

MINUTES
DEFFORD & BESFORD PARISH COUNCIL
<https://defford-besfordparishcouncil.co.uk>

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting of Defford & Besford Parish Council held on Wednesday 21st May in Besford Court Hall at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Cllrs: I Stephens, S Rees, D Lamont, L Peake, J Robinson, G Marshall and I Spiers, District Cllr P Middlebrough and 24 residents from Defford and Besford.

1. APOLOGIES were received from County Cllr A Hardman and Heather du Pleiss

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR / VICE CHAIR:

- **Chairman:** Cllr Stephens was nominated as Chairman, proposed Cllr Peake, seconded Cllr Marshall. There were no other nominations, and all Cllrs approved the nomination – no objections
- **Vice Chairman:** Cllr Rees was nominated as Vice Chair, proposed Cllr Lamont, seconded Cllr Marshall. There were no other nominations, and all Cllrs approved the nomination – no objections

3. 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.

Cllr Rees – School Governor

Cllr Marshall - 25/00854/PIP – Land at (OS 9196 4360), Croome Road, Besford

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: *There were 24 parishioners in attendance. There were 2 agenda items that were the reason for their attendance:*

- *25/00854/PIP – Land at (OS 9196 4360), Croome Road, Besford – comments were received from parishioners and noted by the Parish Council*
The landowner was given the opportunity to speak
- *Defford Arms – live music / alcohol sales - comments were received from parishioners and noted by the Parish Council.*
The landlord / landlady were given the opportunity to speak

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES from meeting 19th March 2025 – proposed approval Cllr Lamont, seconded Cllr Marshall – all in favour

5. FINANCE / GOVERNANCE:

- a) Approval of receipts and payments to 14th May 2025 (made since last meeting)
Payments for authorisation:

| | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Playground Inspection | 96.00 |
| Lengthsman March 2024/25 | 192.00 |
| Signage - Dog Fouling | 83.40 |
| Clerks Salary | 380.08 |
| Clerks Expenses | 15.00 |
| Expenses | 10.49 |
| Playground repairs | 317.98 |
| Hall Hire | 20.00 |
| Book Token Prizes | 30.00 |
| Grass Cutting | 525.00 |
| Signage - Speeding | 143.28 |
| Service Charge | 6.00 |
| CALC - Subscription | 712.40 |
| Insurance | 525.19 |
| Payroll Services | 149.40 |
| Clerks Expenses | 15.00 |
| Clerks Salary | 379.88 |

b) Receipts:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Lengthsman (2024/25) | 192.00 |
| Precept / Grant | 11,281.00 |

c) Account Balances:

Unity Trust Current Account: £1,405.18

Unity Trust Savings Account: £30,591.12

Approval of accounts proposed Cllr Stephens, seconded Cllr Rees – all in favour

d) Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) Form 3 -2025 / 2. AGAR Form 3 and all supporting documents had been circulated to Cllrs in advance of the meeting:

e) Internal Auditor's Report: – report received and shared

f) AGAR 2025 / 26 Form 3 – Section 1 Annual Governance Statement – considered by Cllrs, proposed approval Cllr Peake, seconded Cllr Lamont – all in favour

g) AGAR 2025 / 25 Form 3 – Section 2 Accounting Statements – considered by Cllrs, proposed approval Cllr Spiers, seconded Cllr Rees – all in favour

5. COUNTY & DISTRICT CLLR REPORTS –

- County Council Report – in the absence of Cllr Hardman, Cllr Middlebrough reported that WCC was no longer under a 'single' party control
- District Council Report – Cllr Middlebrough reported:
 - Defford Arms – He had made the licensing authority aware of the concerns made by residents, but advised that any enforcement would be carried out by the police
 - Any lighting / noise concerns should be directed to WDC

6. HIGHWAYS & BYWAYS

a) PRoW – Cllr Marshall reported:

- He had been engaging with WCC PRoW/Footpaths – there is a lower level of staff and a high backlog of outstanding issues. Issues should be reported using the WCC website or via Cllr Marshall
- Pathway 509 (Besford) has been closed since last year and needs a new bridge.

- Pathway 506C (Defford) – bridge has been removed and awaits replacing.
- Cllr Rees reported on the ‘causeway’ and that she had been in communication with WCC and the situation is being monitored.

7. PLANNING:

- a) 25/00854/PIP – Land at (OS 9196 4360), Croome Road, Besford – details of the application had been shared with Cllrs prior to the meeting and comments received from parishioners during ‘public participation’ were noted. The overall opinion of Cllrs was to object to the application and final comments would be shared with Cllrs for consideration before submission to WDC. It was agreed that we ask District Cllr Middlebrough to request this application is considered at ‘full’ planning committee.
- b) Defford Arms – live music / alcohol sales – The parish council were aware of objections from some near neighbours regarding the proposed new trading licence at the Defford Arms. It was noted that the new landlord and landlady of the pub had gone out of their way to engage with the local community and offering reassurance that noise and light pollution would not be a cause for concern. Debate took place between Cllrs, both supporting the Defford Arms but also sympathetic to residents of The Acre. A proposal was made that the parish council should comment to Regulatory Services that there were no objections to the application but that we had noted the concerns raised by some parishioners. However, it was further proposed that no comment should be made at all. A vote on the latter proposal (to make no comment) was taken with 5 Cllrs feeling that the PC should remain neutral, with 1 Cllr feeling that a comment should be made to WRS noting the concerns of neighbours. Based on the outcome of the vote no comment would be made.

8. REPORTS:

- Lengthsman – Cllr Lamont reported that the LM continues to work diligently and responds to work requests efficiently. It was formally approved to increase his hourly rate to £20 an hour to take effect from 1st April, proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Lamont – all in favour. Cllr Lamont would make contact with him and request overgrowth be cut back from around road signs.
- Traffic Calming;
 - ✓ Cllr Stephens to meet with the LM to install the new VAS signs
 - ✓ Besford: Cllr Robinson had communicated with WCC regarding a number of highway issues in and near Ladywood Road. Their response was that some faded line markings were previously considered ‘within’ tolerance and a thought that extra ‘SLOW’ markings would cause confusion. However, he would look at ‘Give Way’ markings. Damaged / faded road names were the responsibility of WDC, and these had been reported.
 - ✓ Woodmancote – to investigate traffic calming signage, either line markings or on a post and to request speed checks to be carried out by the police.
- Millennium Green – Cllr Marshall reported that the MG was well used and there was no evidence of any anti social behaviour. Cllrs were asked to give some thought for future improvements.
- Church:
 - ✓ A second quote would be sought for the repairs to the church wall
 - ✓ To ask the LM to clear the moss on the steps by the old school building
 - ✓ Valerian – an agreement to cut back to ground level once it has stopped flowering

9. CORRESPONDENCE / EMAILS:

- Communication received from parishioners regarding The Deford Arms and planning ref: 25/00854/PIP – this had all been shared with Cllrs.

10. OTHER MATTERS FOR INFORMATION / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: Nothing raised

11. DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Wednesday 16th July at Defford Village Hall