

SIDMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Youth Provision Committee, held at the Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Sidmouth, on Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 10am

Councillors Present: Rachel Perram (Chair)
Bernie Davis (Vice Chair)
Hilary Nelson
Chris Lockyear
Ian Barlow – left at 12:00pm

Apologies: Francetta Bridle
Paul Dodds
John Nicholson
Stuart Hughes

The meeting started at 10:00am and finished at 12:45pm

PART 'A'

20 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Youth Provision Committee held on Thursday 14 August 2025 were signed as a true and accurate record.

21 Declarations of Interest

Name	Type	Action Taken	Details of Interest
Cllr Rachel Perram	Personal	Remained in the Council Chamber and took part during voting and discussion	Daughter is employed by Sidmouth International School, the contractor operating on behalf of the Council contractor to deliver open access sessions
Cllr Rachel Perram	Personal	Remained in the Council Chamber and took part during voting and discussion	Husband is employed by Intoheat who have carried out works on behalf of the Council to assist Sidmouth International School, the contractor delivering open access sessions

22 Matters of Urgency or Report from the Chair

No matters of urgency reported.

23 Open Access Sessions

The Chair of the Committee presented a report on the Open Access Sessions that have been running on Tuesday evenings for the 11-14 age group. The sessions had been very well attended with positive feedback from the contractor, Sidmouth International School, with an average attendance of 35 per session.

The Chair discussed the need to further explore engagement with the older 15-17 age group, due to no initial demand for the Wednesday evening sessions. It was however suggested that the focus should remain with the existing cohort to allow this group to progress naturally to the next age bracket and then to allow them to make suggestions on provision for their own age group.

The Chair asked Members to consider a report which had been presented outlining a case to make the sessions free to all. The Open Access sessions had started in September and were free, up to half-term, after which a £1 subscription fee was payable each week.

The current £1 weekly subscription had raised concerns regarding administrative practicality, equality among attendees and potential barriers to participation. Removing the fee would support inclusivity and simplify financial management.

It was agreed that the £1 charge should be waived for the remainder of this academic year, i.e. to September 2026 when it would be reviewed.

The Chair also updated Members on future plans which included:

- 1) A Safeguarding/Child Protection Training Course for clubs and activity providers in the Sid Valley which had been booked for 9 December 2025. This course was considered an important opportunity for the Council to encourage a consistent, shared approach to protecting young people in the valley. Councillor Barlow suggested that the invitation be extended to all local organisations that had contact with Young People.
- 2) The Radway Cinema had been booked and paid for by the Council's Youth Provision budget to show a Christmas film for local children.
- 3) Web and Social Media development for 'Youth@Sidmouth' was ongoing. There had been some issue accessing Social Media accounts, but this was being investigated. The Chair had also been in contact with Sidmouth College to see if some of their students would like to contribute to the overall design and content of the new platform. Arrangements were in place to ensure IP of the designs was owned by the Council.

The Chair made special mention of charitable donations gratefully received by the Council for Youth Provision and thanked The Balfour Inn for their generosity for raising £250 for Young People in the Sid Valley and to Intoheat Ltd for upgrading the electrics at the Youth Hub and which had made the space more practical and functional for sessions.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The reports be noted
- 2) The Committee explore further options and ideas to engage the 15-17 age group
- 3) The Open Access Sessions be made free for all with the Council funding any missed subsidies for a period of 12 months.

24 Outreach Services

Councillor Perram, Chair of the Committee, asked Members to consider a proposal from SPACE to provide Community Outreach Services, with a suggested trial period from January to March 2026. The proposal outlined that SPACE would attend Sidmouth one evening per week to engage with the most vulnerable young people in the community.

The Chair explained that the target cohort consisted of young people who did not attend school or engage in the Youth Hub, noting that the group often felt marginalised. Members were

advised that SPACE reports that its early-intervention model had demonstrated positive outcomes in other towns.

Members expressed support in principle of the proposal; however, concerns were raised regarding the overall cost implications and whether the trial would provide sufficient value for the funding being requested. Members also required further information as to the effectiveness of the intervention proposed, with reference to other places where the model had been effective. Any future trial should include measurable outcomes/KPIs and pathways for onward referral for young people engaging with outreach services.

Members also wished to explore whether there were alternative channels of outreach work that would be available, for example through Devon and Cornwall Police's Assertive Outreach programme.

RESOLVED: That further investigation be undertaken, with measurable outcomes/KPIs developed prior to bringing the idea back to the Committee.

25 **Mental Health Provision**

Councillor Davis presented the final *Mental Health Youth Worker* report from Young Devon, together with an overall summary of the support which Sidmouth Town Council had given to Mental Health services in 2025/26. Members were advised that both mental health support services previously delivered by Young Devon had been withdrawn as part of Young Devon's strategic withdrawal from the Sid Valley. This withdrawal occurred prior to the start of the current academic year, resulting in a gap in local provision.

Councillor Davis asked Members to consider possible options to address the gaps in mental health provision outlined below:

- 1) The Family Support Worker at Sidmouth College had identified that some students experienced difficulties adjusting to expected norms and social conventions within the college environment. It was suggested that Sidmouth Town Council could fund a trial intervention to support these students.
- 2) The introduction of group mental health *peer support* sessions at Sidmouth Primary School to assist pupils transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7. These sessions could aim to support children experiencing social anxiety or feelings of isolation, enabling them to settle more confidently and successfully.
- 3) It was suggested that some one-to-one mental health support could be offered at Sidmouth College. Such provision would be commissioned by Sid Valley Help, with ongoing discussions between potential providers including SPACE and HeadsUp.

A debate followed with Members exploring the Council's involvement in what is the statutory provision of a principal Council and not a Parish/Town Council. The Chair of Council also expressed concerns regarding the Council directly providing statutory services prescribed by Act of Parliament to be delivered by a higher tier Council noting the legal implications and advising that activities should remain within the Council's remit. It was suggested that lobbying the County Council regarding inadequate provision would be a more appropriate course of action.

RESOLVED that the County Council be contacted regarding the delivery of young people's statutory services and the perceived gaps in provision in the Sidmouth area with particular reference to mental health. The Chair of Council would also consult the Town Clerk regarding the legal implications of the provision of such services.

The Council remains open to consider proposals or projects which support and promote the wellbeing of CYP and their families, through the YP budget; additional support is provided annually through the grants process. However, in considering proposals for possible recommendations to Full Council, Members would require full costing and evidence of value for money, clear objectives and outcomes and the interface between proposed TC funded

provision and statutory provision, including the legal and practical implications of overlap and duplication. While the Town Council remains open to considering proposals or projects, strategic direction for the Town Council’s funded Youth Provision must come from elected members, rather than any external group.

26 The Youth Engagement Task and Finish Forum

Cllr Nelson presented the final report of the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Forum. After consideration of the report, the Committee approved the report and the recommendations it contained.

27 Other

Members were due to receive an update from Councillor Hughes regarding a Stowford *Battle of the Bands* event. Councillor Hughes had sent apologies and was not in attendance; therefore, no report was provided.

28 Future Committee Meeting Dates:

This agenda item was not covered in the time available and would be discussed at a later meeting.

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CHAIR OF THE YOUTH PROVISION COMMITTEE