

Defford & Besford Annual Parish Meeting

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Minutes from Meeting held on Wednesday 18th May 2022 at 7pm At Defford Village Hall

Present: Cllrs J Clarke, G Marshall, P Hale and Ian Spiers, two parishioners and Lily Hughes and Frank Bridgwater (Smart Water)

Apologies were received from Cllrs S Rees and I Stephens, District Cllr R Davis and County Cllr A Hardman

Cllr Clarke welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Lily Hughes and Frank Bridgwater to give a presentation on Smart Water which was well received and informative. Discounted packs of the SW solution are available via a current initiative led by the Police and Crime Commissioner. Normal retail cost is about £25 but parish councils are able to purchase (as a whole community scheme) packs for as little as £8.90. This is dependant on a commitment for 75% of households to sign up and register kits. This will also enable us to receive free signage. It was agreed that some calculating of the total outlay would be necessary, and for the clerk to make enquiries as to whether there would be any grant funding available from Rooftop Housing for their own tenants.

Cllr Clarke reported on the challenges everyone has faced during the past couple of years due to Covid, however there were some successes by the parish council including the restoration of part of the church wall, the new play equipment at the Millennium Green and the upgrades to the street lighting columns. He paid thanks to Cllrs, the Clerk and to our County and District Cllrs, who have always been very supportive. A full copy of the report is annexed to these Minutes

In addition, reports were gratefully received from Cllr Ron Davis (in his capacity as District Cllr) and the Cowleasow Trust – also annexed to these Minutes.

Cllr Marshall had provided updates on footpaths / Public Rights of Way, Neighbourhood Watch and Broadband which are included in the Minutes from the Annual Parish Council meeting

Defford and Besford Parish Council – Chairman's annual report

20/21 was a difficult year for the Parish and the country with Covid hitting parishioners, friends, and family; working lives disrupted and long distant conversations via Zoom.

21/22 saw the Parish Council (PC) switch from remote Zoom meetings back to face to face council meetings at Defford village hall and Besford community centre as Covid restrictions eased. The PC continued to support Covid initiatives and additional local government funding for Defford village hall. Parishioners should be proud of the support they provided neighbours and friends through the very difficult times.

The PC tried to maintain communication through Facebook, the website, Parish Notice Boards and talking to parishioners (at an acceptable social distance). Thank you to those who provided feedback and comments.

There have been a few changes on the Parish Council over the past year, with two Councillors moving out of the parish and another one resigning due to work commitments. Ron Davis unfortunately had a heart attack that incapacitated him for several months. I am pleased to say he is recovering well – his fellow councillors missed his knowledge and experience. We are lucky to have recruited three new Councillors: Gareth Marshall; Iain Stephens and Peter Hale. Their drive, enthusiasm and new ideas are most welcome.

During the difficult Covid shutdown period, the PC was unable to move many projects forward. So there has been a burst of activity this part year with three significant investments into the parishes:

1. Street lighting has been upgraded through most of Defford, replacing old sodium type lamps with modern, energy efficient LEDs
2. A climbing frame has been added to the play equipment on the Millennium Green to provide facilities for older children in the village. This will be supplemented with benches and seating for picnics (or to just take in the lovely views)
3. A large section of the wall around Defford Church has been replaced – as the old part was collapsing and could have constituted a health hazard.

The Parish website has also been re-hosted onto a more modern platform and at lower cost. To better serve the community.

Councillor Sue Rees laid a wreath at Defford church and a second wreath was laid as part of the Eckington memorial event on Remembrance Sunday for the lives lost across the Parish.

Defford Councillors have started and been encouraging a Neighbourhood Watch. Signage has gone up and Smart Water is being investigated. We are lucky that crime is low across the two villages, but anything to maintain the low levels and to encourage community conversations is welcome. One significant crime in the area was the dumping of several tonnes of waste in the Railway yard. Thanks to the vigilance and speedy action of a

Parishioner, photos were taken. Network Rail and the Police pursued the miscreants and I'm pleased to say were found guilty and paid to have the wate removed.

Superfast broad band (fibre to the home) investments have been encouraged in Defford through Airband. Croome Road to half of Upper Street have been connected to the fibre network thanks to the efforts of Parishioner Chris Hunt.

The painted and renovated phone box is awaiting shelving to enable a small sharing library to be installed.

And finally, with several Parishioner's help, the Council are investigating barriers to prevent unauthorised access to the Millennium Green – whilst allowing parking, wheelchair, pushchair, and grass cutting machinery full use of facilities.

Recent events in Ukraine continue to show the caring side of Defford and Besford Parishioners, with a few events being undertaken to raise money for Disasters Relief and UNHCR. Any contributions, however small, will be gratefully received.

Thank you to the Parish Councillors and our Clerk for their diligence, hard work and time given free to the communities of Defford and Besford. You help make our beautiful villages even nicer places to live.

Best wishes to you and your families during these difficult economic times. I encourage you to contact Councillors for improvement suggestions or ideas for the villages. We continue to seek another Councillor to complete our full complement,

Julian Clarke

Defford and Besford Parish Council Chairman

DEFFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

MAY 2022

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Due to my illness last October I had been given Doctors orders to reduce my community activities and regain my strength. So my attendance at meetings has been somewhat reduced.

I have, however, been contactable by email or telephone and maintained contact with the Parish clerks to my 4 Parish Councils.

Regretfully, I was forced to stand down from my position on the Executive Board after 7 years and had to handover my portfolio of Resources and Investments a position I thoroughly enjoyed.. I was pleased, however, that my recommendation to freeze for the 5th year the Wychavon element of this year's council tax.

It has been my privilege to serve the Eckington Ward for another year and I trust I can continue for the next 12 months- health permitting.

We have a difficult year ahead which will require patience a clear and positive strategy Wychavon have the Resources and very sound investments to get through including good management and good Governance.

As I have stated in previous reports-Covid is still out there so take good care of yourselves.

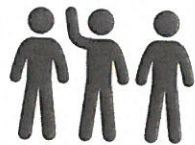
Kind regards.

Ron Davis
District Councillor
Eckington Ward

DEFFORD & BESFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

REPORT – COWLEASOW TRUST

The trustees of the Cowleasow Trust have met twice in the last year. We have tried to raise awareness of the charity whose aims are to support those people in Defford who are in need of assistance. We have supported two requests this year. We have posted a flyer to everyone in the village to try to encourage people to apply to us if they are struggling with their bills.



COWLEASOW TRUST

The Defford Cowleasow Trust is a local charity which has funds available for those living in the parish of Defford, who are in need, hardship, or distress. **Anyone associated with the parish, or who are resident immediately outside the parish may be considered for assistance.**

Needs come in all shapes and sizes and few of us can say we have not needed help at some point on our lives.

In the past, grants have been made to help with costs for:

- **Winter fuel or electricity bills.**
- **Unexpected household repairs or other needs.**
- **Expenses for Further/Higher Education courses.**
- **Hospital visiting and costs involving the care of a sick person.**
- **Provision of specialist equipment for the disabled or housebound.**
- **Physiotherapy or other care services in the home.**

All suggestions or applications are always considered in confidence.

If you feel we may be able to help you, or someone else living within the parish of Defford, please contact us:

Cowleasow.defford@gmail.com
