

Agenda Item	7
Report No	ERA-25-21

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Easter Ross Area Committee

**Date:** 18 November 2021

**Report Title:** Use of Cromarty Firth Repurposed Covid Response Funds

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting of 17 February 2021 the Easter Ross Area Committee allocated £15,000 of Cromarty Firth Ward unspent Covid response funds to support local play areas. This was in line with the decision taken at a meeting of the Highland Council on 7 January 2021 to allow the re-purposing of covid ward funds. Following local consultation, with Community Council representatives and a small group of interested residents, this report requests that £14,750 be allocated to purchase a multi-unit for Saltburn Play area.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- Consider and agree the proposal to allocate £14,750 from the Cromarty Firth reallocated Covid-19 Ward Discretionary funds to purchase a play multi-unit and associated surfacing selected by Saltburn & Westwood Community Council representatives in consultation with amenities staff. The unit will be installed and maintained by the amenities service subject to ongoing maintenance budget being available.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Legal implications: whilst the Council has no legal duty to provide playparks, the Council does have a legal duty in relation to the health and safety of playparks under its ownership. This means that checks must be undertaken annually.
- 3.2 The Management of Health & Safety at Work Act 1992 requires a regular risk assessment of play areas. This entails examination of the equipment, the site and the surrounding area for any/all potential hazards that may be encountered by the playground user. This involves checking site layout, access points and all equipment meets current standards.

High risk safety defects must be actioned to maintain the site safe for use. Any maintenance costs or replacing end of life items must be met from the existing service budget.

- 3.3 Resource implications: the report asks Members to consider a proposal to allocate the majority of the re-purposed Covid-19 Response budget for the Cromarty Firth Ward for the purchase of a multi-unit for Saltburn play area selected by the community in consultation with amenities staff. The cost includes an element for the required safety surfacing and construction costs whilst the amenities team will absorb the staff costs of the installation.

- 3.4 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) implications – These Covid Response Ward funds have been reallocated to support play areas. Local Members have worked with the Community Council in Saltburn & Westwood to consider the most appropriate use of funds and the preferred equipment to promote good play in the area is the multi-unit proposed.

- 3.5 Risk – there is a risk that allocating these funds for one large item will mean that fewer play areas in the Ward can be supported. However, it does mean that this particular play area will contain very appealing equipment which may encourage more families to make use of this play area.

- 3.6 Maintenance budgets are insufficient to, maintain and retain the number of play areas currently in use and additional new equipment puts further pressure on this budget. The future maintenance burden can be mitigated, by selecting equipment with few moving parts. The unit is relatively simple in terms of moving parts and would be expected to have a life span of 10 -15 years subject to the correct maintenance.

Climate Change/Gaelic implications – there are no implications

## **4. Background**

- 4.1 It was agreed at the 17 February Easter Ross Area Committee that a £15,000 Cromarty Firth Ward Play budget be formed from unspent Covid Response Funds. At that time, work was still required to determine how this funding would be spent and it was noted that any spend over £10,000 on one item would still require Committee approval, in line with standing orders. This report asks Members to consider the proposal put forward by Cromarty Firth Ward Members to set aside the sum of £14,750 for the purchase of a multi-unit item for Saltburn play area and required safety surfacing, following consultation with the local community.

## **5. Current Play Budget Position and Proposal**

- 5.1 The total reallocated budget to support play was £15,000. Play is important in all of the communities in the Ward and Members have and will continue to engage across the Ward to support communities and play opportunities. This financial year support has included use of ward discretionary budget for play chip required to keep play areas open and also a contribution to South Lodge Primary School to support inclusive play. However, Saltburn &

Westwood Community Council together with some local residents highlighted to local Members their ambitions for improvement to their play area, noting an increased number of young families in the area and asking for assistance to improve the local play area.

- 5.2 Members are supportive of this and have worked with the Community Council and other residents regarding the current proposal to install a multi-unit tower with platform and slide. The unit itself costs just under 11,500. Whilst amenities colleagues will install the item, there will be installation and construction costs and the total budget required is therefore £14,750. Purchase of this item and the required surfacing will therefore use the majority of the budget available, but it will provide a significant item of equipment and the proposal is supported by the Ward Members and by the local community.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place

Date: 4 November 2021

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