

**Minutes of a Meeting of Sidmouth Town Council's
Tourism and Economy Committee
held in the Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Sidmouth
on Wednesday 12 June 2024 at 6.30 pm**

Councillors present: Ian Barlow
Paul Dodds
Chris Lockyear
Hilary Nelson
Rachel Perram
Kevin Walker
Phil Weaver
Edward Willis Fleming

Invited Reps: TIC Manager – Tim Shardlow
Ignyte Ltd – Tina Veater
Chamber of Commerce – Ian Gregory

Apologies: John Loudoun, John Nicholson

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.55pm

PART 'A'

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the Tourism & Economy Committee meeting held on Wednesday 20 March 2024 were signed and approved as a true and accurate record.

2 Declarations of Interest

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

3 Matters of Urgency and Report

There were no matters of urgency.

4 Tourism Advisory Group Update

Councillor Nelson updated members on the work carried out by the Tourism Advisory Group and reported that Cllrs Perram and Willis Fleming had joined the TAG whilst Sally Mynard had left the group.

- A Family Friendly video was being produced, alongside a list of family orientated activities costing less than £10 which would be available over the summer months.
- The Visit Sidmouth website had been updated with the Virtual Tour now on the front page.
- Businesses were reporting to the TAG a very difficult economic environment, particularly for the hospitality sector, with very low or no bookings for the high season month of August.
- A Sidmouth college work experience student would be working with Ignyte for one week and to take short videos clips of images of interest to younger people, these would be shown on TikTok and Instagram.
- A South West Data Hub had been set up which would collect tourism data, tracking mobile phone accessing Apps, alongside credit and debit card payments. This data would be useful to the Town Council and its Tourism & Promotion activities.

RESOLVED: That the Tourism Advisory Group report be noted.

5 Information Centre Updates

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

- The TIC was now operating on 'summer hours' and open for 7 days a week until 5pm Monday to Saturday and 4pm on Sundays. There were two members of staff working during the summer season.
- The TIC continued the promotion of local events, activities and facilities of interest for visitors and residents, options for sustainable tourism and good value for family groups.
- Folk Festival ticket sales were much higher than 2022, which was the last 'normal' year figures available for comparison and TIC staff were assisting with enquiries from attendees. This was the Festival's 70th Anniversary year and was being organised by a new management team. A Taster Programme had been distributed with the full programme becoming available in July.
- The Banking Hub was now open and was welcomed by both residents and visitors.
- The 2024 Town Maps had now been received and were being distributed to businesses and members of the public, many were being posted out to visitors expecting to visit later in the year. 15,000 had been printed and for the first time included QR codes to assist with guided walks.
- Unfortunately, due to a complicated booking system that would only support one outlet, the TIC had not been able to sell Jazz & Blues Festival tickets, this would impact on the TIC commission budget for 2024.
- There were many other events that the TIC staff advertised and supported throughout the year; Seafest, Connaught Garden band concerts, the September Walking Festival, Bio Diversity Group events, Manor Pavilion Summer Play Season and the Dementia Friendly Sidmouth event.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) The Sidmouth Information Centre report be noted.
- b) Consideration be given to installing a large Town Map in the Market Place, costing and options of aluminium board or digital screen would be presented to the next Tourism and Economy Committee meeting.
- c) Consideration be given to obtaining VIP tickets for the two main music events in order to create national media competitions and increase publicity whilst collecting entrants' data.

6 Tourism & Promotion Contract Update

Tina Veater, Ignyte, presented the Ignyte Visit Sidmouth summary report and explained the breakdown of the social media data report.

- A priority was Accessibility Tourism and Ignyte was represented on the Visit England Stakeholder Group working towards creating a list of the top 20-30 essential search terms for visitors requiring additional accessibility support. This information would then be used to update the Visit Sidmouth website and forwarded to business members via newsletter and webinar.
- Ignyte was working with the Chit Rocks Beach Access project team to see if assistance could be given with publicising this initiative, which would enable wheelchair access to the beach.

- The Local Visitor Economy Partnership ‘LVEP’ project was underway with the Advisory Board and Stakeholder Group set up and first meetings to be held towards the end of July.

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

7 Tourism & Promotion Finance Report

The Chair presented the Tourism & Promotion Finance report for the year ending March 2024.

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

8 South West Water – Support for Businesses with Communications

Members were asked to consider whether additional resources should be provided to local businesses to inform them of and help them communicate about water quality and the forthcoming investment from South West Water for remedial works on The Ham.

It was noted that much of the problem with poor water testing readings was due to agricultural runoff and not from the human waste sewage system.

RESOLVED: That Cllr Nelson and Tina Veater create a proforma information document to be reviewed by Cllr Lockyear as Member for South West Water Liaison.

10 Strategic Priorities for 2024/25

Members were asked to consider recommendations for priority actions for the Tourism and Economy Committee for 2024/25.

RECOMMENDED: That the following priority actions be agreed:

- Town Regeneration – concentrate on one area of ‘excellence’ first then gradually spread out to cover the whole town, commencing with the Market Place area.
- Maximise the use of Open Spaces owned by the Town Council or held as Trustee; create areas that are welcoming to children as play areas, set up online treasure hunt trails, encourage forest schools. Also to extend the Knowle car park area and instal EV charging stations to encourage both residents and visitors to use that area of the town.
- Accessible Tourism – to work with local interest groups and appropriate organisations to create a town that has as its ethos the principle of ‘Welcome to All’.

11 Matters Raised by Invited Representatives

Ian Gregory, Vice Chair Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce, reported that the Chamber of Commerce were considering introducing evening meetings for members to cover specific issues of interest.

RESOLVED: That the Chamber of Commerce report be noted.

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CHAIR OF THE TOURISM & ECONOMY WORKING GROUP