2026/10

MINUTES
DEFFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL
https://defford-besfordparishcouncil.gov.uk

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Defford & Besford Parish Council held on Wednesday 15th July 2026 in Defford Village Hall at 7pm.

PRESENT: Chair I Stephens, Vice Chair S Rees and Cllrs L Peake and I Spiers.

1. **APOLOGIES** were received from Cllr J Robinson, County Cllr A Hardman and District Cllr P Middleborough.

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: **There were no parishioners present**

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** from meetings on 20th May and 9th June 2026 – approved, proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Peake – all in favour

4. **DISTRICT CLLRS REPORT –** Report from District Cllr P Middleborough is annexed to these minutes

5. **FINANCE / GOVERNANCE**
   a) Approval of receipts and payments to 10th July 2026 (made since last meeting):

Insurance	726.21
Lengthsman - April	318.75
Service Charge	7.00
Clerks Salary	391.92
Clerks Expenses	15.00
Training (Cllr Robinson)	48.00
HMRC - PAYE	326.62
Audit Expenses	25.75
Lengthsman - May	300.00
Service Charge	7.00

Approval of payments made / to be made, proposed Cllr Spiers, seconded Cllr Rees

b) Receipts:

LM - MAY	300.00
Interest	145.78

c) Account Balances:
Unity Trust Current Account: £7,875.67
Unity Trust Savings Account: £30,221.00

d) A request had been received from the Clerk for an additional 4 hours to be added to her current contracted hours of 32 per month. The current arrangement has been in place since 2019 and workload for all clerks has increased considerably. There were no objections to this request, proposed Cllr Stephens, seconded Cllr Rees – all in favour. Cllr Stephens asked the Clerk to log all the hours spent on the faculty process / application with regard to the headstones and it was agreed that this time spent should be paid for.

e) Grants - a suggestion was made that the parish council should research grant funding for solar panels (to be installed in Defford village hall car park and that any 'gain' could be off-set against the electricity costs for the street lighting. Clerk was also asked to look at the electricity costs for street lighting.

6. REPORTS:

- Lengthsman – Cllr Rees reported that she had been in communication with the LM and works requested has been satisfactorily carried out. Thanks to be paid to paid to both Steve Baker (LM) and also to L A Garden Services for all their hard work carried out ahead of Defford Open Gardens as well as works included in their routine schedules.
- Headstones / Faculty – Clerk reported on a recent meeting with stone mason and representative of Defford PCC re headstones and the observations made which had been shared with Cllrs and the PCC. The clerk had reported back to the diocese that this is now in the hands of Defford PCC. The clerk advised that she would create a 'policy' specific to the closed churchyards in Defford and Besford that we are responsible for.
- Millennium Green:
  - Hedge cutting had been carried out and a quote received to replace the fencing / posts and install cycle racks at both MG and the Village Hall. Quote included materials, labour and removal of all debris. Mindful that three quotes were required, the parish council had reached out to 2 contractors with one declining the offer to quote and one quote received, the parish council would seek an additional quote.
  - Goal Posts – still being sourced and quotes awaited
  - Ground levelling – a suggestion was made that this could be carried out when the fencing replacement is carried out allowing space for a vehicle / trailer to access MG with topsoil. Cllr Peake would measure the available gap before progressing further. Cllr Spiers advised he is able to transport the topsoil available from Besford, and a suggestion we reach out to the community to spread the topsoil.

7. PLANNING: 26/01303 Besford Water Tower, Ladywood Road - Conversion and refurbishment of Besford Water Tower to form one dwelling, with replacement first-floor, detached subterranean garage with ancillary accommodation, access and associated works – *the parish council had no objections to the first application for this site and their opinions remain the same, with no objections on this second application.*

8. OTHER MATTERS FOR INFORMATION / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- Budgets / Projects
- Grants – Solar Panels

9. DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Wednesday 16th September 2026, 7pm at Defford Village Hall - *apologies received from Cllr Rees*

DEFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING JULY 2026

Wychavon District Council Report

Key issue for Residents

As I write this today Wednesday 8th July the heat is being turned up on Wychavon by the Government.

PLANNING

The Government has stripped nine local authorities including Wychavon of their powers to determine planning applications for major developments over 'inadequate' performance.
Planning Minister Matthew Pennycook wrote to the councils individually informing them of the decision to '**designate**' them under section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

This means developers with housing schemes of more than 10 homes or on sites of more than 0.5 hectares, those looking to build buildings of more than 1,000 square meters, or all other developments on land of more than 1 hectare no longer need to apply to the councils for planning permission. If they chose not to apply to the council the applications will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate instead.

At Wychavon we are astounded this has been done based on planning numbers between 2023-2025 whilst refused by Wychavon were subsequently approved by the Planning Inspectorate.

Things have now changed at Wychavon, where the five-year shows that the council has a 5.48 year housing land supply with a 20% buffer in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Legal action has been instigated by Wychavon to have the **designation** overturned on the grounds our planning procedures are sound in accordance with the Government's NPPF, the action we have taken. A Judicial Review Pre-Action Protocol letter has been sent to the Government's solicitors. This set out in detail the basis of the Council's claim and invited the Secretary of State to confirm whether he will agree to suspend the effect of the designation decision.

Local planning applications should be determined locally and the designation undermines all tiers of local government.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION.

The House of Commons goes into recess in the week commencing 13th July 2026. It is expected that the reorganisation of local government in Worcestershire into one or two unitary authorities, with abolition of Wychavon District Council will be announced. Whilst residents in Wychavon didnt want it to happen, it now seems inevitable and so Wychavon will work to ensure the new Unitary authorities are a success when the come int being on1 April 2028.

WE ARE WYCHAVON FUNDING

Residents, families, businesses and community groups across the district are set to benefit from the first phase of the £5 million **We Are Wychavon Support Fund.** The money will be invested over the next two years and is built around four key themes of supporting wellness, supporting business, supporting families and young people and supporting sustainable communities.

The first package of schemes, which will be introduced over the coming months, includes:

- Free swimming for under-16s.
- Free swimming for over-60s.
- Free learn-to-swim sessions for all ages.
- Reduced fares on the Worcestershire on Demand bus.
- One hour's free parking in short-stay council car parks.
- Support for businesses to create apprenticeships.
- Targeted support to help tackle youth unemployment.
- Funding for families facing financial hardship who do not qualify for existing support.
- Enhanced speech and language support for children.
- New Ward Budgets enabling councillors to support small-scale community projects that do not qualify for existing grant schemes.

Details of how each scheme will work and residents can access them are currently being finalised and will be announced through Wychavon's website, e-newsletter, social media and the local media.

Instead of being focused on a specific part of the district, schemes have been chosen so as many residents as possible have the opportunity to benefit from them.

Further schemes will be announced in phases as the programme develops.

UPDATE

If there is more news on the **Planning Designation** and **Local Government Reorganisation** I will update you at the meeting.

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