

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT. I have pleasure in presenting to you my report on the work of the Parish Council over the past year. Please bring your questions on it or on any other aspect of village life to the Parish Assembly.

In November, the first of a series of newsletters was distributed throughout Sedlescombe containing news of the Council's activities since the elections in May when three new councillors joined the six who were re-elected for a further four-year term. The main subjects dealt with in the Newsletter were:

The proposed development in Brede Lane of car park, public conveniences, 6 aged persons' bungalows and doctors' surgery which has received outline planning approval. Rother District Council plans to construct the car park in 1984/5 with the public conveniences the following year.

VHF TV relay Station. The BBC's application for a 14m wooden pole and an equipment cubicle to be sited adjacent to Street Farm in Brede Lane has been approved. This will probably be erected in 1985 and should improve TV reception for many in and just outside the Parish.

Sportsfield. There has been a gratifying response to the Council's appeal for donations towards the purchase of the field following the Sports Council decision to refuse the Council's application for grant aid. The Council is hoping for completion of the purchase in June this year. Application has been made for planning approval for a car park at the eastern end of the field - parking will not be allowed on the Pestalozzi road.

At last year's Parish Assembly, residents raised various matters which have all been considered and passed, where necessary, onto the appropriate authority. The County Council, for example, took notice of complaints that there were problems turning right at night from the A229 opposite the Clockhouse Stores and added white paint to the edge of the kerb. Later in the year, this was extended and was also used to help traffic turning right from the A21 into Crazy Lane. The County Council would like to hear whether these methods have proved effective. Also whether the new road markings at the southern end of the Green have done anything to slow vehicles leaving the A21 and turning into the slip road.

The speed of vehicles using Brede Lane has again concerned the Parish Council and, in January, Police Inspector Hyde, who is responsible for traffic management in the area, attended the Open Forum and spoke fully on the reasons for the County Council's refusal to extend the 30mph speed limit as far as East View Terrace. Following the meeting, it was agreed 1) to renew the 30mph/direction sign near the Brickwall Hotel, 2) to move the "School" sign to the top of Gammons Hill, and 3) to paint "Slow" on the road surface on the approach to Gammons Way and the School.

Regarding traffic, particularly HGVs using Stream Lane, the County Council has undertaken two brief surveys of the lane. A fairly extensive survey of lorry movements in the area, including Stream Lane, is planned for the Spring.

Parish Councils are called upon to comment on items affecting a wider area than the immediate parish. You may have read of the proposed closure of the Pembury Radiotherapy Unit with a new unit being provided at Maidstone with up-to-date equipment. This caused protests throughout the district because of the increased distance but it was the Council's opinion that the time it takes to travel from Sedlescombe to Maidstone is roughly equal to the time to Pembury considering the less busy road to Maidstone. It therefore did not oppose the move.

The County Council held a series of public meetings and asked for comments on the proposed addition to the County Structure Plan of Policies for Oil and Gas Exploration in the County. The Parish Council made representation to the County Council asking for an amendment to the policy to include an "area of outstanding natural beauty" in the list of areas where there will be a presumption against development which would seriously damage the area. Sedlescombe is part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The District Council, is for the third time, attempting to complete its Review of Parishes within Rother which will be submitted to the Local Boundary Commission for England. In 1978, Sedlescombe Parish Councillors gave this matter much consideration, especially Sedlescombe's boundary with Westfield Parish. The two Parish Councils met on several occasions, consulted those who would be affected and put forward a joint presentation suggesting changes in the boundary to bring that part of the Kent Street Ward of Westfield north of Irelands Farm into

Sedlescombe Parish. Again in 1980, these changes were proposed. Very recently, the Council has reconsidered the matter and, in agreement with Westfield, will adhere to the previous proposals.

The Parish Council has been objecting to the removal of wooden guide posts and their replacement by modern "Worboy" signs bearing the word "BYWAY". This has occurred at the A21 end of Stream Lane (in Whatlington Parish) and at the A229 end of Hurst Lane. In both cases the old guide posts had not only directed vehicles to other villages, but had also shown the name of the lane. Their removal had been inconvenient for local people and visitors. In February, the Parish Council managed to get the District Council to place a street nameplate at the end of Hurst Lane. The Council has also had a meeting with the Divisional Highway Engineer in connection with alterations to the Hurst Lane junction with the A229. The Council hoped that the corner could be improved now that the electricity posts have been set further back onto the verge. At the time of writing, the Parish Council is awaiting details of the County Council's plans for improvement.

The Divisional Highway Engineer attended one of the Parish Council's Open Forums during the year and was able to answer many questions. A useful liaison has built up between the Parish Council and his office and questions, complaints or requests are dealt with sympathetically. The County Council has had to restrict its grass-cutting programme in recent years and found that it could not deal with extra areas of grass such as the piece adjoining Springfield Cottage in Brede Lane. The Parish Council has therefore taken on the job and I hope you will agree that to have the grass between the shrubs neat and tidy is a great improvement. The cost of grass cutting in Sedlescombe is high, almost £1000 this year.

In 1984, Sedlescombe returns to the small East Sussex Village Section of the Best Kept Village Competition, after Championship success in previous years, and hopes are high that with an all-out effort from the Village the coveted first place can be won. So far, the Flower Club and Sedlescombe Green WI have offered to provide and maintain hanging baskets around the Pumphouse and the Wives Group will keep the telephone kiosk at West View Terrace clean. Other offers of help to the Clerk. The Council makes regular inspections of the Village and tries to maintain its playground equipment, seats, litter bins etc in good order. The BKV judges notice dog-fouling problems and the Council would ask that visitors and residents are considerate and do not allow their pets to foul our footways, verges, recreations grounds, the sportsfield or the Village Green. In the early part of this year, Sedlescombe suffered from petty acts of vandalism which spoil the Village's general appearance and the necessary repairs are a waste of the Council's resources.

The Council is grateful for the excellent noticeboard which was expertly made in the workshop of the Pestalozzi Children's Village. Unfortunately, in one of January's gales, the rotted posts proved ineffective and consequently the board's backing was stained by the rain. Please look at the board as often as you can so that you can see not only details of events in this and neighbouring Villages, but also notice of Council Meetings and lists of planning applications relating to the Parish. The Council's Planning Committee meets regularly to consider every Sedlescombe application with a copy of the relevant plan.

The Council's Footpaths Committee has continued to maintain the Parish's footpaths. As in previous years, conducted walks have been held during the winter which not only show visitors and residents the route of the paths but also give Committee members the opportunity of inspecting stiles, waymarks etc. Revised copies of the Parish Council Footpath Walk leaflets are on sale in Robinsons price 5p each.

The other Council Committees - Home Defence, Finance, Sportsfield and Transport - have met as necessary. As mentioned in the Winter Newsletter, the Council has agreed on a programme of maintenance work in the Village in the 1984/5 financial year. Seats, the bus shelter, litter bins and the Pumphouse timbers will be given a coat of preservative and playground equipment and fences will be repaired and repainted as necessary. The Council is looking for an up-to-date, preferably electric typewriter with elite typeface to replace its small portable manual machine which has given good service for some years. Although the Council has had to increase the amount it will need to operate in 1984/5, I hope you will agree that the 2.3p Parish Rate represents excellent value for money.

Please come to the Assembly with your comments and questions.

D. GOODMAN

March 1984