

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

1. INTRODUCTION.

I must first apologise for this rather lengthy report on my first year as Chairman of your Council, but as you will note it has been a very busy one for all members of the Council, and it has been a great privilege to me to act as its Chairman. It would be unfair of me to single out individual Councillors for praise, since all have given a great deal of time and effort in ensuring the full and careful consideration of the many matters coming before the Council. It is, also, not always appreciated how much work is done by several Councillors, beyond their usual Council duties, and as a result many tasks have been carried out at little or no cost to the Parish. Also the Parish owes much to many non-Council members who have given their services to the needs of the Parish.

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW.

A considerable amount of your Council's time has been spent studying the extensive documentation on this matter, attending meetings with other villages and authorities, and responding to requests for views from District & County Councils. A special Committee comprising three Councillors and three parishioners was established, following which a public meeting was held on the 23rd. March when Mr. Julian Davies, County Treasurer gave a review of the objects of the Review and highlighted some of the major questions to be considered when responding to the Local Government Review Commission. I hope that you will all complete and return the enclosed questionnaire, and a report and discussion on this subject will be held at the Annual Assembly.

3. PLAYGROUNDS.

EAST VIEW TERRACE PLAYGROUND.

There has been further damage to the safety surfacing, fence & gate year. The Parish Council repaired the surfacing and the Orbit Housing Association have installed a new and stronger fence. Bye Laws relating to this playground have been made and displayed on site.

GRASS PLAY AREA.

Following the request at last years Assembly, an area of Mr. Keeling's woodland adjacent to East View Terrace was cleared. I am delighted that with the formation of an East View Residents Association it is hoped that funds can be raised to allow the land to be acquired from Mr. Keeling, fencing provided etc. and the necessary procedures for supervision and maintenance of this area established.

RIVERSIDE PLAYGROUND.

Following an accident on the slide, and a regular inspection as required by our insurers, it was clear that it would not be possible to retain the slide and rocking horse and that new equipment would have to be purchased. The opportunity was therefore taken to close the playground in Autumn of last year, and a sub-committee of Council members and parishioners set up to plan and arrange for the construction of a new playground more suited to the needs. I am pleased to be able to advise that orders should be placed for the new equipment very shortly and it is hoped that the new playground will be open this Summer. I should like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have helped, and particularly all those children from the school who submitted ideas and suggestions for the design, which were very helpful to the Sub-Committee.

4. BYE LAWS.

During the year Dog Bye Laws were made and displayed at both Playgrounds and special Bye Laws relating to the East View Terrace Playground also made and displayed.

5. VILLAGE POST OFFICES.

Following moves to encourage Pensioners to use automatic transfer facilities rather than the local Post Office for collecting their pensions, this was considered by many to threaten the existence of Village Post Offices. Your Council decided to write to our MP, Charles Wardle, expressing their concern. I am pleased to say that in reply Mr. Wardle advised that there was no intention of getting rid of Village Post Offices.

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6. VILLAGE HALL

The Village Hall Management Committee have continued their efforts to finalise the selection of a site and design, and are currently negotiating to acquire a site beside the Car Park which could prove to be a suitable location.

7. SCHOOL BUS

Following the tragic accident to a school bus in the Midlands, the Governors of the School decided to fit diagonal safety belts to the school bus, but as this was expected to cost in excess of £750, your Council considered that the Parish should assist in funding up to one third of this amount.

8. VILLAGE GREEN NOTICEBOARD.

Plans for the construction of a new and larger notice board, have been delayed pending agreement from Whitbread Breweries, on the acquisition of a larger area adjoining the existing board. It is hoped to provide a considerably board large enough to cater for the many Parish and Public Notices now being received, but in addition to provide a protected area in front of the board to allow people to inspect and place notices on the board without danger from cars.

9. CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS.

To celebrate 100 years of your Parish Council the following activities have been planned.

LOGO COMPETITION. Following the the Village Assembly we will be announcing the awards of the prizes for this Competition.

OLD & NEW MOTOR SHOW. Thanks to the tireless efforts of John Giles and his colleagues there is every indication that the Vintage Car Rally on the 9th. July should be a great success and I hope that you will all support this function.

CENTENARY WALKS. Our tireless Clerk, Pauline Raymond & her husband Colin have spent many hours planning the Centenary Walks, which will traverse all the footpaths in the Parish and again I would ask you to support this event, even if you only manage one section of the two day function on the 30th April & 1st May.

EXHIBITION. Pauline Raymond has also spent many hours, in fact days, searching out interesting facts, artifacts and information of the past 100 years of Sedlescombe Parish, and with the help of many others it is hoped to provide a fascinating exhibition in the Village Hall on the 28th, 29th, and 30th. July with a smaller version on display at the Fete on the 30th. One of the displays will be by the East Sussex Woodland Forum, illustrating the extensive Tree Survey carried out by our Tree Warden, Pat Martin.

FETE. The Fete Committee of the Sedlescombe Societies Association have agreed to have as this years theme, the Parish Council Centenary and as indicated above there will be a selected display of exhibits from the Parish Council Exhibition at the Fete.

10. COMPETITIONS.

BEST KEPT VILLAGE. Following changes in the method of assessment being used for this Competition, your Council considered that it was not worthwhile entering the contest in 1993.

SOUTH EAST IN BLOOM. Regrettably despite efforts to find someone to organise an entry last year, we were unsuccessful, however it is encouraging that the Garden Society have decided to take on the responsibility for organising this years entry. The Parish Council has agreed to provide hanging baskets for the Pump House and to pay the entry fees for the Competition. The members of the Society will, however, take on the responsibility for planting and maintaining the baskets for which we wish to express our thanks.

11. SPORTSFIELD.

Contracts were let during the year for the renewal and repair of fencing, clearing and regrading of the drainage and it is expected that by the time you read this, this work will have been completed.

12. VILLAGE SHOP.

I think that I express the views of all, when I say how sad we were that the owners of the Clockhouse Store were forced to close. Without good stores in the village an important aspect of village life is lost, and we hope that the shop

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(in some form or other) will soon be reopened and will receive the full support of the village.

13. PLANNING.

The Planning Committee have been kept busy this year with a large number of planning applications but as many of you will be aware one in particular has taken up a disproportionate amount of time. I refer of course to the question of renewal of the permission to use part of Spilsted Farm as a airstrip. Your Council lodged a strong objection to this and thanks to the efforts of the group or villagers, a very determined and well supported objection was raised against this application. As a result the application was withdrawn. I would, however, remind you that at present flying is carrying on under what is known as the 28 day rule, and it is important that anyone seeing planes taking off should record the time and date and send this information to Rother District Council. Here again I should like to thank Mrs. Valerie Wright for producing a form for this purpose and would suggest that anyone interested should contact Mrs Wright on 870220.

14. FINANCE.

Copies of the Draft Accounts are attached and your council will be pleased to answer any questions that you may have at the Assembly.

In anticipation of the need to upgrade the playground equipment, provide a new photocopier, other office equipment, the expenses associated with the Centenary Celebrations, and the new and larger Noticeboard, the Council have built up a reserve to fund part of this cost, but although applications have been made for grants from Rother and other organisations, the annual precept had to be increased to ensure that funds would be available to meet these costs

15. ROAD WORKS.

You will all have experienced the frustrations caused by the road works on the A21, which should have been completed in January. We have been advised that "with luck" the work should be completed by the end of this April!!!

The closure of CRAZY LANE is yet another of the road problems being encountered by us all, and I would suggest that rather than complain only to the Parish Council, all those concerned should write to the District Authority, the County Council and our MP. in an effort to obtain a major improvement to the roads in this area, and to hasten the construction of suitable East/West links to the A27. The Council have continued to examine techniques of TRAFFIC CALMING in an effort to meet the wishes of parishioners that traffic through the village should be controlled. Unfortunately most techniques available, will only be considered by the highway authorities where street lighting is provided. In the past this has been opposed by the majority of the villagers, but your Council will continue to examine all feasible schemes to achieve improvements. Certainly the downgrading to a 'B' road of the main road through the village, has provided some alleviation of the problems.

Your Council also arranged for an "Elderly Pedestrians" warning signs to be installed adjacent to Roselands.

An application has been made for the extension of the 30 MPH speed limit along Chapel Hill, and we understand that this is being studied.

16. PARISH CONSTABLES.

Following the publication by the Home Office of proposals for Parish Constables or Wardens, your Council advised the Minister that rather than provide either of these, we considered that additional funding for village policing should be provided and that the existing Special Constable scheme should be expanded.

17. FOOTPATHS.

A successful series of monthly walks were organised by the Footpaths Committee this year and also, thanks to the efforts of it's members, work has been carried out on the maintenance of several of the paths. A revised edition of the 'Walks around Sedlescombe' booklet is being produced.

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18. WHAT'S WHAT.

A new edition of this publication was produced by our Clerk this year and distributed to new residents in the village, and also placed on sale in the Post Office. We would appreciate receiving details of any other new residents so that a copy may be provided to them. Arrangements have been made for the free production and distribution to every household of an illustrated CENTENARY PARISH GUIDE by July. This will also contain short notes on the work of many of the Sedlescombe Societies.

19. Youth Club.

It is with sadness that I have to advise that, despite the efforts of Mr. & Mrs. Cameron and P.C. Patrick Fisher, the Youth Club has been forced to close. A flourishing Youth Club can be of great value to village community and it is to be hoped that in due course a way can be found to revive this activity.

20. WHAT OF THE FUTURE?.

Probably the most important development will be any changes that may arise from the Local Government Review.

In June, every household should receive a copy of the Local Government Review Commission's preliminary recommendations. Everyone will be invited to comment on these and I would ask that you do so, both direct to the Commission, but also let the Parish Council know your views so that we may ensure that our response represents those of the village.

During the past two years, both District and County Councils have noticeably improved the consultation with and provision of information to Parish Councils, largely in response to the threat of changes to local government structure. Although this has resulted in never ending piles of documents to be studied by your Council and the Parish Clerk, the improvement is to be welcomed. It is also hoped that this closer cooperation will continue whatever form of local government structure is finally adopted.

It is interesting to note that irrespective of the outcome, many villages and villagers are now more aware of the importance of examining, questioning and commenting on the decisions made by all levels of government.