

## Statement from Ashford Parish Council [APC]

### An update on the emerging email network

Following the election in May 2019, it became clear to the new Council that APC should have its own email network. At present APC relies on two privately run systems to distribute Council business. Whilst APC appreciates the support given by these networks, this situation makes it vulnerable to changes of circumstance which might leave it without a means of distribution. This is not acceptable for Council business. APC should have its own network under the control of the Council.

The new network will be used to regularly distribute agendas, minutes and occasionally other Council items such as statements like this. It will not be used for other village matters and will not be a competitor to any other network. Importantly however it will directly ask for residents views on projects to improve the village environment. This will allow parishioners to communicate directly with APC and encourage those not happy with speaking publicly to express their views independently and privately. This feature will be especially relevant when APC needs to decide how to spend S106 funds as they become available.

Earlier this year a mail drop was undertaken to invite residents to join the circulation list for the new network. Because of problems associated with this and the suspension of Council meetings, progress was slow. However work didn't stop and the project is moving forward.

At present we are researching and drafting a Privacy Policy. This is required to comply with GDPR, which all organisations who collect and hold data must adhere to and this is a complicated and exacting process. This policy will soon be accepted by all Councillors and will then be adopted into our standing orders which are available via the Ashford website. With the privacy policy in place, APC can take possession of the email addresses collected from the mail drop. A dedicated email address will then be advertised and those who have not yet provided their details will be invited to join the scheme.

Can I apologise for the lengthy time this process has taken and similarly apologise for the errors in protocol that were associated with the method chosen to collect the data. Can I assure all residents that this initiative is well intentioned and is aimed at bringing the village and its Council closer together.

If any of you who contributed your data months ago and now feel that was wrong, please contact the Clerk: [APCclerk@mail.com](mailto:APCclerk@mail.com) and your details will be deleted.

Philip Hughes Chairman APC

