

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in Lochaber House, High Street, Fort William on Wednesday, 18 January, 2017 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr A Baxter	Mr T MacLennan
Mr B Clark	Mr B Murphy
Mr B Gormley	Mr B Thompson
Mr A Henderson	

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Chief Inspector B MacKay, Police Scotland
Inspector D Campbell, Police Scotland
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service
Mr P Wheelan, Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service
Mr D Esson, Quality Improvement Manager, (West), Care and Learning Service
Mr J Robertson, Programme Manager, City-Region Deal, Chief Executive's Office
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

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

Mr T MacLennan in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 6 – Mr Baxter (Non Financial)
Item 7 – Mr Murphy (Financial)

3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìre

There was circulated Report No LA/1/17 by the South Area Commander for Police which updated Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan. In particular, reference was made to a recent increase in incidents of thefts from commercial and residential properties in the area. Members of the Public were encouraged to report any suspicious activity they witnessed in order to help the Police detect those responsible.

In discussion the following points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the downward trend for most crimes and other issues that impacted on the community, which made the Lochaber area a safe place to live and work.
- An undertaking was given to provide Members with a breakdown of the information in relation to Drink/Drug Driving detections in Lochaber for the last reporting period so this could be publicised for prevention and awareness purposes.
- It was queried if the Police targeted the owners of abandoned/uninsured vehicles for the cost of recovery of these vehicles. It was advised that if the Registered owner of an uninsured vehicle was still in the area then the recovery cost of the seizure and storage of the vehicle would go to the Registered owner. Where vehicles have been abandoned and the owners could not be traced, then the cost of recovery was more difficult and the cost would fall on the Local Authority.
- It was noted that Police Scotland Officers in South Highland area dealt with a wide variety of calls many of which were not crime related. Calls relating to vulnerable people in a variety of contexts were steadily increasing and officers were regularly required to attend. It was queried how this would be reflected in the future training of officers. It was advised that there was ongoing training for officers, for example, relating to mental health, officer safety and other relevant training to meet the needs of officers in the course of their duties.
- In terms of the departure of Inspector D Campbell, Police Scotland from the area, who had provided excellent service in his time in Lochaber, Members were reassured that there would be a suitable replacement for the Inspector and that continuity in good service would be maintained.

Having scrutinised the progress report, the Committee **NOTED** the updates in relation to the 3 Priorities: Road Safety, Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Dishonesty.

4. West Highland & Islands Proposed Local Development Plan Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd an Iar is nan Eilean

There was circulated Report No LA/2/17 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which set out the key elements of the West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan for approval. This followed consultation on a Main Issues Report and an Additional Sites consultation held in 2016. Members were asked to give approval for officers to assemble these elements of the Plan to form the Proposed Plan to be published for public consultation and used as a factor in planning decisions and advice.

In discussion the following points were raised:-

- It was queried if some of the larger plots of land earmarked for housing would be less likely to be completed or started in some cases than smaller sites. It was advised that earmarking land for development was only the first stage and the cost of land was a small proportion of building a house, as in a lot of areas of Highland you had to dig out deep layers of peat and provide appropriate infrastructure for development e.g. sewers, access road. Therefore smaller sites that did not have deep layers of peat or already had an access road and sewer was a more viable way of making housing sites

available. It was accepted that a lot of housing demand was met by smaller housing developments on crofts and other areas. It was advised that more than half of houses were built outwith allocated sites in the development plan.

- In relation to large developments, the developer picked up a large proportion of infrastructure costs. There were smaller piecemeal developments in Lochaber where there had been no need for individuals to contribute to infrastructure costs and the public purse had ended up picking up the wider infrastructure costs. It was queried if there was a way for individual developers to contribute towards these costs. It was advised that the way to control this was not to allow too much piecemeal development in one particular area or public and private funding to provide the infrastructure to open up the bigger development sites.
- There was a projected increase in housing requirements as a result of potential scale of expansion by the new owner of the Aluminium Smelter in Fort William. There was therefore a requirement for an effective land supply in the area and this had been taken account of in the development plan. Also, the traffic impact would require to be assessed and therefore there was a need for the owners to carry out a wide scope transport assessment which could include the industrial development area, site access to the A82 and for wider housing demand.
- In terms of the proposal that the Glencoe Ski Centre road upgrade was aspirational and should not be included in the plan at this stage, Members expressed disappointment with this proposal as it was not just about the Ski Centre but the impact on the A82 trunk road. This was an important leisure facility for South Lochaber and there were significant problems when the Ski Centre was busy, as the car park and road were insufficient to cope with the volume of traffic. This meant you had traffic parking on the verges along the A82, which caused verge damage and particularly in winter, had safety issues as well. An extension of the car park and the future of this centre should be considered in the long term. It was therefore agreed to designate the Glencoe Ski Centre an economic development area
- In terms of broadband coverage in the plan, the maps required to be amended to show the correct patched areas.
- In terms of how post Committee changes to the local development plan should be dealt with, Members agreed that this be delegated to the Chair and all Local Members;
- It was felt that both Glenachulish and South Ballachulish should be considered together in the local development plan. They were both served by the same Community Council and were a strongly linked community. There was a need for additional housing in Ballachulish, particularly social housing, but that this should be considered in the whole Glenachulish and Ballachulish development. The site identified at Ballachulish roundabout partly addressed this need, but because of the wider community opinion about cherished open space, it was suggested removing this site (BHH3) from the local development plan as the housing need was addressed within the overall development pattern on the south side of the loch.

Further, it was queried if the land at the northern edge of site BHM3 along the line of the existing houses, could be allocated for housing. It was advised that building housing on this land would be challenging. Also reference to the textual information in the plan should refer this site as 'the croft land' as it was not existing croft land and local language had always referred to it as the

croft land. Therefore if this site was developed it was not a loss of existing croft land. It was decided to defer a decision on site allocations BHH3 and BHM3 pending a site visit by Members and further discussions with a decision to be made at the next available Lochaber Ward Business meeting ahead of purdah;

- In relation to waste water treatment capacity in South Ballachulish, North Ballachulish, Onich and Glencoe it was queried, as part of this development plan process, if there was a need to do more to lobby Scottish Water to upgrade and install new equipment in existing treatment plants in the smaller communities to take on additional capacity. It was advised that this would be a feasible but very costly option for Scottish Water to go back to having individual treatment plants. It was advised that the waste water treatment capacity was currently sufficient to support all of the proposed plan site allocations, but in the longer term the existing treatment plant at North Ballachulish would reach over capacity.
- In relation to the development plan for Spean Bridge, it was agreed to amend the detail of site SBH1 to allow public access path through it, enabling use by residents residing in the houses further west.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the following to enable officers to assemble and consult upon the West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan:-

- i. noted the issues raised on place-based issues, and agreed the recommended Council responses, as set out in Appendix 1A and 1B, to form the Settlement sections of the Proposed Plan, subject to the following amendments following consideration by Members at the meeting:-
 - *South Ballachulish – deferred a decision on site allocations BHH3 and BHM3 pending a site visit by Members and further discussions with a decision to be made at the next available Lochaber Ward Business meeting ahead of purdah;*
 - *Glencoe Ski Centre – to be designated an economic development area;*
 - *Broadband coverage – maps to show the correct patched areas;*
 - *Spean Bridge – amend detail of site SBH1 to allow public access path through it, enabling use by residents residing in the houses further west*
- ii. noted the issues raised on the plan outcomes, spatial strategy, general policies and other non-spatial plan content, and agreed the recommended Council response, as set out in Appendix 2, and agreed the resultant outcomes, spatial strategy and general policies for the Proposed Plan set out in Appendix 3;
- iii. noted that minor presentational, typographical and factual updates and changes will be made by officers, with any material changes to be agreed in consultation and agreement with the Chair and all Local Members prior to publication;
- iv. noted that additional supporting documents will accompany the publication of the Plan, specifically an action programme, a revised environmental report, a Habitats Regulations Appraisal record and a schedule of land owned by the Highland Council;
- v. in line with government guidance agreed for the published West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan to be treated as a material planning consideration in making planning decisions and providing advice; and

- vi. agreed the approach to public consultation on the Plan as outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

5. Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal Cùmhnant Baile/Roinne Inbhir Nis agus na Gàidhealtachd

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/17 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which provided an update on the City-Region Deal, to set out expected benefits of the programme and to provide an overview of the governance arrangements. The City-Region Deal would be signed-off by the Scottish Government, United Kingdom Government and The Highland Council on 30 January, 2017.

In discussion the following points were raised:-

- The way the Highland City-Region deal had evolved meant that all the changes to the original concept had filtered out the benefits for the wider Highland area and therefore continuing to call it a region deal was offensive to the rest of the Highlands. Further, the Regional benefit of the deal was not sold as part of the City-Region deal but that the deal would free up money in the Council's capital programme for the wider Highland area and this never happened. Therefore, the deal was not benefitting the wider Highland areas to the extent that it could have. Members were advised that many of the projects were pan-Highland and so would bring benefits to areas such as Lochaber.
- There was potential expansion plans by the new owner of the Aluminium Smelter with several hundred new jobs being planned. This would involve developing new skills for the workforce and it was queried how the City-Region Deal could help with this. It was advised that there were a number of ways that the City-Region Deal could help such as the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and digital creativity (STEMD) network of learning centres, one of which would be in Lochaber, an Innovation Hub, the provision of affordable housing and upskilling those who were furthest away from areas of employment to try and get them into sustainable employment, by for example, creating modern apprenticeships.
- In relation to the elements within the Highland City-Region Deal that concentrated on development skills on a pan-Highland basis, Members were of the view that it be recommended to the Highland Council that an emphasis should be put on urgently addressing the skills gap in Lochaber which was likely to be exacerbated by recent economic changes in the area.
- There was a need to work with public sector partners and local Employers to determine what the future skills requirements would be in the Lochaber area.
- In rural areas there was a need for the human and physical infrastructure to support the development of STEMD skills, so the more the STEMD network was developed throughout Highland the more opportunities there would be for training people in rural areas.
- There was a need to ensure that local delivery partnerships for Highland City-Region Deal projects in Lochaber included local Member representation.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the report;

- * ii. **AGREED** the following recommendation to The Highland Council:- “the Council notes the elements within the Highland City-Region Deal that concentrates on development skills on a pan-Highland basis and agrees that an emphasis should be put on urgently addressing the skills gap in Lochaber which is likely to be exacerbated by recent economic changes in the area”;
- iii. **AGREED** that there was a need to work with public sector partners and local Employers to determine what the future skills requirements would be in the Lochaber area; and
- iv. **AGREED** to request that local delivery partnerships for Highland City-Region Deal projects in Lochaber include local Member representation to ensure that urgent skills shortages are addressed quickly and effectively.

6. Kinlochleven High School Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Farsaing air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Baxter declared a non financial interest in this item as his children attended Kinlochleven High 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 him from taking part in the discussion.

There was circulated Report No LA/4/17 by the Area Care & Learning Manager (West) which provided an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Kinlochleven High School Associated School Group (ASG), and provided useful updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

In discussion the following points were raised:-

- a message would be sent on behalf of the Committee to the Head Teacher and staff at the School congratulating them for the encouraging and strong educational performance.
- In relation to additional support needs within this ASG, there were a number of issues on the allocations last summer which had caused difficulties for staff at the schools. An underlying problem that caused this was the lateness in the year of local staff being able to address the budget they were going to have, and it was queried if this had been addressed. For example, there were instances where staff were being told on the last day of term of the hours and where they would be working at the beginning of the next term. It was confirmed that a review of the allocation model, timescales and process for additional support needs was being undertaken.
- In relation to a public meeting in Kinlochleven concerning the placement of Syrian refugees in the village, a reassurance was sought that all the issues raised in terms of the required additional support in schools were being resolved, so that the necessary support was available immediately children started school. It was advised that progress was being made and timescales fulfilled. Also, a local delivery group had been set up in order to implement the support required and this group were meeting regularly. Local Members were to be briefed on progress with these meetings.
- In relation to mental health services for young people, a view was expressed that different schools had different degrees of recognising the challenge of mental health services for young people. The more that could be done to share good practice in this area, the more it would benefit the mental wellbeing of young people. It was confirmed that efforts were being made to

raise awareness of Head Teachers on mental health issues affecting young people.

- In terms of the school leaver destination analysis, it was noted that the percentage of school leavers in Kinlochleven moving on to higher/further education was below highland averages and it was queried if this was comparable to other rural schools. It was advised that it was more typical that school leaver destinations to higher/further education were lower in rural schools, but as the school rolls were relatively small there could be significant variances in these figures from year to year. In rural schools typically there were a much higher number of school leavers going into employment. In terms of how further education could be made more attractive for school leavers in rural locations, it was advised that there was ongoing work with Skills Development Scotland, UHI and West Highland College looking at the promotion of further education and vocational courses and skills development.

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

7. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016 **Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais**

Declaration of Interest: Mr B Murphy declared a financial interest as a temporary accommodation provider and left the room for this item.

There was circulated Report No LA/5/17 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 30 September 2016.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016.

8. Minutes **Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 19 October, 2016 which were approved by the Council on 27 October, 2016.

The Committee also:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Lochaber Chamber of Commerce would be invited to an early meeting of Ward Business in order for the Chamber to submit their priorities and/or seeking their endorsement of the Lochaber Committee's local priorities; and
- ii. **NOTED** that progress would be reported to a Ward Business meeting on the Community Services Committee review on parity of route prioritisation across Highland for winter maintenance taking particular regard of the nature of the geographical layout of some parts of the Highlands.

The meeting concluded at 1.40 p.m.