

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in Lochaber House, High Street, Fort William on Tuesday, 22 August, 2017 at 10.30 a.m.

**Present:**

Mr B Allan	Mr N McLean
Mr A Baxter	Mr I Ramon
Mr A Henderson	Mr B Thompson

**In attendance:**

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)  
Chief Inspector B MacKay, Police Scotland  
Mr D Kilday, C3IR Programme, Police Scotland  
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport, Community Services  
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services  
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services  
Mr L MacDonald, Repairs Manager (South), Community Services  
Mr P Wheelan, Planner, Development & Infrastructure  
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**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr B MacLachlan.

**2. Declarations of Interest  
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

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

Item 7 – Mr A Henderson – Financial

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

There was circulated Report No LA/13/17 by the South Area Commander for Police which provided an update to Committee Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan.

Members were also given a presentation on the Control Room Programme transition (the C3IR Programme) which would see the closure of the Inverness Area Control Room and Service Centre, and would result in the transition of call handling activity (both 999 and 101 calls) to the Police Scotland Service Centre, with the management of police incidents being controlled from Area Control Room North in

Dundee. It was intended for a report to be submitted to the Scottish Police Authority Board on 28 September, 2017 to proceed.

The presentation covered the background for the need for change of the control room service following the creation of Police Scotland, with the aim of delivering significant benefits to policing and communities across Scotland. Performance in call handling would be improved as a result of the proposals and there was a strong culture of improvement, with significant investment in ICT and staffing.

It was recognised that there was concern that closing of Inverness Area Control Room and Service Centre would result in a loss of local knowledge. However, it was emphasised that it was the same local policing teams who would be tasked to attend local incidents exactly as they are now. Also, significant planning, training and exercising was being undertaken in respect of the unique landscape of North Division including in areas such as mountain rescue and island processes.

The transition was subject to a robust quality assurance process so that the new control room service would be delivered safely and securely.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Reference was made to a recent fatal road traffic accident on the A82 involving a motorcyclist. Members expressed their condolences to the family and friends of the motorcyclist. A point was made that there seemed to be an issue with motorcyclists at weekends who were risking lives with excessive speed and dangerous driving and it was queried if the Police were adding extra patrols at weekends to address this problem. It was confirmed that this would be discussed with the Police Road Unit to see what further action could be taken. Educating motorcyclists was key to ensuring that they ride their motorbikes in a safe manner and the Police would work to get this message across.
- In relation to heavy traffic in Fort William, a point was made that no Member had blamed this on the works at the new retail park development. The contractors had done a fantastic job in minimising traffic disruption while the works were being carried out. However, there was just too much traffic in the area and this point had to be put across in the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) to be carried out.
- It was noted that some Police authorities were encouraging motorists to use dash cam footage as evidence of dangerous driving and this could be a useful cost effective device in traffic enforcement and a deterrent to those whose dangerous driving risked their own lives and that of others. It was advised that the quality of footage from dash cams had improved and the number of reports to Police from those who had dash cam footage recorded had increased and had successfully been used in enforcement.
- Members had highlighted before their concerns over accident investigation on the A82 and had requested a road investigation unit in Fort William for some considerable time. The recent fatal road accident on the A82 had re-emphasised the need for a unit in the area, given the length of time accident investigation work took. Members understood the need for the road closures to allow a full investigation to take place, but there was a reliance on an investigation unit from Dingwall to attend traffic accidents in Lochaber resulting in lengthy road closures and there were no suitable diversions. Also, due to Police Scotland moving officers to specialist units, it was

understood that the Police in Lochaber were at times overstretched. A reassurance was sought that local Police officers were not overstretched and that they had the resources to deal with a serious road traffic incident. In response, it was advised that Police Officer numbers in Lochaber had not decreased, although there were two vacancies, one in Glencoe and one in Fort William and these posts would be filled soon. A local officer had expressed interest in being trained in collision investigation and was currently on the list to attend the training course. Members would be advised of the timescale for this. However, once trained this would be only one officer in the area who could carry out collision investigations, and in the event of a serious accident, the officer may not be on duty and therefore officers from the Dingwall Road Policing Unit would require to attend.

- It was noted that there was an outstanding action for Police Scotland's Roads Inspector for the area to be in attendance at a meeting, given Members concerns on road safety/road accident investigation. It was confirmed that the Officer would be in attendance at a future meeting.
- Reference was made to an initiative being carried out in Strathyre where local primary school children working alongside the Police, would talk to speeding drivers on the impact their actions were having on local communities. A commitment was given to do this in areas of Lochaber where speeding was an issue and report back to Members.
- In relation to call handling for mountain rescue teams, reassurance was sought that call handlers would have detailed information and knowledge of the capacities of the teams as to what types of incidents they could be called out to. It was explained that call handlers would relay the incident information to local officers who would still deal with incidents. Local Officers knew the team leaders and capabilities of Mountain Rescue Teams. An assurance was given that this specific issue would be highlighted in the training of call handlers in control rooms.

Having scrutinised the progress report, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i the updates in relation to the 3 Priorities: Road Safety, Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Dishonesty;
- ii that a Police Roads Inspector would be in attendance at a future meeting in light of Members concerns about road safety/accident investigations;
- iii that Members would be advised of the timescale for the local Police Officer to be trained in collision investigation;
- iv that Members would be advised on progress regarding a scheme whereby local primary school children working alongside the Police, would talk to speeding drivers on the impact their actions were having on local communities.

#### **4. Corran Ferry – Operational Update Aiseag a' Chorrain – Fios às Ùr mu Obrachadh**

There was circulated Report No. LA/14/17 by the Director of Community Services which provided an update on the recent suspension of the Corran Ferry; actions taken to restore the service; and business continuity measures being put in place to deliver improved resilience of the service.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee commended the crew of the Corran Ferry for their quick reactions in averting a more serious incident happening. The Director of Finance, Head of Roads and Transport and Roads Operations Manager were also thanked for their work in dealing with the initial situation, its aftermath and ensuring that the Ferry service was operating again quickly.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the proposal for the options appraisal for the Corran Ferry. There was a clear steer from the Transport Services Redesign Review Group to develop the options appraisal and this should now be commenced as quickly as possible. All options should be considered, and this should take account of any Scottish Government funding for ferry services that was available.
- in terms of the proposal to commence with the options appraisal for the Ferry in 2017/18, it was advised that this had originally been planned as a medium term action, but had been brought forward in the light of the recent suspension of the service. While it was hoped that the option appraisal could be completed within this financial year, the timescale for completion would depend on the Independent External Consultant's progress. A decision on the option appraisal would require Council approval and the Lochaber Committee would be updated on progress.
- It was noted that the HITRANS STAG report on the Corran Narrows crossing examines the possible long term option of a fixed crossing. This may not be such a farfetched option, given the cost of purchasing new ferries and the lifetime of the vessels. As well as the bridge option, it was requested that a hydro electric causeway option be also included in the options appraisal. This had been done in other countries and had potential to produce revenue.
- the impact on Fort William of a ferry or bridge crossing not being available should be considered, in terms of the impact this would have on the infrastructure of the town.
- a bridge crossing could have advantages for the area as was seen from the benefits the Skye Bridge had brought to that area.
- The Road Equivalent Tariff was having an economic cost on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula, as tourists were missing out the Peninsula in favour of cheaper ferry routes to other areas.
- It was explained that the HITRANS STAG report would look at options for the crossing e.g. ferry/bridge/causeway and the wider implications of the crossing being off. The Council's option appraisal would look at more immediate issues such as the vessels, investment in the vessels, succession planning with the crew, maintenance arrangements. Members were advised that their input into developing the options appraisal would be welcomed to ensure that all viable options were considered.
- Pending the outcome of the option appraisal, it was requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting on other issues regarding the Corran Ferry service, such as, smart ticketing/fare structure/whether there were risks in terms of costly infrastructure repairs to maintain the ferry service.
- Concern was expressed regarding communication in respect of any potential problems with the ferry service. It was requested that any looming problems in this respect, whether it be repairs or refit etc, local Members should be informed immediately, so that they were properly briefed should members of the public contact them. Further, the biggest criticism from the public over the recent loss in service was the lack of communication and information

from the Council on what was happening. This was a lifeline service and lessons from the failures in communication had to be learned. It was advised that the communications policy was to be reviewed to look at improvements in getting the message across quickly in the event of a loss of ferry service.

- In terms of the maintenance and refit of the vessels, there was a proposal to expand the marine service facilities at Corpach which would enable repairs to be undertaken locally.
- It was advised that the back up vessel, the Maid of Glencoul, would be fully serviced and available for operation within the next couple of weeks. Members would be notified of any delay to this timescale.

Thereafter, the Committee :-

i **NOTED** the actions taken to restore operation of the Corran Ferry service and business continuity measures taken to improve the resilience of the service in the future;

ii **AGREED** that the options appraisal for the Corran Ferry is commenced in 2017/18; and

iii **AGREED** that an additional report on the current operation of the Corran Ferry be submitted to the next meeting to provide an update on outstanding issues discussed at previous meetings e.g. smart ticketing/ future communication plan.

## **5. Winter Maintenance Plan for 2017/18 Plana Obair-glèidhidh Geamhraidh airson 2017/18**

There was circulated Report No. LA/15/17 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on winter maintenance preparations and arrangements for the 2017/18 winter period and invited the Committee to approve the Winter Maintenance Plans for Lochaber.

It was advised that the Council always had an agreement with the Spean Bridge Roy Bridge and Achnacarry Community Council that the Alltour Road to the fire station would be classed as a primary route and the plan should be changed to recognise this.

It was advised that the Glensanda quarry was potentially laying off drivers, and they may be available if the Council required to recruit drivers to its workforce.

There was a need to ensure that grit/salt bins were replenished quickly, particularly on the approaches to churches.

In the event of exceptional weather conditions, a framework contract was in place which allowed the Council to bring in additional resources from local contractors at short notice. In addition, local teams had their own contacts who could be called upon to assist in exceptional conditions. In particular, it was understood that there was no longer a local contractor for Glengarry on standby and an undertaking was given to check this and if not advertise the vacancy.

It was queried if the Framework contract was being measured and was it still performing when needed. In response, given that over the last few winters there had not been a need to call upon additional resources, it would be sensible to

refresh the framework contract to ensure that all the contractors on the list were still available. There would still be a need for local teams to have their local contacts and finding local solutions to problems in exceptional bad weather, for example, using the Coast Guard to take medical personnel to people in their homes.

Reference was made to difficulty that home carers had in visiting clients' homes in bad weather and particular reference was made to the Ardnamurchan Peninsula road. It was requested that if there was weather that required the gritter fleet to start one hour earlier at 5am, then this road should be a priority.

It was noted that the Community Services Committee had agreed to undertake a review of footpath tractors as it was believed that the Lochaber area did not have enough and there were other Areas where tractors were not being used. There was also to be a review on parity of route prioritisation across Highland. An update was sought on these reviews.

Thereafter, the Committee:

i **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Lochaber Area, which included the priority road lists and maps presented in Appendices B & C of the report, subject to:- the Alltour Road to the fire station being classed as a primary route; and Glasdrum Drive being corrected to Glasdrum Road in secondary routes; and

ii **AGREED** that the Framework contract with local contractors would be refreshed.

## **6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2017 Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2017 gu 30 Ògmhios 2017**

There was circulated Report No LA/16/17 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Housing Charter and other performances indicators up to 30 June, 2017.

In particular it was advised that there was a Rent Arrears Working Group looking at what improvements could be made to current policy and procedures in dealing with Universal Credit in particular.

It was noted that the recladding of timber houses in Lochaber was ongoing.

Having heard the Chairman express his appreciation to the Housing department in Lochaber for significant improvements in terms of being more responsive to Councillors and assisting them with work in their Wards, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2017.

**7. Planning Guidance for Mallaig Harbour Expansion**  
**Stiùireadh Dealbhadh airson Caladh Mhalaig a Leudachadh**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr A Henderson declared a financial interest in this item as a member of the Mallaig Harbour Authority 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 was circulated Report No. LA/17/17 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which outlined the context for and content of detailed planning guidance produced by the Mallaig Harbour Authority for the master planned expansion of Mallaig Harbour. It recommended that the Committee adopt the masterplan as interim Supplementary Guidance, making the guidance a material consideration in planning decision making.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the thorough plan formulation and consultation processes used by Mallaig Harbour Authority to produce the guidance;
- ii **NOTED** the advanced stage of the West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan and the masterplan’s compatibility with its provisions; and
- iii **APPROVED** the Mallaig Harbour Masterplan as Interim Supplementary Guidance pending its final adoption following the adoption of the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan.

**8. Street Naming**  
**Ainmeachadh Sràide**

There was circulated Report No. LA/18/17 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development Service requesting homologation of the naming of a new flatted housing block at the former Whisky and Craft Centre, Fort William as “MacBrayne Apartments”.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the naming of a new flatted housing block at the former Whisky and Craft Centre, High Street, Fort William as “MacBrayne Apartments”.

**9. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated for noting, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 23 June, 2017 which were approved by the Council on 29 June, 2017, which were **NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 p.m