

## Letter to Chideock Parish Council

8 October 2024

As a council tax paying resident of this Village I was most concerned to learn that a second ex gratia payment has been approved by the Parish Council to the Village Hall.

In my years as a Parish Councillor the Clerk applied a strict discipline to the process for Village bodies (which are NOT the direct financial responsibility of the CPC) receiving financial assistance from the CPC. That process permitted a **ONCE A YEAR** grant application to be made by that body around the end of the current financial year. The PC considered any and all such applications and then decided which to support for inclusion into the Budget for the following tax year. This process was followed for the tax year 2023 - 2024 when a grant was approved for the Village Hall in the sum of £925 for payment in the tax year 2024 - 2025, which has been made. Therefore no further applications should be made or agreed until later this year for payment in the year 2025 - 2026.

Therefore I note with concern that a second application for £1,000 has been received and agreed for payment to the Village Hall - which has not been budgeted for.

In their very brief discussion about this at the last PC Meeting held on Tuesday 24 Sep 24 the Chair Cllr Caroline Parkins virtually directed the other Cllrs to approve this application since she claimed that "*the repairs to the Village Hall underground drainage were a Public Health hazard*". I ask for the evidence upon which she based this assumption. Clearly since it is underground drainage some technical investigation must have been carried out (e.g. a camera survey), and at least estimates obtained for the work required. Will you please confirm that this process has been carried out and then make such evidence publicly available.

I emphasise again that the Village Hall is not the financial responsibility of the CPC and that this is public money that is being handed out, despite my understanding that the Village Hall itself has funds in excess of £20,000 (a sum not denied by Cllr Benjamin who is also the Village Hall Chairman).

I therefore ask the CPC the following questions:

1. What financial procedure are you following to agree additional grants from the precept in the same financial year (and to the same organisations who have already had grants awarded) outside of the grant setting period?. Whilst I accept that there may be no statutory reason to prevent individual community groups coming forward, the question is whether there is sufficient budget to cover an additional request.

2. What scrutiny have you applied, and where is the money coming from, especially given the fact that additional monies have already been vired in this financial year due to the increase in demand?

Thank you and I look forward to receiving your swift response within 5 days.