

**DEFFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Annual Parish Meetings - 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024**  
**Defford – Defford Village Hall @ 6pm**  
**Besford – Besford Court Hall @ 7pm**

Minutes of Annual Parish Meetings held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at both Defford Village Hall and Besford Court Hall

**Present:** Cllrs: Peter Hale, Sue Rees, Ian Spiers. Iain Stephens, Seb Soukup, CSO Clare Doughty (Police – at Defford Meeting) and 2 parishioners (Besford Meeting)

**Apologies** were received from: Cllrs Deb Lamont and Gareth Marshall, County Cllr A Hardman, District Cllr P Middlebrough and Ian Mcleod (Head of WDC Planning)

**Reports** received are annexed to these Minutes – received from:

- Defford & Besford Parish Council – Chairmans report
- District Cllr's report
- Defford Village Hall report
- Cowleasow Trust report (Defford)

**Police Report:** CSO Doughty reported that record of incidents could be obtained from [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)

The parish council asked CSO Doughty if periodic controls could be made in Defford, particularly at Millennium Green following reports of possible anti-social behaviour. This was acknowledged. She added that there was low crime rated from within Defford and Besford.

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

## Defford & Besford Parish Council

### Chair's report for the Defford and Besford Annual Parish Meeting

This year has been very fruitful as we have seen a number of projects completed to enhance the parish.

**Councillors:** We now have seven councillors; we welcomed a new councillor in March who is going to look after the Millenium Green. We still need 2 more to make our numbers up to the magic 9 and would welcome anyone who would like to join us. However, we would especially like to see some representation from Besford so they can have their own voice. Do please contact us to find out about what the job entails and come along to a meeting to meet us.

**Neighbourhood Watch and Smart Water:** Smart Water is coming to Defford and Besford, this has seen the fruition of a lot of hard work from one councillor in particular. We hope there will be a big take up of the packs that will enable the police to return any items that may be stolen from you in the future. The fact that properties will have marked their contents with smart water acts as a deterrent to criminals helping to make us all safer in our communities. This is in conjunction with the neighbourhood watch scheme that a large number of parishioners have signed up to. This was as a result of an open meeting held at the village hall where it was lovely to meet members of the parish

**Millenium Green:** We have improved the access to the Millenium Green with barriers round the car park, repaired the gate and added a pedestrian gate to enable wheelchairs and pushchairs to access the park if the larger gate is closed. We have added nets to the goal posts although more work is required to make them sturdier. We have two new picnic tables with wheelchair access. These are going to be concreted into the ground in the near future. We are researching funding to support improvements to the Green to widen the opportunities for it's use in the future.

**Lengthsman:** We have a new Parish lengthsman who alongside other routine work has worked hard to keep the footpaths clear of vegetation, ensure we can see at junctions round the grass and cleaned the drains. The work is never ending and there have been times when the weather or incapacity have impeded his work.

**Footpaths:** If you walk the footpaths and see a problem, please report it on the county council's website and let us know via the parish website as our footpath warden may be able to deal with it. We have seen some new footpath signs erected. We are eagerly awaiting the repair of the bridge across the Bow Brook on the Defford side of the Eckington round footpath, this will make is easier to walk across in wet weather, fewer very muddy boots.

The footpath from Upper St to Hillview has been resurfaced and is now much safer to walk along.

**Planning:** We have continued to review planning applications trying to balance increasing housing stocks which will benefit the villages and those which we feel may cause issues. We are expecting more houses to be built within the village as is happening in every settlement in the country. We wish to encourage a range of properties to be built to support existing services and provide a thriving community for the future.

I would like to finish my year as chair by saying a big thank you to the other councillors who are so supportive and work hard to improve our communities. Also, to the support provided to us by our District and County Councillors.

# DEFFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

## Annual Parish Meeting 2024

15<sup>th</sup> May 2024

### Report of Wychavon District Councillor Paul Middlebrough

I am delighted to give you a written report of the main events of Wychavon Council over the past twelve months.

#### Democratic

At the District Council elections in May 2023 the conservative group remained the largest.

Conservatives	29
Greens	6
Labour	1
Liberal Democrats	7

The leader of the Council Chris Day is the councillor for Ombersley.

#### Financial

Wychavon remains in a sound financial position and has not been faced with reductions in services. The budget for 2024/25 was agreed at £12,852,000 which results in a Band D council tax increase of £5 resulting in Band D council tax being £125.08.

This is the first rise in Wychavon's council tax for 6 years and reflects the challenges of increases costs and demands for services. That being said Wychavon's District charge is the third lowest in England.

#### Planning

The Revision of the South Worcestershire Development Plan continues to run mightily slowly as the inspectors ask for more up to date information. It is now expected it will be approved early next year.

This is very serious for some areas because Wychavon does not have a five-year land supply and so applications for medium to larger sized developments have been hard to resist. On a brighter note the Planning Inspectorate seems to be more positive in giving more weight to Neighbourhood Plans.

#### Green developments

Evesham and Pershore leisure centre dare having £400,000 invested in decarbonisation projects.

The parks contractor has started using Hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) in their vans and ride-on mowers to reduce carbon emissions. They are also using Aspen Alkylate petrol which produces approximately 1% of the polluting emissions of regular petrol in the smaller equipment such as strimmer's and blowers. At the same time, they started a 12-month trial of using no herbicides or pesticides in the parks.

Abbey Park, Pershore water play is complete. We now need the weather to improve so we can open it!

## Health

A major investment in Droitwich has been announced to upgrade the leisure facilities at the leisure centre, the Lido and athletics track to make active healthy recreation more accessible.

## Key Investments

The Riverside Centre in Evesham is a hindrance to the vitality of the town with empty retail unit and an unattractive visage. Working with the owners, and potential developers the council is developing plans to demolish the centre, bring new housing and retail together with opening up the views to Abbey Park and the river.

## Police

Anti-social behaviour, inconsiderate and aggressive driving area constant worry together with IT fraud and domestic abuse.

I would encourage household joining the West Mercia Neighbourhood Matters web site. It provides information and contact details for the local safer neighbourhood teams.

West Mercia Police really would like to hear from you so why not ask your family, friends and colleagues to register too? Talk to the police if you have concerns through Neighbourhood matters.

## Wychavon Rural Fund

Capital grants of between £2,500 and £25,000 are available to both private, public or voluntary sector organisations.

£25,000 has been awarded to Avon Navigation Trust's £38,000 project to construct a new, fixed bridge near Strensham Lock to improve the footpath network. This is part of a larger project that will improve the portage paths in the area and bring additional biodiversity to the site.

## Community Legacy Grants

Just over £4million in Community Legacy Grants have been awarded. Our investment has enabled communities to build brand new village halls, make major improvements to existing community buildings, create new green spaces and play areas, start a community minibus service and even build a new burial ground and open-air theatre. The scheme is now coming to an end.

## Planning Applications

During the year the following new planning applications have been submitted for the parish.

Submitted	Approved	Refused	Being Processed
23	20	2	1

## Personal reflection

Coming back on to Wychavon Council after a four-year break has been a pleasure. I have enjoyed meeting, helping and sometimes disagreeing with residents in the ward, but you a friendly group of people. I look forward to continuing to meet and hear from you in the coming year.

# Paul Middlebrough

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Paul Middlebrough

## Village Hall Report for 2024 Defford & Besford Annual Parish Meeting

Since the last Defford & Besford Parish Meeting, the Trustees of the Village Hall have continued to work hard to ensure that the Hall provides a modern, well equipped facility to meet the needs of the local community.

The Hall is currently used as the regular meeting venue for 10 different local clubs. We also regularly serve as a venue for Weddings, Children's Parties & other one-off events where there are larger numbers of attendees. Undoubtedly the large car parking facility of the Village Hall is an attraction for those wishing to host such events & our large garden area is an additional benefit for attendees during the summer months.

We have faced a number of challenges and changes during the last 12 months:

- Our "number one" priority has been to make sure that all Village Hall users leave the Hall as they found it. We have recently undertaken a series of briefing sessions to reacquaint regular users with the functions and protocols of using the Hall, which have been well received.
- Our Cleaning Company going out of business towards the end of last year gave us the opportunity to bring this service "in house" and now have a dedicated Part Time Caretaker who performs these duties.
- We have recently revised & updated the Terms & Conditions of Use of the Village Hall – which appear on our website.
- The Chair of the Village Hall is now also member of the Parish Council, which facilitates communication between the two organisations.
- We are in the process of updating the Village Hall website to more accurately represent the excellent facilities it offers and further promote it's use. We have also now built in functionality to the website to enable Clubs to display the range of activities they offer – and so hopefully help to promote their membership.

Looking forward, are plans are:

- To improve access to - and use of - the AV facilities in the Hall
- Enhance the functionality of the Hearing Loop
- Longer term – to physically extend the Village Hall to provide a bigger, better kitchen area and better storage facilities for chairs and tables

Peter Hale

Chair of Defford cum Besford Trustees

8<sup>th</sup> May 2024

## COWLEASOW TRUST

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

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 now with the cost-of-living crisis. If anyone knows of anyone who would like support, please let us know. We are very discreet and keep all names out of the public domain.

The Trustees are Sue Rees, Richard Clements, John Taylor, Beate Atter, Helen Ide, Hazel Wakefield, Tracey Gresham, and Jemma Siddons.

We'd like to thank Deby Fox for her time as a trustee, especially as she was chair for several years.

We would also like to thank David Wakefield for his sterling work as Treasurer sine 2013, he has now retired, and we welcome Michelle Wallbank as the new treasurer.

We have publicised the Trust around Pershore, on the village notice boards and on Facebook.

Sue Rees