



1995 REPORT

April 1995

Chairman

Although it gives me great pleasure to be Chairman of the Parish Council again, I am sorry that the reason is the illness of Derek Davis. Best wishes are extended to him for a speedy recovery. Parish Councillor John Giles has also been in hospital this year but I am glad to say he has now taken up his Council duties again.

Review of Local Government

The Parish Council's final view on the reform of local government was to press for no change at all. Detailed consideration of the Review was undertaken with the help of 3 local residents co-opted to a Parish Council committee. Thank you to them for their valuable assistance. After 20 years, the current system appears to have settled down and during the last couple of years there have been definite moves to improve relationships between the parishes and the District and County Councils. Devolvement to Parish Councils of some of the functions of the other authorities is currently being actively considered. This will inevitably involve an increase in the workload for the already stretched smaller parish councils but greater involvement has been welcomed generally.

Centenary

The 1994 centenary celebrations of the Parish Council were successfully completed in December with a dinner at the Brickwall Hotel for past and present councillors (paid for by those attending). Celebratory events were varied - a Parish Walks weekend at Spring Bank Holiday - an Old & New Motor Show - and an Exhibition depicting Sedlescombe's last hundred years. The Societies Association also took up the theme for their carnival procession. A £600 Rural Action Grant almost covered the cost of

staging the Exhibition. A grant of £30 was given by the District Council for a commemorative tree (now planted at the Riverside Playground).

The production of the Sedlescombe Parish Map, the booklet "A Century of Village Life" and the wonderful model of the Village Green by Sedlescombe Seniors added interest. The winning logo in the Logo Competition by Barbara Hanson of Catsfield has been adopted by the Parish Council and is now being used on headed paper.

Prints of the Parish Map and copies of the booklet are still available. The Parish Clerk was responsible for the booklet and put in a great many hours of research towards the Exhibition for which the Parish Council is most grateful.

Noticeboard

The Council has always believed that it is important to keep residents informed. However, this was becoming increasingly difficult with the small Council noticeboard near the post office. In addition, reading it could be a real hazard being so near the traffic. Negotiations with the Whitbread Brewery and Mr John Cook of the Queen's Head have resulted in the Parish Council providing a new larger board tucked away behind the Queen's Head garden wall. Please have a look at it regularly. The Clerk endeavours to post up notice of all items of importance as well as notice of events as provided by local societies.

Playgrounds

Children's playgrounds are not what they used to be. Forty years ago, when Sedlescombe's first play equipment was installed on land next to the garage, safety surfacing was not even heard of. Today, the danger of children's playgrounds has been drawn to our attention as well as the possibility of a wider range of equipment. It has been the Council's intention for some years to replace the

equipment at the Riverside Playground and money had been put aside for the purpose. Last spring, a small committee of councillors and a co-opted mother, drew up a plan for a new playground to cater for a wide range of age groups and this has now been built. Time is needed for it to properly settle down after such a wet winter but it is hoped that children will enjoy it for many years to come. The whole area has been fenced to exclude dogs in accordance with the No Dogs byelaw and rubber safety tiles have been included under the swings and rocking rockette as well as under the toddler equipment. A small picnic table/seats has been included for mothers to comfortably keep an eye on the children. A community grant of £5000 was received from Rother District Council and a grant of £500 from the Sussex County Playing Fields Association.

At East View Terrace, the Residents Association has been involved in negotiations to transfer the ownership of a small piece of land to the Parish Council and to fence it off as a kickabout play area. The Parish Council has applied for and obtained planning permission for change of use and now awaits information from the Residents Association before proceeding.

Youth Club

The Parish Council has also tried this year to help the teenagers by paying for the rent of the Village Hall for six months at the time of the reformation of the Club. Running a youth club is not easy and the Council is appreciative of the work undertaken voluntarily by the leaders.

Sports

Although the management of the Sportsfield is undertaken by the Sedlescombe Sports Association, the Parish Council remains responsible for some maintenance including the ditch. It is an ongoing problem to keep the

ditch flowing and clearance is needed very regularly. In 1994, the Council arranged for a contractor to machine clear the ditch back to the river. This year more smallscale regular clearance of the ditch is planned and the success of this will be monitored.

Discussions with the Tennis Club have taken place this year in preparation for the renewal of the Parish Council/Tennis Club licence of the tennis courts. The courts themselves appear still to be in good condition 5 years after the last resurfacing and money is being held in reserve for the next resurfacing planned in about the year 2000.

Churchyard

An application has been made for planning permission to extend the churchyard with additional gravespace. Although this is a Parochial Church Council matter, the Parish Council has been supportive and has paid the legal costs so far incurred in acquisition of the land. Further legal costs are expected and the Council has made provision for spending another £650 for this purpose.

Village Hall

Please see the separate sheet regarding the Village Hall and note that the Hall is included on the Assembly agenda to allow adequate time for discussion.

Administration

The purchase of a new photocopier by the Council has enabled much improved copies to be produced more cheaply.

Footpaths

The copier was used to produce the new footpath leaflets at a very reasonable cost. Produced on single sheets in a plastic wallet, they describe 7 walks in the parish and remain on sale at the Post Office for 50p each. The old leaflets were always popular with visitors and residents alike and we hope the improved versions will be as well. It is likely that the publication of the leaflets has increased the use of our public rights of way. The winter series of guided footpath walks has continued this year and the walks have been attended by larger

numbers than in previous years, despite the inclement weather.

Representation

One useful role of a parish council is the ability to make representations to other local authorities and similar bodies on behalf of its parishioners. This year, the Council has contacted, amongst others, the National Rivers Authority about brown froth in the River Line, the County Council about the speed of vehicles in Chapel Hill, the need for footways in various places and for traffic calming measures in the Village, the Forestry Commission and Senlac Bowmen about archery in Brassetts Wood near the public footpath, and Southern Water Authority about problems with sewage at the south of the Village.

Consultation

Another, not inconsiderable, task of a parish council is to comment on consultation documents. This year the subjects covered by these documents have included boot fairs, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the County Structure Plan and the East Sussex Waste Strategy.

Currently, the Council is considering the Rother Draft Local Plan in great detail. The policies when adopted in the Local Plan will influence the planning authority in its decisions concerning development in the Rother District. One of the proposals is for the centre part of Sedlescombe to become a "conservation area". This has been supported by the Parish Council.

All members of the Parish Council are also representatives of the Council on other village committees or other bodies.

Planning

It is now the policy of the Parish Council for one councillor if possible to meet the applicant to inspect the site of each planning application. The Council's Planning Committee can then give the matter proper consideration with that councillor's advice.

Although the number of planning applications that the Parish Council has had to comment on this year is lower than in previous years, some

have caused considerable interest in the Village.

The application to use farmland at Spilstead Farm as a private unlicensed airstrip was refused by Rother District Council. As flying continued, the Council took enforcement action and an appeal to the Secretary of State for the Environment by the applicant followed. A public inquiry is expected to be held. The application at the same address for an underground fuel storage tank was also refused by Rother but has recently been allowed on appeal by the Department of the Environment.

The erection of a detached house and garage in the garden of Four Winds, Balcombe Green has aroused interest, particularly because of the loss of an established garden. The site has had outline planning approval for many years and the new owner has decided to implement the permission.

Plans are in the pipeline for a swimming pool development to the rear of the Brickwall Hotel. An application was submitted in December for the reconstruction and enclosure of the existing outdoor pool and the provision of ancillary facilities. There was some opposition from neighbours and the owner has therefore decided to rethink his plans. A revised application will be submitted.

1995/6 budget

The new financial year brings a series of small jobs that the Council has decided to put together and let out to one handyman who will also be responsible for litter collection at the playgrounds, bus shelter and Village Green. The Junior Football Club and the Youth Club would like to see a hard playing area constructed next to the tennis courts and the Council is looking into this suggestion.

The future

In May the Council will start a new four-year term, with a number of new councillors joining at a time when the profile of parish councils is higher than for many years. Three of your present councillors have stood down - Mr Barter, Mr Blanford and Mr Davis. Sincere thanks are due to them for the time and effort they have put in during the years as your councillors.

April 1995

Sheila M. Betts

NEW VILLAGE HALL - SEDLESCOMBE

1 Almost five years ago, on May 1st 1990, an open meeting was held in the Village Hall at which a proposal that Sedlescombe should have a new village hall was adopted by a very large majority.

2 Since then four sites for a new hall have been considered and rejected as described below, and a fifth is a possibility which the Hall Management Committee is at present investigating.

Sportsfield

3 This location has been considered on a number of occasions but it has never progressed even as far as an application for outline planning approval because

- (a) Rother District was not keen to allow such a development outside the village 'envelope,
- (b) it is a long way from the centre of the village,
- (c) the single carriageway entrance is at a rather dangerous road junction, and
- (d) the site is very open to vandalism.

Car Park

4 This alternative envisaged a hall in the south-west corner of the car park. Application for outline planning permission was made but, although the site had the advantages of an existing car park and ready made on-the-spot services, due to objections from local residents and because it would incur an unacceptable reduction in car parking places, it was not supported by the District Council and was subsequently withdrawn.

Recreation Ground

5 Alternatively known as the Tennis Courts Site, this had the advantage of already being owned by the village though, as the water table was high and there was no car park, construction costs would be much greater. However, Rother District gave outline planning permission subject to the provision of double carriageway access but, as the owners of the land on both sides of the present single carriageway entrance did not appear to be willing to sell their property, this site was not feasible.

Queen's Head

6 There is a site at the bottom end of the field that lies behind and belongs to the Queen's Head Inn that is ideal for a village hall. It has direct access to the car park, services available on the spot, is in the centre of the village, and would accommodate a hall unobtrusive to surrounding property.

7 Several attempts have been made to persuade Whitbreads, the owners, to part with this plot but, although the Chairman of Whitbreads has even been approached by our M.P. on our behalf, they are adamant that they will neither sell nor lease the land to anybody.

Existing Village Hall Site

8 The Management Committee is presently considering using the existing site, augmented by the purchase of a plot of land behind the present site. This might enable a new hall to be built while the old one remained available for continued use.

9 Application has been made to Rother District for outline planning permission for a building on such a site, and this is now being considered by the local authorities concerned.

D.H.

9 April 1995