

## The Highland Council

### Resources Committee - 27 August 2014

Agenda Item	10.ii.d
Report No	RES/35/14

## Poolewe and District Swimming Pool Association: Application to Capital Discretionary Fund 2014/15

### Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

#### Summary

This report requests approval to grant up to £50,000 from the Capital Discretionary Fund and £5,000 from the Ward 6 Discretionary Budget to Poolewe and District Swimming Pool Association as a contribution towards upgrading the facility.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 Poolewe and District Swimming Pool Association was established in 1986 as a community company to own and manage the local swimming pool. The pool was constructed after a long and active period of community fundraising on a site made available by the local landowner. Though a relatively small, basic pool it is nevertheless an important community asset and the only facility of this nature in the area - the closest pools being in Ullapool or Dingwall involving round trips of 100 and 130 miles respectively. The pool is estimated to serve a population of around 2500.
- 1.2 The pool is well used by local schools with approximately 750 swimming lessons delivered in 2013/14. During the same period (and excluding schools) approximately 1400 swimming lessons were delivered and some 5600 people used the pool simply to enjoy a swim or to participate in other water based recreational activities such as aqua aerobics or kayaking. It has proved to be an important and well used facility by tourists and visitors to the area.
- 1.3 The Association is a registered charity and derives its income from local fundraising, High Life memberships, admission fees and grant aid. The Association currently receives an annual revenue grant of £48,823 from the Council: approximately 45% of the operating costs. It employs 9 part time staff and High Life Highland provides support by managing the facility. Fundraising events take place regularly and a 300 Club and a Covenant Scheme are in place to assist income generation - with over £12,500 raised in 2013/14.
- 1.4 Although the Association has worked hard to maintain the facility and has actively undertaken a number of refurbishment projects over the years, the whole building is now in urgent need of essential upgrading works to meet required standards. A Council funded study estimated a sum of £110k is required to undertake some measures which would extend the life span of the facility for a further 20 years. These include insulation and energy efficiency, pool lining replacement and improvements to plant and machinery. Further upgrades to, for example, the changing facilities while desirable are not considered as being so urgent.

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1 The Pool Association has been in contact with some of the organisations which may consider assisting the upgrade costs. However, it is clear that the financial support of the Council in any upgrade is expected before any other organisation will commit funding. Council support will also be regarded by external funders as confirmation of the important role the facility plays in the community and in meeting some of the Council's priorities such as increasing health and wellbeing opportunities and promoting physical activities to both young people and adults.
- 2.2 It is therefore suggested that the Council agrees to indicate its willingness to make a contribution towards the capital costs of upgrading the pool to the extent of 50% of the sum required, up to a maximum of £55k. This commitment will allow the Association to make formal approaches to other bodies for contributions, and it is hoped that the Council's support will help these approaches obtain a positive result.
- 2.3 This project is fully supported by the Ward 6 Members, and it demonstrates a very good fit with a number of commitments within the Programme for the Highland Council - for example, those relating to Children & Young People and to Empowering our Communities. A contribution of £5,000 from the Ward Discretionary Budget is proposed.
- 2.4 It is recommended that a grant of up to £50k from the Capital Discretionary Fund is offered to Poolewe and District Swimming Pool Association as a contribution towards the upgrading of the facility. The grant would only be paid if and when the outstanding balance has been secured from other sources and the upgrade work is ready to proceed.

## **3. Implications**

- 3.1 Resource - the £50,000 requested from the Capital Discretionary Fund plus £5,000 from the Ward 6 Discretionary Budget forms an important element of the overall funding package for the upgrade work and will allow applications for funding from other sources to be made.
- 3.2 Rural – the facility provides an important and well used resource in a rural area.
- 3.3 There are no equalities, legal, climate change/Carbon Clever, risk or Gaelic implications directly arising from this Report.

### **Recommendation**

The Committee is recommended to support the application by Poolewe and District Swimming Pool Association for a grant towards the cost of upgrading the facility; the Council's contribution to be made up of £50,000 from the Capital Discretionary Fund and £5,000 from the Ward 6 Discretionary Budget.

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 19 August 2014

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