

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in **Council Chambers, Council Offices, Charles Kennedy Building, Achintore Road, Fort William, on Thursday, 29 August 2019 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baxter
Mr A Henderson
Mr I Ramon

Mr D Rixson
Mr B Thompson

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services
Mr M Bain, Project Manager, Corran Ferry, Community Services
Mr S Manning, Principal Transport Officer, Community Services
Ms S Maclennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Community Services
Ms L Burns, Project Manager, Development & Infrastructure (by Video Conference)
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Manager (South), Community Services (by Video Conference)
Mr D Esson, Quality Improvement Manager, West, Care and Learning Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Also in attendance:-

Police Sergeant D McCartney, Police Scotland

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 Allan and Mr N McLean.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declarations of Interest:-

Item 6 – Mr A Baxter (non financial)
Item 10 – Mr D Rixson (non financial)

**3. Police Scotland Local Committee Performance Report
Aithisg Coileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Poileas Alba**

There had been circulated Report No LA/13/19 by the Area Commander for Police.

During discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- in terms of the introduction of Mobile Working it was queried if single crewed Officers would have more capability with the mobile device than they currently have;
- in relation to publicity regarding the West Midlands Police operation called 'Park Safe' where the public were able to take photographs of cars parked on pavements, obstructing the highway etc., it was queried if there were any plans to rollout this operation in Scotland. An undertaking was given to provide information on this to Councillor B Thompson;
- problems with obstructive parking at Glenfinnan were highlighted. It was queried if it was now time for Councillors to work with the Police to establish a formal clearway that was enforceable from the Glenfinnan rail bridge to beyond the village as there were extreme concerns regarding pedestrian safety, and that there could be a fatality on this stretch of road if not. This suggestion was supported by the Police and it was noted that the Community Council were trying to erect a footbridge in this area;
- the presentation at Caol Community Centre on banking scams targeting the elderly was welcomed and it was hoped it would be repeated;
- a fifth of missing persons were young people that had social care experiences and it was welcomed that the Police were working with residential units to address this problem;
- when there were serious accidents on roads, there was a need to get information out to the public to raise awareness of the incident so that they could avoid the area and regular bulletins on Nevis Radio was suggested. It was confirmed that information was sent out to Bear Scotland and local media to warn drivers of serious road accidents;
- reference was made to anti social behaviour in Glen Etive and other areas in Lochaber and a greater Police presence would possibly help stop this. The problem of Campervans parking in laybys in Glen Etive was also highlighted and there was a need to penalise such offences to act as a deterrent. It was confirmed that Police action had been taken on these issues in Glen Etive;
- noisy and speeding cars at night, particularly at weekends affecting elderly people on Alma Road was also highlighted as an issue. An undertaking was given to pass this information onto local Police Officers; and
- the Police did work alongside Parking Enforcement Officers to tackle the issue of obstructive parking.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 2 and 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2018- 31 March 2019 and 1 April 2019 – 30 June 2019.

4. Grounds Maintenance Performance Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Coileanadh Obair-gleidhidh Raointean

There had been circulated Report No. LA/14/19 by the Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

During discussion, it was explained that following discussions with Community Councils, they perceived there was poor grounds maintenance in some areas and that there were areas in villages they believed no longer needed to be maintained as formal grassed areas. They were seeking Council support to turn these areas over to wildflower areas, which would have the advantage of not having to cut grass on areas

of difficult terrain. It was therefore proposed that Officers in conjunction with Ward Members commence consultation with Community Councils ahead of any review of service standards by the Committee before the 2020 season commences. This would enable consultation to hear the concerns of Community Councils and seek alternative ideas where it was felt there was no longer a need to continue with the current grass cutting schedule.

It was also proposed that a review of required service standards should be considered at future Lochaber Committee meetings and not at Ward Business Meetings as recommended in the report. It was felt this would allow transparency when the Council were reviewing service standards.

In relation to concerns about weed killing in certain areas, it was requested that Officers outline alternative arrangements for weed killing following the Council decision to cease the use of glyphosate. It was advised that Officers were looking at alternative arrangements and a report on this would be submitted to a future full Council meeting.

It was highlighted that with the limited resources available, the grounds maintenance service was performing well.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the performance management information;
- ii **AGREED** to review required service standards at future Lochaber Committee Meetings;
- iii **AGREED** that Officers in conjunction with Ward Members commence consultation with Community Councils ahead of any review of service standards by the Committee before the 2020 season commences; and
- iv **AGREED** that Officers outline alternative arrangements for weed killing, following the Council decision to cease use of glyphosate.

5. **Annual Area Capital Report** **Aithisg Bhliadhnaì Calpa Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/15/19 by the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in relation to Invergarry Primary extension and refurbishment project, the sum allocated to Invergarry Primary School in the capital budget was £800k. Given that only a third of this allocation had been spent to date and phase 2 of the project was considered too expensive to proceed at this time, but phase 2 was the smaller part of the project, the whole project should come within budget. An explanation was requested as to what the original allocation was for this project and why the allocation had not been spent. An undertaking was given to provide a breakdown of expenditure for this project to Members;
- the report showed a snapshot of information at a particular time. However, it did not show an overall view of major projects that continue over a number of years e.g. the Charles Kennedy Building and the Alexander Ross House projects. It was requested that the total budget allocated; the final outturn figure; the overspend; and the reasons for this for the refurbishment and rebuilding of the Charles Kennedy Building and Alexander Ross House, be reported to the next meeting;

- in relation to the Acharacle Primary School – Life Cycle project, confirmation was sought that this project was for the construction of the new all-weather sports pitch. An undertaking was given to provide this information to Members; and
- the amount of capital invested into Council house building in Lochaber was impressive and welcomed by Members.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the expenditure on each project in this Council area in 2018/19;
- NOTED** the budget for each project in this Council area in 2019/20;
- NOTED** the cumulative spend for each project in this Council area for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to end of June; and
- AGREED** that a report be submitted to the next meeting with information on the total budget allocated; the final outturn figure; the overspend; and the reasons for this for the refurbishment and rebuilding of the Charles Kennedy Building and Alexander Ross House, be reported to the next meeting;

6. Lochaber Parking Income Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Theachd-a-steach Parcadh Loch Abar

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Baxter declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Nevis Partnership 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 his involvement in discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. LA/16/19 by Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

During discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- the proposed tariffs for Mallaig West Bay Car Park were welcomed and demonstrated that the Council did listen to local residents feedback on this issue. It was queried how season ticket holders could guarantee a space in the car park and in relation to the ticket machine, it was suggested that it should have a protective cover to protect it from severe weather at this exposed location;
- in terms of vacant posts for Parking Enforcement Officers, it was requested that adverts for these posts should be published in the Mallaig area, as well as Fort William or Inverness in order to help the local economy;
- reference was made to the seasonality of Lochaber car parking income and it appeared to be tourists who were paying the most car parking charges. There was currently a consultation on a tourist tax and car parking charges were in effect a tourist tax and the charging structure could be directed so that it was tourists that pay the greatest burden for car parking;
- money raised from car parking should be distributed locally to the benefit of communities and an amendment to the report was proposed which stated:-“the Committee agree to the introduction of car parking charges as detailed in the report for West Bay, Mallaig, with the revenue raised to be included in a disaggregated Community Services budget for Lochaber within an extended local control budget as previously agreed by full Council on 28th June, 2018. The Committee agree that a report be brought to Lochaber Members before June 2020 advising how additional car parking revenue raised from West Bay Mallaig be re-invested locally, especially to improve infrastructure and the tourist experience in the Mallaig, Morar and Arisaig areas, in line with the recommendations of the Redesign Review on Car Parking”. By way of

clarification, it was explained that this amendment would relate to the 2020/21 budget. The amendment was supported by the Committee;

- it was requested that figures for the Transport Centre and An Aird car parks be circulated to the Committee;
- an analysis of Town Centre car parking and whether there had been any impact as a result of the new retail development at North Road, Fort William had previously been requested, and information on this was provided in section 5.1 of the report with further commentary on this provided by the Officer at the meeting;
- in relation to the Parking Services Policy agreed at the EDI Committee in August 2018, this included charging for parking and clearly defined roles for Officers to engage in introducing car parking charges. The Policy stated that any income achieved over budgeted sums would be retained for local use through the governance of the local Committee. Therefore, as the income budget for Lochaber was £420,000 and forecast income outturn of £490,000 was projected for 2019/20, there was a surplus amount of £70,000 that should be re-invested locally in Community Services in accordance with the terms of that Policy;
- the Lochaber area had 16% of car parking spaces across the Highland Council area and provided circa. 30% of the income from car parking charges. In contrast, Ross and Cromarty area had nearly a quarter of available car parking spaces, but last year contributed just over 1% in car parking charges to the Council. This underlined the inequality of the administration of the car parking policy. It was advised that the Income Generation Project Board had a list of 49 car parks where charges could be introduced;
- it was queried what the cost of introducing free car parking in Fort William last Christmas. It was advised that this had cost around £7.5k in lost income;
- the creation of a car park at the Glen Nevis turning area was to be explored and it was suggested that introducing charging in this area would manage traffic better. Further, the Nevis Partnership was taking forward other car parks in Glen Nevis and it might be that they were the best organisation to create a car park at the turning area in terms of staffing and enforcement. Officers would work with the Nevis Partnership on this issue; and
- given that no other area had substantially made progress on the Car Parking Policy that had been agreed it was proposed to introduce 2 hours free car parking in Viewforth and Middle Street Car Parks, Fort William commencing on Friday, 29 November, 2019 to close of business on Friday, 3 January, 2020. This proposal was supported by the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the reporting of performance;
- * ii. **AGREED** the introduction of car parking charges as detailed in the report for West Bay Mallaig, with the revenue raised to be included in a disaggregated Community Services budget for Lochaber within an extended local control budget as previously agreed by full Council on 28th June, 2018. Also, a report be brought to Lochaber Members before June 2020 advising how additional car parking revenue raised from West Bay Mallaig be re-invested locally, especially to improve infrastructure and the tourist experience in the Mallaig, Morar and Arisaig areas, in line with the recommendations of the Redesign Review on Car Parking; and
- * iii. **AGREED** to introduce 2 hours free car parking in Viewforth and Middle Street Car Parks, Fort William commencing on Friday, 29 November, 2019 to close of business on Friday, 3 January, 2020.

7. Corran Ferry Service Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Aiseag a' Chorrain

There had been circulated Report No. LA/17/19 by the Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

During discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- it was requested that Officers consult with representatives of the Knoydart Community on the project;
- the Committee extended its thanks to Officers for their work on the Corran Ferry Project;
- concession and discounts were discussed in relation to proposed fares for foot passengers and pedal cyclists after which the fares shown below were proposed and accepted by the Committee; and
- it was also proposed that in future years the Lochaber Committee should determine future charges for foot passengers and pedal cyclists. Following many consultations with the community it was felt preferable to introduce foot passenger and pedal cyclist charges rather than continually increasing fares for vehicles.

The Committee:-

i **NOTED** the content of the report; and

ii **AGREED** the Passengers and Pedal cyclists fares as follows:-

Foot Passengers - £1.00

Foot Passengers – discounted book of 30 tickets - £8

Pedal Cyclists - £1.50

Pedal Cyclists – discounted book of 30 tickets - £12

Registered Disabled – Free

Under 18 years Old – Free

Holders of a Scottish National Concession Card - Free

- * iii. **AGREED** that future charges for foot passengers and pedal cyclists are determined by the Lochaber Committee.

8. Winter Maintenance Plan 2019/20 Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh 2019/20

There had been circulated Report No LA/18/19 by Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- last year additional Grit/Salt bins were distributed in Caol in response to local requests and this was well received by the community and it was requested that the same arrangement continues this winter; and
- works were proposed to improve the Strontian Depot, which would improve winter maintenance.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Lochaber Area, which is in accordance with report EDI/57/18, and includes the priority road map presented in Appendix B, and note amendments in paragraphs 4.5, 9.2 and 13.3 of the report.

9. Area Roads and Bridges Progress Report 2018/19
Aithisg Adhartais Rathaidean agus Dhrochaidean na Sgìre 2018/19

There had been circulated Report No. LA/19/19 by the Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

During discussion, it was requested that an update in relation to the Kinlochleven viaduct (on remedial costs and long term solution) and Invercoe Bridge projects be submitted to a Ward Business meeting.

The Committee:

- i **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- ii **AGREED** that a report be submitted to a Ward Business Meeting with an update on progress with the Kinlochleven viaduct and Invercoe Bridge projects.

10. Housing Performance Report
Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to 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 his involvement in discussion.

There had been circulated Report No LA/20/19 by the Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

Reference was made to repairs made to harling on houses. When such repairs were made and the houses were not painted thereafter, it had quite a visual impact on the estate. In this respect, it would be checked if there were specific painting works planned on houses in Caol and information provided to Councillor D Rixson.

The better than Highland wide average in respect of the average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs in Lochaber was good news for tenants and the Housing team were commended for this.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 30 June 2019; and
- ii **APPROVED** an amendment to the approved Lochaber HRA capital at item 9.5 of the report.

11. Housing Revenue Account: Garage and Garage Sites Update
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Cunntas às Ùr mu Gharaidsean agus Làraich Gharaidsean

There had been circulated Report No. LA/21/19 by the Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services).

The action proposed in relation to garage and garage sites in Lochaber was important work in order to monitor and address issues and target resources to where they were most needed. It was hoped that other areas in Highland would adopt this approach.

As there was limited funding for repairs to garages it was suggested that focus should be on repairing a group of garages that had a Red RAG rating.

The Committee **AGREED** the proposals for Lochaber garage and garage sites.

12. Education Scotland Reports Aithisgean Foghlam Alba

Members welcomed the undernoted reports and in particular the improvements that had been made to performance where follow up inspections at Schools had been necessary. Members expressed their thanks to staff for addressing these matters and making improvements. Particular reference was made to the reports on Lochaline and Lundavra which were commended.

i Ardgour Primary School

There had been circulated Report No. LA/22/19 by the Area Care & Learning Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the Education Scotland Reports on Ardgour Primary School of 13 March, 2018 and 21 May, 2019.

ii Lochaline Primary School

There had been circulated Report No. LA/23/19 by the Area Care & Learning Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the Education Scotland Report on Lochaline Primary School of 19 March, 2019.

iii Lundavra Primary School

There had been circulated Report No. LA/24/19 by the Area Care & Learning Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the Education Scotland Report of Lundavra Primary School of 28 August, 2018.

iv Strontian Primary School

There had been circulated Report No. LA/25/19 by the Area Care & Learning Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the Education Scotland Reports on Strontian Primary School of 19 September 2017 and 4 December 2018.

13. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED**, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 10 April, 2019 which were approved by the Council on 9 May, 2019.

The meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.