

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in Lochaber House, High Street, Fort William on Friday, 23 June, 2017 at 1.00pm.

### Present:

Mr B Allan  
Mr A Baxter  
Mr N McLean

Mr I Ramon  
Mr B Thompson

### In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)  
Mr P McElhinney, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services (by video conference)  
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

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

### Business

The Senior Ward Manager took the Chair at the start of the meeting.

#### 1. **Appointment of Chair** **Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr A Baxter as Chair.

#### **Mr Baxter then took the Chair.**

At this point, the Chair confirmed that he looked forward to working with all Lochaber Members over the next few years. The indications were that as much business and power as possible would be devolved to Local Committees in future and there was a responsibility on Local Members to ensure this happened.

He also referred to contact which had been made by residents and Community Councils with regard to concerns about the standard of grass cutting in the area and confirmed that he had been in contact with both the Leader of the Council and the Director of Community Services on this matter. He had also asked for a representative from Community Services to attend the next Ward Business Meeting so that this could be discussed in more detail and with a view to resolving the issues which had been raised.

#### 2. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Henderson and Mr B MacLachlan.

### **3. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

The Committee **NOTED** the following declaration of interest:-

Item 10 – Mr B Allan (Non-Financial)

### **4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report for 2016/17 Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba airson Ràith 1 de 2016/17**

There had been circulated Report No LA/6/17 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland providing an update on the progress against the priorities outlined in the Area Plan for Lochaber 2016 – 2017. In this regard, priority areas had been identified through a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities delivered in partnership to reduce risk to the communities of Lochaber.

The report also contained previously agreed information and performance as requested by Committee Members.

Having heard the Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) summarise the report, the following points were raised:-

- The SFRS was actively recruiting in a number of communities to improve station and fire appliance availability and as a result new recruits had been appointed which had improved station availability since the last report to the Committee. There were a number of promotional activities which would hopefully result in further new recruits being appointed. The Group Manager thanked local Employers who continued to support Retained Fire and Rescue teams in releasing them for operational duties;
- The Service would welcome assistance from the Council, through its community connections, social groups, school visits, and any community activity the SFRS could take part in to raise the profile of the work of the SFRS in order to attract candidates to the Service. In relation to the Lochaber 999 Road Show, enquiries were being made to see if it was possible to provide a bus for young people and their parents from rural areas to attend this event. There might be a cost for the provision of this transport and any financial assistance from the Council for this would be greatly appreciated;
- In terms of recruitment, it was queried if people who lived in Glencoe and Ballachulish could be recruited to the Kinlochleven station. It was advised that Fire personnel had to be able to attend the station within 6 minutes of a call out and this time limit would therefore exclude those living in these villages from being recruited. If people worked close to the station during the day then it might be possible to recruit them. In terms of whether a new Station could be located in Glencoe village or Ballachulish, it was advised that where Stations were located was a matter for the Service to determine in light of its operational requirements;
- It was advised that defibrillators had been issued to some key stations in the area as a transitional measure. Fire personnel attending to heart attacks at incidents had not yet been approved nationally but once national terms and conditions had been agreed it would be easier to roll out defibrillators to other stations;

- In relation to the Grenfell Tower fire, the SFRS had carried out an assessment and there were no high rise buildings over 5 floors in the area. The Service had a duty to carry out fire safety checks on high rise buildings and properties that were licensed to ensure that they complied with the relevant fire safety legislation. In relation to home fire safety checks, the owner's permission was required before Fire personnel could undertake fire safety checks. In particular, high risk and vulnerable people were targeted for home safety checks and in this area over 800 home fire safety visits had been undertaken which was a significant number and was very welcomed;
- It was queried if the Service had concerns from a fire risk perspective of grass being allowed to grow in village and urban environments. It was explained that there was a new Council policy of not cutting grass on slopes and there were villages that had houses and car parking at the top of slopes. It was advised that this would be a potential fire risk. The Fire Service dealt with a number of wild fires in the spring and summer season and the main concern was if any of those came close to properties. In the Lochaber area many properties had gas cylinders and oil tanks which could have considerable consequences for Fire personnel tackling this type of wild fire incident, given the potential for an explosion. Therefore, it could be a false economy not cutting the grass, given that the cost of the Fire Service and the community dealing with a wild fire could be much greater;
- When a fire station responded to a call out, fire appliances from other Stations would be deployed to ensure that cover was available throughout the area. It was therefore vitally important to recruit personnel and to ensure that stations were available when required;
- In relation to the Community Response Units (CRU), it was queried if the types of incidents they had been called out to had been reduced since control room call handling had been removed from Highland and were call handlers aware of what types of incidents CRUs could respond to. It was advised that there were two CRUs in the Lochaber area and they were called out when required. There was no knowledge of them not being called upon as a consequence of call handling being outwith the area. Further, call handlers were aware of the CRUs appliances and their capability.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

## 5. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh a thaobh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No LA/7/17 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 March, 2017.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- an update on the Syrian resettlement project in Kinlochleven was requested and it was advised that this had been a very successful project and refugee families had settled into the community extremely well. The community had accepted and assisted the families. There was a monthly delivery group meeting to deal with any issues that the families might have but there had been no significant issues to date;
- it was noted that the poor state of gardens was treated as low level anti-

- social behaviour in terms of Council policy. If escalated, this could result in enforcement action being taken for householders to improve their gardens;
- It was explained that the length of time to complete non-emergency repairs was measured from the time that a works order was raised in the housing system to the job being repaired. A comment was made that the target of 8 days for completion of non-emergency repairs was probably only a small part of the tenant's experience and it would be useful to measure their entire experience from the moment the repair was logged to the job being completed and the average time that this took. It was advised that information could also be provided on routine repairs.
  - It was queried if exterior cladding on Council properties had been fire safety checked and in particular if physical safety tests were to be undertaken. It was advised that the Scottish Government had issued an instruction for all Local Authorities to check cladding and this work was underway. In this respect, Members requested an update from the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance as to progress on this matter and the requirements of the Scottish Government instruction i.e. whether this was a paper check or laboratory testing of materials.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March, 2017.

It was **AGREED** that a measure of tenants' experience in terms of repair works being carried out on their properties and the average length of time it took to complete repairs be provided in the next report.

It was also **AGREED** that an update should be provided by the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance on progress with fire safety checks on exterior cladding on Council properties and information on the requirements of the Scottish Government instruction for safety checks i.e. whether this was a paper check or laboratory testing of materials.

## **6. Lochaber Roads Maintenance Programme 2017/18 Prògram Càradh Rathaid Ionadail Loch Abar 2017/18**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/8/17 dated 8 June, 2017 by the Director of Community Services which detailed the Lochaber Roads Maintenance Programme for 2017/18.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was queried as to when the 2018/19 Roads Maintenance programme was to be submitted to the Local Committee. In response, it was confirmed that it was intended to submit this programme to the October 2017 meeting of the Committee;
- in relation to the 2017/18 Winter Maintenance Plan, a request was made that this be submitted to the August meeting of the Committee and early confirmation that this would happen was sought;
- it was queried how often the Jetpatcher road repair machine would be allocated to Lochaber compared to other areas. It was advised that the Council now had its own Jetpatcher and each area had been allocated money for use of this machine as shown in Appendix 1 to the report. For Lochaber, this amounted to £9,900 (about 10 days work). In addition the

Council hired another Jetpacher and the Lochaber area would receive a further 2 to 4 weeks use of this machine;

- it was queried how the maintenance of roads under the Housing Revenue Account was managed. It was advised that it was managed by Housing who had the revenue budget for this. Most roads in Council housing estates were adopted and would come under the Roads Maintenance budget. However, some roads and car parks in Council housing schemes were not adopted and the point was made that those car parks were the most neglected in the road network and tenants/non tenants living in privately owned homes found it difficult to understand why the Council were not maintaining them. It was advised that this was a Highland wide issue and the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance was looking into it. Continuing, in some cases there were so few Council owned houses in residential areas and as the Council was still responsible for the car parks, there was a case for the Council adopting these car parks as part of the road network. It was advised that this would have to be done on a case by case basis as it could have far reaching consequences if done Highland wide; and
- arising from the discussion on the Housing Revenue Account, a point was made that when Community Services was created, Members were advised that there would be no distinction between how the Housing Revenue Account worked and TEC Services responsibilities. However, it was apparent that it was far from seamless and the distinction still remained.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Lochaber Roads Maintenance Programme for 2017/18 and **AGREED** to request that the 2017/18 Winter Maintenance Plan be submitted to the August meeting.

**7. U1661 Corriebeg Road – Partial Deletion  
U1661 Rathad na Coire Bige – Pairt Dubhadh As**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/9/17 dated 15 May, 2017 by the Director of Community Services inviting approval of the proposed deletion of the last 70 metres of the U1661 Corriebeg Road from the List of Adopted Roads.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed partial deletion of the U1661 Corriebeg Road, Locheilside.

**8. Kilchoan Speed Restrictions (30/40mph Speed Limit) Order 2017  
Òrdugh Cuingealachadh Astair Chille Chòmhain (Crìoch Astair 30/40msu)  
2017**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/10/17 dated 12 May, 2017 by the Director of Community Services on proposed implementation of amendments to the current speed restriction in Kilchoan.

In this regard, and in relation to the Ormsaigbeg road at Kilchoan, safety concerns were expressed in regard to how overgrown the verges were on this road and also the number of potholes. In response, the Road Operations Manager undertook to discuss these concerns with Local Members.

The Committee **APPROVED** the introduction of a 30mph speed restriction in Kilchoan, the preparation and advertising of a Draft Order and the making of the Order should there be no unresolved objection.

**9. B849 Speed Restrictions (30mph Speed Limit) Order 2017**  
**Òrdugh Cuingealachadh Astair B849 (Crìoch Astair 30msu) 2017**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/11/17 dated 12 May, 2017 by the Director of Community Services on proposed speed restrictions for part of the B849 Drimnin Road.

The Committee **APPROVED** the introduction of a 30mph speed restriction on part of the B849 Lochaline – Drimnin Road, the preparation and advertising of a Draft Order and location plan (available at Appendix 1 & 2 to the report) and the making of the Order should there be no unresolved objection.

**10. Street Naming**  
**Ainmeachadh Sraide**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr B Allan declared a non-financial interest in this item as an employee of the developer of properties at the Heathercroft development site but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/12/17 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development Service requesting homologation of the naming of a new street at the Heathercroft development site in Fort William as ‘Raasay Court’.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the naming of the new street at the Heathercroft development site in Fort William as ‘Raasay Court’.

**11. Appointments to Lochaber Local Access Forum**  
**Cur an Dreuchd gu Foram Inntrigeadh Ionadail Loch Abar**

The Council had a statutory duty under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to establish Local Access Forums for its area. There are currently six Local Access Forums in the Highland area which advise on matters in relation to the exercise of access rights, the existence of delineation of rights of way or the drawing up and adoption of the Core Path Plan. In addition, they also offer and give assistance to parties in terms of the resolution of any disputes in this respect.

The Committee were invited to appoint 2 Members to the Lochaber Local Access Forum.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr B Thompson and Mr N McLean to the Lochaber Local Access Forum.

**12. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for noting Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 18 January, 2017 which had been approved by the Council on 9 March 2017, which were **NOTED**.

The Committee also requested an update to a Ward Business meeting on the Community Services review on parity of route prioritisation across Highland for winter maintenance, taking particular regard of the nature of the geographical layout of some parts of the Highlands.

The meeting concluded at 2.15pm.