

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO PARISH ASSEMBLY

The final year of this Council's term of office has been busy with monthly Council Meetings, frequent committee meetings and several informal meetings with other councils and bodies, including Rother Planning Officers, East Sussex County Council Traffic Officers and the Police, Orbit Housing Association and Croudace, and Pestalozzi.

I am pleased to be able to start my report with a success story. After many years of pressure, the **30mph speed limit in Brede Lane** is to be extended to just past East View Terrace. It will also cover Park Shaw, Gorselands and East View. Currently, the paperwork is being processed and the signs will be erected in due course.

Complaints about inconsiderate **parking in Brede Lane** are still being received. Again, double yellow lines were discussed with the County Council but no agreement could be reached on where they should go and therefore the matter was not taken any further. To encourage drivers to park in the unlit **car park** on winter nights, it has been arranged that the toilet lights are left on. Also at the car park, a footway will be constructed at the entrance for pedestrians walking to the School.

A resident is planning to carry out a **traffic survey** in the village this Spring in the hope that the County Council can be persuaded to do something about the increase, speed and weight of vehicles driving through the village. The Council for the Protection of Rural England has asked all Sussex Parish Councils for details of local problems.

The **safety of children using playgrounds** has been high on Sedlescombe's agenda. If introduced, statutory standards especially for safety surfacing would be very expensive for parish councils. Sedlescombe has borne this in mind and has set aside money in a Repairs and Renewals Fund which could be used for this purpose. During the redevelopment of East View, Sedlescombe is reduced to the playground by the river. In 1989/90, play equipment, fences and gates were vandalised. The 35-year-old roundabout was so badly damaged that it had to be removed. Following pleas from the Playgroup and with the welcome arrival of P.C. Richard Coates in the Village, the Council has this year repaired all the fences, the gate and the seat and has put up a new notice. Plans for the future include repairing and installing the rocking rockette, which had been at East View.

The new **play area at East View** is being provided by Orbit Housing Association. The Parish Council, who will take over care and maintenance once it is finished, has been consulted on its design. The equipment will be suitable for younger children only. A **legacy of £150** left by Miss Margaret Heap to the Council will be used to provide a seat at the playground. Councillors felt this was an appropriate use of the money because of Miss Heap's interest in children.

The newly-surfaced **tennis courts** have had a successful year with increased public use. This is in no small way due to the efforts of Maurice and Diane Durling of the Bridge Garage who have looked after the hiring of the courts for the Tennis Club. During the very hot weather some damage was caused to the courts by players using inappropriate footwear. After repair, the courts were closed on the very hottest days. Although the Tennis Club continues to have a very low membership, it has contributed £228 this year to the Tennis Courts Fund which is held by the Council.

## Chairman's Report continued

The Council has continued to press for a **dog regulation byelaw for the Sportsfield**. The Home Office refused to agree a dog ban because the field is not fenced and has a footpath through it but suggested instead a "poop-scoop" byelaw. However, the enormous problem of providing and collecting from the bins, daily in the summer, persuaded the Council to reject this suggestion. Now an application for a "dogs on leads" byelaw has been made to the Home Office. Consideration was given this year to piping **the Sportsfield ditch** which is difficult to maintain. However, at a cost of around £4000, it was decided not to proceed with the work. The Council did, however, carry out **tree planting and surgery** at the field during the winter.

Various discussions have been held with the Director and Bursar of **Pestalozzi**. The Council was asked for its comments on a proposal by the 1066 Car Club who wished to hold an annual **speed hill climb** event on the Pestalozzi road. The Council decided that it would not be against an event being held on one occasion so that the village's reactions could be gauged. However, Pestalozzi decided not to give the Car Club the go-ahead because of the risk of causing offence and inconvenience to the village.

In January, the subject for discussion was **Pestalozzi's plans for future development** in Sedlescombe. The Council has welcomed proposals for improvement of existing buildings to bring them to the standard that would be expected today in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and for limited expansion within defined areas. The Parish Council would like to see future planning permission restricted to Pestalozzi so that if, at any time, Pestalozzi was to move, all new buildings would have to be demolished. During the year, the Council has supported extension of the Tibetan House and the erection of one craft unit.

The Council is pleased that P C Richard Coates has been able to restart the **Neighbourhood Watch Scheme** in the Village and is grateful to Louise, his wife, who produces the useful Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter for co-ordinators. P C Coates will be at the Assembly to give a report.

Last May, a well-attended public meeting voted overwhelmingly for a **new village hall** with the land in front of the tennis courts being the favoured site. Since then, both the Council and the members of the Village Hall Management Committee have been working on the project. Progress is slow as, inevitably, problems have arisen. During the year, however, planning permission has been obtained for the demolition of the existing hall and erection of one dwelling on the site.

The long-awaited demolition of the pre-war part of **East View Terrace** and its replacement with 31 rented bungalows and houses, 16 shared ownership flats and houses and 19 houses for sale has become a reality. No doubt District Councillor Walker will report at the Assembly on this exciting scheme. The Parish Council has sympathy for those living at East View during the redevelopment, not only people who will eventually move into the new houses but also those in "new" East View who have had to put up with the noise and dust. However, one hears few complaints about the builders who appear to be doing an excellent job. The first people should be able to move into their new homes in the next few months. During the planning of the redevelopment, the Parish Council was asked whether **street lighting** should be included on the estate. A survey of all people at present living in the old part came out strongly against lighting and this view was forwarded to the County Council and the builders.

## Chairman's Report continued

Despite the downturn in the building industry, there has been no decline in the number of **planning applications** to consider, some of them quite controversial. On each occasion the Council's Planning Committee has met to consider the plans and has commented to Rother District Council, the planning authority. As it is impossible in a short report to go into details about the proposals, it is suggested that every resident should at some time in the week look at the village noticeboard where a brief description of each application is posted. The Council often finds that those who are affected by development do not put forward their comments or objections until it is too late, sometimes because they are unaware of the planning application at the time it is submitted.

Generally, the **public footpaths and bridleways** in Sedlescombe are in good order although as always there is room for improvement. This year has seen the clearance of two paths which have been seriously blocked for 3½ years, at Share Wood and near the Powdermill Reservoir where part of the path has also been diverted. Footpaths Committee members have continued to inspect the paths and where necessary problems have been reported to East Sussex County Council. The new Rights of Way Act 1990, which came into effect on 13/08/90, makes important changes to the law about cultivating any land that is crossed by a right of way. It is too early to judge how landowners will react but a duty on them to ensure that the line of a path through crops is apparent to anyone wishing to use it will be useful for walkers and riders. Footpath leaflets continue to be on sale and footpath walks have again been led by members during the winter.

This last year, each community chargepayer in the village paid **£4.06** towards **parish council expenses**. The Council believes this to be very good value for money. Major expenses have been maintenance of the Village Green including new railings around the lead pump which had been vandalised and replacement of one lead cherub which had been stolen. Mowing of the Green, the playground and land in Brede Lane is a regular annual expense. The Council's office equipment has been updated with the purchase of a word processor. A new litter bin and several liners have been purchased and thanks are due to Sedlescombe Scouts who applied wood preservative to seats and bins. I have already mentioned extensive repairs at the playground. Unfortunately, despite taking the case to the small claims court, the Council has had to write-off the cost of replacing the Sportsfield fence which was damaged in a road traffic accident in May 1988.

For 1991/2, the parish community charge has been increased to **£7.94**. The increase can be explained by taking into account the decrease in the number of chargepayers, inflation, the cost of parish council elections, painting of play equipment and funds set aside for advisory services.

Despite this longer than usual Chairman's Report, many matters considered by the Parish Council have had to be omitted. However, Mr Bell, Mr Walker and I shall be pleased to take your questions and comments at the Assembly on any matter affecting our village life. Please note that as well as P C Coates, the Divisional Highway Engineer for this area will also speak on the maintenance of our roads and pavements and will answer your questions.

*Sheila Bietts*

Chairman, Sedlescombe Parish Council  
March 1991