

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 12 November 2024 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey
Mr J C Grafton
Ms S Fanet

Mr T MacLennan
Ms L Saggars
Ms K Willis

Officials in Attendance:

Mr J Henderson, Housing Manager
Ms E Wilkinson, Principal Housing Officer
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Manager (South)
Ms S Murdoch, Common Goods Fund Officer
Ms P Betts, Common Goods Fund Officer
Mr J Maclean, Bereavement Services Manager
Ms R Robertson, Project Coordinator, Burial Grounds
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager, West and Mid Highland
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services

Also in attendance:-

Chief Inspector D Allan, Police Scotland (item 3 only)

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

There was circulated Report No LA/19/24 by the Area Commander, Police Scotland.

Following a summary of the report by the Chief Inspector, Police Scotland the following main points were raised in discussion:-

- The increase in domestic abuse crime in the last year was concerning. There was now a better understanding of domestic abuse which included coercive behaviour.

- There were increases in incidents relating to fraud, including boiler room scams, romance fraud. These scams were widely reported in the media, but people were still falling victim to them. Given people's good nature they often wanted to believe what they were being told by scammers, or they were panicked into taking rash action. Educating the public was key in fighting fraud.
- It was queried if digital scanning equipment for road traffic accident investigations was based in Lochaber. An undertaking was given to provide this information to Councillor T MacLennan.
- There had been no concerns raised regarding road works in Fort William affecting emergency responses. However, an undertaking was given to check this.
- There was evidence of a rise in anti-social behaviour, particular in youth disorder. The Police would look at ways on how to tackle this behaviour. In the Western Isles division a campus officer had recently been appointed to link in with schools. Lessons learned from this could be used to tackle anti-social behaviour in other areas.
- The Police were very active in education of young people on the dangers of online exploitation and the need to protect themselves online.
- The Police had a missing persons co-ordinator who encouraged young people to get involved in local clubs and groups etc, to address repeat missing persons cases. Other opportunities in the local community to assist with this would be welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023–2026 Year 1 attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024; and
- the change in format necessitated by a reduction in back-office capacity to prepare additional area committee reports.

4. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais

There was circulated Report No. LA/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Housing Manager, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was queried if there was a breakdown of the reasons for rent arrears, such as shortage of money from losing employment. It was advised that currently this was not recorded but an undertaking was given to consider this.
- In terms of tenants reporting housing repairs, there were reports that they did not hear back from the housing team for a long time. It was queried if a review of the communication strategy was required to address this. It was advised that a report on housing repairs would be submitted to the Area Committee to allow greater scrutiny of this issue;
- It was noted that complaints received by the housing team of anti-social behaviour had decreased. Consideration would be given to more detail being provided in reports on anti social behaviour. Anti-

social behaviour cases in a housing context, covered a broad range of issues, they could be complicated and could take a long time to resolve, if ever.

- In terms of homelessness, the housing team were sometimes made aware in advance of a crises that could make someone homeless. The housing team would soon be obliged to take homeless applications 6 months in advance of someone being made homeless.
- Some sheds on housing estates were in a poor condition and were attracting vermin. Some of these were in private ownership, but this problem was affecting Council tenants. There was a need to look at how the Council could be more proactive in addressing this issue. The Housing Manager undertook to look at the issue in more detail and perhaps a multi service approach could address the problem.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024.

5. Scottish Government Play Park Funding Maoineachadh Phàircean-cluiche Riaghaltas na h-Alba

There was circulated Report No. LA/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Reference was made to a scheme of flood defence works and contractors had not brought a play park back up to the required standard following these works. Therefore, the Council was not able to adopt the play park. The Council would engage with the contractor on this matter to see if assistance could be provided to bring the play park back to required standard. An update on this would be provided at an Area Business meeting.

The work on play park projects would commence as quickly as possible to ensure money was spent within the timelines that the Scottish Government funding required to be spent. Members would be kept informed of progress. Final proposals for the remainder of the funding would be brought to a future Committee to ensure the full funding allocation was spent.

The Committee **AGREED** in Ward:

- i. 11 £182,152 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.5 of the report; and
- ii. 21 £194,000 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.6 of the report.

6. Fort William Common Good Asset Register Clàr So-mhainn Math Coitcheann a' Ghearasdain

There was circulated Report No. LA/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate and Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Common Goods Fund Officer, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was noted that Elected Members of the Council were custodians of common good funds in Highland. The role of local Members going forward in developing a strategic plan for the Fort William common

good fund was queried. It was advised that the responsibility for the management and strategic plans for the fund would be with local Members. A meeting of Members and Officers from relevant Services to look at the way forward with the common good fund would be arranged in due course.

- There were delegated amounts that the local committee had to adhere to for disposal of common good assets. If the asset value exceeded the delegated amount, local Members would make recommendations to full Council. The process for sale of a common good fund asset was explained.
- There was work ongoing for all Highland common good funds to assess fund requirements and how funds meet the liabilities for their responsibilities. Members would be kept informed of progress with this work.
- Part of the income from the West End car park would go to the common good fund from the beginning of July. The remaining income would go to the Council for their part of the car park. 55% of income would go to the common good and 45% would go to the Council. This was based on measurement of the area of land owned by the Council and that owned under common good. It was suggested that the split in income needed to be investigated as it was not felt this was a fair split for the common good fund.
- Reassurance was sought that any future repairs required to the West End car park sea wall, should be the responsibility of the Council and not the common good fund. It was advised that this would need to be discussed further with Officers, as there needed to be an agreement on liability for expenses for any shared asset.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the 'Fort William Common Good Asset Register' in the format presented in Appendix 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the contents of the 'Fort William consultation on the asset register - representations and responses' document in Appendix 2;
- * iii. **AGREED** to the publication of the Fort William Common Good Asset Register;
- * iv. **AGREED** to the re-classification of the properties included on the asset register and to the creation of the Fort William Common Good Fund;
- v. **NOTED** that the properties listed on the Fort William Common Good Asset Register will continue to be supported by the Council's General Fund, until such time as adequate income levels are available from the Fort William Common Good Fund to cover maintenance costs;
- vi. **NOTED** that the creation of the Fort William Common Good Fund and its financial position, will be reported under the minutes of a future Highland Council meeting, given that all Members are custodians of all Common Good Funds in Highland; and
- vii. **AGREED**, for full transparency, clarification was sought as to the division of Highland Council/ Fort William Common Good Fund land in relation to the West End car park as well as other assets in future, and also the share of responsibility for costs of major repairs to the sea wall containing the West End car park.

7. **Bereavement Services - Project Updates**
Cunntas às Ùr mun t-Seirbheis Chaoidh

There was circulated Report No. LA/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Bereavement Services Manager, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- A consultant had been commissioned to do a comprehensive feasibility study for a crematorium in Lochaber;
- It was encouraging to see the potential to increase the capacity at 3 burial grounds in the area, especially at Glen Nevis. If more could be done to encourage cremations, this would alleviate pressures on burial ground capacity.
- There was additional land in Morar to be developed for burial space which would increase capacity;
- It was queried if cost was a factor when people were choosing between burial and cremation. It was advised that across Scotland there was an average of 70% cremations and 45% in Highland. It was therefore felt there was a tradition for burials in Highland.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. progress of burial ground extensions in the Lochaber area; and
- ii. challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development.

8. **Appointments to Outside Bodies**
Cur an Dreuchd gu Buidhnean air an Taobh A-muigh

Non – company appointments

The Committee was asked to appoint 1 Member from Ward 21 to the Fort William 2040 Community Stakeholder group.

Ms S Fanet was nominated by Ms K Willis and this was seconded by Mr A Baldrey.

There being no other nominations, the Committee therefore **AGREED** that Ms S Fanet be appointed to the Fort William 2040 Community Stakeholder group.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards since the last Committee meeting:-

Ward 11

Highland Archive Service HLH - Isle of Eigg Archive Workshop - £356

An Comunn Gàidhealach - Royal National Mod 2025 (contribution to venue hire) - £800

Ward 21

An Comunn Gàidhealach - Royal National Mod 2025 (contribution to venue hire) - £1200

Duror & Kentallen Community Council - Local Place Plan Hard Copy

Printing Costs - £200

10.

Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 27 August 2024 which were approved by the Council on 19 September 2024, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.