

**Minutes of a Meeting of Sidmouth Town Council's  
Tourism and Economy Committee  
on Monday 14 September 2020 at 6.30 pm**

(Due to the current COVID-19 situation, the Tourism and Economy Committee met virtually  
as authorised by the Regulations set out in Clause 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020.)

Councillors present: Ian Barlow  
Denise Bickley  
Louise Cole  
Charissa Evans  
Deirdre Hounsom  
Stuart Hughes  
Chris Lockyear  
Marianne Rixson

Invited Reps: Chamber of Commerce – David Cook and Sally Mynard  
SW Tourism Alliance – Alistair Handyside (left partway through)  
TIC Manager – Jeff Bailey

Apologies: Tina Veater of Ignyte Ltd

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.15pm

## **PART 'A'**

### **50 Minutes**

The Minutes of the Tourism & Economy Committee meeting held on Monday 9 March 2020 were approved as a true and accurate record.

### **51 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received for items on this agenda.

### **52 Tourism & Promotion Strategy TaFF**

Councillor Cole, Chair of the Tourism & Promotion Strategy TaFF gave a brief update report of the work carried out by the group so far; the Visit Sidmouth had now been launched publicly, shoulder season videos were being created for the Autumn which would be followed by marketing Sidmouth for Christmas.

- a) Future marketing campaigns – the TaFF were preparing plans for 2021
- b) TIC review subgroup – Councillor Deidre Hounsom gave a presentation of the work carried out so far with regard to the TIC review. She would be contacting Councillors to take part in the working group which would hold 3 meetings over the Autumn period.
- c) Covid Recovery meetings with hospitality sector leaders – these had been very successful and would continue on a quarterly basis to be held shortly before the Tourism & Economy committee meetings.
- d) TaFF Final Report – after the completion of the TIC Review the intention was to create a Tourism & Promotion Advisory Group which would specifically work on Tourism Promotion and positioning Sidmouth in the Tourism marketplace.

**RESOLVED:** That the Tourism & Promotion Strategy TaFF reports be noted.

### **53 Information Centre Manager's Report & Financial Report**

- a) Jeff Bailey, Information Centre Manager, reported that access to the pool and therefore the Information Centre had been achieved on Monday 27 July 2020. The centre had been open

since then with one member of staff for each session, however, unfortunately not many members of the public were visiting the TIC. Members commented that the altered entrance with new restrictions to the LED swimming pool building was not very welcoming and additional signage should be considered.

b) Jeff Bailey, Information Centre Manager, presented the Sidmouth Information Centre Finance Report for July 2020.

**RESOLVED:** That the Sidmouth Information Centre Reports be noted.

**54 Tourism & Promotion Contract Update**

In the absence of Tina Veater of Ignyte, Councillor Cole gave a short update of the progress of the Tourism & Promotion contract between Sidmouth Town Council and Ignyte Ltd.

**RESOLVED:** That the Tourism & Promotion contract update report be noted.

**55 Tourism & Promotion Budget update**

Councillor Cole reported that of the £46,500 budget £43,986 had been either spent or committed for spend by the end of the year; this left a figure of £2,514 which would be held for contingencies/projects arising before the end of this financial year.

Councillor Cole had also been working on the 2021/22 budget and reported that it was proposed to budget £50,000 which would include the ongoing contract with Ignyte, Social Media advertising, video production, a Visit Sidmouth product range, development of the TIC/Interpretation centre, an August Summer Festival event and a summer season visitor survey.

**RESOLVED:** That the Tourism & Promotion budget update report be noted and agreed.

**56 Open Streets Café Culture – Creating the best condition for 2021-21**

Members discussed the possible extension of the Active Travel social Distancing Covid secure traffic measures and the County council's 'Open Streets Café Culture' scheme.

David Cook was thanked for his report and feedback gained from businesses on the current temporary traffic management system written and presented on behalf of the Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce. He indicated that Sidmouth's scheme had been far more successful than other towns resulting in a much busier 'high street' as it allowed a sensible mix of safe pedestrian areas but still allowed traffic to flow through the town. The Chamber of Commerce and Town Council were largely in agreement with regard to the ongoing street closures to enable safe socially distanced shopping, although there were still concerns from many shop keepers with regard to receiving deliveries. Councillors agreed that the feedback from residents had been positive and that reduced traffic had largely created a safer environment. They expressed a wish to examine more permanent arrangements in the future which could go further to reduce traffic.

Councillor Hughes suggested that there may be government funding available for this project. It was agreed that an extension of the scheme would enable further surveying of public opinion including customers, residents and visitors and not just the businesses themselves. Members also discussed the possibility of a more permanent scheme which could be introduced in 2021.

**RESOLVED:** That:

**1)** the Town Council would request Devon County Council to extend the existing scheme into the new year and that discussions be held on a more permanent arrangement to be drawn up for the 2021 summer season.

2) during the extended period, information be gathered from residents, visitors, customers and businesses on the temporary arrangements to help inform and devise a possible future permanent scheme.

**57 Sidmouth Regatta/August Summer Fair Week 2021**

Councillor Cole reported that the former longstanding regatta committee had resigned and had tried to encourage others to take over but with no positive response to date.

It was suggested that a weeklong series of events could take place in the week leading up to the Airshow with Red Arrows and seasonal Regatta, making an August Summer Festival. An overall organiser/coordinator would be needed but it was hoped that the event would involve as many Sidmouth clubs and organisations as possible to showcase their groups. Such an event could place an emphasis on Sidmouth's role as a Fairtrade town and Plastic Free town.

**RESOLVED:** That discussions would continue with a view to creating a Summer 'Regatta Week' of events in 2021.

**58 Matters Raised by Invited Representatives**

Unfortunately, Alistair Handyside's zoom connection was unreliable and he was unable to present his report at the meeting. Attached as Appendix A are notes from Alistair which had been written prior to the more recent introduction of the 'Rule of Six' by the Government.

The following matters were raised by Sally Mynard and David Cook, Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce:

- Sally Mynard, Chamber of Commerce, apologised for the wording of her recent emailed statement regarding Tourism Promotion, which had caused some misunderstanding and confusion. A revised statement had been issued.
- Winter car parking charges – the Chamber of Commerce asked for the Town Council's support in lobbying EDDC with regard to the winter £2 all day car parking charges. It was felt that these should commence from 10am and not 8am as it was found that shop workers were using it to park all day for work rather than shoppers being able to access car parking to visit the town. The Town Clerk was asked to again discuss this issue with other East Devon towns as well as EDDC.
- Seafront pedestrian crossings – County Councillor Hughes reported that additional light control crossings were not allowed on the seafront due to the historic nature of the area. It was possible that a second crossing at The Arches, where other facilities were available, may alleviate the current problem at The Mocha. 'Tabletops' may be able to be used to slow traffic to enable pedestrians to cross the road.
- Round Table Traffic Management Plan Scheme – County Councillor Hughes reported that it was intended to hold 'round table' discussions to obtain 'quick wins' with regard to traffic management in Sidmouth. Cllr Hughes would act as Chair and he was currently waiting for officer support to administer the meetings.



## Great South West DMOs and SWTA Partnership

### (COVID-19) Business Impact Report and Government Asks Paper

9<sup>th</sup> September 2020

#### 1. Introduction

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and the South West Tourism Alliance (SWTA) are working together in partnership across the Great South West (GSW) region to support tourism businesses recover from Covid-19. The GSW region includes Cornwall, Devon (Plymouth and Torbay), Exmoor, Somerset and Dorset.

In August 2020, a business impact survey took place to measure the impact of Covid-19 across the tourism sector. The purpose of the survey was to collect more hard evidence regarding the impact of Coronavirus and crucially what support businesses need for their future survival and growth.

#### 2. National Context

Tourism is one of the UK's largest, most diverse and interconnected sectors of the UK economy, generating high levels of revenue and employment across all parts of the country. It is also a sector that has been particularly impacted by the Coronavirus outbreak.

Tourism is acknowledged as being one of the sectors of the UK economy most affected by the Coronavirus outbreak. With regards to domestic tourism, VisitBritain's forecast (29th July) is that expenditure during 2020 will decline by £44.8bn (49%) to £46.8bn with domestic overnight tourism being down by £12.1bn and day visitor expenditure down by £32.7bn.

Combined, VisitBritain is forecasting that tourism revenue will decrease by £68.8bn, which equates to a loss of over 1,000,000 FTE tourism-related jobs.

The DCMS Coronavirus Impact Business Survey published on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020 shows:

- 92% of tourism businesses said that their revenue had decreased by more than 50%, with 68% saying that their business was generating no revenue at all.
  - 62% said that they would not be viable within 6 months even with existing Government support packages.
  - Only 31% of tourism businesses said they had accessed Government support.
- (Source: Retained, Rebuilt, Resilient, UK Tourism Recovery Report Sept 2020.)

#### 3. Regional Context

The South West visitor economy in Cornwall and IoS, Devon, Somerset and Dorset is the largest single visitor region outside of London in the UK, attracting 17 million staying visitors,

with an estimated economic impact of £11.3 billion, with direct employment of 210,000 people.

The threat to this sector is un-paralleled.

#### 4. Survey Findings

The Great South West impact survey shows for the period January-July 2020:

- The average change in business turnover is **-56%**.
- As a consequence, it is estimated that approx **£2.2 billion** of anticipated tourism business turnover will be lost in the Great South West region (Jan-July 2020).
- If the supply chain is also considered, it is estimated a further loss of **£486m** is lost to the GSW economy.
- 5% of businesses remain closed; 33% of businesses are now open but are actually operating at **75% capacity** or less (including 15% operating at 50% capacity or less).
- **Only 30%** of businesses anticipate they will survive beyond Summer 2021.

#### 5. Asks to Government

The Great South West Partnership key asks to Government are:

- Extend the business rates holiday and bounce back loan repayment terms
- Maintain the 5% VAT reduction rate to at least Easter 2021
- Implement new seasonal schemes to extend the winter season – following the success of Eat Out to Help Out campaign, explore options for 'Stay out', 'Seat out' further supporting all aspects of the tourism and hospitality sector.
- Extend the furlough scheme (or something similar) throughout the winter to retain key full-time staff which are key to future survival
- The Government reviews the structure and funding of all DMO's nationally for the long term and in conjunction with Tourism Sector Deal ambitions.

On behalf of the Destination Management Organisations and the South West Tourism Alliance in the Great South West region:

- Visit Devon
- Destination Plymouth
- English Riviera BID Company
- Visit Somerset
- Visit Exmoor
- Visit Dorset
- South West Tourism Alliance

The report above was written prior to the introduction of the 'Rule of Six':

Supporting notes from Alistair Handyside:

The rule of six is causing carnage across UK self-catering, bookings are collapsing.

The least we can achieve is to get children under 11 excluded from the rule of six in England, so that more families can holiday together over the critical half term period.

There are three main points.

- **Disruption to guests having to cancel what was a legal booking on Sunday but will be illegal from 14 September.**
- **Disruption to the sector just as it starts to recover**

This is the data from a leading agent.

41% cancelled

15% amended

44% Stated abiding by the law

- **Chaotic rules across the UK**

In England it's a 'rule of six' and that includes babies. In Scotland children under 12 are not included in the number and in Wales children under 11 are not included in the number. This is the time of year that bookings in self-catering are made up of pre-school families and extended family group, and these are the primary types of affected guests. It's still legal for an illegal group in England to go on holiday abroad, or book in Scotland or Wales. It's still considered safe to fly side by side in a crowded aircraft. Self-catering offers safe, Covid secure space, that you can choose who you share it with, which you can't in a pub, aeroplane or hotel.

Talking compliance? We are confident that most businesses will comply, if they don't, they will not only be breaking the law, but will be invalidating their insurance. Both parties are responsible for being compliant as it is Law now not Guidelines as it was until yesterday. The message is getting out there, enquiries have fallen off a cliff over the weekend.