

AGENDA ITEM 15

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in **Council Chambers, Council Offices, Charles Kennedy Building, Achintore Road, Fort William**, on **Wednesday, 6 November, 2019 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baxter
Mr A Henderson
Mr N McLean

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 Dalgarno, Development Plan Manager, Development & Infrastructure (by VC)
Mr D Chisholm, Planner (Development Plans), Development & Infrastructure (by VC)
Ms M Cameron, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
Mr A Lawrie, Principal Repairs Officer (Lochaber)
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Manager (South), Community Services (by VC)
Mr D Esson, Quality Improvement Manager, West, Care and Learning Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Also in attendance:-

Group Commander F Nixon, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Station Commander, C Robb, Scottish Fire and Rescue 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

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

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 8 – Mr D Rixson (non financial)

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

There was circulated Report No LA/27/19 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

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

- It was encouraging to see improvements in station availability. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's efforts in giving recruitment a high profile was extremely welcomed and commended. Recognition was also given to the Employers of fire personnel who allowed their staff time off from their main employment to attend fire service duties.
- It was explained that following the Grenfell incident, the SFRS and The Highland Council undertook a survey of Highland Council properties to see if there were any cladding in properties similar to that used in the Grenfell Tower and none was found. A report on this had been produced to reflect that this action had been undertaken and a copy of this would be forwarded to the Committee. Further, there were no high rise buildings in The Highland Council area. However, there were tall buildings in the area, and in Fort William specific high rise training would be given to Fire personnel so that they were familiar with the procedures to be undertaken in the event of an incident.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

i the Area Performance Report; and

ii that a briefing paper published by Highland Council on a review of Insulation products used in new build and refurbishment housing projects, following the Grenfell Tower incident, would be circulated to Members.

**4. Annual Area Capital Update Report
Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh Calpa Sgìreil**

Due to Officer illness, this item was deferred until the next meeting in February, 2020.

**5. West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan – Action Programme
Plana Leasachadh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd an Iar agus nan Eilean – Prògram
Lìbhrigidh**

There was circulated Report No. LA/29/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

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

- It was queried what the process was for Area Committees to ask for additional items to be included or deleted in the Action Programme, as in Fort William there was a need for a new Football pitch in Upper Achintore. It was explained that the role of the Action Programme was to document the aspirations that the Community was seeking to deliver and the facilities that were required. It was not necessarily the Council's role to vet the suitability of any projects, but for the Action Programme to act as a co-ordination tool for projects for the future of the Community. The Action Programme had taken account of the aspiration of the Community Partnership to have a community space in the Upper Achintore area. This item had also been taken account of in the Fort William 2040

process. If there were other items that the Committee wished to see included in the Action Programme, Officers would record these.

- It was queried how developer contributions were decided if there was more than one suitable project. Specific reference was made to developer contributions likely to be sought from development at Upper Achintore. It was explained that Officers could provide advice to Members on how Developer contributions could be used in compliance with the policy set by the Scottish Government. Advice could also be provided on which projects in the Action Programme should be prioritised for developer contributions. A process was to be put in place whereby Area Committees would be asked to give their views on what projects should be prioritised for money received from Developer contributions.
- In relation to the Inverloch Castle Estate attention was drawn to the sensitivity in the Community around the Estate as it was an extremely iconic area;
- There seemed to be practical difficulties in implementing District heating networks, but in terms of climate change awareness such networks should be considered. It was explained that there were difficulties nationally in implementing these types of schemes. It was hoped that the Council would support lobbying for the new National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy to better reflect and assist local Councils in delivering sustainable climate conscious sources of energy for the future.
- In relation to possible upgrades and developments at the Nevis Centre, it was highlighted that there was a desire in the Community for an Arts facility in the area, for example a performing arts or visual arts facility. There was a gap in provision for this type of facility in the area and the Committee wished to see this reflected in the Action Programme and that this facility should act as a Hub for other arts facilities across the area.
- It was suggested that Officers contact the Development Officer for the Isle of Rum community led land use plan for further information on this project.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Local Development Plan has been adopted;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Action Programme in Appendix 1;
- iii. **NOTED** the intended arrangements for ongoing monitoring and review of the Action Programme (as set out in Section 6 of the report); and
- iv. **NOTED** the aspiration of the Community for an Arts facility for the area to be added to the Action Programme.

6. Grounds Maintenance Season 2019 Ràith Obair-gleidhidh Raointean 2019

There was circulated Report No. LA/30/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

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

- It was queried what the reason was for the failure rate in inspection rates for Ward 21 Lochaber compared to the neighbouring Ward and what remedial action was to be taken. It was explained that employees carried out self monitoring of standards so that they could undertake inspections in the course of normal duties. Therefore, more inspections could have been completed in Ward 21 compared to the neighbouring Ward simply because more employees were in Ward 21 undertaking normal duties during the period. Overall, there was still a high level of satisfaction from inspections for Ward 21.
- It was advised that the Grounds Maintenance Service review needed to be completed by end of February, 2020 so that the revised service standards could be implemented in time for the new season in April. Therefore, the Community Council consultation on the review would require to be undertaken during the month of January. It was requested that once the consultation on the review of service standards had been completed, the outcome be reported back to the next meeting of the Committee in February, 2020.
- There was to be a Highland wide review of Amenity Services and the scope of this review was currently being developed.
- Reference was made to the problem of weeds in some urban areas and the different methods to control weeds. In this respect, it was requested that a presentation to the Parks Advisory Group providing an update on alternative arrangements following the Council decision to cease the use of glyphosate for weed killing be circulated to Members.
- It was advised that there had not been a consistent approach to the maintenance of play areas that had been taken over by Community Groups and this had caused some problems. Play areas were within the scope of the Amenity Services review.
- It was confirmed that burial grounds would be included in the Amenity Services review. It was also requested that there be more inspections around burial grounds particularly in the Ardnamurchan area as it was felt the wrong machinery was being used in their maintenance, to the extent that flowers were being cut and headstones were not being cleaned after grass cutting. An undertaking was given to look at these issues and report back to Ward 21 Members.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the performance management information;
- (ii) **AGREED** to review service standards in partnership with other stakeholders during the winter season, and that the outcome of the review be reported back to the next meeting of the Committee in February, 2020;
- (iii) **NOTED** that a presentation by the Amenities Manager (South) to the Parks Advisory Group providing an update on alternative arrangements following the Council decision to cease the use of glyphosate for weed killing, would be circulated to Members; and
- (iv) **NOTED** that grounds maintenance issues in the Ardnamurchan area would be looked into and the outcome of this reported back to Ward 21 Members.

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

There was circulated Report No. LA/31/19 by the Executive Chief Officer, Customer & Communities.

Following an operations update for the Corran Ferry Service by the Roads Operations Manager the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was noted that the refit of the MV Corran including a steering upgrade was all on target and it was expected that the MV Corran would be back into service around the end of November, 2019. It was requested that a media communication be issued confirming timescales for the completion of the refit of MV Corran.
- The Lochaline pier upgrade seemed to be far more substantial than anticipated and may have an impact of increased traffic using the Corran Ferry. It was requested that Members be informed once the impact of the upgrade on traffic was known.
- A review of signage at both slipways was being undertaken. HITRANS funding may be available for digital signage at both slipways for the ferry service updates. Also, it was suggested that opportunities for generating income through advertising on digital signage at the Corran slipway would be included in the review.
- The additional ferry services provided during the road closure in the summer was commended. The public communication of service updates at that time was also acknowledged. It was highlighted that the Corran Ferry crew received an award for their kindness to the Community at the recent Highland Council Quality Awards.
- The ferry service was operated on an income versus operating costs basis. However, this did not include other overheads such as management costs. The Council also received Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) from the Scottish Government and the Council prioritised where this money would be spent. If the Corran Ferry required significant expenditure on it, this would be funded from GAE. If the ferry service was transferred to a non profit organisation then the Council would no longer expect to receive the GAE allocated for supporting the Service.
- It was noted that the Council's corporate view on the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) would be sent to Transport Scotland. Within Lochaber it had an isolated peninsula with the Knoydart to Western Isles ferry service probably Scotland's most expensive ferry service. It was confirmed that this issue would be reflected in the Council's submission.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the content of the report;
- AGREED** that a media communication be issued confirming timescales for the completion of the refit of MV Corran;
- NOTED** that the Lochaline pier upgrade may have an impact on increased traffic using the Corran Ferry. Members were to be informed once the impact was known;
- NOTED** that improved signage was being reviewed. Also, that digital signage at both slipways and opportunities for generating income through advertising on digital signage at the Corran slipway would be included in the review.

8. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh 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 was circulated Report No LA/32/19 by the Executive Chief Officer, Customer & Communities.

It was requested that Officers attend a Ward Business meeting to discuss the report in more detail and in particular the issue of housing voids.

The Housing team were commended for the work undertaken in Malliag in relation to Environmental Improvements. Also, it was welcomed that times to complete housing repairs in Lochaber compared favourably with the Highland average.

It was advised that the last of the Syrian refugees had now left Lochaber. The Housing and Repairs team were commended for their assistance in working with the refugees to meet their needs. What could have been a very troubling period for the refugees was made so much easier by the efforts of the Housing and Repairs team.

The Committee:-

i **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019; and

ii **AGREED** that Officers attend a future Ward Business Meeting to discuss the report in more detail.

9. Education Scotland Report – Duror Primary School Report Aithisgean Foghlam Alba

There was circulated Report No. LA/33/19 by the Area Care and Learning Manager.

It was noted that the Education Scotland Report on Duror Primary School was very disappointing and had caused understandable upset and concern amongst parents and the Parent Council.

An update was provided on the action taken to support the School and to make sure that the improvements that the Education Scotland report identified were progressed. In this respect, as a matter of urgency an experienced Interim Head Teacher was appointed immediately to the School. The Head Teacher had worked with teaching staff and the Council to develop a detailed Action Plan which was encompassed in the school improvement plan. Work on the Action Plan had commenced and so far there had been very good progress made on the improvements that had been highlighted in the Education Scotland report.

It was requested that an update on progress with the Action Plan be provided at a Ward Business meeting in the New Year.

The Committee:-

i **NOTED** the Education Scotland report on Duror Primary School of 27 August 2019; and

ii **AGREED** that an update on progress with the Action Plan be provided at a Ward Business meeting in the New Year.

**10. Street Naming
Ainmeachadh Sràide**

There was circulated Report No LA/34/19 by the Acting Head of Policy.

The Committee **APPROVED** 1 street name in Spean Bridge as Ferguson Court.

**11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** for information:-

i Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 29 August, 2019 which were approved by the Council on 5 September, 2019; and

ii Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 25 September, 2019 which were approved at the Council meeting on 31 October, 2019.

The meeting ended at 12 noon.