

MINUTES
OF THE
MEETING OF
SIDMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER 2008
AT 6.30 PM
WOOLCOMBE HOUSE
SIDMOUTH, DEVON

Members Present:

Sidmouth North Councillor Mrs. S. Carr
 Councillor P. Sullivan (Vice-Chairman)

Sidmouth South Councillor J.G.T. Dyson
 Councillor C.F.A. Gibbings
 Councillor Mrs. M. Jolly

Sidmouth East Councillor S.P. Pollentine

Sidmouth West Councillor Mrs. A.E. Liverton

Primley Councillor T.J. Cox (Chairman)
 Councillor J. Turner

Sidford Councillor S.J. Brokenshire
 Councillor I.J. McKenzie Edwards

Sidbury Councillor Mrs. C.E. Drew

08:09/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hollick, Hughes, Kelly, G.K. Liverton, Newth, Reed and Wale.

08:09/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Gibbings and Drew declared personal interests as District Councillors.

08:09/26 BOUNDARY COMMITTEE DRAFT PROPOSAL
FOR UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DEVON

The Town Clerk gave a presentation on the Boundary Committee's draft proposal for Unitary Local Government in Devon which was published on the 7th July 2008. The Council were asked to consider a response to these draft proposals in order that a submission can be made before the deadline of 26th September 2008.

The following matters were raised and would form the basis of a letter to the Review Manager at The Boundary Committee for England.

- There is no **evidence** that a Unitary Devon is the best option (why have other concepts been disregarded?). There is no **evidence** that Unitary arrangements are working elsewhere and there is no **evidence** that the proposals will give value for money. Devon communities, especially rural parishes will not be well served by a Unitary Devon.
- No consideration appears to have been given to the future of planning or housing arrangements. This Council (as a Quality Council) has taken on some delegated decisions from the District Council and more might be possible. East Devon has an excellent housing stock and there is great concern in the Council and indeed with tenants that this will diminish under a Unitary Council.
- We are convinced that Sidmouth tax payers will be paying more for less and whilst the phrase ‘status quo’ is not popular, Sidmouth Town Council believe the current system should be maintained and enhanced with greater partnerships with other authorities, including Parish and Town Councils.
- If change is needed (and we believe that change for change sakes just costs us all money in the long run) then perhaps there might be a place for new smaller Unitary Authorities as an option as the proposed Unitary will merely be a re-vamped County Council under another name and guise.
- Every aspect of the suggested Community Boards is of great concern, the whole concept is completely undemocratic. Unitary representatives will be well paid with Parish and Town Councillors expected to attend meetings with little or no recompense. Administration costs will be high and at this moment in time there appears to be no idea where funding will come from. It will also lead to ‘professional’ Councillors as those who currently serve would be restricted to those who can afford time and resources and preclude younger people and those in full time employment to come forward as Councillors to the detriment of democracy and the system as a whole. Perhaps a more effective solution would be to give the 28 Hub Towns the finance to enable them (with greater powers) to act as the elected authority for their local community – do we need a Board to undertake what the 28 hub towns could achieve (with appropriate funding and resources).
- The proposal to take Exeter and Exmouth out of the Unitary is completely impractical, this will polarise Devon into City / Rural areas, it already started with the removal of Plymouth and Torbay, by also removing Exeter an extremely large rural area is created without a sufficient tax base to cover such areas as social services, road, etc., etc., as the funding stream will be lost.
- Sidmouth Town Council firmly believe that engagement and empowerment in a community takes place at a local level and taking this further away neither engages or empowers local people and we would ask you to reconsider the proposal made in July.

.....
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL