

**Minutes of a Meeting of Sidmouth Town Council's
Tourism and Economy Committee
on Monday 20 July 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

Deirdre Hounsom

Stuart Hughes

Chris Lockyear

Dawn Manley

Invited Reps: Chamber of Commerce – Richard Eley and Sally Mynard

Ignyte Ltd – Tina Veater

SW Tourism Alliance – Alistair Handyside

TIC Manager – Jeff Bailey

Apologies: David Barratt, Jack Brokenshire, Marianne Rixson, Jeff Turner, Paul Wright

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.25pm

PART 'A'

38 Appointment of the Vice-Chair of the Tourism & Economy Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Lockyear and seconded by Councillor Barlow that Councillor Hounsom be appointed Vice-Chair of Sidmouth Town Council's Tourism & Economy Committee for the forthcoming year. There being no other nominations, Councillor Hounsom was duly appointed Vice-Chair of Sidmouth Town Council's Tourism & Economy Committee for the forthcoming year.

39 Minutes

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

40 Declarations of Interest

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

Councillor Chris Lockyear left the meeting during the following item.

41 Tourism & Promotion Strategy TaFF

Councillor Cole, Chair of the Tourism & Promotion Strategy TaFF presented the report of the work carried out by the group so far and asked Members to focus especially on the list of Recommended Next Priorities.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The Tourism & Promotion Strategy TaFF report be noted.
2. A small-scale digital visitor survey and handout visitor questionnaire, with competition, be carried out during the 2020 summer holiday period, with a view to conducting a larger scale survey in 2021.
3. Ian Barlow and Richard Eley, with input from Deirdre Hounsom and Louise Cole, be tasked with creating an appropriate survey questionnaire format.

4. Ignyte's Cognito subscription would be utilised to conduct the survey online and printed copies would be handed out to all customers in shops, cafes, hotels etc throughout Sidmouth.
5. The questionnaire would also be included in the Visit Devon newsletter issued by Ignyte Ltd.

42 Tourism & Promotion Budget update

Councillor Cole reported the current level of spend and committed expenditure for the Tourism & Promotion budget. Of the original £50,000 budget £42,496 had been either spent or committed, including £3,500 that had been allocated towards the build of the new Live Sidmouth website. This figure would now be moved out of the Tourism & Promotion budget to be shown within the Office Expenses section.

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

43 Tourism & Promotion Contract Update

Tina Veater, Ignyte presented an update of the progress of the Tourism & Promotion contract between Sidmouth Town Council and Ignyte Ltd. This included a preview presentation of the layout and content of the new Visit Sidmouth website, which was being prepared for a soft launch on 4 August 2020.

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

44 Information Centre Manager's Report & Financial Report

a) Jeff Bailey, Information Centre Manager, reported that access to the Information Centre was reliant on LED and EDDC who owned the swimming pool building and controlled access through the foyer. The TIC had been made fully Covid safe ready for the expected opening date of Monday 6 July; this had then been delayed by government to Saturday 25 July. However, the Information Centre Manager had been advised by LED that the Sidmouth swimming pool would not be reopening unless the District Council were willing to subsidise LED's anticipated loss of income.

An initial review of the feasibility of using the Jurassic Coast Interpretation Centre as an interim TIC had raised a number of issues/problems that would need to be resolved, so the preferred option would be to obtain access to the LED swimming pool building.

b) The Finance Report for the Financial Year End to March 2020 in respect of the Sidmouth Information Centre had been attached to the agenda for Members information.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The Sidmouth Information Centre Reports be noted.
2. District Councillors Bickley, Hughes and Manley would raise the issue of obtaining access to the TIC with the appropriate EDDC officers.
3. Further discussion between the TIC Manager, Chair of the Council, Chair and Vice Chair of Tourism & Economy would be held endeavouring to discover a means of reopening the Information Centre and/or the Interpretation Centre as soon as possible.

45 Manstone Skatepark

Councillor Cole reported on the progress and development of the new Wheeled Sports facility at Manstone Recreation Ground; the concept design was complete, and the Town Council now awaited confirmation of the allocation of match funding from the EDDC S106 Tourism Fund.

RESOLVED: That the Manstone Skatepark report be noted.

46 Live Sidmouth Website

Councillor Cole reported that plans for the Council's main .gov website had been brought forward from the Autumn. This resident facing website would be a completely different design to the Visit Sidmouth website, the contract had been given to Zonkey Website Developers who had experience building WordPress websites for Town Councils. A small working group had been set up to take this project forward; members were Cllrs Wright, Evans, Murdoch and Town Council staff.

RESOLVED: That the Live Sidmouth website report be noted.

47 Blue Flag Beach and Other Future Campaign Ideas

Councillor Cole reported that Blue Flag Beach status had been achieved for Sidmouth.

Other campaign ideas would be discussed under the Post Covid Recovery item on the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the Blue Flag Beach report be noted.

48 Matters Raised by Invited Representatives

The following matters were raised by Alistair Handyside, South West Tourism Alliance:

- The government's Summer Safe funding campaign was underway with a difficult application procedure; it was hoped that Sidmouth would benefit from their relationship with Visit Devon who were applying for funds on behalf of the Devon tourism industry.
- There would be a 'Covid Guidelines' inspection visit to Sidmouth on Thursday 23 July using Dukes and Oakdown Holiday Park as examples; Cllrs Barlow and Cole would also be in attendance.
- The restriction of two households/bubbles only able to holiday together was causing problems for accommodation providers in the South West; it was hoped that this PM/Chief Medical Officer ruling would be relaxed in the near future.
- Coach Company Operators were experiencing severe financial difficulties and were concerned that the relaxation of the social distancing rules that had been allowed for air travel had not been extended to travelling by coach.
- The VAT reduction would act as a real financial boost to the tourism economy as there was no requirement to pass this reduction on to customers and it would also apply to forward bookings.
- It was hoped that with live music events beginning to open up that this would increase visitors and enhance the local economies.
- Although much had been done to support the tourism industry for the summer period it was vitally important to encourage visitors to the South West from September through to winter, especially for hotels and guest houses who had experienced the worst impact of the Covid reduction intrade.

The following matters were raised by Sally Mynard and Richard Eley, Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce:

- The Chamber of Commerce had sponsored Sidmouth resident Amy Roles who had created a Sidmouth Scarecrow competition; this had been very successful with many entries and was attracting a lot of social media coverage. It was anticipated that this would become an annual event.
- The Chamber of Commerce had held regular meetings to support local businesses throughout the Covid lockdown and Councillor Barlow was thanked for also attending.

- There had been much positive feedback on the road closure/restrictions to enable socially distanced pedestrian access to the town.
- Although there were concerns that the requirement to wear facemasks in shops and enclosed environments may reduce discretionary browsing and spending it was also hoped that customer confidence would increase over a period of time as we all get used to wearing masks.

49 Post Covid Recovery – Opportunities and Challenges and 2020/21 Events

Members were asked to report on the challenges and opportunities surrounding easing of lockdown rules and the running of events in the future. The following projects and events were reported on:

- Red Arrows – the 2020 had been cancelled due to the high upfront spend with no security of the event being able to take place. A bigger event was to be planned for August 2021.
- Folk Week – although the 2020 had been cancelled early in April the Folk Week board had been raising funding through crowd funding to ensure that the 2021 event would definitely go ahead.
- Science Festival – the October 2020 would be held as a ‘virtual’ festival.
- All Chamber of Commerce events were ‘on hold’ for the time being with continuous ongoing review.
- There should be good news coverage on the website and social media reporting the fact that Sidmouth born Dominic Bess was playing for the England Cricket Team in the current test matches.
- Other projects mentioned were – Manstone Skatepark, transfer of Knowle Parkland, Park & Walk scheme from the Knowle car park, DCC flood defence scheme creating and amphitheatre performance space, new Alma Bridge opening, S106 money for play parks, replanting borders at The Ham, refurbishment of the car park wall at The Ham and the Exeter Regeneration Scheme which would lead to additional housing in settlements outside Sidmouth where new potential visitors may be found.

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CHAIR OF THE TOURISM & ECONOMY COMMITTEE