

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

15 October 2024

Item 6 – Public Participation

From Colin Gale, Chairman, Rushall Parish Council

To Cllr Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Highways, Street Scene and Flooding

Ditch Clearance, Repair and Maintenance

Preamble

Introduction:

The Church Lane ditch clearance, repair and maintenance has been a repeated ongoing issue over numerous years. Rushall PC continuously have to go round the buoy with the local WC Highways Engineers over the responsibility for the ditches with WC Highways.

The sole purpose of the ditches down Church Lane is water drainage from the Devizes Road crossroads, Church Lane and the Church Lane spur. The ditches are an integral part of the public highways and are not within the landowner's boundary.

Flooding at Rushall Bridge is an ongoing issue that was previously raised at WC Full Council on 21st May 2024. The drains were cleared and flushed on the 19th June 2024 and the response to the supplemental question on clearance of the ditch dated 3rd July 2024 stated that the ditch work would be undertaken in the next month. The month period has long past and the ditch work has not been undertaken.

Background:

There are two drains, one each side of the A342 highway junction with the C351, Pewsey Road and Church Lane which feed underneath the crossroads to a head in the ditch in Church Lane. If the drains and ditch are not kept clear the highways water floods the road at the junction and flows across the junction flooding the A342 and Church Lane.

In June 2021, Ringway, the WC Highways contractor at that time were constructing the Elm Row, Phase 1 stretch of footway from Church Lane to the Bus Shelter. Due to high levels of rainwater and lack of drainage maintenance the drains at the junction flooded the drain head in the Church Lane ditch was blocked and the flooding water disrupted the footpath



construction. Ringway in conjunction with the WC Highways Engineer arranged for the drains to be cleared and flushed and the top section of the Church Lane ditch was dug out and cleared. During this work it was identified that the drainage head in the ditch in Church Lane had collapsed and need re-constructing, see picture. The WC Highways Engineer agreed to arrange for the re-constructing of the head but it has never happened. The drainage grips from Church Lane into the ditch have been maintained by the Parish Steward as requested by Rushall PC.



The WC Highways ditches further down Church Lane have had virtually no WC Highways Maintenance over a significant period. The drain heads in the other ditches are OK, see adjacent picture. The drainage pipes down the Church Lane Spur (leading to The Old Rectory) which feed into the ditch are blocked and have been ever since Church Lane was re-tarmacked in December 2014. A Senior WC Highways Manager was informed of this issue several times after the tarmac was completed and the Senior Highways Manager acknowledged the issue but the pipes were never un-blocked.



There are five drainage pipes along the spur section and they have all been blocked by tarmac.

Question P24-28

- a) When will Wiltshire Council acknowledge the work required to the ditch in Church Lane and rebuild the drain head and clear/digout the ditch?
- b) When will Wiltshire Council clear the drainage pipes along the Church Lane spur blocked by the re-surfacing of the Lane?

Response

- a) While there is a perception that ditches running alongside roads are the

responsibility of the Highway Authority to maintain, in the majority of cases they are in fact the responsibility of the adjoining landowner to maintain. The council does seek to take a pragmatic approach and on occasions will redig ditches to mitigate flooding.

The drainage has been inspected during heavy rain on 8th October. The drainage at Devizes Road junction was working well and surface water was passing through the headwall unrestricted. The first section of the ditch in Church Lane is heavily silted and requires regrading. A works order has been raised for this work to be carried out when resources are next available in Rushall.

- b) The drainage has been inspected during heavy rain on 8th October. Concerning the section of Church Lane running past Churchstow, there was no flooding along the section and the ditch was flowing. There are a number of side entry pipes to the ditch which are heavily silted and the pipe under the access to Churchstow is restricted. A works order has been raised to jet and clear these pipes to ensure that they are working correctly. As there is no flooding of property and no risk of aquaplaning there is no target date for this work as flooding sites will take precedence over this work.

Question P24-29

When will Wiltshire Council now come and dig out the ditch previously agreed reference the Full Council Meeting dated 21st May and associated subsequent correspondence?

Response

A works instruction has been issued for this work but as yet has not been programmed.