

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE: **Education, Culture and Sport**

DATE: **11<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

DIRECTOR: **Gayle Gorman**

TITLE OF REPORT: **Rugby Academy Initiative**

REPORT NUMBER: **ECS/14/048**

CHECKLIST: **YES**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides the committee with information in relation to Scottish Rugby's new policy initiatives and the development of a new regional academy in the North of Scotland.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the committee notes the report and:

- a) Welcomes Scottish Rugby's decision to locate the North academy in Aberdeen City.
- b) Instructs officers to continue to work with Scottish Rugby to provide training facilities for the rugby academy within Seaton Park.
- b) Notes that a proportion of the current investment into rugby development through the Aberdeen Youth Rugby Association will be realigned to support this project and future projects in line with Scottish Rugby's new policy initiative to grow the game.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Aberdeen City Council currently provides £10,000 per annum to the Aberdeen Youth Rugby Association in order to deliver upon local priorities and support Aberdeen City Council to increase participation and improve performance in rugby.

The national governing body of Rugby has been reviewing its structures over the past couple of months and recognises in order to accelerate the opportunities for our best local talent to thrive and be ready to compete on a

world stage that the development of a rugby academy is fundamental to support this.

Scottish Rugby will be financially supporting this key priority however in line with this realignment nationally it is recommended that Aberdeen City Council reallocate current investment into Aberdeen Youth Rugby by providing £7,500 to grow participation (schools and clubs) and £2,500 to improving performance through the rugby academy.

This allocation of £2,500 will support the maintenance of the training area which includes grass cutting and lining the pitch 30 times by the council's Housing and Environment team.

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

An appropriate agreement will be put in place for the usage and management of the area within Seaton Park. The terms of that agreement will be discussed with appropriate officers in the asset management, environmental and legal teams.

#### **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

Scottish Rugby, the national governing body of rugby in Scotland, has carried out a review of its development structures in order to raise the standard of play in Scotland. An outcome of this review is that they have created five new rugby development plans for the game which include club rugby, school rugby, women's rugby, coach development and the rugby academy initiative.

To support these developments the Scottish Rugby Board has recently committed to funding the creation of the rugby academy initiative by developing four academies across Scotland to be based in the North, the Borders, Glasgow and the west; and Edinburgh.

The core principles of the rugby academy proposals are:

- The membership of the academy will be open only to players who do or could qualify to represent Scotland.
- The academy will also serve the woman's game
- The staff appointment for the academy in each region will be professional and full time namely a head of region, skills coach, strength and conditioning coach and a physiotherapist
- There will be a process for planning individual player development and for reviewing developmental progress both in academic and rugby programmes.
- Members of the academy will play a significant number of games for their school or club each season, although the academy programme will take precedence
- Selection for the academy depends on the promise shown on the pitch but members will have other contractual obligations; to their school and

parents in educational matters and to the academy in adhering to Scottish Rugby's code of conduct and for their general behaviour

To progress this work the governing body reviewed various locations across Scotland which offer strong support to assist in the development of their plan. During this process they looked for an environment which would support the development of the academy and help to support young people to meet their full sporting potential

They identified a location in Aberdeen and discussions have been ongoing between The University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen City Council and Scottish Rugby in relation to locating the academy at the Hillhead Centre. This site is owned by the University of Aberdeen and consists of an office and meeting space, strength and conditioning area and a grass pitch.

Additional training space is however required for the academy in order to ensure that it is able to deliver on key priorities. Given the close proximity of the main site to Seaton Park, Scottish Rugby are keen to work with the council to look at utilising an area (highlighted in appendix 1). This will enable academy players to walk to this site from Hillhead as there are no changing facilities onsite in Seaton Park. The predominant usage of this facility is likely to be midweek 7 – 8.30am and after school. During the winter months it is intended that the majority of training will take place in the indoor pitch at Aberdeen Sports Village. This will enable the academy to continue training when the pitch at Seaton Park may be unplayable due to the ground being soft and waterlogged.

## **6. IMPACT**

This report relates to 'Aberdeen – the Smarter City':

- We will promote and improve opportunities for physical activity and sport to enable Aberdeen's citizens to lead more active, healthier lives.

The report relates to the Arts, Heritage and Sport strand of the Community Plan, specifically in relation to the Sports, Leisure and Recreation vision of developing Aberdeen as an "Active City".

The report relates closely to the objectives of "Fit for the Future, the sport and physical activity strategy for Aberdeen City (2009-2015)". These objectives are:

- Promote and increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity for everyone in Aberdeen.
- Provide a comprehensive and high quality range of sports facilities in Aberdeen.
- Maximise social, educational, health and economic benefits of sport and physical activity in Aberdeen.
- Develop and sustain pathways which nurture local, regional and national sporting people to reach their potential.
- Raise the profile of sport in Aberdeen.

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

The management of risk will be managed by the sports strategy team in conjunction with officers in the assets and environmental services team.

An appropriate agreement will be put in place which clearly sets out roles and responsibilities for the use of the area for rugby training and a regular liaison meeting will take place between officers from the City Council, Scottish Rugby and the University of Aberdeen.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Scottish Rugby Union – The Way Forward 2016 and Beyond Policy Initiatives** (December 2013)

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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