited. In this digital world, there is much less need for house-to-house deliveries. These Community Road Stewards will help you where they

can, but not all are continuing to accept cash. Not just Road Stewards, but anyone who has access to the members' area will be able to help a neighbour fill in our new online registration form and, if convenient, use their own bank card in exchange for cash.

## Invitation to all residents of Ashtead

We have created a flyer that Royal Mail is delivering to all 6,000 properties in Ashtead, which we hope will persuade more people to join ARA. This will go to member households, too. It uses a picture of the pond on Barnett Wood Lane to catch the eye. We would be most grateful if members would mention this mailing to their neighbours and encourage them to join us.

**Peter Williams** (*Membership Secretary*)





# ASHTEAD LEVEL CROSSING

**T**he level crossing at Ashtead is the only vehicular access/exit for the approximately 600 households located north of the railway line. There are several pedestrian access points: Lady Howard Crossing, Newton Wood Road, the bridges at the Station and Woodfield, and the Green Lane Crossing.

The crossing handles some 230 train movements per day from Southern and South Western Railway services, along with a similar – or probably higher – number of cars and pedestrians. It is a busy crossing, though not the busiest in the Wessex Rail area.

Everything functions well until the rails, sleepers, and four barrier lifting mechanisms require servicing. Every four months, the crossing is closed overnight so Network Rail (NR) contractors can dismantle it, replace any defective components, and rebuild it. Over time, the Residents' Association has established a protocol with NR to minimize the disruption caused by these planned closures. Advance warnings are issued, signage is installed, and free parking is made available at the Station Car Park. For longer closures – such as during recent rail replacement works – a minibus is stationed on the north side to transport residents. By and large, this protocol works well.

However, during the most recent extended closure, the system for alerting the Police, Ambulance, and Fire & Rescue Control Rooms failed due to a communication breakdown between Surrey County Council and the Control Rooms. As a result, contractors were unaware an ambulance was en route to attend a suspected heart attack patient, and the temporary steel plates had not been laid. For future extended works, NR has agreed to inform not only SCC but also the Control Rooms directly.

## Emergency services and unplanned closures

Unplanned closures can cause the most disruption and distress. Mechanical failure is thankfully rare, but it is an eventuality that NR prepares for by keeping spare parts on-site. If one barrier mechanism fails, all four are replaced to prevent further issues. However, a maintenance team must travel from Wimbledon, and the journey can take 20 minutes or more. During that time, traffic queues build up on both sides, causing congestion and delays to residents with flights, medical appointments, or school pickups.

In response, the Residents' Association convened a meeting of all relevant parties. Attendees included representatives from Network Rail (Public Relations, Maintenance, Operations Risk, and Route Operations), local MVDC and SCC Councillors, South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB), Fire & Rescue Service (FRS), the City of London Ashtead Common Estate Office, and Surrey Police. MP Helen Maguire was invited to the first meeting, but due to new parliamentary responsibilities, she was unable to attend. She and her team did attend the second meeting.

The aim was to clarify the procedures used by NR, SECAMB, and FRS, and to dispel the rumors and anecdotal reports circulating locally. NR acknowledged the almost unique circumstances of the Ashtead crossing and confirmed



**(Above)** Air ambulance support now forms part of emergency plans north of the tracks **(Below)** Ashtead's level crossing under review as part of efforts to safeguard emergency access

it has taken additional steps to reduce the risk of failure. It has agreed to dispatch two Mobile Operations Managers (MOMs) to any future incidents. Subject to the signalman's agreement, they may manually open the barriers if required. NR also recognized the distress caused to motorists caught on either side and confirmed that, where safe, it will open the barriers to ease queues, always ensuring passenger safety is not compromised.



## Alternative access and ongoing improvements

SECAMB has worked with the Ashtead Common Rangers to explore a cross-Common route from The Wells estate for ambulance access. This has proven effective, though it depends on the availability of an on-duty Ranger. The meeting also considered a system where local residents would meet the ambulance at the crossing and transport paramedics to the patient.

Eight volunteers have since been identified, and the logistics of the plan are being developed.

Acting ARA Chairman Alan Bradley has also liaised with the Air Ambulance for Kent, Surrey & Sussex (AAKSS), which has agreed to cover the northern part of Ashtead if alerted by SECAMB in the event the level crossing is impassable. AAKSS is currently assessing suitable landing sites.

Regarding fire services, the Commons route is unsuitable for full-size fire engines. However, if the power is confirmed as off and trains are halted, crews may remove the barriers. FRS is exploring the use of its Land Rover to reach incidents via the Commons and is also considering positioning fire-fighting equipment north of the crossing in case access is blocked.

Surrey Police is fully aware of the challenges posed by barrier failures. Only the police are authorized to permit vehicles to cross while warning lights are active.

The two meetings have been highly productive. Network Rail is now working to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the three emergency services. In the meantime, ARA has secured a significant benefit for residents through the agreed attendance by AAKSS and continues to work on all other aspects. Further updates will follow.

**David Baker**

# FRIENDS OF ASHTEAD VILLAGE HALL

**Y**ou might not have heard of the Friends of Ashted Village Hall (FAVH), or the fundraising dinners we host four times a year in support of the Peace Memorial Hall. While the Hall Trustees are responsible for maintaining a safe and functional building, as any homeowner will know, there's always more to be done. That's where we come in.

Over the years, FAVH has helped fund a new fridge-freezer, upgraded the stage area and lighting, installed automatic doors in the new porch, and contributed to the refurbishment of the servery.

Our primary fundraising events are our quarterly dinners. For just £32, guests enjoy a three-course meal with coffee, mints, and live entertainment. There's also a raffle for those who wish to take part.

Tickets for our next dinner on 4<sup>th</sup> July are available from the Hall Secretary or any member of the FAVH committee. One of us will also be available in the bar area of the Hall on each of the four Fridays leading up to the dinner. We'd love for you to come along and join us!

**Penny Weaver**



*Lively conversation and good company at one of our past Friends of Ashted Village Hall fundraising dinners – helping to keep the Peace Memorial Hall thriving*

## TWO FREE COMMUNITY EVENTS AT APMH

**W**e're pleased to invite residents to two informative and engaging events at the Ashted Peace Memorial Hall (APMH) over the coming months. These events are free to attend and form part of our ongoing commitment to raising awareness about sustainability and encouraging positive action in our community.

On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May at 8pm, Helen Maguire MP (*pictured below*) will be joining us to share her perspectives on sustainability, both locally and nationally.

And on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June at 8pm, we'll be hosting an informative session on heat pumps and heat pump readiness. If you're thinking about transitioning your home heating system, or are simply curious about how heat pumps work and whether they're suitable for your property, this talk will provide practical insights and guidance.

We hope you'll join us for both evenings – everyone is welcome, and we encourage you to bring along friends and neighbours who might be interested.

**Transition Ashted**



## ROYAL BRITISH LEGION POPPY APPEAL

**A** heartfelt thank you goes out to all the wonderful volunteers, local schools, clubs, and village traders who gave their time and energy to support last year's Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. Thanks to your incredible efforts and generosity, Ashted achieved a record-breaking total of £19,500 raised across both Upper and Lower Ashted.

This remarkable result reflects the strength of our community spirit and our shared commitment to remembering and supporting those who have served. It is also part of a wider success story, with Surrey raising well over £1 million for the Appeal – a testament to the continued importance and impact of the Poppy Appeal across the county.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed, whether by volunteering, donating, or simply wearing a poppy with pride.

**Richard & Pat Garrard** (Upper Ashted) and **Martin Howlin** (Lower Ashted),  
Royal British Legion Local Organisers



# TRAVELLING BY BUS IS GETTING EASIER!

**A**t Transition Ashtead, we strongly support the use of public transport as a key way to reduce individual carbon footprints and contribute to a more sustainable community. While many people are already familiar with travelling by train, taking the bus has historically been a bit more complicated – especially when it comes to checking timetables or knowing when the next one is due. Fortunately, this is changing.

If you have a smartphone (and don't mind adding one more app to it!), we recommend trying out the new Falcon Buses app. It's simple to use and allows you to view up-to-date timetables, track buses in real-time, and see exactly when the next one will arrive. It also allows you to purchase tickets – including day passes – directly through the app, which makes the experience smoother and more convenient.

Falcon Buses operates most of the services in our part of Surrey, including the 479 route between Guildford and

Epsom, which is particularly useful for Ashtead residents. The service is generally well-rated by passengers and runs until nearly 10pm most evenings, offering reliable options for day-to-day travel.

Even more encouragingly, Falcon Buses is continuing to invest in its fleet as part of the national drive toward greener transport. The company has 13 electric buses on order, funded in part by the UK Government's Zero-Emission Regional Bus Areas (ZEBRA) scheme. These new buses will initially run on routes 436 (Weybridge to Woking) and 461 (Kingston to Chertsey) starting in 2026. We're hopeful the 479 service will follow suit before long, helping to further cut emissions from local travel.

In the meantime, we warmly welcome both the added convenience that the app brings and the progress being made towards achieving Net Zero in local transport.

Chris Ellis



## CONTINUING OUR JOURNEY TO GO GREEN

**A**s many of you will know, a central part of our Centenary Celebrations last year was not just to mark 100 years of Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall's service to the community, but also to raise awareness of our 'Go Green' initiative. As part of this campaign, we set ourselves the ambitious goal of raising £1,000 for every year the hall has been in use – a total target of £100,000.

Thanks to the generosity of local individuals, community groups, and organisations, we are delighted to report that we have already passed the halfway mark toward that goal – a fantastic milestone for our much-loved community venue.

With a generous grant from Mole Valley District Council, we were able last year to install solar panels on the roof and fit two large batteries in the hall store. This was a big step towards reducing our environmental footprint and supporting more sustainable operations.



Looking to 2025, our efforts continue as we work towards becoming as carbon neutral as possible. The next phase of our green transformation includes plans to further insulate the hall and replace existing lighting with energy-efficient LED lights, starting in key areas and progressing in stages.

APMH plays a vital role in village life, hosting a wide range of clubs, groups, and community events throughout the year. Maintaining and upgrading the hall ensures it remains a comfortable, cost-effective, and sustainable space for all who use it. To support these efforts, our fundraising will continue, and any donation – big or small – will be gratefully received.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

Jane Hiley

## COULD YOU LEND A HELPING HAND?

**W**e're exactly what the name suggests – Good Neighbours – and proud of it.

For over 20 years, Ashtead Good Neighbours has been providing a vital community service thanks to the dedication of our team of volunteer drivers. At the heart of what we do is a simple aim: to offer peace of mind to local residents by helping them get safely to and from their medical appointments.

This small act of kindness makes a big difference to our many clients, who rely on our support for everything from GP and hospital visits to dental and physiotherapy appointments.

Could you spare a little time to help? We're looking for new volunteer drivers to join our friendly team. Even offering to drive once or twice a month would make a real impact. There's no fixed schedule or commitment – simply respond when you're available. And if you're not free when we call, it's absolutely fine to say no. It's a hugely rewarding way to give back to your community and meet some wonderful people along the way. Don't delay – get in touch today to find out more. Visit our website at [www.ashteadgoodneighbours.net](http://www.ashteadgoodneighbours.net) or email us at [ashteadgn@gmail.com](mailto:ashteadgn@gmail.com) for more information. We'd love to hear from you!

Lynda Feeney



**Ashtead Good Neighbours**

# AHS CELEBRATES 150 YEARS!

**2025 marks the 150th Anniversary of Ashtead Horticultural Society (AHS) – a remarkable milestone for one of the village’s longest-running community groups. To celebrate, we’ll be holding a series of special events throughout the year, including the reissue of our history book, first published for our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2000.**

Our much-loved Summer and Autumn Shows at Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall continue as ever, with free entry and a warm welcome. Held on the third Saturday in July and the first Saturday in September, these events offer a feast for the senses.

Doors open at 1.30pm, and visitors can enjoy colourful floral displays, home-grown fruit and veg, crafts, baking, photography and more – all with a cup of tea and a slice of home-made cake.

Children are especially welcome, with classes for under 9s and 9-14s in the Summer Show. Prizes are awarded, with points collected across both shows. Some sections are open to non-members – and if you’d like to join, we’d love to welcome you. For full details, visit our Summer and Autumn Show pages, or find out more about Membership today.

**Sue Oestel**



*Ashtead Horticultural Society's seasonal show at the Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall brings together growers, gardeners, and flower lovers from across the village*

## HELP US CARE FOR ORPHANED ANIMALS

**W**ildlife Aid, based here in Surrey, is one of the UK’s busiest and longest-established wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centres. For over 40 years, we’ve been dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of British wildlife, dealing with over 20,000 incidents every year.



Our work is 24/7. On any given day, our team might be rescuing stranded baby owls, freeing fox cubs tangled in garden netting, performing life-saving surgeries, or hand-rearing hundreds of young animals in our on-site hospital. We care for more than 180 species of native wildlife, with a passionate team of over 300 volunteers and a thriving outreach programme that inspires people to protect the natural world around them.

We are now entering orphan season – the busiest time of

year – and we’re bracing for a seven-month surge in sick, injured, and orphaned animals. To meet this growing need, we urgently require supplies.

You can help by ordering from our Amazon Wishlist, which includes items like specialist bird food, syringes, bandage spray, formula-mixing tools, and other essential equipment.

Every donation, however small, will make a real difference to the lives of the wild animals in our care.

Please consider donating today. Visit our Amazon Wishlist (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/register/wishlist/3MQX8VLJAMUXN>)

**Wildlife Aid**



## ASHTEAD AND LEATHERHEAD PROBUS

**A**shtead and Leatherhead Probus is a welcoming club for men and women with a professional or business background who enjoy good company, great food, and stimulating conversation. We meet monthly at 12.30pm on the third Monday of each month at Tyrrells Wood Golf Club, where members enjoy a lunch followed by an entertaining guest speaker.

In addition to our regular meetings, we also organize informal pub lunches, a countryside walking group, and outings to places of interest. Throughout late 2024 and into early 2025, we’ve continued to enjoy a varied programme of fascinating and engaging after-lunch talks.

December saw a festive highlight as members and guests came together for our Christmas buffet and carvery, accompanied by live music from The Downsman – a thoroughly enjoyable way to round off the year.

We have a full calendar of talks and events lined up for 2025. To find out more or enquire about joining, please visit our website at [www.ashteadleatherheadprobus.org](http://www.ashteadleatherheadprobus.org).

**Keith Allardyce**



# A CELEBRATION OF ARTS IN ASHTEAD

**T**hroughout late 2024 and early 2025, The Arts Society Ashtead (TASA) has continued to delight members with its engaging monthly talks at Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall, covering a wide and fascinating range of arts topics.

Recent talks have taken us from the remote mystery of Easter Island to the often-overlooked artistry of wallpaper design. We also explored the innovative mind of Thomas Heatherwick, a creative force in modern architecture. The year ended on a festive note with our always-popular Christmas Dinner, paired this time with a light-hearted talk on the history of pantomime—cue laughter and plenty of “Oh yes it was!”

Looking ahead, TASA has a fresh line-up of spring and summer talks designed to inform and entertain. We'll discover how Napier became New Zealand's Art Deco capital, trace the evolving link between food and art, and admire early 20th-century jewellery and fashion in From



*Autumn 2024 tour to Devon and Cornwall*

Downton to Gatsby. We'll also celebrate the life and work of beloved Impressionist Berthe Morisot. In August, we host a Special Interest Morning at the Dell Centre, offering a deeper dive into a chosen topic in a friendly, social setting.

TASA also runs cultural outings. This year, we'll visit Stansted Park, Chawton House, The Vyne, Pitzhanger Manor, and Osterley Park. In September, we look forward to a five-day cultural holiday to historic Suffolk.

Whether you're passionate about the arts or just looking to connect with like-minded people, TASA offers something for everyone. Join us for a monthly meeting and experience our friendly, stimulating atmosphere.

To see our full programme and events, visit our new website: [www.tas-ashtead.org.uk](http://www.tas-ashtead.org.uk). We look forward to welcoming you!

**Keith Allardyce**

## THINKING ABOUT JOINING A WI GROUP?

**H**ave you ever thought about joining a Women's Institute group but weren't quite sure what to expect? Ashtead WI might be just what you're looking for. Proudly part of the village since 1973, Ashtead WI offers women of all ages a chance to meet new people, build friendships, and take part in a wide range of activities, talks, and outings in a relaxed and welcoming setting.

Our monthly meetings, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm at Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall, feature an engaging programme of guest speakers covering a broad mix of subjects – so there's always something new to learn or be inspired by.

In addition to our main meetings, members can also enjoy a variety of interest groups throughout the month. Whether you're into books, crafts, gardening, or walking, these smaller gatherings provide a great way to share hobbies and get to know fellow members better in a friendly, informal environment.

We also organize occasional day trips – this year's highlights include visits to the Brighton Pavilion and the beautiful historic West Horsley Place.

If you're curious and would like to give it a try, why not come along to one of our meetings? You'll be guaranteed a warm and friendly welcome, and we'd love to meet you.

For more information, feel free to email us at [ashteadwi@gmail.com](mailto:ashteadwi@gmail.com) or visit our website at [www.ashteadwi.co.uk](http://www.ashteadwi.co.uk).

**Lillian Baldwin**



## SOUNDBYTES WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

**I**f you love music and enjoy a sense of community, why not consider joining Soundbytes, Ashtead's much-loved community choir?

Founded in 2009, Soundbytes has brought joy to audiences across the area and raised an impressive £40,000 for local charities along the way. The choir is known for its welcoming spirit and uplifting harmonies – and now it's looking for new members to join in the fun.

The new term begins on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, with weekly rehearsals from 7:30pm to 9:30pm. There's no audition and no need to read music – all you need is a love of singing! Free taster sessions are available for anyone who'd like to give it a go before signing up.

If you prefer singing purely for pleasure and without the pressure of public performances, Soundbytes also runs SongWorks, a relaxed, performance-free singing group. Sessions take place on Thursday evenings from 7:30pm to 9:00pm, which start on Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> April, and free tasters are available here too.

Both groups offer a fantastic way to de-stress, meet new people, and experience the joy of singing in a friendly, supportive environment.

For more information or to register your interest, contact us by emailing [hazelhannam@icloud.com](mailto:hazelhannam@icloud.com).

**Hazel Hannam**



# JOIN THE ASHTEAD RUNNING CLUB

**If you enjoy running and like some friendly company, why not join the Ashtead Running Group?**

We're a welcoming group of local runners who meet every Tuesday at 7.30pm outside the Woodman Pub for a sociable 40-60 minute run. Our pace is around 8 minutes per mile, and we're always happy to see new faces – whether you're new to the area, training for an event, or just looking for a regular group to run with.

ARG also organises the Ashtead 10k and 2k Fun Run, held with the kind permission of the Ashtead Common Rangers and the Corporation of the City of London. This

year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> edition of the race, taking place on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September.

Celebrated as one of the UK's greenest runs, the Ashtead 10k features a scenic off-road course through the Common. It's open to runners of all abilities, and the 2k Fun Run ensures there's something for the whole family. Entries are open – just search 'Ashtead 10k' online to sign up.

We look forward to seeing you on a Tuesday evening – or on the start line in September! For more information, visit [ashteadrunning.net](http://ashteadrunning.net).

**Robert McCaffrey**



*Ashtead Running Club brings together runners of all abilities to enjoy fitness, friendship, and the great outdoors*

## A CREATIVE COMMUNITY IN FULL BLOOM

**W**ith spring in the air, Ashtead Art Group (AAG) recently celebrated the season with its popular Spring Exhibition at the Denbies Vineyard Gallery in Dorking. The week-long event, which ran until 6<sup>th</sup> April, offered visitors a vibrant and diverse showcase of original artwork in a beautiful setting.



Featuring work from more than 30 local artists, the exhibition presented a wide variety of styles and media – from traditional landscapes and still life to bold abstracts and contemporary pieces. Many of the artworks were sold, and the event drew praise for both its quality and welcoming atmosphere, reinforcing AAG's role as a cornerstone of Ashtead's creative community.

Now in its sixth decade, Ashtead Art Group continues to offer a

friendly and supportive space for artists of all abilities. The group meets on Monday evenings at Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall and hosts an engaging programme of demonstrations, hands-on workshops, and relaxed painting sessions. Whether you're an experienced artist or a beginner, AAG provides the perfect environment to explore and develop your creativity.

If you missed the Denbies exhibition but are curious about the group, you're warmly invited to attend a Monday evening meeting to find out more. New members are always welcome – and who knows, you might be exhibiting at the next show!

For more information, simply come along to a meeting or get in touch with the group via their usual channels. Creativity starts here!

**Audrey Mitchell**

## A WHODUNNIT COMES TO ASHTEAD

**T**he Woodfield Entertainers return this May with *Amdram is Murder!*, an original light-hearted murder mystery set in the world of amateur dramatics – where the offstage drama proves just as entertaining as what's happening under the spotlight.

Blending gentle suspense with a touch of comedy, the production follows the members of a fictional drama group as rehearsals take a turn and tensions rise. Audiences are invited to follow the clues and see if they can work out whodunnit before the final reveal.

Performances will take place from Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall. Doors open at 7.00pm, with the show starting at 7.30pm. Tickets are £12 per person and can be booked by calling 0333 666 3366 or visiting [www.WoodfieldEntertainers.co.uk](http://www.WoodfieldEntertainers.co.uk).

Woodfield Entertainers is a long-established amateur dramatics group based in Ashtead, staging two productions a year. The group is always pleased to welcome new members – whether you're interested in performing, helping backstage, or supporting front-of-house. If you've ever considered getting involved in local theatre, this is a great way to see the group in action.

Come along for an enjoyable evening of local theatre, and see if you can solve the mystery!.

**Tanya Haylett**





# TRY BOWLS FOR FREE THIS SUMMER!

**A**re you looking for a new hobby that's fun, social, and suitable for all ages? Why not give bowls a try? **Ashtead Bowls Club is now welcoming new members for the 2025 summer season, and it's the perfect time to get involved with this enjoyable and skilful sport.**

Tucked away just off Woodfield Lane, behind the cricket club, Ashtead Bowls Club is a hidden gem. With a proud history spanning +100 years, it's recognised as having one of the finest outdoor greens in the area. The club also boasts excellent facilities including a well-stocked bar, an indoor 'short mat' bowling area for the cooler months, and a lively calendar of social events throughout the year.

Whether you're new to the game or have played before, the club caters to all abilities. From relaxed 'roll up' sessions with friends to more competitive league matches, there's something to suit everyone's pace and interests.



*Members of Ashtead Bowls Club enjoying a friendly match on the green – sport, skill, and community spirit in the heart of the village*

To help you get started, the club is offering free taster sessions from the start of the season in April – no previous experience needed. All equipment and coaching will be provided, so you can simply turn up and give it a go. You're warmly invited to join us at one of our Open Days:

- Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April: Evening session from 6.00pm
- Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April: Afternoon session from 2.00pm
- Additional sessions available by arrangement

Bowls is a great way to stay active, meet new people, and enjoy the outdoors – all in a friendly, welcoming environment. Give it a try and see what you've been missing! To find out more, email [ashteadbowls@gmail.com](mailto:ashteadbowls@gmail.com) or come along on one of the dates above – we'll be happy to see you.

**Richard Elphick**

## NEW COURTS AND A NEW WAY TO PLAY

**I**t's an exciting time for tennis enthusiasts in Ashtead. **Courts 3 and 4 – located in the Recreation Ground near the children's play areas – are being completely resurfaced during April and May. When they reopen on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, residents will enjoy upgraded facilities and also have the chance to try Pickleball, a fast-growing sport that blends tennis, badminton, and table tennis.**

The courts will feature a new blue-on-green color scheme, giving them a fresh, modern look.

Everyone is welcome to join Ashtead Tennis Players Club, with individual memberships costing less than £13.50 per month. This includes unlimited use of the courts, seven-day advance booking, weekly club sessions, and access to social events. Even better value is the family membership – two adults and two children for just £25 a month.



If annual membership isn't for you, the courts can be booked on a pay-and-play basis for £10 per hour, up to four days in advance. Bookings include a box of free tennis balls. All courts are floodlit and open daily until 9:30pm.

And who knows – you might follow in the footsteps of local star Jack Draper, now ranked seventh in the world, who was reportedly spotted playing on Court 3 a few years ago!

To find out more or to join, please email [membership@ashteadtennisplayersclub.com](mailto:membership@ashteadtennisplayersclub.com).

**Simon Culhane**



## LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEW CRICKET SEASON

**A**s we head into another summer, Ashtead Cricket Club is gearing up for what I'm sure will be an exciting and enjoyable season. As well as our senior teams, we'll once again have junior and women's cricket being played across both Woodfield Lane and Parsons Mead, with plenty of matches to look forward to throughout the summer.

I'd like to extend a warm invitation to everyone in the village – and further afield – to come down to the club. Whether you're a seasoned supporter or just fancy spending a sunny afternoon watching some cricket, you'll always be welcome. Our friendly bar is open on matchdays, and it's a great spot to relax and catch up with others in the community over a drink or two.

One of the things I most enjoy about the club is the chance to meet new people, so I do hope to see some new faces this year. Please don't hesitate to come over and say 'hello'.

**Nick Hill**

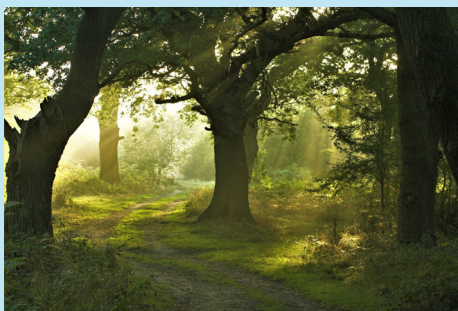
## ASHTEAD COMMON'S LIVING LEGACY

**"The unmixed London Clay at its worst; undrained, sour, and cold, saturated all the winter and cracking wide during the drought, it has little economic value except for timber." So wrote Hall and Russell in their 1911 report on the Agriculture and Soils of Kent, Surrey and Sussex.**

Why, then, did the City of London Corporation – the governing body for the Square Mile, the world's leading financial centre – acquire Ashtead Common in 1991?

The reason is simple: cities need high-quality natural spaces to be healthy, vibrant, and attractive. The legislation that enables the City of London to acquire and protect open spaces was introduced in 1878, at a time when vast areas of countryside were being lost to development and public health concerns were growing. More recently, the Covid pandemic once again highlighted the vital role that access to natural space plays in supporting health and wellbeing.

Ashtead Common National Nature Reserve is a particularly fine example of a wooded common,



*Ancient oak pollards standing tall – some of Ashtead Common's oldest residents*

home to more than 1,000 ancient oak pollards, as well as areas of scrub, grassland, and wetland. It holds very high conservation value, having recently been ranked joint fourth in the UK (alongside Richmond Park) in the Index of Ecological Continuity. This index measures the abundance and variety of specialist insects found in old trees and reflects how long-established a habitat is. In the case of Ashtead Common, that continuity spans at least 2,000 years.

Pollen samples analysed during investigations of Ashtead Common's Roman villa suggest that the vegetative makeup of the Common 2,000 years ago closely resembled what we see today. Evidence also suggests that when the villa was abandoned not long after 200 AD, grazing was introduced, initiating the wood pasture management system that supports the area's current biodiversity.

Managed as a charity, Ashtead Common is protected in perpetuity as a place for both recreation and wildlife conservation, with community involvement remaining central to the care of this nationally significant reserve. The focus is on enhancing biodiversity through proactive management, and there have been some notable successes. The ancient oaks have been given an additional 300 years of life,

grazing has been reintroduced and expanded, and species such as the nightingale and grasshopper warbler have returned.

The challenge now is to retain this diversity in the face of increasing recreational pressure and the growing impacts of climate change.

**Andy Thwaites**

*(Head Ranger, Natural Environment Division, Environment Department, City of London Corporation)*

### Annual General Meeting 2025

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025**

**at 7.00pm for 7.30pm**

**Ashtead Peace**

**Memorial Hall, Ashtead**

### Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Apologies for absence
3. Approval of the minutes of the 2024 Annual and Autumn General Meetings
4. Matters arising from the minutes
5. Chairman's report
6. Hon. Treasurer's report and adoption of accounts
7. Election of Vice-Presidents
8. Election of Chairman. Vice-Chairman, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer
9. Election of Committee Members
10. Appointment of the Hon. Examiner
11. Any other business

*Copies of the accounts, and the minutes of the 2024 General Meetings, are on the ARA website – [www.ashteadresidents.org.uk](http://www.ashteadresidents.org.uk)*



*The wood pasture of Ashtead Common, where tradition and biodiversity thrive side by side*