

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 31 October, 2023 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

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

Ms M Macdonald, Area Education & Learning Manager, Education & Learning Service

Mr A Bruce, Service Delivery Manager, Resources & Finance

Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Chief Inspector R McCartney, Area Commander, Police Scotland

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander (Highland West), Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, representing Lochaber Community Partnership

**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**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr A Baldrey.

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

There were none.

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

There was circulated Report No LA/14/23 by the Area Commander.

There was commentary on the report by the Area Commander and in particular the work of the local Mountain Rescue team was commended and the support of the team members' families was also acknowledged. Budget constraints on Police Scotland and their impact on the implementation of technology was highlighted. There had been a significant investment in Police housing across Lochaber which was welcomed. There were challenges faced in relation to road policing and anti social behaviour and disorder within local

communities and Police Scotland were committed to tackling these issues, working alongside its Partners.

In relation to anti social behaviour and disorder in Fort William which had a significant detrimental impact on the town centre, there was a need for more Police foot patrols after schools closed to act as a deterrent to this. Particular reference was made to vandalism of public toilets and e-bikes for hire. It was advised that reporting of incidents of anti social behaviour could be made to the Police 101 contact number and on the Police Scotland website. There was a commitment by Police Scotland to increase patrols in the town centre and this was being monitored and any feedback on this from Members would be welcomed. There were also early intervention youth offending mechanisms to tackle anti social behaviour. It was requested that data be provided in the next report showing increases in Police patrols in the town centre. HITRANS had responsibility for the E-bike scheme and they would be contacted in order to support them to introduce measures to make it more difficult for these bikes to be taken and vandalised. It would be suggested to HITRANS that, working alongside the Crime Prevention Officer, a system be put in place to identify e-bikes for hire in order to deter vandalism of these bikes.

It was advised that there was CCTV on the High Street, Fort William and this was monitored by a full-time member of staff on a rota basis. When not being monitored there was the facility to review any incidents reported. An undertaking was given to check who was responsible for the CCTV system and liaise with them to see if there was scope for more staff resources to increase the CCTV monitoring in order to target Officers to problem areas.

There were 2 Accident Investigation Officers in Fort William and a third officer was in training which was welcomed given how long it could take Officers outwith the area to attend road accidents.

At a national level there was ongoing work to tackle cyber crimes and fraud and put in place banking protocols to deal with these crimes. In terms of protecting vulnerable people in the community from these crimes, the NHS did have a vulnerable persons list and there were pathways to communicate any concerns to the Police.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023;
- ii data would be provided in the next report showing increases in Police patrols in Fort William town centre;
- iii it would be suggested to HITRANS that, working alongside the Crime Prevention Officer, a system be put in place to identify e-bikes for hire in order to deter vandalism of these bikes; and
- iv it would be checked who was responsible for the CCTV system in Fort William town centre to see if additional monitoring could be undertaken.

4. Lochaber Community Partnership Com-pàirteachas Coimhearsnachd Loch Abar

There was circulated Report No. LA/15/23 by the Group Commander, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, representing Lochaber Community Partnership. The

report provided an overview of the Lochaber area plan. The plan was still in a development stage and the challenges of Partner agencies in resourcing the development of the plan given their operational priorities was highlighted. There were clear ideas of how the Lochaber Community Partnership should move forward and the scrutiny and governance that should be in place. Further, Community Action Groups (CAGs) worked extremely hard to deliver to local communities and an update was provided on the work being undertaken by each of the 3 CAGs in Lochaber:- Fort William (Plantation, Upper Achintore and Town Centre, Caol North and Kinlochleven.

A suggestion that local Elected Members being represented on the Lochaber Community Partnership would be discussed with the Partnership and a further update on the community plan was requested for a future meeting.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i the information contained in the report;
- ii that the suggestion of local Elected Members being represented on the Lochaber Community Partnership would be discussed with the Partnership; and
- iii an update on community planning would be provided at a future meeting.

5. School Inspection Reports Aithisgean Sgrùdaidh Sgoile

There was circulated the following school inspection reports by the Education and Learning Manager:-

- a. Acharacle Primary School and Nursery Class (Report No LA/16/23)
- b. Banavie Primary School Nursery (Report No LA/17/23)
- c. Rum Primary School and Nursery (Report No LA/18/23)
- d. Spean Bridge Primary School and Nursery (Report No LA/19/23)
- e. St Brides Primary School and Nursery (Report No LA/20/23)

The Area Education and Learning Manager provided an overview on the school inspection reports to Members.

In terms of the support available to schools so they could improve their gradings, the Council had Collaborative Lead Officers who worked closely with schools and there was a programme of universal, focused and intensive support for schools. An update was provided on the number of children at Rum Primary and Nursery and the accommodation for staff at that school. It was also confirmed that interviews for a Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher at Kinlochleven would take place soon.

There were Teachers on fixed term contracts and after a period of time they would have permanent employment rights to a contract with the Council. Workforce Planning were continually looking ahead as there may be Probationer Teachers assigned to the Highland Council area, so there was always a requirement for flexibility in the workforce to employ Probationers.

Stability in staffing in schools was important and this was challenging to achieve in some schools.

Following further discussion, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i the findings in relation to the school inspection reports;
- ii a list of schools in the area and how often they had been inspected would be provided to Members;
- iii future reports would include links to the full school inspection reports included on the Education Scotland website;
- iv information be provided on the reasoning behind whether a short or full inspection of schools is carried out by the Inspection team; and
- v information would be provided on what happens to unoccupied school houses that were retained in case they were required in future for use by school staff.

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

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

Ward 11

HLH Archive Centre – contribution to travelling exhibition costs Tir nan Og - £750

Lochaber Wheeled sports society – for purchase of bikes & helmets - £1000

Knoydart Trading Limited – purchase of freezer - £2,350

Ward 21

Kinlochleven Primary School Council – School trip - £250

South Lochaber Community Association – Contribution to Bus repairs - £1750

Lochaber wheeled sports society – for purchase of bikes & helmets - £1000

West Ardnamurchan Community Council – for purchase of IT kit - £450

7. **Minutes Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 8 August, 2023 which were approved by the Council on 14 September, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

Urgent Item of Business – *the following report was taken as an urgent item of business as the Islands Winter Boost funding required to be spent by end of March, 2024.*

8. **The Islands Winter Boost Fund 2023/24**

There was circulated Report No. LA/17/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Service Delivery Manager and discussion by Members, feedback would be given to the Scottish Government that the peninsulas of Ardnamurchan and Knoydart faced the same cost of living challenges faced by Island communities and should be included in the Islands Winter Boost funding; and payments for those eligible for the funding

had been reduced this year compared to last year, but as the cost of living challenges were still the same, the funding to eligible households should be increased. The wider challenges faced by communities living in peninsulas would be discussed at a future Area Business meeting.

Thereafter the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Council has received Islands Winter Boost funding for 2023/24 to help alleviate the impacts of the cost crisis for island communities; and
- ii. **AGREED** that this funding be used to automatically make non-recurring cost crisis payments of £127 per eligible household by 28 February 2024 where the Council holds current bank details, in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in section 4 of the report.

The meeting ended at 12.20 p.m.