

My report concentrates on village matters and is, as always, necessarily brief. Please bring your questions on any subject affecting the life of our village to the Assembly in the Village Hall on Tuesday 24 April starting at 7.30pm. Alternatively, you will be welcome at the Open Forum held prior to each Council meeting.

This past year the whole village was saddened to hear of the deaths of much-respected long-time residents. Mary Rawles who organised the Meals on Wheels scheme and Beryl Lucey whose book "Twenty Centuries in Sedlescombe" is, and will remain, the definitive account of Sedlescombe's history. David Woodman, despite leading a very busy life running Luff's Farm and a successful milk delivery business, always found time to be actively involved with village affairs. He joined the Parish Council in 1974 and was its Chairman between 1979 and 1986. The Parish Council has made a donation towards the purchase of a memorial seat at the School and intends to place another at the Sportsfield.

We welcome Ralph Dellow to the Parish Council following the resignation of Mike O'Dowd.

Village hall

The Council is very pleased that, at last, the new hall is a reality and should be open in August. For the past 11 years, we have been trying to find a suitable site and, although it is difficult to pick out anyone for special mention, several people have been particularly heavily involved in the search. Many thanks to David Hollis, David Blanford, Jock Robertson and of course Ted Cornford and Ron Sunderland for all they have done and, in Ted and Ron's case, are continuing to do. In the background, other members of the Village Hall Management Committee have made their own important contributions.

Regarding the old hall, the Council would like to thank Ken Stubberfield who has, for so many years, dealt with bookings and acted as caretaker so admirably.

Plans are in hand for the old hall to be sold, hopefully with planning permission for a detached dwelling.

Red Barn Field

The Council is planning to retain the part of Red Barn Field not needed for the hall as a valuable amenity for the Village. A path will be built to give pedestrian access from Balcombe Green to the hall and, with the help of the Rye Bay Countryside Office, a High Weald Initiative grant has been promised to pay for two kissing gates, a picnic table, bench and interpretative board.

Tennis courts

The Council is grateful to Mr and Mrs Mainwood and their staff in the shop for taking charge of the public key. This no doubt contributed to the increased income from the public hire

of the tennis courts last season. The refurbished courts also attracted increased use for coaching and membership of the Tennis Club.

This year, the Council has been horrified to see how much damage has been caused to the tennis pavilion by vandals. Eventually, after repeated repairs, it was decided that the best option was to remove the pavilion altogether before someone was injured and this has now been done. Thank you to those councillors who gave up their Saturday morning to help.

On a more positive note, the Council is arranging a tennis taster fun morning for children and adults. It will be held at Sedlescombe courts on Sunday 6 May and you are all invited to participate. 10-10.45am primary school children; 11-11.45am secondary school children and 12-1pm adults. Come along and find out how much fun it can be to play tennis and get fit at the same time. The Council is grateful for a grant from Rother District Council that will pay for this event.

Sportsfield

The replacement of the aged sports pavilion is now top priority for all the sports teams and the Council is ready to give every assistance. During the year, the Sports Association has been trying to match the size and type of pavilion they would like to what can be afforded and this has led to several changes of direction. With the loss of the tennis pavilion, the construction of a new pavilion at the Sportsfield is even more important.

Youth

Inevitably, the acts of vandalism perpetrated by the few give all youngsters a bad name. The Council is eager to help the majority who do not ever consider damaging other people's property and this year it has been trying to find ways of improving youth facilities in Sedlescombe.

A meeting was arranged in May for the children and young people to tell the Council what could be done. The overwhelming desire of those present was for the Youth Club to be reformed and we can report that, within a few months, many problems had been overcome and the Club restarted. The Council is grateful to the adults who volunteered to run the Club because, without them, it could not continue. More helpers are needed as there are many exciting ideas in the pipeline.

The youngsters also wanted improved facilities at the East View Terrace Kickabout Area and, currently, funding is being sought for a project expected to cost in the region of £19,000 that should result in an area that can be used throughout the year by both girls and boys for a wide range of sporting activities.

Rural Tourism Initiative

The idea of being one of the pilot parishes in the initial East Sussex Rural Tourism Initiative received a mixed response from parish councillors. However, in common with other parts of the High Weald, many people already holiday here but often do not explore the area in the immediate vicinity of Sedlescombe. It was therefore decided that the provision of low key village improvements that could be of mutual

benefit to visitors and residents alike should be considered.

From the successful workshop well attended by private residents, local businesspeople and parish councillors, several small projects that could easily be undertaken with the help of a little funding have been identified. They include new leaflets, signposting of a footpath link with the 1066 Country Walk and an information board. Sedlescombe is now looking forward to seeing some of these implemented in the near future.

Waiting for the new leaflets to be designed and printed has held up the distribution of the Welcome packs for new residents. We do, nonetheless, welcome you to Sedlescombe if you have recently moved in and hope you will feel able to join some of the organisations in the Village.

Grass cutting

For the first time last summer, the Council took over cutting the grass verges within the Village from the County Council. This means that the Parish Council is now responsible for cutting all the public grass in the Village. This has been very successful and the Council acknowledges the excellent job done by Southern Counties Landscapes.

Hedge cutting

Another task that the Parish Council is doing for the County Council is sending out letters to landowners who allow their hedges to grow over footways or roads. Please try to check your hedges and arrange for them to be cut to save the Parish Council sending a letter.

Trees

The removal of the red oak from the bottom of the Village Green was undertaken at short notice because of concern for public safety following an inspection that noted an attack of fungus.

Small jobs

The ability to call on someone to mend a fence or repair the bus shelter and other similar jobs is important to the Parish Council. We would like to thank John Cook very much for all his excellent work in Sedlescombe over

the last few years. We are fortunate to have his namesake willing to take over this important task, for which we are grateful.

Pestalozzi road

Arrangements have been made for the entrance to the Sportsfield car park to be resurfaced.

The Pestalozzi Village has been considering improvements to the entrance to the Pestalozzi road.

Waste Local Plan

The Council opposed the proposal in the Draft Waste Local Plan to opt for an Energy from Waste plant to be built at Mountfield. The reasons for opposing this proposal were Mountfield's position within a quiet rural area in the High Weald AONB, problems that would be caused transporting the rubbish to the site and storing it before processing and the existence of a suitable alternative site outside the AONB at Pebsham.

Industrial development in Marley Lane

Two out of the three major industrial sites in Marley Lane are in the parish of Sedlescombe. In the past, the Parish Council supported the development at Bowlings Corner, now held up on a technical point. However, it continues to oppose major development of the Blackman, Pavie & Ladden site.

Water

The unusually high rainfall since last autumn has, of course, caused new problems to arise in the Village. The Parish Council has been doing what it can to get some of the problems solved and East Sussex County Council is planning to carry out substantial drainage work in The Street and Brede Lane.

Parking

Complaints have again been received that inconsiderate parking is causing problems in the Village. The two places of most concern seem to be outside the Doctors' surgery and at the junction of the B2244 and Balcombe Green.

Dog fouling

Another regular complaint that the Council receives is regarding dog fouling. The most recent concerns the public footpath between Park Shaw and Balcombe Green where it is not only mud that has to be contended with. Please clear up after your dog wherever it fouls. There are now three dog waste bins in the Village for disposal.

Finance

There is no doubt that there are plenty of funding opportunities "out there". Applying for grants is a time-consuming exercise but with perseverance several have been awarded this year and, hopefully, more will be obtained in the coming year.

Because the Parish Council is currently involved in several large projects and finance is not available for them all at once, a five-year plan has been drawn up to spread the cost. This will be reviewed each year and new jobs added to the list as they arise.

Joanna Hinde

It is not often that we can celebrate the national and international success of a local athlete. The Council is therefore particularly pleased to be able to congratulate Joanna Hinde on recent successes and to wish her good luck in the future. A collection pot has been placed in the Post Office for any donations you wish to make and collected money will be added to a cheque to be presented by the Council.

Chair, Sedlescombe Parish Council