

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Monday, 7 February, 2022 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr B Allan
Mr A Baxter
Ms S Fanet

Mr A Henderson
Mr D Rixson

Officials in Attendance:

Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager, Housing and Property
Mr L Macdonald, Repairs Manager, Housing and Property
Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy and Investment Manager, Housing & Property
Mr D Esson, Area Education & Learning Manager (West), Education & Learning
Mr C Howell, Head of Roads & Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Manager (South), Communities and Place
Mr A Webster, Regeneration Team Leader, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Inspector N Hough, Area Inspector (Lochaber) Police Scotland

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council.
All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.**

Mr A Baxter in the Chair

BUSINESS

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Item 5 – Mr A Baxter (non financial)
Item 9 – Mr D Rixson and Mr A Henderson (non financial)
Item 10 – Ms S Fanet (non financial)

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

There was circulated Report No LA/1/22 by the Lochaber Area Inspector.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was highlighted that the Lochaber area remained a safe place to live and work and if there were specific issues these were dealt with effectively by Police Scotland. Visitor management was an issue particularly in areas such as Glen Nevis and Glen Etive and Police Scotland were encouraged to continue to make it a priority in future.
- The importance of Police reinforcing Highland Council Rangers and a visible Police presence in the Summer season was highlighted. Given the significant increase in population in the area over the Summer season, it was suggested that there should be a review of the Police staffing model for the area to ascertain whether more resources should be brought in to enhance the local Police. In response, it was advised that planning was underway for visitor management involving partner agencies. In terms of Police resources in the area, these had been recently reviewed and additional resources were now available. There was the ability to increase these resources when required and there was support from other operational units within Police Scotland.
- There was a good complement of resources available to the Police in Lochaber and details of these were provided;
- In relation to a recent fire incident at an Hotel in Mallaig, given that the incident happened early morning, there were no Police on duty locally at that time and resources had to be sent from Fort William. However, immediate assistance had been provided by locals and this highlighted the goodwill of locals to assist emergency services in rural areas.
- There was a reduction in the number of drug possessions and this was a reflection of licensed premises not operating fully during Covid restrictions.
- The number of incidents of hate crime and abuse by social media was low in Lochaber. The Police had a victim orientated approach to such incidents.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April, 2021 to 31 December, 2021.

4. Area Roads Capital Programme 2022/23 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2022/23

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- There was £40,000 set aside in the proposed programme for Kinlochhourn drainage and it was suggested that this money may be better spent on Morar Hill road which had major structural problems and drainage issues. An undertaking was given to consider this.
- The first half of repairs to Grange Terrace was scheduled for March and the completion of repairs was scheduled in the 2022/23 financial year.
- It was highlighted that the level of investment in roads across Highland falls short of the budget requirements to maintain a steady state condition of the road network.
- It was advised that embankments contingency funding tended to be for landslips repairs.
- It was intended to put together a funding package for North Loch Morar (Bracara) for roads, parking and bridges.
- additional capital funding had been received for bridges and there would be a reporting process for works to be undertaken.

- It was confirmed that repairs were planned to the worst section of the B849 Lochaline westbound and further works to this road had been identified and would be undertaken when funding was available. Further information on this would be provided to Councillor Fanet.
- Priorities in the programme could change according to needs in order to address safety issues, storm damage etc. The full budget for roads maintenance for next financial year was not known as yet. There would be continued discussions with Members and Community Councils in terms of the programme.
- An update on the A861 road and progress on an application to the Strategic Timber Transport Fund was requested. It was confirmed that a bid to the Fund would be submitted this year. It was advised that circa. £1m of priority works had been identified for the A861, but more funding would be required in order to undertake these works.
- An invite was extended and accepted by the Head of Roads & Infrastructure to visit Lochaber to check the condition of roads in the area as well as a visit to Invercoe bridge.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for Lochaber Area.

5. Kinlochleven Associated School Group Overview

Foir-shealladh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Cheann Loch Liobhann

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Baxter declared a non-financial interest in this item as he had children in Kinlochleven High School and Kinlochleven Primary School, 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/3/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

In discussion, ongoing concerns over staffing resources at Kinlochleven High School were acknowledged and the current situation was very challenging which had been further impacted by a lack of local, Highland and national Supply Teachers and a sharp rise in recent Covid related staff absences. The Council continued to work with Local Authority Supply Teachers and a range of organisations including West Highland College in order to try and obtain cover to support the School. The Area Education and Learning Manager undertook to meet with Members at a Ward Business meeting to discuss the ongoing staffing challenges and solutions to these.

In particular, the need for long term solutions to staffing at the School was highlighted and it was confirmed that there would be an annual staff review of secondary and primary schools. The Head Teacher of the School was moving on to a new role and it was confirmed the post would be advertised on 8 February with a closing date of 21 February.

There was also concern that due to the difficulties at the School, parents may consider transferring their children to Lochaber High School. Therefore without long term solutions, it could be that the School would be unviable in the long term.

Further, staff absences in smaller Schools made delivering the curriculum more difficult. It was confirmed that there was an ongoing review of staffing formulae for smaller Schools. Also, different models for delivering the curriculum including blended learning were being looked at and work was ongoing with the Highland Virtual Academy to look at the courses available and also linking in with courses available at the West Highland College.

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

**6. Housing Performance Report
Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No LA/4/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided information on how the Housing Service performed in relation to Scottish Social Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 December, 2021.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2021.

**7. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2022/23
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. LA/5/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided information on garage rents for Lochaber and invited the Committee to set rent levels for garage and garage sites held on the Housing Revenue Account for 2022/23.

In particular, Members were supportive of a 1% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage sites.

The Service was consulting with communities on the future of garages and it was noted that so far there had been positive feedback from communities on the proposals to remove garages, this being viewed as an improvement to these housing estates.

The Committee **AGREED** a 1% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.

**8. Lochaber HRA Capital Programme 2022/23
Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais Loch Abar 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. LA/6/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

It was noted that the following information would be shared with Councillor B Allan:- an update on the Claggan Quadrangles environmental improvements project and whether there were any works proposed at Claggan flats within the Capital Programme.

It was noted that the proposed capital programme reflected the strategic commitment towards increased spend on heating/energy efficiency measures to assist with improving the energy efficiency of the housing stock. A future report would be submitted to the Housing and Property Committee on estimated costs to achieve compliance with energy efficiency targets. In this respect, fuel

poverty was a significant issue and was likely to get much worse with energy prices increasing and the work planned to improve energy efficiency in homes would help tackle this problem.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Lochaber Area as set out at 5.7;
- ii. **NOTED** the guideline investment priorities as set out in sections 5.2 and 5.3 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed one-year HRA Capital Programme for Lochaber 2022-23 as set out in Appendix 1;
- iv. **NOTED** the position relating the current year HRA Capital Programme; and
- v. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

In terms of Standing Order 9, with the consent of Members, the following item had been taken immediately after item 4 on the agenda.

**9. Place Based Investment Programme
Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

Declaration of Interest - Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in the Lochaber Housing Association and Isle of Rum Community Trust Harris Lodge applications, as a Board Member of those organisations and would take no part in the discussion or decision on those specific applications.

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Henderson declared a non financial interest in the Glenfinnan Community Hall Project as a family member was involved in the Project and would take no part in the discussion or decision on this application.

There was circulated Report No. LA/7/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which invited Members to consider

applications for Place Based Investment Programme funding. Lochaber Committee was allocated £154,144.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** the following projects be offered a Place Based Investment Programme grant:-

Glenfinnan Community Hall - £20,900
Caol Shopping Centre Car Park - £50,000
Canna Community Hub – £49,244
Fort William Pump Track - £34,000; and

AGREED the following Reserve List (listed in order of priority):-

Fort William Marina & Shoreline CIC - £11, 753.39
Lochaber Housing Association (Mallaig Housing Development) - £10,700
Arisaig Community Trust (Arisaig housing development) - £40,550; and

AGREED to support the Fort William Promenade (public realm) application being funded from another Area budget such as the Ward discretionary budget; and:-

The following applications were either not eligible for PBIP funding or were declined:-

Harris Lodge; An Laimhrig; Fort William Parade (public realm); Fort William Waterfront.

10. Place Based Investment Funds – Funding Application
Mainteann Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite – Iarrtas Maoineachaidh

Declaration of Interest – Ms S Fanet declared a non financial interest in this item as before her appointment as a Highland Council Councillor she had submitted an application for part time work with Ewen’s Room and therefore there was a possibility of work with the Charity in future and would not take part in this item.

There was circulated Report No. LA/8/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place which invited Members to consider an application from Place Based Investment Funds from Ewen’s Room.

In particular, it was highlighted that Ewen’s Room had been successful in one of their match funding bids and had received £9,960 from the Highland Community Mental Health Fund.

The Committee **AGREED** a grant of £15,000 to Ewen’s Room to support their Community Resilience and Wellbeing Support Services within the Fort William and Ardnamurchan ward.

11. Play Park Funding – New Allocations
Ath-sgrùdadh Pàirc Chluiche

There was circulated Report No. LA/9/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place on proposals for the allocation of Play Park funding.

It particular, it was suggested that the remainder of the Ward 11 Covid fund of £1,432.50 be re-purposed for play provision and this was supported by the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the funding available and the funding already committed to invest in play parks in the Lochaber Wards; and
- ii. a further £55m is to be awarded to Scottish Councils over the lifetime of the parliament

Also **AGREED**:-

- iii. to split the allocation for the Lochaber Area 2021/22 (£37,919) equally between the two Lochaber Wards;
- iv. in Ward 21, the remaining £15,020 is added to the Ward share of the Scottish Government funding (Lochaber total; £37,919);
- v. the remainder of the Ward 21 Covid fund; £1,679, be re-purposed for play provision and the total amount made available for communities to bid in to for the repair or replacement of play equipment;
- vi. The remainder of the Ward 11 Covid fund £1,432.50 be re-purposed for play provision; and
- vii. open a funding round immediately with a closing date of mid-March.

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 8 November 2021 which were approved by the Council on 10 December 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

Valedictory

As this was the last scheduled meeting of the Lochaber Committee before the Local Government Election, the Chairman wished all Members his best wishes for the future and thanked them for their co-operation over the last 5 years. The Chairman on behalf of Members expressed his thanks and appreciation to Officers supporting the Committee over the term of this Council for their service to the Lochaber area and this Committee.

The meeting ended at 1.00 p.m.