

**Minutes of a Meeting of Sidmouth Town Council's
Tourism and Economy Committee
held in the Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Sidmouth
on Wednesday 10 September 2025 at 6.30pm**

Councillors present: Edward Willis Fleming (Chair)
Ian Barlow
Jo Dodds
Hilary Nelson (Vice Chair)
Kevin Walker
Chris Lockyear
John Loudon
Francetta Bridle

Invited Reps: Tim Shardlow - TIC Manager
Ian Gregory – Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce, left at 7:30PM (item 9)
Tina Veater - Ignyte Ltd (Visit Sidmouth Tourism Promotion)
Louise Cole & Coco Hodgkinson - Sidmouth Coastal Community Hub

Apologies : Lorraine Brown, John Nicholson, Paul Dodds and Tina Veater – Ignyte Ltd

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.30pm

PART 'A'

16 Minutes

The Minutes of the Tourism & Economy Committee meeting held on Wednesday 11 June were signed and approved as a true and accurate record.

17 Declarations of Interest

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

18 Matters of Urgency and Report

There were no matters of urgency.

19 Matters Raised by Invited Representatives

Ian Gregory of Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce had to leave the meeting at 7:30PM. Therefore, Item 12 was brought forward on the agenda.

Members noted that:

- The Chamber had canvassed their membership regarding the 'Community – Loos to use' initiative previously discussed. The overall response had been poor and the majority of responses had not been in favour of the initiative. The Chair suggested that the Chamber and the Council should work closely together, to develop cohesion and increase engagement from the Chamber's Membership on community initiatives.
- The Chamber would be supporting 'Late Night Shopping' this year on 22 November in conjunction with the annual Christmas Lights Switch On event. Cllr Barlow suggested a further 'Late Night Shopping' date in December and asked if the Chamber could support this.
- The Chair asked Ian Gregory if he could persuade all members of the Chamber to light their windows with the same style and type of white lights, as they do in Topsham to promote the idea of Christmas as a 'Festival of Light'.
- The Chamber were looking forward to the Sidmouth Classic Car Show scheduled on 20 September.

RESOLVED That:

- a) The Chair and Ian Gregory would liaise on a regular basis.
- b) Ian Gregory would ask the Chamber to consider supporting an additional 'Late Night Shopping' date in December.
- c) Ian Gregory would ask Members of the Chamber to help promote Christmas as a 'Festival of Light' by decorating their windows with the same style and type of white lights for the season.

20 Tourism Information Centre Summary of Activities

Tim Shardlow - Tourist Information Centre Manager, presented his report, which had been distributed to Members prior to the meeting, giving an update of TIC activities.

RESOLVED: That the Sidmouth Information Centre report be noted.

21 Tourism & Promotion Finance Report

The Chair presented the Tourism & Promotion Finance report for the period April to June 2025. Cllr Lockyear commented on Ignyte's sales revenue being down. Cllr Nelson explained that revenue normally increases from September onwards. The original contract was initiated in September so more subscription renewals take place around this time of year.

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

22 Tourism & Promotion Contract Update

Tina Veater of Ignyte was not able to attend the meeting. Tina had distributed her report in advance to Members and Invited Representatives.

Cllr Barlow commented that the 'Visit Sidmouth' website was now five years old and should be refreshed. Frustration was voiced as to the useability of the website. It has become difficult to find local information on the site and in some cases, content appeared to have been created without knowledge of local geography.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The Tourism and Contract update be noted.
- b) The 'Visit Sidmouth' website to be reviewed as part of the new contract negotiation.

23 Tourism & Promotion Contract Renegotiation

The Chair updated Members on the current contract between Sidmouth Town Council and Ignyte that expires in January 2026 and requested that delegated authority to be given to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Tourism and Economy Committee to negotiate a new contract.

RESOLVED: That delegated authority would be given to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Tourism and Economy Committee to negotiate a new contract with Ignyte or another provider.

24 Festivals

- The Chair updated Members on the 'Festival Coast' promotion concept. The concept would not only promote Sidmouth but surrounding coastal and country towns too. Sidmouth had a busy calendar of festivals throughout the year, but the town would benefit from promoting other towns' events attracting more visitors to the area.
- It was also reported that the recent Regatta weekend had been a great success with special thanks given to Cllr Barlow, Town Clerk Christopher Holland and Town Council Officer Di Byrne for helping towards making it such an achievement.
- Cllr Walker reported that promotion of the 'Festival of Gardens' required some work and that he had been working with 'Visit Devon' to make it easier for garden owners to list their gardens.

- Cllr Walker further reported that the 'Walking Festival' was growing in popularity and that 2/3rd of bookings were from local residents. He stressed that more could be done to market this festival to attract visitors from outside the area. A meeting was scheduled on 7 October with East Devon Tourism to discuss ways to market the festival.
- The Chair indicated that he was keen for Sidmouth to have its own Pride Day.
- Cllr Lockyear reported that the Science Festival was taking place from 10-19 October.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The reports and updates on Festivals be noted.
- b) Discussions regarding the 'Festival Coast' concept and branding would continue.
- c) Sidmouth Pride Day suggestion would be progressed and discussed at the next meeting.

25 Town Signage

Members considered alternative means of enabling the advertising of public events and festivals in ways that would not adversely affect the conservation area.

RESOLVED: That it be noted that alternative means and locations for advertising of events and festivals needed further discussion. The Tourism and Economy Committee would select a small group of Members to move the objective forward.

.....
CHAIR OF THE TOURISM & ECONOMY WORKING GROUP