

**DEFFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Annual Parish Meeting - 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 7.30pm at Defford Village Hall.

**Present:** Cllrs: Peter Hale, Debra Lamont, Ian Spiers. Iain Stephens, Julian Clarke (previous Chairman and Steve Baker (Lengthsman)

**Apologies** were received from: County Cllr A Hardman, District Cllr P Middlebrough, Ron Davis and Gareth Marshall.

**Chairman's Report:** Julian Clark (outgoing Cllr and Chairman) welcomed everyone present to this Annual Parish Meeting and presented a report, paying thanks to Cllrs (past and present), the clerk, County Cllr A Hardman and in particular Ron Davis. Ron having been a Parish Cllr for over 50 years and a District Cllr for 16 years. Reference to the achievements by the parish council, including updating of the street lighting in Defford (now more energy efficient), new benches and picnic tables at Millennium Green and a 'traveller prevention' barrier. Full report annexed to the Minutes on the website or from the Clerk.

**Annual Report from Wychavon District Council:** Ron Davis reported (via email in his absence): *"A short report just to say that it has been my privilege to have served on the Parish Council for over 50 years in total. It has also been an honour to have served as your District Councillor for the past 16 years. It is unfortunate that my health issues have forced me to stand down from both of these roles which I enjoyed very much.*

*However, you have an excellent DC in Paul Middlebrough who has a great deal of experience in Council matters at County, District and Parish levels. I am confident he will prove to be very helpful.*

*I wish you all well for the future and good luck to your new Chair Sue who I know will be a very good chairperson.*

*My sincere good wishes to you all"*

District Cllr Middlebrough submitted a resume from Wychavon District Council. Full report annexed to the Minutes on the website or from the Clerk

**Police Report** (from PCSO Julie Pardoe): There has been a number of break ins to the new solar farm where panels and wiring have been stolen. As the site develops this should naturally stop but in the meantime, they have increased their security measures. Solar farms are very prone to theft, and this is a common problem throughout the area.

A horse box was stolen in December which was located and reunited with the owner.

There was also a break into a vehicle in Church Close, Defford. Personal items were removed from the vehicle. CCTV from local properties was viewed but we were unable to identify the offenders. On the same night I was informed that other properties had items stolen but we received no further reports from any other residents.

We were recently contacted by a concerned resident from Besford regarding large agricultural vehicles using the lanes and the fact that there had been two recent accidents. The resident was given advice to contact Worcestershire County Council regarding further signage etc. We were unable to find any reports regarding road traffic collisions though if there had been no injuries or damage to roadside furniture it is not necessary to report them as long as details are exchanged.

As a number of people now report online, when carrying out searches for incidents on our systems these incidents do not necessarily appear. Therefore, we can only produce a report based on the incidents we can find or recall attending so apologies if anything has been missed.

The team has now changed, and PC Riley has moved on to become a Sergeant in custody. We have PC Molly Keeler as his replacement. PCSO Claire Doughty has joined me as PCSO for the area.

#### Reports from Other Village Organisations:

- **St. James and St Peter's Church** – report received reporting on the use of both churches for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Defford church benefitted from the purchase of a new electronic organ. The church continues to work closely with Defford First School. Sadly, despite a few new members, there is a substantial decline in the numbers attending services. Full report annexed to the Minutes on the website or from the Clerk.
- **Cowleasow Trust** (for those living in Defford or around Defford) – report received: We have money to give to people who have a need, it is difficult to identify those people, but we would really like to support people who are having problems especially at the moment with the cost-of-living crisis. If anyone knows of anyone who would like support, please let me know. We are very discreet and keep all names out of any public report. We have given money to the school to help with swimming lesson transport. We have publicised the Trust around Pershore, on the village notice boards and on Facebook.

#### Specific Village Issues:

- **Highways** to include traffic calming /Bourne Road – reference was made to speeding traffic issues / tractor movements in Besford during the preceding parish council meeting and in the police report (above). This will be reported back at our next parish council meeting in July. **Bourne Road** – concerns were raised regarding the condition of the road surface and a suggestion made that a 'weight limit' be applied, if possible. The clerk would raise this with WCC.
- **Coronation Commemorative Benches** – these are to be installed at Defford's Millennium green and outside the Church in Besford.
- **Defford's Closed Churchyard, Church Wall** – we continue to build reserves to re-build the remaining section of the wall.
- **Lengthsman** – we now have a new parish Lengthsman in place who has been liaising with Cllr Lamont. Already, there are visible signs of the work he has undertaken.

Reports are available from the Clerk: [clerk@defford-besfordparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@defford-besfordparishcouncil.co.uk) or 01386 552233

# Defford and Besford Parish Council

## Chairman's annual report 22/23

2022/23 has been a better year for some and a more difficult year for others – the Parish has been aware of those impacted by events in Ukraine, the rising cost of energy prices, hence cost of living and wider price rises. The two parishes continue to support parishioners as best they can.

Our new Parish Councillors from 21/22 year (Gareth Marshall, Iain Stephens, and Peter Hale) have been joined by another newbie, Debra Lamont, who has fitted in well to “long served” Ian Spiers and my deputy, Sue Rees. Thank you for all your hard work. It is with a sad heart I must report Ron Davis has decided to step down as a Parish and District Councillor.

Ron has been a member of the PC for more than 17 years and involved in local government for over 50 years. He has provided guidance and support to many across the years – me included over the past 8 years. His knowledge of Wychavon financial matters and processes was invaluable as we applied for grants or worked out how we could fund which works. Thank you, Ron. The villages thank you. We wish you all the best in your retirement.

This year has seen the PC finish the update of the LED lighting in Defford. These are more energy efficient and the lamps longer lasting.

We have purchased new benches and tables for the Millennium Green and fitted a new security barrier / fencing around the entrance. This was in discussion with local Parishioners who could be impacted by people parking on the Green. The barrier solution was changed, following the consultation.

This is a good point to say thank you to Parishioners for your support and contribution over the past year. We have had a few more of you attend Parish Council meetings (more would be even better) and we have received comments and feedback via the Facebook page and website. But perhaps more importantly, just topping Parish Councillors and discussing points is the most appropriate and direct method. Thank you.

This raises another point – we are short of two Parish Councillors for Besford – we seek volunteers. It takes perhaps an hour or two per week with six PC Meetings per year, each of about two hours. Please consider helping your community and stepping forward – speak to our Parish Clerk, Lynne.

I would like to thank Lynne for all her hard work and knowledge. It is the Clerk's responsibility to be aware of local government rule changes and what we as Councillors are and are not allowed to do. The Parish Councillors make the decisions, but with guidance from the Clerk.

The Defford Neighbourhood Watch continues to be successful, thanks to Councillor Marshall's drive. The PC has also been keeping rights of way clear (thanks again Councillor Marshall), reporting blocked drains (Parishioners can do this as well through the Worcestershire Highways website) and getting grass verges cut and maintained.

Planning is another area where the PC has a defined set of responsibilities. We review all planning requests within the Parishes. We seek feedback from Parishioners if there is anything controversial. But our powers are limited – we can only question plans grouped around 10 or so areas.

Julian Clarke

Defford and Besford Parish Council Chairman

## **DEFFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

### **ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING & ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

Report on Wychavon District Council Year 2022/2023

Unfortunately, Ron Davis is unable to be present tonight, but I have prepared a summary of the highlights from the past year.

#### **Financial Sustainability and responsible investments**

- *Frozen Wychavon's council tax so it is the third lowest in the country.*
- *Invested £28 million over the past 4 years in sports leisure facilities town centre improvements and supporting the local economy.*

#### **Focusing on Good Building Design**

- *Introduced a new design code which sets out clear expectations for new building design and quality, beauty, and sustainability.*
- *This will require developers to build to the design code and planners can ensure new developments are better suited to the villages.*

#### **Town centres**

- *Investment strategies have been developed for Doitwich Spa, Evesham and Pershore including £4 million in Evesham.*
- *Commitment to attract £100 million investment in redeveloping the Riverside Shopping Centre in Evesham*

#### **Enhancing the Environmental**

- Reducing Wychavon's carbon emissions by 75% by 2030
- Tripling local energy generation.
- Doubling the size and Wychavon's low carbon economy by 2030
- Restoring and enhancing habitats to capture 500 tonnes of CO2 every year by 2025.
- Major tree planting scheme with Heart of England Forest.
- 23 new pollinator sites for insects

#### **Support for people in need**

- £600 thousand for new housing schemes to help young people at risk of ending up on the streets.
- 740 affordable houses have been delivered.
- £110,000 for school breakfast clubs.

Paul Middlebrough with help from Ron Davis 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023

## **Report for Defford Parish Council from St. James and St. Peter's Church**

St. James' church continues to play an active role in the life of Defford village, where it offers a place of worship and space for prayer to the community. During the year it has seen a return to its' pre Covid level of activity, with a monthly service of Holy Communion on the 4th Sunday of the month and a Midweek Holy Communion Service on 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month. In addition, special services were held at Christmas, Easter and to mark historic events, such as the death of the late Queen, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

St. Peter's church in Besford also continues to hold a monthly Holy Communion service on the 1st Sunday in the month, as well as additional services led by lay members of the congregation on special occasions. All these services attract a small but regular number of people. During the year St. Peter's also held several fund-raising activities, to raise monies both for the church and some local charities. These were well supported and strengthened friendship across the community.

Both churches also saw a number of baptisms, weddings and funerals being held throughout the year, as well as a number of Interment of Ashes in the cemetery in Defford. As such, it is good to know that the Church is still recognised as being an important place in the community in which to mark life events.

To this end, worship in Defford church was enhanced during the last year with the purchase of a new electronic organ. This has been a much awaited development and so now all our services in church can be supported with the help of an organ accompaniment.

Christmas and Easter are of course particularly important Festivals in the church's year, and so it was good to be able to deliver Christmas cards from the church to homes across the villages and also to be able to distribute a number of Palm Crosses on Palm Sunday. The Parochial Church Council in Eckington also paid for chocolate Advent Calendars which were given to all the pupils of both Eckington and Defford First Schools.

The church continues to value its relationship with Defford First School. This involves making visits to the school to support their worship and in offering St. James' church for their special Festival Services at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. This year, as vicar, I was able to conduct a Christingle service for the school in church and this was well received by the staff and pupils as we built a Christingle and learnt about Christ as the Light of the World. In addition, I was

able to watch two concerts which were performed as part of the ISing Pop Christian music project held in school. It was lovely to watch the enthusiasm as the children performed the songs and dance routines they had learnt as part of this activity as well as hearing about the Christian teaching that went alongside it.

Sadly, although we have attracted one or two members to our regular congregations, due to an increasingly older demographic of people attending the church on a regular basis, as well as a decline in the number of people attending services, the income raised for the running of the church continues to be a challenge. This raises an overarching concern regarding the viability of the churches going forwards, as well as the ongoing maintenance and fabric of the church buildings and the opportunity to continue ministry in its present form. This will be discussed in the coming months by the Parochial Church Council.

However, the church continues to be optimistic about its' presence as a Christian focus within the villages of Defford and Besford; And so, with the establishment of new initiatives like the Bible Study and Fellowship Group in Defford and plans for several fund-raising activities next year, we trust in the faithfulness of God and the assurance that His churches will continue to flourish in the coming months.

**Reverend Allison Davies**

**Vicar of Defford cum Besford**

**Report from the Cowleasow Trust for those living in Defford or around Defford.**

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