

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 24 January, 2023 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)
Ms S Fanet
Mr J C Grafton (remote)
Mr A MacDonald

Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Ms L Saggars (remote)
Ms K Willis

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place

Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager Community Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Ms M Gray, Project Officer Community Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Housing & Property Service

Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property Service

Mr A MacInnes, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

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

Ms K Willis in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Declaration of Interest, Item 7, Glencoe Folk Musuem application– Ms S Fanet

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

There was circulated Report No LA/1/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, it was highlighted that station availability still remained challenging in rural remote areas with significant societal changes. The Service

continued to proactively recruit and 5 new Officers would be dispersed to stations throughout the area and there were others in the recruitment process. National solutions were being sought to sustain an effective recruiting model.

Firefighters employment terms and conditions required for a certain number of firefighters to be available before they could attend an incident as there was also a need to protect firefighters safety. Due to the lack of resources in certain areas, the Service had implemented joint mobilisation protocols to address this issue. The priority would always be to protect communities, but firefighters could not be put at an unacceptable level of risk and the Service had a duty to keep firefighters safe. The answer to this issue was to recruit more firefighters, but recruitment was challenging and alternative recruitment models were being looked at to make a difference. Recruitment to the Service was very much a national problem. An undertaking was given to discuss at the Community Planning Partnership what The Highland Council could do to contribute to the promotion of the SFRS recruitment process.

In relation to muirburning season, landowners should be reporting muirburning to the SFRS. Deliberate wildfires would be reported to Police Scotland who would work with the SFRS to identify who was responsible and what action could be taken.

There was a ballot for industrial action within the SFRS and if this proceeded most wholtime firefighters would be on strike. There would need to be a review of resources should strike action be taken.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i the Area Performance Report; and
- ii an undertaking was given to discuss at the Community Planning Partnership what The Highland Council could do to contribute to the promotion of the SFRS recruitment process.

4. Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023/24

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

It was advised that the local allocations capital budget for 2023/24 remained to be established, which will be calculated from the approved capital budget allocation, being adjusted for any acceleration or slippage in the previous financial year for each area allocation, and also analysis of the road condition survey results. Consequently the 2023/24 area capital roads programme was based on the previous year's budget. Should the approved 2023/24 budget differ from the 2022/23 budget then the programme would be adjusted as appropriate. It was recognised that variation to the programme can be expected, and these will be agreed with Members at ward business meetings to maintain a dynamic programme.

In terms of road length, Lochaber area was comparable with Caithness and Skye. However, in terms of the winter allocation the latter two areas received significantly more funding for winter maintenance than Lochaber. It was advised that every area of the Highlands had a different micro climate with some areas requiring more winter maintenance than others and some had more primary

routes, secondary routes than others and this was recognised in the budget allocation to areas. However, if more money required to be spent on winter maintenance in Lochaber that would be done and consequently the cyclical maintenance budget would be reduced.

It was highlighted that the JCT Pothole Pro was very productive and Members were welcome to see it in operation.

It was explained that water on roads caused significant damage and therefore drainage was very important.

It would be checked what agreements were in place with SSE and how they could be enforced to fund road improvements along the Invergarry road as a result of upgrading of power lines to Skye. Information on this would be shared with Councillor A Baldrey.

There had always been issues in Lochaber with landslips affecting roads and wet weather was the issue, but it was not known if the problem was getting worse by climate change. In terms of protecting the hillside above the Kilchoan Road, ways to target and prioritise sections of the road were being looked at within the resources available.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Lochaber Area.

5. Lochaber HRA Capital Programme 2022/23 Update and 2023-27 Programme
Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais Loch Abar 2022/23 agus Prògram 2023–27

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

It particular, there was a focus on energy efficiency and adaptation works on the housing stock within the capital programme. It was an ongoing process in making improvements to the housing stock and the Housing and Investment Officer would attend a future Ward Business Meeting to brief Members on the energy efficiency standard for social housing. There were guideline principles for prioritising work in the HRA Capital Programme within available resources. However, there was a move to focus on an asset management approach to works and the Service Lead (Housing Investment/Building Maintenance) would attend a Ward Business Meeting to brief Members on this.

In terms of new builds being clad with exterior insulation, this did not do much for the appearance of these houses and tenants should have an environment they were proud to live in. In particular, the Principal Repairs Officer would be

asked what works could be done to improve the appearance and maintenance of Council owned flats in Fort William High Street (Tweeddale).

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the 2022-23 Lochaber HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report and Appendix 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the resources available to Lochaber at 6.7;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Lochaber 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 2; and
- iv. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will 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.
- v **NOTED** that the Principal Repairs Officer would be asked what works could be done to improve the appearance and maintenance of Council owned flats in Fort William High Street (Tweeddale).

6. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/2024 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2023/2024

There was circulated Report No. LA/4/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property. The Committee were invited to agree a level of rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.

It was recommended that a rent increase of 7% would enable garage repairs and improvements or to demolish garages should they not be fit for purpose. Where garages are being demolished and sites are being resurfaced to improve parking an undertaking was given to consider providing bike storage and solar roofs at these sites.

It was understood that some other Local Committees were recommending a 5% increase and the Committee were supportive of this. Consideration was also given to a slightly higher increase for non tenant garages, but the financial impact of this would be negligible and in fairness a consistent increase to both tenant and non tenant garages would be recommended.

The Committee:-

- i **AGREED** a 5% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.
- ii **NOTED** that in terms of sites where garages are being demolished and sites are being resurfaced to improve parking an undertaking was given to consider providing bike storage and solar roofs at these sites.

7. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications Iarrtasan airson Maoin Ath-bheòthachaidh Coimhearsnachd

There was circulated Report No LA/5/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

There was an introduction to the report, which included changes to some applications. The total grant requests amounted to £616, 139.40 and available funding was £487,138.12. The Committee considered applications for

Community Regeneration Funding (CRF) and agreed as shown below. The Committee also requested that applicants whose request for funding had been rejected, be advised that it was still open to them to submit updated applications to a future round of CRF.

Kilmallie Shinty Club & Lochaber Rural Education Trust – New Mini Bus

Rejected

Lochaber Hope – New connections

Rejected

Agreed that in order to help progress the aims of this project, a meeting of the Fort William Community Action Group and relevant Partners be arranged to try and have the different groups work together on this.

Fort William Marina & Shoreline CIC – Feasibility Study for Loch Linnhe Development

Rejected

The project delivery team for this project would be invited to liaise with Councillor A MacDonald to see if the project could be tied in with the ambitions of Fort William 2040.

Isle of Canna Development Trust – Coroghan Barn Redevelopment

APPROVED – £25,000

Communities Housing Trust – Glengarry Affordable Housing & Woodland Crofts

APPROVED - £23,490

Urram SCIO – Electric community car share & transport service

APPROVED - £63,748

Morvern Heritage Society – Lochaline Sand Mine Heritage Trail

APPROVED - £24,601.40

Acharacle Community Company – Community Regeneration Project

APPROVED - £34,760

Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust– Old Surgery Affordable Homes for rent

APPROVED - £100,000

Caol Regeneration Company – Thomas Telford Corpach Marina

APPROVED - £115,000

Declaration of Interest: Ms S Fanet declared an interest in the following application as a volunteer at the Glencoe Folk Museum and took no part in the consideration of the application.

Glencoe Folk Museum – Capital and Activities Redevelopment

APPROVED - £50,000

Eigg Trading Ltd – Green Shed Business and Coastguard units

APPROVED - £50,000

The Committee **NOTED** that £600 remained unallocated and would be carried forward into the next round of CRF.

**8. Place Based Investment Funds – Reallocation of Funding Allocation
Maoinean Tasgaidh Stèidhichte Air Àite – Ath-riarachadh Riarachadh
Maoinne**

There was circulated Report No. LA/6/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** that £5,000 is reallocated to the Lochaber Community Partnership to support the delivery of the objectives contained within the Caol Locality Plan.

**9. Appointment to Lochaber Local Access Forum
Cur an Dreuchd gu Fòram Inntreigeadh Ionadail Loch Abar**

The Council had a statutory duty under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to establish Local Access Forums for its area. There were currently six Local Access Forums in the Highland area which advise on matters in relation to the exercise of access rights, the existence of delineation of rights of way or the drawing up and adoption of the Core Path Plan. In addition, they also offer and give assistance to parties in terms of the resolution of any disputes in this respect.

The Committee was asked to appoint 1 Member to the Lochaber Local Access Forum.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Ms K Willis to the Lochaber Local Access Forum.

**10. Ward Discretionary Budget
Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Ward Discretionary Fund applications have been approved since 1st April 2022.

Ward 11

Mallaig, Ardnamurchan & District Pipe Band – venue hire costs - £394.87
Headway Highland – Support for core organisation costs - £72
Highland Council – Cruise ship welcome plaques - £57.50

Mallaig Community Council - Mallaig Circular path improvements - £5,000
Rotary Club of Lochaber – contribution to Christmas event - £1,000
Fort William Festive Fund – Contribution to High Street Christmas lighting scheme 2022 - £1,000
Caol Community Council – IT hardware for Community Council meetings - £685
West Highland Community Rail Partnership – identification of Traffic Management Solutions - £1,250

Ward 21

Mallaig, Ardnamurchan & District Pipe Band – venue hire costs - £394.87
Headway Highland – Support for core organisation costs - £72
Highland Council – Cruise ship welcome plaques - £57.50
Highland Council – Deer warning signs, Kinlochleven - £205.93
Rotary Club of Lochaber – contribution to Christmas event 2022 - £1,000
Fort William Festive Fund – Contribution to High Street Christmas lighting scheme 2022 - £2,000
Kinlochleven Primary School Parent Council – trip to pantomime - £250
Ardgour Community Council – IT hardware for Community Council meetings - £78.43
Duror and Kentallen Community Council – IT hardware for Community Council meetings - £540
West Highland Community Rail Partnership – identification of Traffic Management Solutions - £1,250

**11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 7 November, 2022 which were approved by the Council on 8 December, 2022, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 12.25 p.m.