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26 September 2003

Dear Andy,

WINTERBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL - REQUEST FOR DISCRETIONARY GRANT

1. Introduction. I am writing on behalf of Winterbourne Parish Council with full approval of the committee and in consultation with the Parish Clerk. For the last three years the Parish Council has been working towards the replacement of our amenity area boundary and the refurbishment of play apparatus.
2. Background. The background to these two projects is as follows:
 - a. Boundary. The boundary comprised a partly collapsed cob wall, scrub and a yew tree, and is situated on the SW extremity of a conservation area. After consultation with the Districts' Tree Officer and Conservation Officer in 2001, it was clear that the Parish's original thoughts of replacing the cob wall with a close-boarded fence throughout its length would have to be adjusted. The adjustment included the conservation requirement to build 18 metres of 'look-a-like' cob wall in order to maintain the vista. Following professional advice a 'bid to tender' was drawn up with specification and sent to 5 local companies. After a considerable period of negotiation a builder was decided upon and engaged. Due to fluctuations in the building trade in late 2002 and early 2003 there was a considerable delay before the work began. Throughout this period (2002) the Parish Council consulted District Councillors as the constraint of building such a wall, rather than a fence, was accepted as an unachievable and unreasonable charge to the Parish.

In broad terms the 18m. of wall was to cost £10K and the fence £1K. A Conservation Enhancement Grant of £2K was granted and an application for a SWAG grant was made for £1,500 in February 2003. The SWAG grant was refused for reasons that were not clear to us¹. However, we were grateful that a discretionary grant of £2.4K was made in May 2003. This left a deficit of £4.6K.

The SWAG Grant was then reconsidered at the July 2003 Northern Area Meeting. Unfortunately due to the time of year and commitments the Parish was unable to send anyone to the meeting and in the absence of anyone being able to answer questions the application was deferred. The work on the boundary was completed in August 2003 (payment was delayed for as long as was reasonable) and the bill paid on the 25 September 2003. The money was found by the Parish from the budget allocated to the Play Apparatus Project and through deferral of other plans.

[cont.]

¹ The reason given by the Committee for refusal was: "No contribution - This application is second application from this Parish Council in the current financial year. The Parish Council is recommended to put forward an alternative application with details that are in conjunction with recently approved details on Conservation Enhancement Grant CEG/203." The application was based on a scheme that comprised solely of a boarded fence and so was not commensurate with the improved scheme.

b. Play Apparatus. For the last four years the ROSPA inspection reports have identified a trend of increasing risk (Low to Med/High) with our increasingly tired looking apparatus. The decision to refurbish the equipment was made in 2002 and a plan was produced. A 'bid to tender' was complied and the companies interested in the job were invited to submit detailed plans. The decision to proceed was made in January 2003 (at which time the Parish was expecting the boundary replacement to proceed with adequate and anticipated funding) for the work to be completed in the Summer holidays 2003. The planned expenditure with the main contractor was £16.5K. The work was recently completed (22 Sep 03) and the Parish anticipates paying the bill in October 2003.

3. Discretionary Grant Application. Following the deferral of the SWAG bid at the Jul 03 Northern Area Meeting it can be seen from the explanation given above that the timing of events have conspired against the Parish Councils ability to realise prior assurances given in September 2002 by District Council staff and a further submission for a SWAG grant which would not be realisable before February 2004.

The SWAG route for additional funding is therefore closed as bills have either been paid or are about to be paid. Following advice from Councillor John Noeken and the Clerk to Committee, Andy Buckwell, centring on the issue of procedure regarding retrospective grants it is believed to be appropriate in this case to request a discretionary grant to cover our funding shortfall. This avoids the retrospective issue and acknowledges the difficulties that the Parish Council has experienced in drawing together resources for our Amenity Area Project Plan. We therefore wish to request a discretionary grant of £4,000.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely

Leslie Wastie

[Signed on email 261412A SEP03]

Copy to:

Chair Parish Council

Parish Clerk