

**Minutes of a Meeting of Sidmouth Town Council's
Tourism and Economy Committee
held in the Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Sidmouth
on Wednesday 25 March 2026 at 6.30pm**

Councillors present: Edward Willis Fleming (Chair)
Hilary Nelson (Vice Chair)
Ian Barlow
Paul Dodds
Chris Lockyear
Kevin Walker

Invited Reps: Tim Shardlow (TIC Manager)
Ian Gregory (Chamber of Commerce)

Apologies : Francetta Bridle
Jo Dodds
John Loudoun
John Nicholson

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 9.00pm

PART 'A'

35 Minutes

The Minutes of the Tourism & Economy Committee meeting held on Wednesday 10 December 2025 were signed and approved as a true and accurate record.

36 Declarations of Interest

Name	Item Number	Type	Action Taken	Details
Ian Barlow	10	Personal	Stayed in the meeting for the duration of item discussion	Trustee: Sidmouth School of Art

37 Matters of urgency and report

The Chair sought an urgent decision on the provision of interchangeable festival flags ahead of the near summer season. Members agreed that such banners could support the promotion of local and neighbouring town festivals.

It was proposed that, subject to approval from Devon County Council Highways and Streetlighting, six interchangeable flag posts be installed along Station Road on existing lampposts to advertise forthcoming events. The cost of each post, including installation, would be £295.

Members also considered the potential for additional flags within the town centre, particularly in locations currently used for Christmas lighting.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That approval be given for the installation of six interchangeable flag posts at a cost of £295 per post, including installation, subject to approval of the positioning by Devon County Council.
- 2) That the Chair contact Cllr Denise Bickley regarding the flags and their positioning; and

3) That Devon County Council be contacted to seek the necessary permissions, as the lampposts were under their ownership.

38 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

39 Tourism & Promotion Finance Report

The Vice Chair presented the Tourism & Promotion Finance report & 'Visit Sidmouth' merchandise sales figures for Nov 2025-Jan 2026. The budget was showing a significant underspend of around £3k.

RESOLVED: That the Finance and Finance report was noted

40 Tourism and Promotion Budget 2026-2027

The Vice Chair reported on the budget, noting that several costs had been reduced and that an earmarked reserve of approximately £25,000 remained. It was further suggested that engagement take place with neighbouring towns to encourage support for a cross-promotional approach.

In addition, the Vice Chair referred to the potential to make greater use of archived footage and materials from previous Sidmouth festivals and events to help generate interest in the 2026 programme. The possible reactivation of the Tourism Advisory Group (TAG), in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, was also raised for consideration.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Sidmouth Tourism and Promotion budget be noted and approved.
- 2) That the Chair of Council write to Tina Veater from Ignyte to suggest using recordings and content of Sidmouth Festivals/events from previous Years to promote interest for our up-and-coming festivals for 2026.
- 3) That the Chair contact the Chair of Chamber of Commerce to reactivate the Tourism Advisory Group (TAG) group.

41 Tourist Information Centre Summary of Activities

Members received an update from the Tourist Information Centre Manager, Tim Shardlow. It was reported that a number of local attractions were reopening in preparation for the Easter holiday period and that ticket sales for festivals and events were progressing well. It was further noted that plans were being formulated to install new festival signage at all four main entrances to Sidmouth.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

42 Strategic Tourism Development (STD) and ‘The Fishermen’s Sheds & The Ham’ TAFF

Members considered a recommendation from the Town Clerk to merge the Strategic Tourism Development (STD) group and ‘The Fishermen’s Sheds & The Ham’ TAFF, in light of the overlap between the two sub-groups. The Chair provided an update on the proposal to bring the two groups together under a single Strategic Tourism Development (STD) Committee structure.

During discussion, Members acknowledged the similarities in scope and objectives of the two groups and considered the potential benefits of a more streamlined and coordinated approach.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the merge of ‘The Fishermans Sheds and The Ham’ TAFF be approved.
- 2) That Cllr Lockyear continued to Chair the merged Working Group.

43 UK Town of Culture 2028 competition

The Vice Chair reported on the submission of Sidmouth to the first round of the national UK Town of Culture 2028 competition, highlighting the town’s strengths in arts, culture, music, heritage and community. It was noted that the bid was considered to be robust, had generated considerable excitement within the town, and had received a positive response to date.

Members discussed the breadth of the Committee’s current work and considered whether a change of name would better reflect its expanded remit, including its involvement in arts and cultural initiatives.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted
- 2) That the proposal to change the name of the Committee to Tourism, Economy, Arts and Culture Committee.

44 Festival Updates

Members received an update on behalf of Cllr Bridle regarding the Health and Wellbeing Festival initiative. It was reported that the festival would take place from 12–19 September 2026 and that there had been a positive response from Sidmouth hotels to participate. A further progress report was received from Cllr Walker in respect of the Walking Festival 2026.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee noted the report from Cllr Walker and thanked him for his work towards the festival.
- 2) That the Committee thanked Cllr Bridle for her work and organisation in relation to the Health and Wellbeing Festival to be held in September.

45 Tourism & Promotion Contract Report

Members received an update of recent promotional activity and Ignyte’s work with Sidmouth Town Council by Tina Veater.

RESOLVED: That the report was noted.

46 Matters Raised by Invited Representatives

Ian Gregory, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, provided an update on plans to relaunch the Chamber, including the introduction of a newsletter and an increased programme of networking events. It was reported that the Chamber would support the Sidmouth Christmas lights switch-on, including the provision of street entertainment.

Members were also advised of a planned drive to increase membership and the development of a survey to gather feedback on local events.

47 PART 'B'

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.

Ignyte Contract Re-negotiation

The renewal of the contract with Ignyte was discussed.

RESOLVED: That the contract be renewed for a period of 1 Year initially in line with Members wishes.

.....
CHAIR OF THE TOURISM & ECONOMY COMMITTEE