

AGENDA ITEM 9

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Charles Kennedy Building, Achintore Road, Fort William on **Wednesday, 7 November 2018 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baxter
Mr A Henderson
Mr N McLean

Mr I Ramon
Mr D Rixson
Mr B Thompson

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Mr F Nixon, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr A Nicolson, Programme Manager, Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Mr S Manning, Principal Transport Officer, Community Services
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services
Mr L MacDonald, Repairs Manager (South), Community Services
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Manager (South), Community Services
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Also in attendance:

Mr J Taylor, Area Youth Services Officer (South), High Life Highland
Ms E Leitch, Youth Convener
Rachael Hatfield, Year of Young People Ambassador
Connor MacKenzie – Kinlochleven High School
Ruairdh MacLenlan - Kinlochleven High School
Kathryn Kelly - Lochaber High School

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 A Baxter - Chairman

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following declaration of interest:-

Item 6 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)

3. **Lochaber Year of Young People Daoine Òga**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/24/18 by the High Life Highland Chief Executive.

There was a presentation by Young People from the Lochaber Area which provided an update of the variety of activities undertaken within Lochaber surrounding Year of Young People. Activities covered in presentations from the Young People included – Pupil Council; Social Media; Summer Programme; Volunteering and Glen Fest (celebration of Lochaber Young People) and highlights of other events taken place in Lochaber over the past year.

During discussion, Members commended the Young People for their informative presentations and congratulated them on the many activities undertaken over the past year. In particular, the work of the Pupil Council in Kinlochleven High School was commended in that it did have an impact on issues out with the school, for example, the lack of bus shelters and the poor positioning of them along a school bus route in Lochaber had been raised by the Pupil Council and as a result, there were now new bus shelters that were better positioned to protect users from bad weather on the bus route in South Lochaber. This was a practical measure raised by the Pupil Council that would benefit the whole community.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the report and presentations made by Young People representing the youth voice of Lochaber and High Life Highland;

ii **AGREED** to support the undernoted three areas for improvement that young people wish the Committee to action:-

- to support the development and use of social media within the Council as a platform for engaging with young people;
- to hold a consultation with Sheil Buses (main public transport provider), community transport providers, stakeholders and young people from the Lochaber area High Schools, West Highland College UHI and youth groups in the area to find out how public transport options could be improved to ensure they are efficient and meeting the needs of young people in the area so they can effectively engage in education, training, leisure and work activities as required; and
- to support the four High Schools in the Lochaber area to improve their LGBTI inclusive practice and where identified achieve their LGBTI Charter Award. Further, where appropriate, Members would positively consider applications to the Ward Budgets from schools to develop initiatives which support inclusive practice.

4. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No. LA/25/18 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland on progress against the priorities outlined in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Area Committee Plan for Lochaber 2016-2018. The report also contained previously agreed

information and performance as requested by the Area Committee.

During discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- As part of the transformation of the Fire Service, there would be 56 full time Rural Fire Officer posts created to support the Retained Service in rural areas across Scotland. This was in addition to the current structure. One of these posts would be based in Fort William and the recruitment process was underway. This post would support the Lochaber District stations which would be a great investment in the Retained Service in the Lochaber area.
- Kinlochleven was a two appliance station which presented recruitment difficulties in trying to attract local people to crew those appliances. The Fire Service was continually trying to recruit people to fill vacancies. It was suggested that Elected Members could assist the Fire Service in their recruitment campaigns by working alongside Fire Officers when visiting local communities. It was queried if people from Glencoe could apply for vacancies at the Kinlochleven station and in response it was confirmed that they could and their application would be considered. However, there needed to be a reasonable response time to an emergency and this would be discussed with applicants.
- There was concern that the Fire Service will look at the Kinlochleven Fire appliance availability figures and potentially remove the 2nd Appliance given the low staffing availability for this appliance. This would be detrimental to South Lochaber and it was preferred that in any Fire Service review of the location of appliances, that one of the new Rapid Response Unit Appliances be based in Glencoe, where there were Mountain Rescue, Police and Ambulance stations. This was in recognition that many of the call outs for Kinlochleven Fire Station were not fire related, but for traffic incidents and it was important to have a 2nd Appliance to cover the A82 and the Oban road. The Officer advised that he was not aware of any current review of station locations.
- Concern was expressed that extending the response time to Kinlochleven Fire Station would mean Fire personnel attending emergencies on a road with poor sight lines and the preference in the longer term was for a reallocation of resources to the Glencoe/Balachulish area.
- It was requested that previous quarter data on Station availability be included in future Performance Reports for comparative purposes.

The Committee having scrutinised the Performance report, **NOTED:-**

i that Members comments on the Kinlochleven Fire Station staff resources and their preference for a reallocation of resources to Glencoe/Balachulish area in the longer term would be fed back to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; and

ii that the previous quarter data on Station availability be included in future Performance Reports.

5. Fort William 2040 Consultation Workshop Co-chomhairle mu Lèirsinn 2040 a' Ghearasdain

There was circulated Report No. LA/26/18 dated 26 October 2018 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented the outcome of a major consultation exercise held in September, 2018 which brought together a wide range of stakeholders to create a vision for the future of Fort William, in its wider Lochaber context, and to prepare a Delivery Programme outlining projects, responsibilities and actions for delivering that vision.

The report presented the findings of the consultation and sought approval for a recommended approach to ongoing monitoring and collaboration in implementing the actions outlined in the Delivery Programme, and the vision for Fort William.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- As part of the consultation, there had been an undertaking given by the Development Plans team to go back to certain local Community Groups and it was confirmed that meetings would be scheduled with the Fort William Community Council Association and South Lochaber Community Council Association on the Fort William 2040 vision;
- Members requested more time to look at the detailed submissions to the consultation rather than the summary responses in Appendix 1;
- In respect of the updated Fort William 2040 vision draft diagrams tabled at the meeting, concern was expressed that Members were only receiving these at the meeting and that Community Councils and local residents did not have the opportunity to see these.
- In terms of the consultation process a view was expressed as to whether the vision for Fort William 2040 could be delivered. For example there had been a charrette focusing on Fort William Town Centre a few years ago resulting in many recommendations that were now repeated in this report, particularly about revitalising the Town Centre and refocusing the Centre outwards towards the waterfront. Transport Scotland were key to this happening but they had dismissed a lot of the suggestions. Further, a number of suggestions in the report relied upon Liberty Group and their new operation in Fort William. There was still no evidence that the promises that the company had given to Lochaber beginning to come to fruition. The Officer confirmed that the next steps in the process were in response to this situation. There were challenges in delivering development and infrastructure and improvements to support existing communities and to provide growth ambitions. The aim was to capitalise on the work already undertaken by the Council to prepare a delivery programme to support the local development plan. One of the outcomes from the consultation event was that it would give a process for the ongoing monitoring of the delivery programme. It was therefore hoped that the delivery programme was a proactive response to the dilemma outlined.
- In terms of Appendix 3, number 17 LNG Energy it was queried what were the practical implications of the rollout of an LNG network in Fort William. The Officer advised that consideration was still being given as to what would be required to take forward a gas network in the town. There would require to be more consultation and engagement before any firm decisions were made on this.
- There seemed to be little content in the report regarding contacts between the North and South sides of Loch Linnhe. Further, there seemed to be only reference to development in the North Side of the Loch and virtually nothing in the South. Even if the communities were not interested, they should at least be part of the process of engagement.
- Included in the summary of the responses was for Fort William to be a place with a distinctive, local, cultural identity. This was one of the local priorities of the Committee and currently a potential bid to the European Union Regional Development Fund was being explored.

Following further discussion, the Committee **DEFERRED** consideration of the recommendations in the report until the next meeting to enable refinement of the

tabled diagram at Appendix 2; for Members to consider the responses to the Community consultation; and for the Development Plans team to consult with the Fort William Community Council Association and South Lochaber Community Council Association on the Fort William 2040 vision.

6. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to Lochaber Housing Association 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 his involvement in discussion.

There had been circulated Report No LA/27/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Housing Charter and other performances indicators for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September, 2018.

It was noted that the first four performance indicators (Reactive repairs; Repairs appointments; Rent collected; Gross rent arrears) in Appendix 1 were incorrect and an amended Appendix with revised RAG status for these indicators had been issued to Members.

It was queried why there was a declining performance for non emergency repairs and whether work was being allocated to the housing repair teams electronically to save time. Also, in terms of housing repair work on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula this would potentially involve the team spending a full day on the Peninsula for even minor repairs. It was queried if other Council staff, who might not be in the housing service i.e. Roads team, could be used for minor housing repairs in that area.

It was confirmed that cross service working for minor housing repair work on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula would be considered. Further, there was currently a paper based system and mobile system for allocating work to the Housing team. It was the intention to roll out mobile working to all Housing repair staff, however Wipro still required to install software on the mobile devices.

It was confirmed that a high proportion of rent arrears was due to the introduction of Universal Credit and that the decline in revenue would eventually impact on carrying out housing repairs.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September, 2018;
- ii. the use of the staff from the Roads team to carry out some minor housing repair work on Ardnamurchan Peninsula would be considered; and
- iii. that Councillor A Baxter undertook to request Wipro to speed up the rollout of Mobile working devices used by the Housing repair team in Lochaber.

7. Car Parking in Lochaber Parcadh Chàraichean ann an Loch Abar

There had been circulated Report No. LA/28/18 by the Director of Community Services which reviewed financial projections from parking charges implemented on 23 April,

2018.

A summary of the report having been provided by the officer, the following main points were raised:-

- There was a correction to the report in relation to average weekly car parking income for Fort William, this was circa £12, 360 and not £15,081 as detailed in the report;
- In the review of car parking in Lochaber, particularly Fort William, it was queried if there had been a reduction in disabled parking spaces in Fort William town centre and if so how many, particularly in car parks but also on streets. While there was no intention by the Service to reduce disabled parking spaces, an undertaking was given to check and send this information to Members.
- It was queried why it took nearly a year for new coach parking signs to be erected in the West end of Fort William. This had been agreed over a year ago in consultation with local retailers, and there had been confusion for coach operators over the summer season as to whether they could park where it had been agreed for them to do so. It was advised that the delay was a result of a staff resource issue within the Service and the need to re-publish amendments to the Traffic Order procedure. It would be checked that the signs had now been erected.
- It was noted that there was a Notional budget set for Lochaber car parking income. Previously the indication had been that car parking income was a Lochaber budget and that there was also supposed to be for example a Dingwall and Nairn budget. It was queried why it had suddenly become a Notional budget and whether the Committee needed to take any recognition of the recommendation to discuss and agree mitigation measures to help address the budget shortfall.
- It was advised that full Council did not give specific income amounts for each car park and they were to be spread out across the areas, and there was a commitment by Council that Community Services would deal with shortfalls in income across the rollout car park charging locations for this financial year. Therefore, the budgeted new income target for Lochaber was £543k and while there was a pressure to meet the budget shortfall if this did not come from Lochaber car parking income, the shortfall would be met from Community Services. On this basis the view was expressed that this was a Community Services budget problem and not for Lochaber Committee, particularly when other Local Areas had not taken the budget responsibility and introduce car park charging as required by budget decisions at full Council. Therefore, if there was a reduction in Community Services provision as a result of a shortfall in car parking income it was assumed this would be met from the Roads budget etc from other Local Areas rather than Lochaber. It was advised that the Director of Community Services was reporting to the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee on 8 November, 2018 and there may be more clarity on this point.
- It was felt that the car parking budget target was unrealistic for Fort William. While mitigation measures could be looked at, how long could this continue, as the income from parking charges just was not there to meet the target. Potentially by charging for parking you damage the footfall on the High Street.
- It was explained that the budget target for additional income set by Council for car parking charges was £1.4m. A breakdown of income levels for each of the Local Committees had been produced and the target for Lochaber had not been achieved. There was an option to make some car park tariffs cheaper and increase the yield. Tariffs would continue to be reviewed in order to generate

income as would payment methods to make it as easy as possible for car park users to pay.

- The car parking budget raised around £2m to the Council each year and it appeared to be heavily under resourced in terms of staffing for the programme it was expected to deliver.
- In terms of mitigation measures to help address the budget shortfall, it was queried if the “control of use” of the Nevis Centre car park could be brought forward into this financial year. It was advised that the intention was to implement this as soon as possible and the Council’s Property team were currently drafting a lease with Nevis Centre Solicitors;
- There was a traffic pressure at the end of Glen Nevis and potentially there may be an opportunity to create a car park at the Glen Nevis turning area;
- In terms of car parking enforcement in Fort William, this was mainly carried out by Officers based in Fort William with support from Officers in Inverness. There was not a high contravention rate in Lochaber. It was requested that car parking enforcement statistics for Lochaber be submitted in a future report to Committee;
- The budget shortfall could be eased by the introduction of car parking charges in Mallaig;
- The Local Parking Season Ticket was growing in popularity and the uptake was good;
- Retailers in Fort William had valid concerns regarding the new retail sites on North Road, Fort William. It was queried from car parking data if there was any change in car parking habits in the centre of Fort William over the last year and particularly from April when the new Aldi Store was opened. While the Officer undertook to do analysis on this and report back, it was advised that the free parking period had been very successful;
- It was queried if information could be provided from car parking data as to where cars come from, so an analysis of town traffic could be made. Also an analysis of event sales for each car park could be undertaken to see how they vary across the year;
- The period in the run up to Christmas was extremely important for retailers and it was acknowledged that the half hour free car parking had a successful uptake, but that this might not be long enough for Christmas shoppers. It was queried what impact there would be in terms of loss of revenue for introducing free parking for 2 hours in one designated car park in Fort William, as Perth had just introduced free car parking for 6 weeks in the run up to Christmas for their town centre car parks. It was confirmed that the loss of income would be substantial, and nationally there was no evidence that reasonable charging for parking impacted on footfall in Town Centres. This was a matter for Members discretion but there would be cash consequences on the budget.
- Extending the Local Parking Season ticket to the short stay car parks in Fort William was suggested for a limited period of time. This would increase the benefits of having a Season ticket and thereby increasing the uptake of it.
- It was advised that Car parking income of £1.4m was money Community Services required to find and the Notional element was how this figure was split between the different local areas. The Officer advised that any recommendation to reduce car parking income could not be supported. However, the view was expressed that other areas were not charging for car parks in their area, which they could feasibly do with little impact on their communities. Fort William had been charging for car parking for many years and it was for other areas to address the budget shortfall and not the Lochaber area.

It having been confirmed that the review of car parking tariffs was a delegated function to Local Committees, M A Baxter, seconded by Mr B Thompson **MOVED** to introduce

2 hours free car parking in the six weeks running up to Christmas Eve for Fort William for this year. This was on the basis that there were no statistics available on the impact of Car Parking in Fort William Town Centre from the new retail development on North Road, Fort William and once these were available, consideration could be given to introducing 2 hours free car parking in the six weeks running up to Christmas Eve on a permanent basis in future years once a full set of yearly statistics from the new car parking regime were known.

The Committee supported the Motion.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the projected budget shortfall;
- ii. **AGREED** that there is no reduction in the Local Parking Season Ticket;
- * iii. **AGREED** to introduce 2 hours free car parking in the six weeks running up to Christmas Eve for Fort William for this year. This was on the basis that there were no statistics available on the impact of Car Parking in Fort William Town Centre from the new retail development on North Road, Fort William and once these were available, consideration could be given to introducing 2 hours free car parking in the six weeks running up to Christmas Eve on a permanent basis in future years once a full set of yearly statistics from the new car parking regime were known.
- iv. **NOTED** that it would be checked if the number of disabled parking spaces in Fort William had been reduced;
- v. **NOTED** that it would be checked that the new Coach parking signs had been installed in the West end of Fort William.
- vi. **NOTED** that an opportunity to create a car park at the Glen Nevis turning area would be explored;
- vii. **NOTED** that car parking enforcement statistics for Lochaber would be submitted in a future report to Committee; and
- viii. **NOTED** that an analysis of car parking in Fort William Town Centre over the last year and particularly from April when the new Aldi Store was opened would be undertaken, to establish if the Town Centre car parking had been impacted by the new out of town centre retail development.

8. **Grounds Maintenance Performance Report Obair-glèidhidh Raointean**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/29/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how Community Services performed in relation to performance indicators for the period 1 April to 30 September 2018.

The Officer highlighted a correction to the report under the section relating to Public Conveniences. The Wards inspected were numbers 11 and 21 and the number of inspections and number of satisfactory inspections were both 17.

It was queried if the figure of 100% satisfactory inspections for both grounds maintenance and public convenience inspections was actually the case overall. It was advised that given that the number of inspections was low, it was unlikely that the overall performance was as good.

Further, it was confirmed that in terms of the Public Conveniences review, the Station Brae, Fort William public convenience would be retained and the intention was to install charging at this facility.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on performance for the period 1 April to 30 September 2018.

**9. Appointment of Director to the Isle of Rum Trust
Cur Stiùiriche an Dreuchd do dh'Urras Eilean Rùm**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/30/18 by the Acting Head of Policy which sought approval for the appointment of Councillor Denis Rixson to the Isle of Rum Community Trust.

The Committee **APPROVED** the appointment of Councillor D Rixson to the Isle of Rum Community Trust.

**10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 30 August 2018 which were approved by the Council on 6 September 2018.

The meeting ended at 1.25 p.m.