

**BISHOPSTONE PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
Held in the Village Hall Bishopstone
Thursday 11th January 2024 at 7.30pm.**

MINUTES

Present : Parish Councillors : A Thorne (AJT) (Chairman)
P Edwards (PE) (Vice Chairman)
N Barter (NTB)
Mrs A Smith (AS)
Mrs M Tatner (MT)
Ms N Rigg (NR)

Parish Clerk: M R Ash (MRA)

Also present: Mrs Caroline Ash

1. Apologies for Absence

There were apologies for absence from Cllr S Williams.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

3. Approval of Minutes of the meeting on 9th November 2023.

AS proposed that the minutes of the meeting on 9th November 2023 be approved as a correct record, this was seconded by NTB and agreed.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes, including Action Plan

MRA reported that he had spoken to Geoffrey Taylor of the PCC and agreed that they will include an outline of the organization's funding arrangements at the Annual Parish Meeting in March.

All other matters arising from the minutes were on the agenda for later in the meeting.

5. Public Forum

No matters were raised.

6. Cllr Nabil Najjar Report

Cllr Najjar did not attend.

7. Chairman's Items

The Chairman, Cllr Ali Thorne, thanked everyone who had helped out in dealing with flooding following the recent storm. This had resulted in high levels of both river and groundwater. One property in the village had suffered internal flooding and neighbours had helped mitigate the

impacts. He thanked Cllr Edwards and the Flood Wardens for their contribution. It was clear that works undertaken to improve drainage, most recently in Faulston Lane, had meant that the impacts of the flooding overall were much less than had been the case in the past.

8. Precept for 2024/25

Provisional decisions on the amount of the Precept required for 2024/25 had been taken at the meeting in November. Since then final figures had been received from Wiltshire Council on the size of the tax base. These made a very small difference to the amount of Council Tax liable on individual properties in the parish. PE formally proposed approval of a Precept for the financial year 2024/25 of £7,500. This was seconded by NR and agreed.

9. Parish Clerk's Report

MRA said that there was nothing further to report at present on the Speed Limit Assessment due to be undertaken on Broad Chalke Road.

He said that discussions had taken place with Officers of Wiltshire Council about the problems caused by road closures along the High Road, with consequent "rat-running" along Mill and Faulston Lanes. He had already circulated to Councillors a note that he had submitted outlining the Council's concerns (copy attached to these minutes). Wiltshire Officers had explained that statutory requirements regarding the minimum width of road left once work and safety zones had been put in place meant that it was not possible to keep the road open using lights or stop/go boards. Equally, it is not possible to stop drivers using unapproved alternative routes if these exist, only discourage them by indicating that these are not suitable as a diversion. Any damage caused by the use of unsuitable routes is the responsibility of the drivers concerned. However, they did undertake to raise with the utility companies the need to minimise closures and not to postpone closures once announced.

Wiltshire Council had approved Michael Pratt as a Tree Warden for the village and it was likely that this job will be shared with Mrs Georgie Phillips. They are keen to have a discussion with Councillors about their role. It had been agreed that this might best be done in the context of the Annual Parish Meeting in March when there would be a greater opportunity to engage with a wider group of villagers about the project.

Approval of Expenditure

MRA requested that expenditure be approved as follows:

- (i) £165 rent of the Village Hall in 2023;
- (ii) £100 for grass cutting in the Children's Play Area in 2023.

MT proposed that these items of expenditure be approved, this was seconded by AS and agreed.

10. Planning Matters

There were none.

11. Questions or statements from Councillors.

There were none.

Date, location and time of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Thursday 14th March 2024** in the Village Hall, following the Annual Parish Meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

Signed as an accurate record:

.....
Chairman

.....
Date

BISHOPSTONE PARISH COUNCIL**PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Thursday 11th January 2024

ACTION PLAN

WHAT ACTION	BY WHOM	COMPLETED ✓
Repairs to gate to footbridge in Mill Lane to be investigated.	AJT	
Article in STaB re need to clear dead trees and recruit additional Tree Warden.	MRA	✓
Action on Parish Clerk recruitment.	MRA	
Drainage ditches in Flamstone Street to be cleared.	MRA	
Third defibrillator to be procured and installed.	MRA	✓

ROAD CLOSURES IN BISHOPSTONE

This note summarises the problems caused by road closures along the C12 (High Road) in Bishopstone. The attached map shows the sections of the C12 which have been subject to Closure Orders over recent months (red), and the “rat run” used by drivers seeking to avoid the formal diversion (blue).

When the High Road is closed the formal diversion, from one end of the village to the other, is via Wilton, Fovant and Broad Chalke and vice-versa – a distance of some 17 miles (roughly 40 mins). Bishopstone has experienced a very large number of road closures over the past two years, mainly for work by Openreach and Scottish and Southern Electricity.

Background

The C12 is the “spine” road of the Chalke Valley, serving the villages of Bishopstone, Broad Chalke, Bowerchalke, Ebbesbourne Wake and Alvediston. The only bus route through the valley links Salisbury and Shaftesbury. Road closures along the C12 cause difficulty for the whole of the valley as well as the residents of Bishopstone. Particularly affected are school children (delivered by car and coaches to schools in Broad Chalke, Coombe Bissett and Salisbury), local businesses and the elderly - because the only bus service is suspended.

Suspension of the bus service, as well as limiting access for many elderly residents to shopping in Salisbury and Shaftesbury, leads to the postponement of doctor/hospital appointments etc. Since the pandemic there has been a considerable increase in both home deliveries and home based businesses. Road closures mean that businesses in the village have to postpone commercial deliveries, client appointments etc.

Issues

(i) The number, and postponement, of closures

In the last three months closure orders have been in place along the C12 in Bishopstone village for works by Openreach on a total of 8 days. Closures for 4 days in August were postponed and were finally implemented in November (1 day) and December (3 days). Whilst disruption is clearly less when a closure doesn't in fact take place, this only usually becomes clear on the morning of the first day. The bus service remains suspended and business meetings etc cannot be reinstated at short notice.

Even when closures do take place the works often “under-run” so, for example the three day closure in December only, in fact, lasted for two. However, this still means that the bus service is suspended, deliveries postponed etc even though the road is open.

Pressure needs to be put on the utility companies (a) to make use of closure periods as originally granted and not to postpone works, particularly in locations where it is known there will be considerable disruption to people's lives and (b) to more tightly schedule work to minimise the number of days for which the road is closed.

(ii) The use of alternative traffic management measures

Some utility companies, and Wiltshire Council itself, seem to manage road works with minimal disruption through the use of traffic lights or stop/go boards. The response to this suggestion, in particular with regards to Openreach works, is “....road closures are the last resort but unfortunately due to minimum width safety requirements which follows the code of practice there is no other option sometime to use another form of traffic management.” It is not clear why this code of practice applies only to works by Openreach. It is the total closure of the road that leads to the problems outlined in this note.

(iii) Rat running

Because of the length of the formal diversion route (outlined above) many drivers, including of lorries and other delivery vehicles, try to use the “back lane” diversion via the single track Mill Lane and Faulston Lane. These lanes have large signs saying “single track road with no passing places”. Signs put out for the road closure say that this route is “unsuitable as a diversion” (there is a view that putting out such signs advertises that an alternative route exists even if “unsuitable”). All of this signage is ignored with the result that there are long traffic jams, altercations and damage to property.

On 12 December there was a major blockage of that narrow road with vehicles reversing, trying to do multi point turns etc. One driver took an hour to get through from one end to the other. It might be hoped that all this would have a deterrent effect - but that does not seem to be the case, people are prepared to risk it rather than take the long diversion. We know, from past experience, that there will be environmental damage along the lanes, probably some vehicle damage and many frayed tempers. There are residential properties along the lanes and certainly access by emergency vehicles to those properties would be severely compromised in these circumstances.

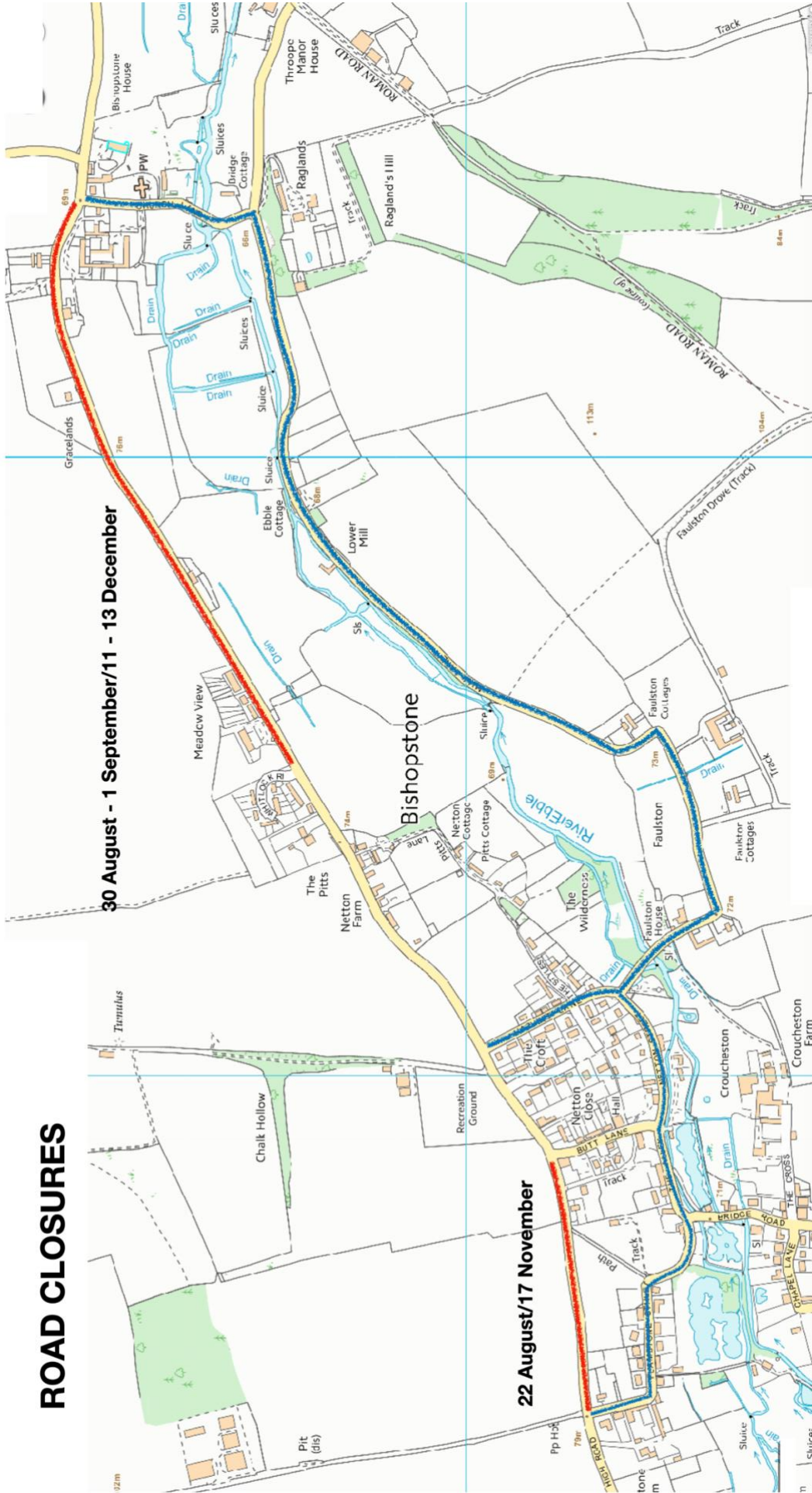
Wiltshire Council say they that the alternative route cannot be closed and that they can do no more than put out signs saying that this route is “unsuitable” as a diversion. Why cannot the C12 road closure extend to the full length in Bishopstone – including the two ends of the “back lane route”? This would at least prevent through traffic trying to use this route. Access for residents would be maintained in the usual way.

If that is not possible, could there be radio controlled traffic flow along the lanes? This would require manpower - some villagers have already volunteered to help if that approach could be taken. Finally, at least, some stronger wording needs to be used on the signage indicating the nature of the “unsuitable” route and the fact that there will be lengthy delays if used.

Conclusion

It is hoped that it will be appreciated, from the above, that this issue has been a major matter of concern to local residents in Bishopstone. Perhaps it has been the recent frequency of the closures that has stimulated this and, it is to be hoped, that when current works are completed it will not be necessary to have such closures again in the immediate future. Whether that is the case or not, Bishopstone Parish Council requests that Wiltshire Council considers the above matters and takes them up in meetings with the utility companies concerned.

ROAD CLOSURES



30 August - 1 September/11 - 13 December

22 August/17 November