

## AGENDA ITEM 10

### The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in Caol Community Centre, Glenkingie Street, Caol, Fort William on **Wednesday, 17 January, 2018 at 10.30 a.m.**

#### **Present:**

Mr B Allan  
Mr A Baxter

Mr A Henderson

#### **In attendance:**

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)  
Area Inspector, I Campbell, Police Scotland  
Police Constable, K Duncan, Prevention and Intervention, Police Scotland  
Ms M Cameron, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services  
Mr L MacDonald, Repairs Manager (South), Community Services  
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services  
Mr M Macleod, Head of Planning and Environment, Development & Infrastructure Service  
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service  
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**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B MacLachlan, Mr N McLean, Mr I Ramon and Mr B Thompson.

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

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

Item 8 – Mr B Allan – Financial

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

There was circulated Report No. LA/1/18 by the Area Commander for Police which provided an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Policing Plan 2017-20.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Prevention and Intervention Officer's role had been central in welcoming the Syrian refugees to Kinlochleven last year and the role had been a very important part of the community liaison in this respect. The Officer's work had been very much appreciated by the families concerned.
- Appreciation was expressed to the work of the two Police Officers on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula, whose work went above and beyond the call of duty. Their work was commended and much appreciated by the community they served and was a great example of community policing.
- In relation to an incident in Claggan, Fort William, a separate briefing on this would be provided to Councillor A Henderson;
- In light of recent press publicity of online fraud in Drumnadrochit which was linked to a specific cash machine, it was queried what approach would the Police take to deal with online fraud within the Lochaber area. In response, it was advised that there had not been any large scale multi victim incidents of online fraud in Lochaber to date. Social media had been used by the Police to issue prevention guidance and this issue was discussed regularly by the Police at team meetings and there were specialist resources available to the Police to combat and detect online fraud.
- There had been instances locally of anti social behaviour problems caused by employees from outwith the area who had been working on infrastructure projects in Lochaber. It was queried what action could be taken by the Police to try and prevent this happening in future. It was explained that the Police would take a proactive approach to this, by talking to contractors to establish a single point of contact who had access to all the relevant people on the site, to get the message across that anti social behaviour would not be tolerated. The Police would welcome information from Ward Members of any developments taking place in their area, so that the Police could raise awareness with contractors on the issue of anti social behaviour.

Thereafter, the Committee **Scrutinised** and **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20.

### 4. **Housing Performance Report** **Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No LA/2/18 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 30 September 2017.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Given Lochaber's remote and rural area, targets for housing repairs were difficult to meet, but performance was overall good;

- In relation to the increase in the number of void properties in Lochaber, it was felt that people were being more selective on where they wanted to live and that there were more housing options available to them e.g. new builds;
- Rent arrears had increased in Lochaber due to the continued roll out of Universal Credit.
- It was noted that rent arrears in 2016/17 had been considerably lower than in 2015/16 and this was due to the area team prioritising rent arrears; raising court actions; identifying tenants who may be eligible for benefits, and ensuring those who were in receipt of benefits, received all the benefits they were entitled to.
- It was noted that there had been a long term trend of an increase in homeless presentations in the Lochaber area, but this trend had levelled off recently. It was felt that the roll out of Universal Credit would increase the number of homeless presentations.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017.

*In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, items 8 & 9 on the agenda were taken at this point.*

## 8. Street Naming Ainmeachadh Sràide

**Declaration of Interest - Mr B Allan declared a financial interest in this item as Chief Executive of Lochaber Housing Association but as Ward Members had previously considered and made a decision on this item, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There was circulated Report No. LA/5/18 by the Head of Policy and Reform which set out a request from the Chief Executive's Office for the re-naming of two redundant buildings which will accommodate new Council Offices and partner services. It also set out requests from the Corporate Address Gazetteer team to create new street names for two separate housing developments consisting of 2 properties in Kinlochleven and six properties in Duror. All developments lie within Ward 21 (Fort William and Ardnamurchan).

In order to allow the developer to progress in a timely manner the naming request was considered by Ward Members earlier, resulting in this report coming to the Committee for homogation.

The Committee **Homologated** the decision of Ward Members naming of two buildings under redevelopment located in Achintore Road, Fort William and two street names serving new housing developments located in Kinlochleven and Duror, namely Charles Kennedy Building, Alexander Ross House, Hostel Brae and Kirk Side.

## 9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 4 October 2017 which were approved by the Council on 26 October 2017, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

Arising from the Minutes, the following matters were raised:-

i the Lochaber priorities were to have been refined and progress reported to this meeting of the Committee. However, further time was required to discuss the priorities with Community Planning partners, and the report on priorities would now be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee, in April 2018;

ii it was advised that Parent Councils were discussing the proposals for changes to the Governance of Education, and it would be interesting to know their views on this matter. Parent Councils were encouraged to respond to the Scottish Government consultation and write to their MSP with their views.

## **5. Roads Maintenance Programme 2018/19 Prògram Càradh Rathaidean airson 2018/19**

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/18 by the Director of Community Services which detailed the proposed 2018/19 Roads Maintenance programme for the Lochaber area.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The submission of the report at an early stage in the year was welcomed, as previously it had been submitted in the new financial year when decisions on the programme of works had already been made.
- It was advised that once the Council had agreed its budget for 2018/19, the Service could then determine how much of the Roads Maintenance Programme could be achieved within the budget allocated for this purpose;
- It was requested that for future reports the Work Programme be updated to include the cost per project, as it was felt that the public did not know how expensive it was to repair roads and it would be helpful to Members to be able to explain to their constituents why particular projects had been considered a priority;
- That for future reports, projects that did not make it onto the priority list be included in order that Members could have the flexibility to determine the priorities.
- It was requested that the total cost in backlog road maintenance repairs for the Lochaber area be provided for Members.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **APPROVED** the proposed 2018/19 Roads Maintenance Programme for Lochaber Area;

ii **NOTED** that Ward Members would be notified at a future Ward Business Meeting of the projects contained in the Works Programme that could be progressed following the Council's decisions on the budget at their meeting on 15 February, 2018;

iii **AGREED** that for future reports the Works Programme be updated to include the cost per project and projects not included in the priority list, and the revised version be sent to Ward Members;

iv **AGREED** that Ward Members be provided with the total cost of the backlog in road maintenance repairs for the Lochaber area.

## **6. Winter Maintenance Obair-glèidhidh Geamhraidh**

There was a verbal report by the Roads Operations Manager on the Service's performance in relation to this year's Winter Maintenance Programme. It was advised that the winter conditions experienced to date in Lochaber had been very challenging. While the performance and winter conditions was similar to that in other areas in Highland, in Lochaber some aspects of the Programme had worked better, such as there had been virtually no sickness absence in the workforce; working relationships between local services had gone well, and there had been assistance from the Community Payback team.

However, there had been issues affecting performance such as vehicle/plant breakdowns and solutions to this were being looked at. Sub contracting snow clearing work was also being looked at to help in adverse conditions.

Sustained snowy conditions did put a strain on the Winter Maintenance Budget and this was being monitored. It also put a strain on resources, such as the provision of salt and drivers who required to work within drivers' hours regulations. The fact that there had been virtually no sickness absence throughout the winter period was commended.

Communication to the public on raising awareness of adverse winter conditions was really important and the Council continued to look at how best to do this, such as using social media.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was advised that the 5am start for winter gritting had been used in the Lochaber area, such as on the Kinlochleven road and this had made a big difference;
- It was queried why there was not more use of staff within Community Services to assist with winter maintenance, such as Community Wardens, Housing Repair staff and would this be practicable. It was advised that the redeployment of staff had been considered and may happen in future. It was requested that the redeployment of staff within Community Services during winter conditions be incorporated in the Winter Maintenance Plan 2018/19;
- It was queried if there was an ongoing problem at the Strontian Depot where salt stocks remained uncovered and did this result in faults developing on the spreader mechanisms on the Gritters. It was confirmed that it had caused problems with the spreader mechanisms and solutions to this were being looked at, and covering the salt heap would help with this. A cover for the salt heap at the Strontian Depot was planned and was a priority.
- Given the challenging winter conditions experienced, the Service had coped very well in the circumstances;
- Members were reassured that salt stocks would not run out and that vehicles/plant not being used in areas, would be moved to other areas most in need during adverse winter conditions.

- There were plenty of volunteers who were willing to spread salt and clear pavements in winter conditions, but what was needed was a volunteer co-ordinator to enable this;

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the update provided in relation to Winter Maintenance; and
- ii **AGREED** that a proposal for the redeployment of staff within Community Services during winter conditions be incorporated in the Winter Maintenance Plan 2018/19.

## 7. **WestPlan – Update** **Plana an Iar – Cunntas às Ùr**

There was circulated Report No. LA/4/18 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which provided an update on progress with the preparation of the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (West Plan).

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was queried when the decision was made to pause the preparation of the West Plan until the next cycle of Local Committees. It was advised that the decision had been made prior to the Christmas break, and had taken account of a range of factors, particularly the work being undertaken on the likely implications of the proposed significant investment at the Lochaber Smelter site. It was important to have as much information as possible in the preparation of the plan and the short delay was felt worthwhile given the reasons for this as detailed in the report.
- It was queried if there was any risk in delaying the West Plan beyond the next Committee date in April, 2018 and whether there was any risk of a legal challenge as a result of the delay. It was advised that there was no risk on either point and that Officers would continue to work on the Plan and would brief Members on progress. In this respect, it was suggested that Members be briefed at a future Ward Business Meeting.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the progress with the preparation of the Plan, and that Ward Members would be briefed on the Plan at a future Ward Business Meeting; and
- ii **NOTED** that it was intended to report on representations received along with any Plan changes (if appropriate) to the next cycle of relevant Local Committees which will finalise the Council's position prior to the Plan being sent to Scottish Government for Examination.

The meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.