

Agenda Item	4
Report No	LA/19/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Lochaber Committee

Date: 4 October 2017

Report Title: Lochaber Priorities

Report By: Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the Lochaber Priorities as agreed in October 2016 and provides an opportunity for Members to discuss their key issues with the Leader and whether the Administration could help progress these issues.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Consider and agree to review the current Lochaber Priorities
 - ii. Agree that the priorities will be further refined and progress reported following discussion at a future meeting.

3. Background

- 3.1 Building on the Localism agenda and increased delegation of decision making to local committees, each local committee was asked by the Leader to consider developing a set of strategic Council priorities for their area.
- 3.2 It is important to note that while these are Council priorities, they were drafted on the basis of shared understanding of the concerns and priorities discussed at the Lochaber Partnership

4. Developing the Lochaber Priorities

- 4.1 Lochaber Members originally set out their priorities for the area in November 2015. These priorities were identified through community consultation and discussion with partners via the Lochaber Community Planning Partnership. They were endorsed again at the Lochaber Committee held on 19 October 2016.
- 4.2 Following the Local Authority elections in May 2017, 4 new Members were elected to serve the Lochaber Wards 11 and 21.
- 4.3 Members have taken the opportunity over the first few months in office to meet with a number of services and partners responsible for progressing some of the key priorities identified, including Tourism, Infrastructure, Education, Housing, Community Works and Health.
- 4.4 Lochaber is currently experiencing a significant number of economic opportunities as growth is reported in a number of sectors including tourism and manufacturing. The purchase of the aluminium smelter by Liberty Simec GFG will potentially create a significant number of jobs but this will also bring challenges in ensuring the appropriate infrastructure is in place to deliver this.
- 4.5 This report provides an opportunity to discuss these key issues with the Leader and to determine whether the Administration can help progress them.
- 4.6 Further meetings will be scheduled to refine the priorities and progress will be reviewed at a future Area Committee.

5. Implications

- 5.1 There are no immediate Resource, Legal, Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural), Climate Change/Carbon Clever, Risk implications or Gaelic implications in the report. However, the priorities may have a positive impact on many of these themes.

Designation: Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development

Date: 18 September 2017

Author: Dot Ferguson

Background Papers: Appendix 1 - Lochaber Priorities

HIGHLAND FIRST - LOCHABER PRIORITIES

Lochaber looks forward and sees an area which offers an increasingly attractive place to live, learn and work. This ongoing commitment to a growing and sustainable area is demonstrated by our determination to see the following priorities delivered:

- **A830 relief road** – construction of this road will remove around 60% of traffic from a recognised A82 choke point, delivering more effective traffic movement and freeing up land for commercial use
- **Transport infrastructure** – working with the public and private sector we will deliver a more efficient and joined up transport system. This will provide a trunk road network fit for purpose and the infrastructure to create a multi-modal hub allowing sea, rail and road transport to work seamlessly and offering a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists. A long-term sustainable solution for crossing the Corran Narrows will also be investigated.
- **Marine infrastructure** – providing appropriate infrastructure such as pontoons and a breakwater combined with effective management structure (eg a harbour authority) will maximise the potential from marine tourism, including cruise ships
- **STEM Centre**– supporting West Highland College UHI’s ambition to develop a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths Centre will ensure that Lochaber continues to strengthen and diversify its education provision, making it well-placed to serve the economy
- **“University Town” status for Fort William** – with partners we will pursue development and delivery of services and facilities which support our growing student population which will in turn help grow the economic and cultural diversity of the area.
- **New Belford Hospital** – replacing the existing 1960s Belford Hospital with a state of the art facility which will deliver outstanding health care for the next 50 years will ensure the well-being of the residents and visitors to the area
- **Health and wellbeing** – working with community planning partners we will develop and deliver the Lochaber Community Learning and Development plan which aims to improve the skills and well-being of people living and working in Lochaber, including the most vulnerable
- **Increase housing and specialist support provision** – we will work with partners to provide the mechanism to deliver suitable housing with the most appropriate support in areas of identified need. This will deliver for our most vulnerable communities as well as increasing social confidence

- **Indoor Training Centre** – assisting the delivery of an Indoor Training Centre will reduce the demands on local pitches which suffer from the extreme wet-weather conditions allowing a greater range of sports to be enjoyed with the resulting health and social benefits
- **Multi-use indoor centre** – extending visitors' length of stay and increasing the social well-being of the area can be delivered by developing all weather visitor attractions offering a range of uses for residents and visitors
- **Participatory budgeting** – we will build on the success of the Lochaber pilot and will strengthen and empower communities to decide together how public monies should be spent
- **Lochaber Common Good Fund** – establishing a Common Good Fund will enable appropriate projects to be funded via a mechanism which will have direct community input