

**Minutes of a Meeting of Sidmouth Town Council's
Tourism and Economy Working Group
on Monday 13 September 2021 at 6.30 pm**

(Due to the COVID-19 situation, the Tourism and Economy Working Group met virtually)

Councillors present: Ian Barlow

Louise Cole

Steven Kendall-Torry

Richard Thurlow

Invited Reps: Chamber of Commerce – Sally Mynard

Ignyte Ltd – Tina Veater

TIC Manager – Jeff Bailey

Tourism Advisory Group – Jo Watson

Apologies: Jack Brokenshire, Chris Lockyear, Hilary Nelson, Charissa Evans,
SW Tourism Alliance – Alistair Handyside

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.30pm

PART 'A'

10 Minutes

The Minutes of the Tourism & Economy Working Group meeting held on Monday 14 June 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

11 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest received for items on this agenda.

12 Tourism Advisory Group Update

Councillor Cole, Chair of the Tourism Advisory Group, gave an update of the work that had been carried out by the Tourism Advisory Group during the summer months and reported that she and Cllr Nelson were currently in discussions with other nearby local towns who no longer had a TIC, to help work with them and coordinate a tourism strategy, maximising the improved and enhanced tourism offer Sidmouth now had.

Jo Watson reported on the very busy summer months in the hospitality businesses who had benefitted by the 'staycation' trend, but it was noted this had been restricted by a serious lack of staff, initially caused by the requirement to self-isolate but now continuing as younger workers returned to education.

RESOLVED: That the Tourism Advisory Group report be noted.

13 Information Centre Manager's Update

Jeff Bailey, Information Centre Manager, reported that the TIC refurbishment was complete apart from a large flag to advertise that the TIC was open; the refurbished TIC would be officially opened on 30 September 2021 with MP Simon Jupp in attendance. The new Visit Sidmouth merchandise offer had been rearranged and TIC staff were attending the Classic Car Show on Saturday 18 September with a stall of maps, information and merchandise.

It was noted that East Devon District Council had recently stopped taking cash in their car parks and this was upsetting visitors as the machines were not user friendly when taking electronic payments; TIC staff regularly assisted people to pay for their parking. The TIC visitor numbers had averaged around 75/80 per day which was down on previous seasons and there had been very few international visitors this season.

RESOLVED: That the Sidmouth Information Centre reports be noted.

14 Tourism & Promotion Contract Update

Tina Veater of Ignyte, presented the report of the promotional activity work carried out with and on behalf of the Town Council. Louise Avis, Ignyte’s Sidmouth account manager, had visited Sidmouth regularly throughout the season in order to create and maintain relationships with Sidmouth accommodation providers and businesses. A Visit Sidmouth Shopify platform was being created so that merchandise could be purchased via the website. The 2021 Town Map had been very successful and had been distributed to visitors via the TIC, town centre car parks and town businesses.

It was anticipated that the 2022 Town Map would be incorporated as a centre page pull out in a 16-page publication which would have other maps and information about the town; the final decision would be determined by the printing costs. The Visit Sidmouth independent shopping videos would be filmed on Tuesday 14 September and would then be placed on the website and social media platforms; all retail members had been invited and four members had asked to be included in the filming opportunity.

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

15 Tourism & Promotion Budget Spend and Committed 2020/2021

The Chair presented the Tourism & Promotion Budget report as at the end of July 2021.

RESOLVED: That the Tourism & Promotion Budget report be noted.

16 Sidmouth Air Show 2021

The Town Clerk gave a report on the success of the Sidmouth Air Show which took place on 27 August 2021; all car parks had been full and additional spaces to the usual EDDC car parks had been organised as usual, working with the Rugby and Cricket clubs and private landowners. The police had estimated that between 30 and 35 thousand people were spectating during the event. Just under £13,000 in cash had been collected by volunteers as donations towards the event with additional income still being received from the car parking facilities. Jo Watson was thanked for the support given by Sidmouth Hotels by supplying a central venue for the event’s safety centre. It was suggested that the Town Clerk prepare a report which could show income and cost streams but also indicate the largely unperceived benefits to charitable and other organisations and operators of for example, the car parking and show how additional facilities are included in the event planning, which could then be used as a template to help other event organisers.

Members were asked to consider how to encourage additional community run events during the 2022 Bank Holiday weekend to complement the Sidmouth Air Show and Sailing Regatta. It was suggested that events could be offered to include information on helping promote the Council’s environment and economic agenda and demonstrating how the Council offsets the carbon footprint of the air show. Councillor Richard Thurlow volunteered to begin contacting various local groups in the town with a view to holding a meeting with those who may be interested in becoming involved in organising a weekend of complementary events.

RESOLVED: That the Sidmouth Air Show report be noted.

17 Matters Raised by Invited Representatives

Sally Mynard, Chamber of Commerce, reported that:

- The Classic Car Show was due to be held on Saturday 18 September. As ever, the event was weather dependant and it was essential that the cricket ground was dry enough to use for the display cars. It was noted that this was the Chamber of Commerce’s biggest income event so it would be very disappointing if it couldn’t take place again this year.

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CHAIR OF THE TOURISM & ECONOMY WORKING GROUP