

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in Lochaber House, High Street, Fort William on Wednesday, 4 October, 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
Mr B MacLachlan	

Non Member in attendance:-

Mrs M Davidson

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Mr F Nixon, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Ms K Lackie, Business Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Ms N Young, Area Care & Learning Manager, West, Care and Learning Service
Mr D Esson, Quality Improvement Manager, West, Care and Learning Service
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services
Ms R Cleland, Communications and Resilience Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's 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.

Mr A Baxter - Chairman

Business

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

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

Item 3 – Mr B Allan – Non Financial

3. **Council Programme** **Prògram na Comhairle**

Declaration of Interest - Mr B Allan declared a non financial interest in this item as Chief Executive of Lochaber Housing Association 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.

The Leader of the Council was in attendance at the meeting to discuss the Programme for the Council.

In terms of the priority themes of the Council Programme, the Committee **AGREED** the following priorities should be reflected in the Council Programme and inform the further development of the local plan for Lochaber.

A Place to Live

- Investment in affordable housing particularly three bedroom family housing. Also, with the proposals for expansion of the Aluminium Smelter, Fort William there was an opportunity to work with the owners of the smelter to use the land supply available and Council housing stock in Kinlochleven for the anticipated workforce at the smelter.

Further, in relation to an issue of developers acquiring land, receiving planning permission but then nothing happened for many years, it was advised that the Council was looking to purchase land for housing, and a Seminar was arranged on 10 November, 2017 for Members on planning issues and how to progress developments.

- Lochaber Committee should set its own housing strategy and this could then be reflected in the Council's overall housing plan. The Head of Development and Regeneration be invited to meet with Members to discuss this.

A Place to Learn

- the quality of the new schools in the area be used for marketing purposes to encourage people to come too work and live in Lochaber.

A Place to Thrive

- Tourism was intrinsic in every area of the Council's planning and would be included in priority 3 of this Council Programme theme.
- Support from Council to small community/private providers of broadband services and to encourage providers to rollout wireless broadband.
- A key health priority for Lochaber was the new Belford Hospital and the Council would work with NHS Highland to make this happen.

A Welcoming Place

- Work with Visit Scotland to target their advertising to stretch the tourism period for Lochaber as a welcoming place all year round and to promote less visited places in the area.

- The need for more 20mph zones in the area as communities wanted a safer environment to live in.

A Redesigned Council

- The Council needed to look at how it could help communities to provide more services themselves and how the Council could support this process taking place. The Council needed to work with Highlands and Islands Enterprise to help communities provide services that were sustainable.
- that there should be either Member and/or Officer representation from Lochaber at all strategic meetings which impact on Lochaber.
- Workforce planning was required through the Community Planning Partnership, with particular emphasis on the implications of Brexit for the Council.

4. Lochaber Priorities Prìomhachasan Loch Abar

There was circulated Report No LA/19/17 dated 18 September 2017 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which set out the Lochaber Priorities as agreed in October, 2016 and provided an opportunity for Members to discuss their key issues with the Leader and whether the Administration could help progress these issues.

It was requested that an Action Plan be drawn up for the Lochaber Priorities and that the title of the first priority be changed to 'A82 realignment' with the intention that this potentially would cover a A830 relief road. Further, tourism infrastructure should be added as a priority and there was a need to lobby the Scottish Government in order to achieve the same recognition for remote rural areas as those areas to benefit from the Scottish Government's Islands Deal. In this respect, it was advised that the Scottish Government's Local Governance Bill would be more reflective of local requirements and therefore there was an opportunity to seek similar recognition in this Bill for remote rural areas and coastal communities.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the current Lochaber Priorities, subject to:-
 - the title of the first priority would be changed to 'A82 realignment', which would also cover a A830 relief road;
 - the addition of Tourism infrastructure;
 - lobby the Scottish Government in order to achieve the same recognition for remote rural areas and coastal communities as those areas to benefit from the Scottish Government's Islands Deal.

- ii. that there would be an Action Plan for the Lochaber Priorities; and
- iii. that the priorities would be further refined and progress reported following discussion at the next meeting in January, 2018.

5. **Proposals for Changes to the Governance of Education** **Molaidhean airson Atharrachaidhean do Riaghladh Foghlaim**

There was circulated Report No LA/20/17 dated 31 August 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which outlined the Scottish Government's recently announced proposals for the reform of education governance and asked Members to seek views on the proposals in their communities and particularly through discussion with their respective Parent Councils.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- there was no confirmation in the proposals on the role of Parent Councils, although there would have to be a duty of care to ensure that parents had some mechanism to engage with Head Teachers, and there would need to be support and training for Head Teachers to allow them to engage with parents. It was also unclear who Head Teachers would report to.
- There were concerns that the proposals would increase workload for Head Teachers and in terms of governance it was not clear how Elected Members would interact with the proposed Regional Improvement Collaboratives. It was advised that Mr H Fraser, former Director of Education and Mr C MacSween, former Head of Education, had been commissioned by the Council to take the lead on this work and formulate a plan to answer all the queries on the proposals that were unclear.
- It was advised that the Council's management support arrangements for Head Teachers would continue;
- In terms of how the regional governance proposals would improve attainment, an update to the proposals were provided at the meeting and it was advised that there would no longer be a Regional Director, but only a Lead Officer with responsibility for improvement. This Officer would be appointed by one of the Local Authorities in the Regional Improvement Collaborative and the Officer would be accountable to the Local Authorities in the collaborative area.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Council had agreed to seek to work with Government, including through CoSLA, the Northern Alliance and other fora in an endeavour to influence these proposals in a more positive and constructive direction; and
- ii. **NOTED** that Members would seek views on the proposals through discussions in their communities and particularly through discussions with their respective Parent Councils.

6. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba

There was circulated Report No LA/21/17 dated 20 September 2017 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland, which provided an update on progress against the priorities outlined in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Area Committee Plan for Lochaber 2016-2017.

There was also a presentation by the Local Senior Officer for Highland on the future transformation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), the Fire Service role in the future and how it could be fit for purpose. There was a need to transform as there were changing risks and challenges for the Fire Service to meet. This was an initial stage in the consultation process on the transformation, which would be followed by formal public consultation. The SFRS was committed to delivering change in partnership with public bodies and sought support for change.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In relation to what could be done to reduce the number of unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS), it was advised that a new policy had been implemented which required SFRS personnel to work closely with duty holders in order to reduce the number of UFAS events.
- it would be checked whether traffic congestion in Fort William was affecting crews attending fire calls and that consideration would be given to fire personnel having Fire Service badges displayed in their vehicles, similar to those used by the Mountain Rescue Service, for identification purposes when responding to call outs.
- In relation to the Grenfell Tower fire, it was advised that there were no buildings in this area that had similar exterior cladding to that of Grenfell Tower.
- There was no intention under the future transformation of the SFRS to centralise services in Fort William. The aim was to enhance the current services it provided, including outlying areas, in order to provide a better service for communities to meet the changing risks and challenges.
- The formal public consultation would include the use of social media, leaflets, public meetings, staff engagement and on-line surveys.

Having scrutinised the performance report, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

7. Lochaber Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Farsaing air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Loch Abar

There was circulated Report No LA/22/17 dated 20 September 2017 by the Quality Improvement Manager (West) which provided an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Lochaber Associated School Group and provided useful updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was advised that the Lochaber Associated School Group worked very well;

- that an update on the Lochaber High School Pipe Band would be circulated to Members;
- that in future reports statistics for unauthorised absences be provided for previous years for comparative purposes as well as statistics on the number of days of staff sickness absence. It would also be clarified what the difference was between the number of exclusions and Rates per 1000 Pupils compared to the number of pupils excluded and rate per 1000 pupils.
- that information would be provided to Members on whether all the 13 FTE ASN teacher posts were filled.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

8. Corran Ferry – Update Aiseag a' Chorrain – Fios às Ùr

There was circulated Report No LA/23/17 dated 20 September 2017 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on the current operation of the Corran Ferry, giving an update on outstanding issues discussed at previous meetings e.g. smart ticketing/future communication plan.

Members welcomed the report which provided reassurance that points raised at the last meeting had been addressed. It was also acknowledged that lessons had been learned and that the Council was addressing those and that a robust communications plan was now in place for future interruptions to the ferry service. It was also noted that for the first time it was explicitly acknowledged by the Council that the loss in ferry service had a significant socio-economic consequences for the area, and this was very important insofar as Lochaber was concerned.

In relation to the timing for the options appraisal for Corran Ferry, it was advised that progress on this would be made as soon as possible. Officials had been in discussions with HITRANS in order to scope the Options Appraisal and advice on the appointment of a private consultant to conduct the Options Appraisal. There was also to be a meeting with Transport Scotland at the end of October. It was requested that the outcome of the meeting with Transport Scotland on the Options Appraisal; progress with the appointment of a private consultant, and the Programme for the Options Appraisal be reported to the Ward Business Meeting in November, 2017.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the information provided on the current operation of the Corran Ferry which gave an update on outstanding issues discussed at previous meetings e.g. smart ticketing/ future communication plan.

ii **AGREED** that an update be provided at the Ward Business Meeting in November on:-

- the outcome of the meeting with Transport Scotland at the end of October on the Options Appraisal for Corran Ferry;
- progress with the appointment of a private consultant to conduct the Options Appraisal; and

- the Programme for the Options Appraisal.

9. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 22 August, 2017 which were approved by the Council on 7 September 2017, which were **NOTED**. It was requested that outstanding action points in the minutes would be reported as soon as possible to a Ward Business Meeting.

The meeting ended at 1.45 p.m.