WYCHAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

*good services, good value*

# COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

# DEFFORD AND BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

## Published 23 February 2026

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Aims of the review*

Following a request from Defford and Besford Parish Council, Wychavon District Council has resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review pursuant to Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to consider the number of councillors each individual parish elects to the Parish Council.

### *Why undertake a community governance review?*

A Community Governance Review provides an opportunity for principal authorities to review and make changes to community governance within their area.
A Community Governance Review is a review of the whole or part of the district to consider one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes

- The electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election: council size, the number of councillors to be elected to council, and parish warding) and
- Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes.

The government has emphasised that ultimately, recommendations made in Community Governance Reviews are to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

***Scope of the review***

The District Council has resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review to consider whether governance arrangements within the above stated parish ward are:

a) Reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area:
b) Effective and convenient to the community in that area

In doing so, the review is required to take into account:

a) The impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion and
b) The size, population and boundaries of the local community or parish

Specifically, the review will consider:

Whether the current split of 6 from Desford Parish and 3 from Besford Parish – making a total of 9 councillors on the Parish Council – is appropriate.

In their request, Defford and Besford Parish Council state that “despite many attempts to reach out to Besford residents…to fill (councillor) vacancies, there has been no response”. The view of the Parish Council is that the current split arrangement is not working, as they constantly struggle to find enough people to fill the 3 Besford seats. If changes are to be made, these could involve altering the distribution of councillors between each parish – so for example, the split could be amended to 8 from Defford Parish and 1 from Besford Parish.
N.B. Government guidance states that each parish unit would need to send at least one councillor to the Parish Council. Beyond that, there are no legal restrictions or ratios for councillor numbers or the split between parishes.

***Background and Detail***

Defford and Besford Parish Council currently comprises two separate civil parish units – Defford and Besford. The number of Parish councillor seats for each is currently 6 and 3 respectively.

- Defford consists of 302 properties with 501 electors
- Besford has 113 properties and 219 electors.

Both parts are in the same Wychavon District Ward (Eckington), Worcestershire County Division (Bredon) and Parliamentary Constituency (West Worcestershire).

Neither Defford nor Besford has had a contested election since 2011, when Defford alone was contested. So, for the 2015, 2019 and 2023 regular elections, the number of candidates did not exceed the number of seats in either parish. There have been no by-elections in this period either – all vacancies went to co-option.

***Who will undertake the community governance review?***
As the principal authority, the District Council are responsible for undertaking any Community Governance Review within its electoral area. The Wychavon District Ward Councillor for Eckington Ward is councillor Paul Middlebrough. The review will be administered by the Elections Team at Wychavon.
Final recommendations, should changes be recommended, will be made to Full Council for adoption and creation of a Community Governance Order.

**CONSULTATION**
Before making any recommendations or publishing final proposals, in line with legislative requirements, the District Council will take full account of the views of local people. The District Council will comply with legislative requirements by

- Consulting local government electors for the area under review
- Consulting any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the principal council to have an interest in the review
- Consulting the County Councillors
- Taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.

Therefore, the consultees as a minimum will be:

- The electors of Defford and Besford
- County Councillor for Bredon Division (Adrian Hardman)
- Worcestershire County Council
- Defford and Besford Parish Council
- Local Government Boundary Commission

When taking account of written representations, the District Council is bound to have regard to the need to ensure that community governance within the area under review:

- Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
- Is effective and convenient

In order to ensure that this review is conducted transparently, as soon as practicable the District Council will publish its recommendations and take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them.

In accordance with the Act, representations received in connection with the review will be taken into account, and steps will be taken to notify consultees of the outcome of the review by:

- publishing them on the Council's website at www.wychavon.gov.uk
- posting public notices in the relevant areas
- placing key documents on public deposit at Council Offices
- requesting that the Parish Council publicises them too

## TIMETABLE FOR THE REVIEW

A Community Governance Review will be concluded within a twelve-month period from the day on with the review commences. A Community Governance Review commences when the Council publishes its Terms of Reference, and it concludes when the Distinct Council publishes the recommendations made in the review.

| Action | Timetable | Outline of action |
|---|---|---|
| Compiling Terms of Reference | February 2026 | |
| Publication of Terms of Reference | By 1 March 2026 | District Council Publishes TOR and notifies stakeholders, clearly defining extent of the review. |
| Consultations – invite initial submissions | March – April 2026<br><br>9 Weeks | District Council undertakes a full consultation requesting support for /or alternative proposals |
| Preparation of Draft Proposals | May 2026 | |
| Publication of Draft Proposals | 31 May 2026 | |
| Consultation on Draft Proposals | June - July 2026<br><br>8 weeks | |
| Final Proposals are prepared and published | August 2026 | District Council considers the results of consultation and prepares Final Proposals |
| Final Proposals are considered by Council | September 2026 | District (full) Council adopts Final Proposals |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Council publishes an Order if changes are proposed and agreed | Thereafter | District Council publishes an order concerning Parish matters |
| Next election held under new electoral arrangements (if agreed) | May 6th 2027 | |

## PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE REVIEW

### *Relevant legislation*

In undertaking a Community Governance Review, the District Council will apply the guiding principles as appropriate from the following legislation and guidance:

- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- The Local Government Act 1972
- Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (MHCLG) 2010
- Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils)(England) Regulations 2008

### *Parish governance*

The District Council believes that parish councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at the local level and wants to ensure that parish governance in the district continues to be robust, representative and enabled to meet the challenges that lie before it. Furthermore, it wants to ensure that there is clarity and transparency to the areas that the parish councils represent and that the electoral arrangements of parishes – the warding arrangements and the allocations of councillors – are appropriate, equitable, and readily understood by their electorate.

The Council is keen to ensure electors should be able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident. It considers this sense of identity and community should:

- lend strength and legitimacy to the parish structure
- create a common interest in parish affairs
- encourage participation in elections to the parish council
- leads to representative and accountable government
- engenders visionary leadership
- generate a strong inclusive community with a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride

The Council considers parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity. The feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are primary considerations in this Review.

The Council is keen to balance carefully the considerations of changes that have happened over time through population shifts or additional development for example and have led to a different community identity with historic traditions in its area.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like to say how you view potential future arrangements under these Terms of Reference, please submit your comments no later than 30th April 2026 to:

**The Elections Team**
**Wychavon District Council**
**Civic Centre**
**Queen Elizabeth Drive**
**Pershore**
**WR10 1PT**
Email - elections@wychavon.gov.uk Phone – 01386 565437
We can receive comments by letter, email, phone or in person.

Should you require any further information or need clarification on the review process please contact:

**Jon Morgan - Electoral Services Manager**
**Telephone 01386 565437**
**Email jonathan.morgan@wychavon.gov.uk**

## PUBLICATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

These Terms of Reference will be published on the District Council website: www.wychavon.gov.uk and will be available for public inspection at the Council Contact Centres at:

- Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore

Notices advertising this Community Governance Review and the availability of these Terms of Reference will also be posted within the parish.

**Date of publication - 23 February 2026**

## APPENDIX

Appendix - Map of the Defford and Besford Parish Council area

**Map of Defford and Besford – please also see the interactive map on** My Local Area - Wychavon District Council

