

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF SEDLESCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL TO THE PARISH ASSEMBLY 1979

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have pleasure in submitting to you a report of your Council's work over the past year and look forward to the opportunity of discussing items from this report which you may wish to raise at the Assembly.

- 1 Sedlescombe School. The Parish Council has continued its interest in the new school and the Council's representatives on the Board of Managers have been kept informed of its progress. It has been agreed that the school should be built allowing for the possibility of a community hall being added in, say, 15-20 years when the present village hall is reaching the end of its useful life. Adult toilets, some storage space and tea-making facilities will be included in the school and space will be allocated to a site for a swimming pool. The Parent-Teachers Association has already commenced fund-raising for the pool. Councillors had the opportunity of visiting a similar new school at Pebsham and were impressed with its design. In January, the Council saw plans for the landscaping of the grounds of the school with a variety of attractive trees and shrubs. Discussions have been held with the adult education department of Claverham Community College, who have certain advisory responsibilities for adult education and youth and community services in the catchment area, about possible uses for the old school. The Parish Council was unable to support the proposals for the old school's use that had been made by Claverham for several reasons, including the purchase and maintenance and running costs, especially as Sedlescombe has other buildings which could have community use - the Village Hall, the Scout Hut and, when built, the new school.
- 2 Lottery Proceeds. The District Council asked, in August, what amenities should be considered for a contribution from the proceeds of Rother's first 5 lotteries. The Parish Council replied asking the District Council to allocate small sums on a regular basis towards either the provision in the future of a bowling or putting green on the land near the tennis courts or towards the provision of a swimming pool at the new school. The District Council was unable to agree to this form of regular funding but would be willing to consider a donation at a later date when one of the projects is about to be put in hand. In January, the Parish Council passed to Rother a request from the Village Hall Management Committee for funds from the next distribution of profits towards materials for the interior redecoration of the Hall and towards the purchase of additional stacking chairs.
- 3 Car Park/Public Conveniences/Housing Site, Brode Lane. All residents have been informed of both the District and the Parish Councils' views on the proposed layout of the site by way of a questionnaire issued in January. The response to the questionnaire was good and resulted in a majority in favour of the Parish Council's views on each question. The District Council has been requested to reconsider the layout in the light of the results.
- 4 Petley Wood. Your Council has been involved in considering and commenting on the planning applications for a farmhouse, a caravan and an access road from Marley Lane arising from the use of the land as a deer farm. The Parish Council has pressed the District Council for action to preserve the wood and to enforce planning regulations where necessary. The Footpaths Committee of the Council has considered the alleged rights of way, the obstruction of the definitive footpath and a possible diversion and temporary diversion of the definitive footpath.
- 5 Revision of bus timetables. Your Council was unable to persuade the bus company that a late-night bus should be provided as late-night buses previously provided had not been used. However, in general, Sedlescombe benefitted from the changes in the timetable and now receives a bus service to and from Bexhill. Concessionary bus fare tickets continue to be available from the Clerk.
- 6 Bus Shelter, Hurst Lane. Unfortunately, this shelter was demolished in a road traffic accident in May and subsequently the Council obtained approval to move it a few yards into Hurst Lane where it would not be damaged if a car failed to negotiate the bend. However, very soon after the shelter had been rebuilt in its new position, a lorry reversed into it causing damage to the roof and making a further repair necessary.

- 7 Review of electoral arrangements, Rother District. The local inquiry to hear objections to the Boundary Commission's proposal for alterations to the electoral arrangements was, after an earlier postponement, held on 22nd November 1978. Representatives from the parish councils of Sedlescombe and Westfield had met on several occasions and had reached the following agreement: that only the part of the Kent Street Ward of the Parish of Westfield north of Irelands Farm should be included in the Sedlescombe /Whatlington District Ward and not all of the Kent Street Ward (which includes Moat Lane) as suggested by the Boundary Commission. Sedlescombe parish councillor Mr L Barter and I, together with Westfield parish councillor Mr J Cain, presented the agreed case at the Inquiry. The result of the Inquiry is awaited.
- 8 Best Kept Village Competition 1978. The Parish Council entered Sedlescombe for this competition after making a concerted effort to tidy up the village. The judges were favourably impressed and the markings were a considerable improvement on those gained on previous occasions. The Council's thanks are due to those organisations and individuals who helped in any way to achieve this result. The Council has agreed to enter the 1979 competition.
- 9 Speed Limit Order. At the Parish Council's request, approval has been obtained from the Department of the Environment for the extension of the speed limit order 110 metres to the south of the village. The Council would like to acknowledge the help given by Mr G Wheeler who produced the necessary data to persuade the County Council that this extension was necessary. The Council has discussed with the County Council various improvements to the road signs etc. which are to be made at the junction of Chapel Hill and the A229 to lessen the probability of accidents occurring there.
- 10 Fouling by Dogs. Complaints were received by the Council about the fouling by dogs of both pavements and play areas in the village. The Council cooperated with Rother in running a "Kerb your Dog" Campaign involving notices and leaflets. In addition, a fence was erected around the play equipment near the tennis courts. A "No Dogs" notice was put on the gate and it is hoped that dog owners will cooperate by not taking their dogs into this area where children play.
- 11 Street Sweeping. The Council made a request to Rother District Council for a street sweeper and litter picker and this service is now provided in a limited area on two afternoons a week. The Parish Council pays, in addition, for two local residents to keep the Green and bus shelters clean and tidy.
- 12 Churchyard. The Council considered raising its grant to the Parochial Church Council for the upkeep of the churchyard and agreed to increase the grant to £75 in 1979 with a review of the situation for 1980.
- 13 Abstraction of Water. The Council sent a letter of representation to Southern Water Authority about Eastbourne Waterworks Company's application to abstract water at the rate of 95 million gallons per annum, 35,000 gallons per day, 17,000 gallons an hour from the Vine Hall stream and the River Line. Southern Water Authority was able to give assurances that with certain safeguards, no adverse effects on existing water interests will result.
- 14 Village Hall. The Council as Custodian Trustee of the Village Hall maintained its interest in the Hall which has been ably run by the Village Hall Management Committee. Much of the £6,000 loan obtained from the Public Works Loan Board in 1977 for the extension and improvements to the Hall has still to be repaid.
- 15 Village Sign. The village sign had, unfortunately, to be returned to the sign-writer for touching-up of the paintwork. It is now back in position on the Green.
- 16 Silver Birch Trees. The silver birch trees near the tennis courts and the oak tree at the lower end of the Green received treatment from a local firm.
- 17 Two seats were repaired and decorated at Church/^{Hill} and at the lower playground.
- 18 'No Cycling' Byelaw. An attempt is being made to obtain a 'no cycling' byelaw to prohibit the riding of bicycles on the footpath from the A229 to the Waterfall Bridge (ie by the tennis courts and playground).
- 19 East View Terrace Playground. The Council agreed to prohibit ball games at the East View Terrace playground and arranged for a notice to this effect to be erected at the playground.

- 20 Safety at Children's Playgrounds. The Council considered a report on "The Need for Improved Safety in Children's Playgrounds" and how the playgrounds could be improved from the safety angle. A regular detailed inspection of all equipment, as well as the annual inspection carried out by the manufacturers of the equipment, will be made. Please report any faults you may find to the Clerk as soon as possible.
- 21 Gift to the Village. The Council gratefully approved a suggestion from Lady Keeling that she donate to the Village, in memory of her late husband Sir John Keeling, a triangular seat to be placed around the oak at the top end of the Green.
- 22 Planning Committee. The Planning Committee met to consider and comment on every planning application in the Parish of Sedlescombe and also the proposed gipsy site in the neighbouring parish of Brode. (Brief details of each planning application that arises may be seen on the Council's noticeboard outside the Post Office.)
- 23 Footpaths Committee. The Footpaths Committee has, in addition to its normal function of dealing with footpath problems, undertaken three other activities which are detailed below:
In the 16 months to January 1979, the Committee arranged 11 guided walks in which 114 different people have between them covered a distance of approx. 960 miles. In addition, 3 clearance parties have been organised; one party successfully cleared a quarter of a mile stretch of the ancient road to Battle which had previously been impassable.
Five different leaflets describing circular walks around Sedlescombe have been published and in all approximately 450 have been sold since last June.
The Countryside Commission recommended system of waymarking has been adopted and 192 yellow painted arrows and three white discs have been positioned at various locations indicating the route of footpaths. The Council is grateful for the cooperation it has received from the majority of local landowners with regard to the waymarking of paths across their land.
- 24 In addition, detailed reports have been studied and commented on and many other matters referred to the appropriate department of the District and County Councils for action.

To conclude, I believe I should mention the frustration felt by members of your Council in matters relating to Rother District Council and to a lesser degree County Council. From the many press reports you will appreciate these difficulties are in no way confined to Sedlescombe.

No doubt all this stems from the reform in 1974, although in the early days the working relationship with Rother was excellent. The decline has come over the last 18 months to 2 years. The apathy shown by the electorate in Rother and elsewhere cannot help in returning the best candidates (many district wards show a very low turnout for the polls although in Sedlescombe you turn out well on all occasions and once, at a bye-election, the Sedlescombe and Whatlington ward polled over 64%. Maybe the political parties who now seem to want to contest most seats should show more responsibility in selecting their candidates but equally this must apply to those of the electorate who feel they must follow the party line. There can be many reasons for the decline; to name a few one might include the payment of attendance allowances attracting the wrong candidates, the in-fighting between the parties or simply the in-fighting between the Bexhill town members and the country members.

What is, however, quite quite certain is that the electorate cannot continue to accept the present poor performance of Rother. Its members and officers have a responsibility to considerably improve its decision making and overall efficiency together with its image.

M. J. DRURY
March 1979.