

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 16 May, 2023 at 10.35 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey
Ms S Fanet
Mr J C Grafton
Mr A MacDonald

Mr T MacLennan
Ms L Siggers
Ms K Willis

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place
Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property Service
Mr A Lawrie, Principal Repairs Officer, Housing & Property Service
Mr A MacLeod, Policy Officer, Performance & Governance
Mr A Bryce, Project Officer Active Travel, Infrastructure & Environment
Mrs S McKandie, Head of Revenues & Business Support, Resources & Finance
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance 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 none.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were none.

**3. Housing Performance Report
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No. LA/7/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In particular, reference was made to the condition of the Claggan Quadrangles that had been discussed previously at Committee. It was understood a process for improvements had been agreed, however from viewing the properties recently serious concern was again expressed regarding the condition of these properties. There was a need to substantially improve the condition of the properties and an understanding of what level of investment was required to bring the properties up to an acceptable standard. It was advised that some maintenance work on the properties had commenced details of which were provided. There was a cyclical maintenance budget for properties but it was not

a large budget and a substantial upgrading of Claggan flats would require a plan and significant funding. Also with there being private owners of these flats, some did not always want work done on their premises and this was outwith the Council's control. In terms of the £120k funding previously set aside for energy efficiency measures at these flats, it was requested that the Council's Tenant Participation Services be asked to do a survey of current residents of Claggan Quadrangles on how they would want this money spent on these properties.

In terms of time taken to undertake repairs, often the delay was due to contractors being too busy to undertake the work and it was queried how this could be improved. The Council was limited in what it could do to make contractors more responsive to undertake repairs and it did look at contractors outwith the area but they were very busy too. There were also delays in securing materials to carry out repairs and problems in recruiting and retaining in house staff due to the volume of work available locally.

Nationally and across Highland more money was required to be set aside for housing maintenance.

The type of weedkiller to be used at the Claggan Quadrangles would be clarified as it was understood that a contractor in the area had been using glyphosate and this should be stopped.

The work of staff in the repairs team was recognised for all their efforts in completing repairs as quickly as possible over the winter period. This work was often carried out in inclement weather conditions and their work was highly valued and much appreciated.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April, 2022 to 31 March, 2023;
- ii further discussion on a plan to improve the condition of Claggan Quadrangles would be held at an Area Business meeting;
- iii that the Council's Tenant Participation Services be asked to do a survey of current residents of Claggan Quadrangles on what areas they would want money spent to improve these properties; and
- iv the type of weedkiller to be used at the Claggan Quadrangles be clarified for Councillor Willis.

4. The Islands Emergency Cost Crisis Fund 2022/23 Maoin Staing Cosgais Èiginneach nan Eilean 2022/23

There was circulated Report No. LA/8/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place. The report was in relation to the Scottish Government grant funding provided to the Highland Council to help alleviate the cost crisis in island communities. The report set out recommendations for distribution of the share of funding for W11 Caol and Mallaig (Small Isles). The funding had been very well received by the Island communities that had received them.

It was queried if in future it would be possible to consider funding for areas of the Highlands such as Lochaber which were not technically Islands. The Ardnamurchan Peninsula and Knoydart for example were very isolated and more isolated than some Islands. It was advised that this specific funding was for Islands, so it was not possible to use it in non Island areas. However, when

there was Highland wide spend, it was looked to ensure that the needs of other isolated areas were met and this would continue to be the case in any future funding rounds.

The Committee:

i. **NOTED** that the Council had received Islands Emergency Cost Crisis funding for 2022/23 to help alleviate the impacts of the cost crisis for island communities.

ii. **AGREED** to homologate the decision that this funding be used to automatically make non-recurring cost crisis payments of £155 per eligible household by 28 February 2023 where the Council holds current bank details, in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in section 4 of the report.

iii. **AGREED** to homologate the decision to award capital grants to Isle of Muck and Isle of Canna.

5. **Implementation of Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 – Annual Report Buileachadh Achd nan Eilean (Aba) 2018 – Aithisg Bhliadhna**

There was circulated Report No. LA/9/23 by the Depute Chief Executive which provided an update on the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 as it related to the Highland Council area for the financial year 2022/23.

In discussion, reference was made to the issue of depopulation which was happening in areas of Lochaber and the positive benefits from the work undertaken to support Island Communities as detailed in the report was excellent. The availability of public services in rural areas, such as care homes, ferries, broadband, dental surgeries was particularly important. It was requested that the importance of the provision of such services be highlighted to the Scottish Government in order to stop depopulation. The importance of a fixed link over the Corran narrows was also highlighted and the need for the Scottish Government to work with the Council to achieve this ambition. An undertaking was given to relay this message at an Islands Strategic Group meeting with the Scottish Government. It was advised that the Scottish Government was looking at the depopulation issue, along with the Convention of the Highlands and Islands.

It was queried what effect highly protected marine areas would have on the population of the Islands. It was advised that the Council had submitted a response to the Scottish Government consultation on this matter and the consultation period had now ended. There were no areas as yet defined as highly protected marine areas.

The Committee **NOTED** the update and acknowledged the work that had taken place.

6. **Highland Quiet Routes – Pilot Project Report Slighean Sàmhach na Gàidhealtachd – Aithisg Pròiseact Paidhleit**

There was circulated Report No. LA/10/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment. The report related to the Highland Quiet Routes pilot project to encourage safe walking, cycling and horseback activities on designated rural roads where traffic and vehicle speeds are low. Additionally, it aimed to preserve the natural beauty of rural areas, whilst

supporting access to the outdoors for everyone, which is shown to support local economic development through increased tourism.

The Project Officer gave a presentation on The 'Glencoe Quiet Route' which comprised a single-track road from the River Coe Bridge South-East to the outskirts of Glencoe Village to link with the A82; passing Red Squirrel Campsite and Clachaig Inn and will facilitate an active travel link between Glencoe and accommodation along the route. The aim was to provide a safe low-traffic route that encourages more people to consider active travel for everyday journeys. If approved, the pilot project would go live on 1 July, 2023 for a period of 18 months and it would be reviewed thereafter.

In discussion, a view was expressed that the overall project cost of £25k was not the best use of public money and it would be better if the money was used to upgrade the path alongside this road. However, it was felt that the pilot project had merits in improving road infrastructure, increasing active travel and providing choices for wider communities and better connectivity along this rural road for tourists, residential properties and holiday accommodation. The reduced speed limit to 40mph and additional signage would also help improve safety as this road was used as a diversionary road when the A82 was closed.

There would be ongoing consultation with the community on the Glencoe quiet route. It was requested that at the end of the trial period, a review of the pilot project should include what data had been collected, outcome of consultation with the community and whether funding could be accessed to improve the path alongside the road. The results of the trial may also indicate whether a further reduction in speed limit to 30mph could be considered.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the contents of the report;
- ii **APPROVED** the 'Glencoe Quiet Route' including Temporary Traffic Regulation Order reducing the Speed Limit on the route to 40mph for 18 months; and
- iii **NOTED** that a review of the pilot project would include what data had been collected, outcome of consultation with the Community and whether funding could be accessed to improve the path alongside the road.

7. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards 2022/2023 and 2023/24.

Ward 11 and 21 Ward Discretionary Fund Grant awards 2022/2023

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
Highland Council – Remembrance Day 2022 costs - £302.09
High Life Highland – Glen Nevis Outdoor classroom works - £2,000
Highland Council – Tougal car park pothole repairs - £2,410
Highland Council – Cruise ship presentation plaques - £187.50
Highland Council - poppy wreaths 2022 - £29.09
Lochaber High School Parent Council – sensory garden - £1,600
Road to the Isles Group – Tougal pot hole repairs - £2.400

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 2022 - £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
Duror & Kentallen Community Council – IT meeting equipment - £540
Ardgour Community Council – IT meeting equipment - £78.43
Highland Council – Remembrance Day 2022 costs - £302.09
Kentallen and Duror Community SCIO – replacement picnic benches
Acharacle Community Council – IT meeting equipment - £403.80
St Pauls Episcopal Church (Kinlochleven) – warm space and meals project - £2,350
High Life Highland - Glen Nevis Outdoor classroom works - £2,000
Highland Council – Cruise ship presentation plaques 2023 - £187.50
Highland Council – Cleaning of West Highland Way signs - £370
Highland Council – Property legal search - £250
Highland Council - poppy wreaths 2022 - £29.08
Fort William Marina and Shoreline CIC – salt water power washer - £1,754
Ardgour Glensanda Development Trust – Local plan plan - £1,754
Highland Council – Kinlochleven directory – £1,000

Ward 11 and 21 Ward Discretionary Fund Grant awards 2023/2024 – No Spend to date

8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 24 January, 2023 which were approved by the Council on 9 March, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.

