

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Lochaber House, High Street, Fort William on Thursday, 26 February, 2015 at 10.30 am

Present:

Mr A Baxter
Mr B Clark
Mr A Henderson

Mr T MacLennan
Mr B Murphy

In attendance:

Ms E Tayler, Professional Assistant/Assistant Ward Manager Chief Executive's Office
Mr C Kemp, Area Community Services Manager (Lochaber, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)
Mr S Callan, Assistant Area Community Services Manager (Lochaber, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)
Mr B MacKinnon, Employability Officer (Client Services), Development and Infrastructure Service
Ms C Divine, Employability Officer, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mrs N Young, Area Care and Learning Manager (West), Care and Learning Service
Mr G Hamilton, Head of Environment and Economic Development, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr G Duff, Countryside Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr J MacGillvary, Countryside Ranger, Development and Infrastructure Service
Ms M Phillips, Countryside Ranger, Development and Infrastructure Service
Ms L Lee, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector C Gough, Highland South Area Commander, Police Scotland
Area Inspector D Campbell, Police Scotland
Mr S Hay, Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services
Mr P Green, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr T MacLennan in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Gormley and Mr B Thompson.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest:-

Item 8 - Mr B Murphy (financial)

3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìre

There had been circulated Report No LA/1/15 dated 3 February 2015 by the Highland South Area Commander for Police providing a local summary update to Committee Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan.

The report summarised road safety, alcohol and drugs abuse/misuse, antisocial behaviour/disorder, crimes of dishonesty and protection of people. The Chief Inspector spoke to the report in full and provided an update where more recent figures had become available.

During discussion, Members welcomed the ongoing reduction in levels of crime, and raised issues relating to:-

- the resources required for the Deloitte Ride Across Britain event;
- road safety with regard to the A82, A830 and drink/drug driving;
- the breakdown of hate crime figures;
- consensual and legislative stop and search;
- drugs misuse, including the purchase of legal highs and the policing of music events;
- internet and telephone crime;
- the increase reporting of sexual crimes in Lochaber as against the downward trend in Highland; and
- resources for wildlife crime policing.

The Chief Inspector provided information in response to the points raised, including that the majority of searches carried out in Lochaber were legislative as opposed to consensual and that no children under the age of 12 years were being searched; that a proactive approach to sexual crime was being taken; and that wildlife crime officers also carried out other duties. With particular reference to hate incidents and internet/telephone crime, he encouraged Members and the public to come forward with any concerns or information.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and the information given and **AGREED** that:-

- i. if possible, figures for fatal and serious injury road traffic collisions for the A82 and A830 within Highland be provided in future reports;
- ii. if possible, hate crime figures be broken down in future reports to show the protected characteristics groups; and
- iii. road safety concerns raised regarding the deteriorating surface, potholes and surface water on the A82, be taken forward by CI Gough both locally and with the Inspectorate in the Trunk Roads Policing unit.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Area Committee Performance Report for 2014-15 Aithisg Dèanadais Comataidh Sgìreil Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba airson 2014-15

There had been circulated Report No LA/2/15 dated 9 February 2015 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue, together with the accompanying Lochaber Area Performance Report, which detailed fire and rescue service performance against the key areas of planned activity identified during the Ward consultation sessions.

The report drew attention to a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities carried out by the Fire and Rescue Service together with partners to reduce risk to the communities of Lochaber. Mr Green spoke to the report in full, drawing attention to a range of issues including fire statistics, the new policy for responding to repeat false alarms, flooding and water rescue, road safety, and recruitment.

Members welcomed the report and the information provided in response to their earlier requests. During discussion a number of points were raised, including in relation to:-

- patterns of road traffic incidents in particular on the A82;
- how availability figures compared between quarters;
- two-appliance stations across Highland, and crewing levels at Kinlochleven;
- the potential for an increase in the number of chimney fires due to increases in the number of wood burning stoves, and action being taken to prevent this' and
- whether there were any plans to close stations.

Mr Green provided information in response to the points raised and, supported by Mr Hay, emphasised in particular that the message being given by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service was that there were no plans to close stations - front line services would be protected and there would be no redundancies. Local recruitment was vital for both preventative work and emergency response, however, Members were encouraged to assist with promoting recruitment and to bring forward any suggestions which could help deliver the seasonal Thematic Actions Plans.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and the information given, and **AGREED** that:-

- i. if available, additional information be included in the report to the next Committee on the vehicles involved in road traffic incidents on the A82 and the A830 (e.g. tourists, hire cars etc.); and
- ii. station availability figures for previous quarters be included in future performance reports, for comparison purposes.

5. Review of Specialist Equipment in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Ath-sgrùdadh air Acainn Sònraichte ann an Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No. LA/3/15 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue comprising a briefing note on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's evaluation of its specialist resources across Scotland, and the outcomes of the review.

During discussion, Mr Hay explained that following amalgamation of the eight Fire and Rescue services, the location of and demand for all specialist resources had

been evaluated. He provided information on vehicles and equipment held in the North which were seldom used and which would be redeployed elsewhere, and additional equipment that would come to the Highlands to fill gaps in local provision. In particular, a swift water capability would be established in Fort William and a command and control unit provided which would support larger incidents across the area e.g. wildfires. He also informed the Committee of a number of building works planned for Highland and reiterated that front line services would be protected.

In response to a question, Members were provided with further information on the swift water capability.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the paper and the information given.

6. Council Emergency Response to Recent Storms and Electricity Outage Freagairt Èiginn na Comhairle ri linn Stoirmean is Cion Dealain o Chionn Ghoirid

There had been circulated Report No. LA/4/15 dated 10 February 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform providing information on the Council's involvement and response to the recent storm and power outages affecting Lochaber.

Comments raised in discussion included that:-

- communities sometimes resisted becoming more resilient as they saw this as a reduction in Council services – it was important to work with communities and emphasise the benefits of being able to respond more directly to events; and
- the Council should take whatever action it could, including working with landowners and Transport Scotland, to carry out proactive tree-felling along road sides, particularly along the A82; severe weather would happen again.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** that a letter be written to the Transport Scotland asking for information on their practice with regard to proactive tree management alongside trunk roads.

7. Ardnamurchan High School Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidhnean Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Àrd-sgoil Àird nam Murchan

There had been circulated Report No. LA/5/15 dated 9 February 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Ardnamurchan High School Associated School Group (ASG), and provided useful updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

The Area Care and Learning Manager (West) advised Members that a new structure for the report, as requested previously by Members, was being considered by Senior Management; it was hoped that a revised report would be brought to the next Committee. In this connection, she reported that the Skye, Ross and Cromarty Members had requested a training session be given on the Insight Data, which replaced the STAC analysis; Lochaber Members could be included in this event if they wished. She also provided a brief update on staffing levels and

recruitment activity and drew attention to a forthcoming Education Scotland report for Ardnamurchan High School.

In discussion, Members welcomed the positive report. In response to questions raised, they were advised that information on uptake of swimming lessons would be reported to Ward meetings and that, in relation to housing for key workers and recruitment difficulties, the Council had been advised that Lochaline School House was available and this had been circulated to staff – it was important that this information was disseminated.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and the information given, including that the Education Scotland report on Arnamurchan High School would be published in early March and brought to the next Committee; a copy would also be forwarded to Members as soon as it was available. Arising from the discussion on key worker housing, the Committee **AGREED** that their concerns that increases to Corran Ferry fares would exacerbate teacher recruitment difficulties be brought to the attention of Headquarters.

8. Housing Performance Report - 1 April 2014 - 31 December 2014
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2014 - 31 Dùbhlachd 2014

Declaration of Interest: Mr B Murphy declared a financial interest in this item as a temporary accommodation provider and left the room for the duration of the item.

There had been circulated Report No. LA/6/15 dated 11 February 2015 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section had performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the first nine months of 2014/2015.

Members having thanked officers for providing information previously requested, the Committee **NOTED** the report and that concerns relating to a particular flooding issue would be addressed outwith the meeting.

9. Housing Capital Projects Report
Aithisg Phròiseactan Calpa Taigheadais

There had been circulated for information Report No. LA/7/15 dated 12 February 2015 by the Director of Community Services providing information to Members on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Projects in the Lochaber Area and on future proposals for the Housing Capital programme.

The Area Community Services Manager summarised the main points of the report. During full discussion, Members welcomed the works proposed for the Swedish timber properties but expressed concern at levels of cyclical maintenance – lack of external painting would store up problems in the years ahead and made an area look run down. The view was also expressed that new kitchens etc. should be provided on an area basis, to all tenants. In response to these and other points raised, the Area Manager advised that:-

- it was hoped that the SQHS works would be completed by the end of the year. This should free up money to move to a more regular capital programme;

- expenditure on items such as cyclical painting and maintenance to external areas were funded from the Housing Revenue Account and priority was given to repairs to individual houses as the need arose – there was a finite amount of money and no easy answers;
- he would work with Members and the tenant liaison officer to improve the flow of information on such matters as the dates for upgrading works to be carried out, and the reasons for delays; and
- Member concerns regarding the efficacy of air source heat pumps would be passed on to appropriate colleagues and he undertook to find out what monitoring was being carried out. He would also inquire as to plans for training local engineers/ apprenticeships.

The Chair having encouraged Members to raise the need for increased local control and decision making at the forthcoming review of Area Committees, the Committee **NOTED** the report and the information given and **AGREED** that the issues raised relating to expenditure and flow of information be discussed during the forthcoming review of the Area Committee remit.

10. Deprived Area Fund 2015-16 Maoin Sgìrean Bochda 2015-16

There had been circulated Report No. LA/8/15 dated 12 February 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which invited Members to consider recommendations for the allocation of the Deprived Area Fund for 2015-16 in the Lochaber Area.

The Employability Officer summarised the report: work was going well and it was anticipated that the budget would be fully spent.

The Committee welcomed the work being undertaken. In response to questions raised, Members were provided with information on how the Lochaber Hope project was scored and advised that this score would improve as the project developed and the organisation came to function more fully; and the support offered to people searching for jobs, and the reasons this was required.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following recommendations:

- i. The SHIRLIE project - £ 4,610
- ii. West Highland College UHI (Lochaber) - £9,970
- iii. Lochaber Hope - £ 9,829

The Committee also **AGREED** to delegate decisions on the balance of the Funds in 2015-16 to the Director of Development and Infrastructure in consultation with the Chair of the Area Committee and appropriate Ward Members.

11. Land Reform Ath-leasachadh Fearainn

There had been circulated Report No. LA/9/15 dated 16 February 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure briefly summarising the recommendations of the Government's Land Reform Review Group which are most relevant to the Council. It also presented the recommendations of the Smith Commission on the Crown

Estate in Scotland and the Council's recent involvement in supporting land reform in the Highlands.

The Head of Environment and Economic Development drew attention to the main points of the report. He advised that work was ongoing with the Scottish Parliament with regard to how the Smith Commission findings would be implemented and that Community Land Scotland, whose objectives were similar to the Council's, had asked to give a presentation to the Committee.

Members welcomed the report and supported the steps being taken to promote community land ownership. Having been advised that vacant land included buildings, and having drawn attention to a local property which was in need of improvement and might be suitable for some form of community ownership, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the findings of the Land Reform Review Group published in May 2014;
- ii. **NOTED** the extent of the Council's current involvement in supporting land reform in the Highlands; and
- iii. **AGREED** to promote the cause of land reform within the Lochaber Area.

12. Countryside Ranger Role Dreuchd nam Maor-dùthcha

There had been circulated Report No. LA/10/15 dated 23 January 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which summarised the events programme delivered by the Council's Countryside Rangers during 2014/15 and the resources allocated to the activities. The report also presented the activities proposed within Lochaber for the financial year 2015/16.

Attention having been drawn to a recent publication setting out forthcoming activities and Members having expressed support for the work carried out by the Rangers, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the content of the report, including highlights of the work of the Countryside Rangers in the Lochaber area during 2014/15; and
- ii. the proposed priorities and activities programme for the 2015-16 financial year.

13. Street Naming – Developments in Spean Bridge and Inverlochy Ainmeachadh Sràide – Leasachaidhean ann an Drochaid an Aonachain agus Inbhir Lòchaidh

There had been circulated Report No. LA/11/15 dated 24 January, 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform regarding the naming of a road and housing block at:

- Spean Bridge (new development of 11 properties off A86) – Burnside
- Inverlochy (Glenlochy Distillery site 21 flatted properties) – McAndie Court

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the names given to the road and housing block as set out above.

14. Landfill Community Fund
Maoin Coimhearsnachd Làraich Sgudail

There had been circulated Report No. LA/12/15 dated 28 January 2015 by the Director of Community Services inviting Members to approve an application to the Highland Council Landfill Community Fund.

The Area Community Services Manager summarised the report and acknowledged that the wording in the Appendix should read “Lochaber” rather than “Inverness” Green Gym.

In discussion, Members requested that further information about TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) be obtained, perhaps by way of a visit, and suggested that the Landfill Community Fund could usefully be discussed at Ward business meetings, to consider whether there were other local projects could be undertaken.

The Committee **APPROVED** that the application from The Conservation Volunteers, Scotland, be submitted to ENTRUST for their consideration.

15. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Area Committee held on 25 November 2014, which were approved by the Council on 18 December 2014.

With reference to item 8 of the minutes, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided regarding the widened eligibility criteria for the Landfill Community Fund, which included projects for public parks, and **AGREED** that action be taken to increase community awareness of the fund

The meeting concluded at 1.15 pm.