

**AGENDA ITEM 11  
REPORT NO. LA-21-19**

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**Committee:** Lochaber Committee

**Date:** 29 August 2019

**Report Title:** Housing Revenue Account: Garage and Garage Sites Update

**Report By:** Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services)

**1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides information on garage and garage sites in Lochaber and invites the Committee to discuss and agree local priorities for garage and garage sites.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are invited to discuss and agree the proposals for Lochaber garage and garage sites.

**3 Implications**

- 3.1 Resource – Resource implications are detailed in the report.
- 3.2 Legal - There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - There are no equality implications arising from this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - There are no climate change/Carbon Clever implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 Risk – There are no implications arising from this report.
- 3.6 Gaelic - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.



## 4 Background

- 4.1 When considering rent levels for 2019/20 at Lochaber Area Committee on 23 January 2019, Members requested officers carry out a review of all garage and garage sites in Lochaber to include a condition survey, to identify possible alternative uses for garage and garage sites and to identify what improvements could be made to garage and garage sites across Lochaber. Officers were asked to provide an update to the August 2019 Lochaber Area Committee.

## 5 Current stock and occupancy levels

- 5.1 The table below provides details of the current stock and occupancy levels for garage and garage sites across Wards 11 and 21. Occupancy levels for garage and garage sites vary, but high levels of empty garage and garage sites are a feature across both Wards. The budgeted void rent loss within the area HRA Revenue Budget is £39,003 per year. Council house tenants accounts for 15% of garage tenants in Ward 11 and 24% in Ward 21.

5.2

Type	Number of units	Units Occupied	Units Void
Garages Ward 11	110	47	63
Garages Ward 21	65	48	17
Garage Sites Ward 11	86	59	27
Garage Sites Ward 21	42	39	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>110</b>

## 6 Garages and Garage Sites - Condition

- 6.1 A survey was carried out of all garage and garage sites and presented to Members at their Ward Business Meeting on 10 June 2019. The garage and garage sites were given a RAG rating, those in the poorest condition being RED, those requiring some repairs rated as AMBER and those in satisfactory condition rated as GREEN. Details of the number of garages by rating is provided below:-

6.2

	No. RED	No. AMBER	No. GREEN
Ward 11	53	81	62
Ward 21	56	47	4

- 6.3 RED garage and garage sites – The “red” garage lock-ups are in a poor condition and will take significant investment to repair. Some of the access roads to garage and garage sites and some garage site standings are also in poor condition. The privately-owned garages that occupy some of the garage sites are also in poor condition. The general area around some garages and garage sites is also untidy.
- 6.4 AMBER garage and garage sites – The “amber” garage lock-ups and garage sites require some general repairs and in some cases improvement to the area surrounding the garages.
- 6.5 GREEN garage and garage sites – the “green” garage and garage sites are in a satisfactory condition.

6.6 Improvement and modernisation of these facilities is expensive in comparison with the garage repairs budget and income received through rents. The current Revenue budget for garage repairs/improvements is £6,500. Although additional income from any rent increase applied locally will be available for investment in garage and garage sites locally it is likely that improvements will also require to be funded from area HRA revenue and capital budgets. This would reduce the amount of money available to spend on housing repairs/improvements locally.

## 7 Tenant Consultation

7.1 All garage lock up and garage site tenants in Lochaber were recently surveyed. The results of that survey are as follows:

**Ward 11** 29.9% of tenants responded. All responding tenants of a garage lock-up raised issues with the current condition of their garage. Garage site tenants raised issues with the general untidiness of the area particularly fly tipping around the garage sites and the condition of some privately owned garages.

**Ward 21** 33.3% of tenants responded. The majority of tenants raised issues about the condition of their garage. 46.6% of garage site tenants were satisfied with the condition of their garage site.

## 8 Allocation – Waiting Lists

8.1 The table below provides details of the current waiting list for garage and garage sites across Lochaber. The waiting list was recently reviewed; all waiting list applicants were contacted to confirm that they wished to remain on the waiting list, those with a negative or no response were removed from the list.

8.2

	<b>Total applicants on waiting list</b>
Garages ward 11	14
Garages ward 21	33
Garage sites ward 11	3
Garage sites ward 21	2
	<b>52</b>

## 9 Future Approach

9.1 It is recommended that the following action is taken to progress the current position in relation to garage and garage sites in Lochaber:-

- All garage and garage sites across Lochaber will be reviewed to establish if there is any potential for housing;
- There will be a Housing Management focus on RED garages;
- There will be a focus on garage and garage sites through Rate Your Estate walkabouts. This will involve discussion with tenants to obtain their views on how areas could be improved;
- There will be further discussion with Members where it has been identified that environmental improvement budget spend would assist with garage and garage site area improvements;

- The current Revenue budget for garage repairs/improvements is £6,500. Where the budget allows repairs will be carried out to those AMBER garages identified as not suitable for future housing development and in need of low level repairs; and
- There will be further discussion with Members where it has been identified that disposal of garage and garage sites is a more viable option.

Designation: Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services)

Date: 29 August 2019

Author: Sandra MacLennan, Housing Manager (South)

Background Papers: Lochaber Garage and Garage Site Survey Report May 2019