

SIDMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Sidmouth Town Council
held at the Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Sidmouth,
on Monday 2 March 2026 at 6.30pm

Ward	Councillors Present:
Sidmouth North	Stephen Blakeway Bernie Davis
Sidmouth South	Kelvin Dent Paul Dodds (Vice Chair) Chris Lockyear
Salcombe Regis	Edward Willis Fleming Ian Barlow
Primley	Hilary Nelson (Chair) Kevin Walker
Sidbury	John Loudoun
Sidford	Mike Goodman Joanne Dodds
Apologies:	Stuart Hughes, John Nicholson and Rachel Perram

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8:45pm.

PART 'A'

92 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 2 February 2026 were signed as a true and accurate record.

93 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received at the meeting.

94 Matters of Urgency or Report from the Chair

- The Chair announced that the Annual Town Assembly would be held at Sidbury Village Hall on Monday 13 April 2026.
- The Chair reported that an additional urgent item concerning the Market Place Building would be considered in Part B of the meeting.
- The Chair reported that the government had launched a 'Town of Culture' competition where towns across the Country could apply to become the first 'Town of Culture'. Applications for Expressions of Interest would open later in the month and Members were asked if they wished Sidmouth to be considered.

RESOLVED: Members supported Sidmouth expressing an interest in becoming a 'Town of Culture' and wished to proceed.

95 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED: that the classification given to the documents to be submitted to the Council, be confirmed, and that the reports relating to exempt information, be dealt with under Part B

96 Public Open Question Time

- Paul Ryder, resident of the Stowford area of Sidmouth, raised concerns over the use and management of Stowford Community Centre. He presented to

Members, suggested changes and possible model of operating the Centre which he had titled the 'Dual Lung' approach. He also presented the Town Council with a petition with over 100 signatures from residents supporting the view that the Community Centre should actively serve the community and for the Town Council to intervene.

- Melanie Coulthard, resident of the Stowford area of Sidmouth, expressed concerns regarding Stowford Community Centre. She stated that the petition was a snapshot of local residents and believed a review of the Community Centre should be conducted.
- The Devon County Councillor for Sidmouth, Denise Bickley, also read a letter on behalf of a resident of the Stowford area of Sidmouth regarding Stowford Community Centre and how the Centre could be better used.
- In response to the first three speakers, the Chair of Council stated that a written reply would be given. The Town Council would do what it could to discuss with the CIC which runs the Stowford Community Centre, the concerns that had been highlighted to the Council and encourage appropriate use of the Centre but advised that this process would take time. The Council wished to ensure that any discussions were done correctly but not in haste.
- Councillor Willis Fleming raised a matter with the Devon County Councillor for Sidmouth, Councillor Denise Bickley, regarding the state of the side roads around the valley. After speaking to a local tyre business, he learnt that they were dealing with 14 tyres and repairs a day, 6 days a week due to potholes which was a 20% increase on last year. This was causing excessive costs and distress to local residents. Cllr Willis Fleming also stated that claims against DCC were very difficult to make resulting in many residents not bothering and even when claims were made, only 5% were successful. He would like the Sidmouth County Councillor to take the complaint to Devon County Highways.

97 Police Advocate Report:

PC Tom Driver of Sidmouth Police attended the meeting and reported that 56 crimes had been reported in January 2026. This figure was the same as January 2025.

The breakdown was as follows:

- Violent and sexual nature - 24
- Antisocial behaviour - 5
- Theft – 5
- Burglaries - 4
- Other – 18

PC Tom Driver made members aware of the Community Police teams current priorities which were reducing anti-social behaviour amongst youths, targeting drug possession and reducing rural crimes which have seen an increase in the past 2-3 months. Members and Members of the public asked a number of questions of PC Driver regarding the Police report and ongoing operations. It was also asked how individuals could find out about the resolution rate of crimes. These could be found on the following link <https://www.police.uk/pu/your-area/devon-and-cornwall-police/sidmouth/?tab=Statistics>

RESOLVED that the report be noted and agreed.

98 Committee/Working Group Reports

98.1 Planning Committee Report

Councillor Dent presented the reports of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 28 January and Wednesday 18 February 2026.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and agreed.

98.2 Tourism and Economy Committee Report

Councillor Willis Fleming, Chair of the Tourism & Economy Committee, reported that Folk Festival Tickets were on sale at the Tourist Information Centre and that from the 6th March, the Jazz and Blues Festival would have special residents only tickets available to purchase. It was also reported that the Walking Festival programme was almost finalised as well as the 2026 Town Map.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and agreed.

98.3 Environment Committee Report

Councillor Barlow, Chair of the Environment Committee, reported that the next meeting would be held on Monday 16 March 2026. It was also reported Sidmouth Library were holding an exhibition displaying renewable energy transition which would run from March 4 until April 16.

98.4 Youth Provision Committee

Councillor Davis, Vice-Chair of the Youth Provision Committee, reported that Action East Devon were launching their Headlight Peer Support sessions in Sidmouth.

RESOLVED that The Youth Provision Committee update be noted and agreed.

98.5 Council Resources Working Group

Councillor Lockyear will be reporting back on the 19 March regarding the Strategic Development Committee.

99 Reports from Members with Special Responsibilities

99.1 Finance Report

Councillor Lockyear presented the Finance report for January 2026. It was noted that over the past 12 months, approximately £6,743 had been spent on vandalism with the vast majority of this on toilets.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and agreed.

99.2 Sidmouth in Bloom

Councilor Bridle updated Members on Sidmouth in Bloom. It was reported that due to the ill health of some volunteers, the structure of the organizing Committee would be changing and the responsibilities shared out between other SIB members. They were seeking more volunteers to support this group.

99.3 South West Water Update

Councillor Lockyear updated Members on the progress of the South West Water work at The Ham. He informed Members that he had met with the new project manager, Chris Bradford and been informed that they were still running 8 days behind schedule due to bad weather. They did intend on working over 8 Saturdays to try and make up this time and completion was still due to be 23 June. They then intended to demobilize and lay the temporary surface by the 3 July in time for the Folk Festival to set up. Councillor Lockyear also informed Members he had followed up on the integrity of the rising main.

100 Town Council Surgeries

Members were asked to consider setting up a trial Town Council surgery for residents in Sidmouth Library. Members showed support for this trial and believed it would be good for local residents. It was suggested that potentially adding another venue in a different area of town could be beneficial.

RESOLVED: that the Council trials 6 Town Council Surgeries. One each month using Sidmouth Library and Stowford Community Centre alternately.

101 Devon County Council: Sidmouth Folk Week Traffic Management

Members were asked to consider the request from Devon County Council Highways regarding the extent of traffic restrictions used during Folk Festival, many of which had no direct impact from the Festival and a proposed rationalization moving forward. Members were made aware that the final decision was ultimately Devon County Councils and that no formal scheme had been proposed yet.

RESOLVED: that Members respond to Devon County Council Highways expressing their view that restrictions should be left as existing.

PART 'B'

102 Exclusion of the Public and Press

RESOLVED: That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of its contents.

103 The Arches (East) – Lease Renewal

Members were asked to consider the confidential report issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Council be given delegated authority to renew The Arches (East) lease subject to further discussion on the timing of the rental increase.

104 The Market Building, Sidmouth

Members were asked to consider the confidential report issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Council be given delegated authority to carry out further negotiations with East Devon District Council with a view to agreeing occupancy.

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CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL