

**Minutes of a Meeting of Sidmouth Town Council's  
Tourism and Economy Working Group  
held in the Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Sidmouth  
on Wednesday 7 June 2023 at 6.30 pm**

Councillors present: Ian Barlow  
Stuart Hughes  
Chris Lockyear  
Hilary Nelson  
Rachel Perram  
Kevin Walker

Invited Reps: TIC Manager – Tim Shardlow

Apologies: Cllr John Loudoun  
Chamber of Commerce – Sally Mynard  
Ignyte Ltd – Tina Veater

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.10pm

## **PART 'A'**

### **1 Minutes**

The Minutes of the Tourism & Economy Committee meeting held on Monday 13 March 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.

### **2 Declarations of Interest**

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

### **3 Tourism Advisory Group Update**

Councillor Nelson gave an update of the work that had been carried out by the Tourism Advisory Group since the last meeting and reported that:

- The TAG had met twice, 17 April and 5 June, and had been working on new promotions, updating the Visit Sidmouth website and a new video promoting festivals held throughout the year.
- There would be two additional videos produced during the year; one to promote Family Friendly and Affordable holidays in Sidmouth and another highlighting Independent Retail and would be issued in late summer to cover the shoulder season.
- Discussions were being held to create a town Christmas Light Trail as the Christmas at Connaught event would not be held this year. The Light Trail might include static lit statues and a food event on The Ham selling mince pies and mulled wine etc.
- There would be a new virtual tour on the website which would include audio/video commentary.
- Sidmouth's Blue Flag Beach status had been retained and the TAG in conjunction with the Chair of the Council were producing a fact sheet for residents, visitors and businesses to alleviate any concerns over river outflow issues.
- The TAG had received feedback from businesses who had reported that they were really struggling with lack of customers, there were fewer visitors who were very late bookings, shorter stays and spending less.

**RESOLVED:** That the Tourism Advisory Group report be noted.

#### 4 Information Centre Updates

Councillor Nelson presented the Sidmouth Information Centre Finance Report and TIC Visit Sidmouth sales for the financial year ending March 2023.

Tim Shardlow, Tourist Information Centre Manager, gave an update of TIC activities and reported that:

- The TIC was now operating on 'summer season' hours of 10am to 5pm Monday to Saturday and 10am to 4pm Sunday, with two members of staff. Footfall was averaging at over 100 per day and were split approximately 40% local residents and 60% visitors.
- The new Giant Deckchair had arrived and would be positioned on the Esplanade shortly and it was hoped to be a popular photo opportunity.
- 20,000 Town Maps had initially been printed, received and were being distributed; these were again proving to be very popular this year.
- The Manor Pavilion Summer Play season would be starting at the end of June and running until September.
- 2023 year was the Bicentenary year for Sidmouth Cricket Club who had many events planned during the summer.
- The TIC had sold tickets for the 2023 Jazz & Blues Festival headline acts and had developed a very good relationship with the organising team.
- Folk Festival sales were currently more than double those of 2022. All tickets sales were sold at a 10% commission rate to support the TIC administration costs.
- The TIC was holding the register for booking the Walking Festival trips running from 16 to 22 September. Other shoulder season events include the Science Festival and many Christmas events.
- Unfortunately, there would be no coach day trips available from Sidmouth this year; Greenslade Tours had ceased trading and a new company Wayfarer Tours had managed to run one coach trips before their coach provider had withdrawn their services.
- Concerns were raised about the difficulties of obtaining car season tickets which was effectively excluding some vulnerable visitors and residents from accessing this reduced cost service. District Councillor Ian Barlow reported that he would raise this issue with the appropriate officer at the District Council.

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

#### 5 Tourism & Promotion Contract Update

In the absence of Tina Veater, Ignyte, Cllr Nelson presented the report of the promotional activity work carried out with and on behalf of the Town Council and described the functionality of the new, improved Visit Sidmouth website.

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

#### 6 Tourism & Promotion Finance Report

The Chair presented the Tourism & Promotion Finance report for the financial year ending March 2023.

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

## 7 IRF Project Update

The Chair presented the IRF (Coast Meets Country project) Finance report for the financial year ending March 2023 and gave an update on the progress of the IRF Project:

- The IRF project deadline had been extended to December 2023 to enable final parts of the project to be completed.
- Councillors Nelson, Barlow and Ignyte's Tina Veater would be visiting the partner towns representatives to encourage further involvement in the project which would be beneficial to the whole district.
- The IRF project focus had moved towards the sustainable tourism part of the program, partnering with businesses who were already working with a green agenda and would become Change Maker Champions and acting as exemplars in order to create a Sustainable Tourism Roadmap and Carbon Action Plan and this would promote a culture of collaboration with the business community in the area.
- Free online training videos were being made available for businesses which would support them in their transition to a more sustainable approach.

**RESOLVED:** That the IRF Project report be noted.

## 8 Sidmouth Regatta

Cllr Perram, Chair of the Sidmouth Regatta Working Group gave an update and reported that:

- Meetings had been held with representatives of the various groups running events over the regatta weekend. The next meeting would be held at the end of June.
- One of the main concerns raised was the issue of obtaining insurance to run the Three-Legged and Raft races which was proving difficult to obtain.
- It had been suggested that a Fancy Dress paddleboard race could be held which should be covered by the insurance held by Sidmouth Jurassic Paddleboards trading on the beach during the summer months.
- Due to restrictive trading laws on the seafront, it had been suggested that food outlets be invited to trade on The Ham during the afternoon and evening of the Regatta Air Show. In addition to this it was hoped that Red Arrows merchandise would also be available for sale.
- More volunteer collectors were needed this year, with as many collection buckets as possible throughout the town, these could have QR codes and information regarding giving donations via text.
- Jurassic Fibre would be approached to discuss the feasibility of creating wifi hotspots around the town to ease issues with mobile phone usage during the event.
- Groups had been asked to submit requests for funding for prizes they may wish to present at the end of their events. These requests would then be considered at a future Council meeting.
- The Town Clerk confirmed that the seafront PA system would be left in position for both the Saturday and Sunday events during the regatta weekend.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) The Sidmouth Regatta Working Group report be noted and Members be thanked for their work in planning for this year's events.
- 2) Discussions would be held between Cllrs Nelson, Perram, the Town Clerk and J R Event Services to finalise plans for street collections, receiving donations via other methods,

trading on The Ham and creating wifi hotspots to ease issues with mobile phone usage during the event.

- 3) An urgent item be added to the next Trustee meeting agenda to consider permission for trading on The Ham for food outlets and Red Arrows merchandise during the afternoon and evening of the 2023 Air Show.

## 9 Matters Raised by Invited Representatives

Councillor Ian Barlow made a suggestion of behalf of the Chamber of Commerce:

- A suggested figure of £10,000 be considered for the 2023/24 budget to support the purchase of individual cameras of a suitable quality which would enable one month's recording and police access to data. These could be distributed to interested businesses who would be responsible for the installation and ongoing running costs.

**RESOLVED:** That a sum of £10,000 for CCTV cameras be considered for inclusion in the Pre-Budget schedule.

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CHAIR OF THE TOURISM & ECONOMY WORKING GROUP