2026/04

MINUTES
DEFFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

https://defford-besfordparishcouncil.co.uk

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Defford & Besford Parish Council held on Wednesday 18th March 2026 in Defford Village Hall following the Annual Parish Meeting (Defford)

PRESENT: Vice Chairman (Acting Chair for this meeting) S Rees, Cllrs: L Peake J Robinson and I Spiers and 1 member of the public

1. **APOLOGIES** were received from Chair Iain Stephens, County Cllr A Hardman and District Cllr P Middlebrough

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**
   a) *Cllrs are reminded of the need to update their register of interests.*
   b) *To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature*
   c) *To declare Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda and their nature*
   d) *Written requests for the council to grant a dispensation (S33 of the Localism Act 2011) are to be with the clerk at least 4 clear days prior to a meeting.*

   Cllrs who have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, or Other Disclosable Interest which falls within the terms of the code of conduct, must leave the room for the relevant items.

   None Declared

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: **Nothing recorded**

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** from meeting 21st January 2026. Acknowledged incorrect date for January 2026 meeting (clerk to amend) proposed approval Cllr Spiers, seconded Cllr Peake – all in favour

4. **COUNTY & DISTRICT CLLR REPORTS – District Cllr report annexed to these Minutes**

5. **FINANCE / GOVERANCE:**
   a) Approval of receipts and payments to 11th March 2026 (made since last meeting)
   Payments for authorisation:

LM - December	245.00
Street Lighting Electric	382.72
Service Charge	6.00
Clerks Expenses	15.00
Clerks Salary	391.92
Service Charge	6.00
Clerks Expenses	15.00
Clerks Salary	391.92
Lengthsman Jan	280.00
Lengthsman Feb	280.00
Hall Hire	22.00
HMRC PAYE	326.82

Payments approved, proposed Cllr Peake, seconded Cllr Robinson – all in favour

Receipts:

Lengthsman	245.00

b) Account Balances:
Unity Trust Current Account: £1,778.38
Unity Trust Savings Account: £27,313.35

c) Polices – in hand
d) Cllr Robinson approved as an additional signatory / authorisation with Unity Trust Bank
e) Community Governance Review – WDC to carry out a consultation with parishioners of both Defford and Besford parishes to approve the request from the parish council to change the 'split' of Cllr representation between the two parishes.

6. PLANNING:

a) Neighbourhood Plan - Following discussion it was agreed that due to the reduced number of Cllrs this was not something the parish council could consider progressing with at the moment. It is hoped that residents from both Defford and Besford realise the importance of this and come forward as either volunteers or Cllrs.

7. HIGHWAYS & BYWAYS

a) Public Rights of Way – The parish council are not aware of any problems, however it should be noted that with only 5 Cllrs recording / reporting of issues could be limited.
b) Highways – part of the highway between Defford and Besford has now been repaired to the first turn to Besford village however there are a number of areas which will be reported to WCC.

8. REPORTS:

a) Lengthsman – The LM continues to work diligently, and we await confirmation that the LM scheme will continue into 2026/27.
b) Millennium Green – Clerk was asked to investigate a means of moving large quantity of topsoil to level out uneven surface

9. CLOSED CHURCHYARDS – DEFFORD & BESFORD:

a) Headstones – the parish council to proceed for a faculty for the re-siting of the headstones in Defford Churchyard.

10. CORRESPONDENCE / EMAILS: These had all been shared with Cllrs.

11. OTHER MATTERS FOR INFORMATION / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- Notice boards to be re-furbished – Clerk to chase the LM

12. DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Wednesday 20th May 2026 at Besford Court Hall – to also include Annual Parish Meeting (Besford).

Report to Parish Councils

March 2026

Information for Residents from Wychavon

WYCHAVON BUDGET

On 25th February 2026 Wychavon completed its budget for 2026/2027.

Total revenue spending is £18.5 million and £16.1 million on capital projects

The key points are

- Freezing our share of the Council Tax for two years
- A £5 million support package offering a mixture of grants, free and discounted council services over the next two years. £400,000 for a new community grants scheme which will provide smaller grants to help community groups improve their local area.
- Up to £4 million to decarbonise Pershore and Evesham Leisure Centres (Energy efficiency measures are being installed at Droitwich Spa Leisure Centre as part of the current upgrade).
- £872,000 to support Wychavon's economy including an extra £412,000 in a new Wychavon Growth Grant and Wychavon Rural Grant to continue to support small and medium-sized businesses across the district with expansion projects.
- £100,000 in grants to support energy efficiency schemes for community buildings and biodiversity improvements for communities.

These are on top of multi-million-pound commitments already made by Wychavon for major regeneration and wellbeing projects, including Evesham Town Centre through redevelopment of the Riverside Shopping Centre site and upgrades to the lido and leisure centre in Droitwich Spa.

Council Tax Bills will be sent out during March. The bills show the following differences since last year

	% Change
Wychavon	0.0
Worcestershire County Council	9.0
West Mercia Police	5.2
Fire Authority	4.9
Defford & Besford	10.9
Birlingham	2.3
Eckington	4.9
Strensham	9.2

PLANNING

South Worcestershire Development Plan (Review)

It is expected that the SWDP(R) will be approved at the end of the month. This should in the short term reduce the need for more housing, though probably not in the medium term as the

Government are revising national planning policy to support their wider objectives of building 1.5 million houses.

Throckmorton New Settlement Master planning

The South Worcestershire Councils (SWC), supported by Homes England, wish to undertake further work to produce an innovative, ambitious, and deliverable Framework Masterplan that is accompanied by a detailed phasing and delivery plan for Throckmorton New Settlement, building upon the work undertaken to date for the imminent Review of the Plan.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION.

The Government's consultation on local government reorganisation in Worcestershire is underway with a closing date of 26th March 2026.

Although the Government for some reason left parish councils off the list of consultees you can of course fill in the forms, Local government reorganisation in Worcestershire - GOV.UK

Parish council insight matters to us, and we want to ensure your voice is heard during this critical phase of the reorganisation process and that is why in our Transforming Worcestershire recommendation we promoted the voice of Town and Parish Councils being essential part of democracy in the South Worcestershire unitary authority.

The Government will probably announce which approach Two Unitaries or One Unitary before their summer recess.

At the same time the government is moving forward with its powers for devolved arrangements, introducing an elected mayor to oversee local transport and skills, as well as being responsible for delivering other services. Firmly committed to mayoral devolution, the government is advancing its agenda through the devolution priority programme. However, it has emphasised that the model is most successful when based on robust foundations, such as the strong unitary structures being established through local government reorganisation. These reforms are scheduled to be delivered within this parliamentary session.

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