Highways

Road Closures

- The Toseland Road/High Street/Offord Road junction was closed without notice for two weeks in December. Two new gulleys were dug across Offord Road and remedial work (including a new drain) was done to the Toseland Road gully. Unfortunately Winrowe Barn flooded again during the recent heavy rains and further work will need to be done.
- The High Street was not shut on 10 December as notified but the gully from Chequers Pond was cleared successfully, if the recent heavy rains were a valid test.
- The High Street will be resurfaced from the pub to home farm on 20-23 January. Although disruptive, residents will be able to come and go.

Communication

I complained about the lack of notice for the first road closure and discovered communication gaps inside the Highways Department (HD) including our own Highways Maintenance Officer (HMO) not being notified of the work until the day before it began. Subsequently, other communication gaps became apparent. It explains some of the conflicting statements made by different officers.

I met Nigel Smith, our new HMO, in the village on 7 January. We discussed the following issues:

- **Surface water running into Winrowe Barn**. He has arranged for a small curb to be placed across the driveway. He was surprised that this had not been done at the time but was confident it will work. This will not involve closing the road junction.
- **Moving the drain outside the pub's driveway.** This has already been agreed and is being scheduled. He has visited the site with an officer from the appropriate department.
- **Sweeping the road**. Clearing the road of debris, particularly straw from trailers passing through after harvest should reduce the risk of gullies being blocked. This could be arranged if enough parishes want this to happen and I asked him to look into it.
- **A weight limit for HGVs.** He suggested a 7.5 ton weight limit would help reduce the damage to our verges and he has asked the safety team for their opinion. They should carry out a site visit this month.
- **Safety mirrors on the blind bend.** The safety team will also consider this. He was concerned at the obvious potential for a head-on collision.
- **Costs of maintaining the verges**. I told him that we were having trouble getting a straightforward answer. He will speak with them.
- **Finalising the LHI options report**. I expressed my personal disappointment with the quality of the report and we looked at their proposals in more detail. Nigel suggested that rain water channels along the edges in places might reduce the debris being carried into the drains and he will look into this.

Maintaining the Verges

The Clerk is still waiting for clarification about how much the county council will give us towards the costs of cutting our verges.

We have not been able to get an alternative estimate from Paxton to test the market as the supplier no longer does that work.

Local Highways Initiative 2024 Report

The draft report gives us a common language to use with HD. Unfortunately, there were no new ideas to help preserve our verges and improve drainage. The report seems to have taken the paper written by Chris Bentley and I in March 2023 as its basis and there was no evidence of any fresh thinking. The only new data were costs of about £100,000 for works to improve matters.

Simon Chapman
7Jan 26