

SIDMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly of Sidmouth Town Council
held in Sidbury Village Hall, Sidbury
on Monday 13 April 2026

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

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 7.25pm

PART 'A'

1 Welcome from the Chair of the Council

The Chair, Councillor Hilary Nelson, welcomed those present
All electors of Sidmouth Town Council wards had been invited to attend the meeting.

2 Minutes of the Town Assembly held on Monday 7 April 2025

The Minutes of the Town Assembly meeting held on Monday 7 April 2025, which had been circulated with the agenda, were received and signed as a true and accurate record.

3 Summary of annual reports

The Chairs of each committee gave a summary of the work that had been accomplished over the past year.

3.1 Chairman's Report

Councillor Hilary Nelson, Chair of Council, shared that Sidmouth Town Councillors had one clear purpose: to make the Sid Valley a great place for everyone who lives, works and visits.. She explained that all councillors were volunteers and served as independents which meant they focused on practical solutions that work for the town. Councillor Nelson then spoke about how closely the Council work with District and County Councils, schools, business', charities, community groups as well as funding over 30 community organisations and voluntary groups through the grant schemes. Looking ahead, Councillor Nelson spoke about the trialling of Town Council surgeries later in the year as well as local government reorganisation and changes coming in 2028, where Sidmouth's council was preparing to take on potentially greater responsibilities. Despite challenges, it saw this as an opportunity to

protect local services and maintain community focused decision making. Overall, it continued prioritising listening to residents, using resources carefully, and supporting the community.

3.2 Chair of Planning

Councillor Kelvin Dent described the planning committee's work as both rewarding and challenging. It reviewed development proposals, supporting suitable ones, objecting to others, and suggesting improvements, though final decisions were made by East Devon District Council. The committee was sometimes frustrated by its limited powers, particularly around enforcement. Made up of eight councillors, it met regularly to consider numerous planning applications, as well as making final decisions on tree works and advertisements. Public participation was encouraged. Looking ahead, uncertainty remained around future planning structures and local government changes, but the committee expected to retain a role. It was also reviewing the Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan to guide future development. The chair concluded by thanking committee members and staff for their contributions.

3.3 Chair of Environment

Councillor Ian Barlow gave a report regarding the work carried out by the Town Council's Environment Committee including the planting of 14,000 trees in the Sid Valley as well as the repair of over 400 potholes in the past 12 months by a group of volunteers working with Devon County Council. Councillor Barlow also explained about the investment in a new project which tested the bathing waters in Sidmouth using a water testing system. He thanked the large volunteer community that had assisted to deliver real improvements for the residents of Sidmouth and hopes to continue delivering the best outcomes to all residents for the year ahead in the most economically efficient way possible.

3.4 Chair of Tourism & Economy

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee, Councillor Hilary Nelson, the Vice Chair gave a report regarding the work carried out by the Town Council's Tourism & Economy Committee, explaining how it supported local businesses, tourism promotion and the economy of the Sid Valley. The Tourist Information Centre was thanked for playing such a vital role in encouraging people to stay longer and return more often to Sidmouth. Councillor Nelson was pleased Sidmouth was to be part of the bid to become the first UK Town of Culture and looked forward to celebrating what made the Sid Vally unique.

3.5 Chair of Youth Provision

Councillor Rachel Perram gave a report regarding the work carried out by the Town Council's Youth Provision Committee. Due to Young Devon withdrawing their youth provision service, Sidmouth International School had started a pilot scheme working with the Council, providing sessions for 11-14 year olds at their building in the centre of Sidmouth which were well attended each week. The 'Get Involved' grant scheme had also been introduced to support those unable to access memberships due to lack of funding. Councillor Perram wanted to give young people a meaningful voice in the town and believed improving mental health and wellbeing was important. The council continued to fund the Mental Health Youth Worker at Sidmouth College as well as supporting parents through Parental Minds.

3.6 Member with Special Responsibility for Finance

Councillor Chris Lockyear, Member with Special Responsibility for Finance, presented the Finance Report showing a breakdown of the 2026-2027 budget giving a detailed description of major items and an explanation of increases and decreases in specific budget lines.

4 Sidmouth Police

PC Ross Buckler presented the statistical report of crimes reported during the period April 2025 to February 2026. The full report was fully accessible to the public on the Sidmouh/Police.uk website.

He reported that over the past year a lot of work had been done regarding antisocial behaviour, the drug supply network and rural crime. Members sent thanks to PC Tom Driver who had worked closely with the council but had now transferred to Dorset Police.

5 General Issues and questions

Members of the public were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions to Members of the Council concerning any issues within the Sid Valley area.

One question had been received prior to the meeting:

“What ways has the Council or CAPS engaged with schools and young people on environment, climate and biodiversity awareness and how successful has the Council been in engaging a range of ages?”

Cllr Barlow replied that the Young People were taught in schools about environmental issues and were incredibly aware but that CAPS also worked with Scout Groups, Cadets, Libraries and the Sidmouth School of Art to engage with this age bracket. He said it was very hard to quantify and say how successful awareness projects were but all ages are encouraged to participate.

A member of the public asked about whether there were plans to build the long awaited cycle path between Sidbury and Sidford to create a safe cycle and walking link. The Chair of Council replied that Devon County Council had previously been involved in this matter and it was their decision as to when and whether this happened. The Chair of Council agreed to write to the County Councillor for Sidmouth stressing that the project was needed as a matter of urgency.

Another question was raised regarding coastal flooding in Sidmouth. Councillor Lockyear gave an update on the beach management scheme and informed the public that there was a talk at Science Festival in October which would outline the latest situation and plans being working up.

The Chair thanked those present for attending Sidmouth Town Council’s Town Assembly.

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CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL