



**CONSULTATION - SPORT AND HEALTH SAVINGS 2026-27**

Report by Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services

**PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to consider the savings agreed for Sport and Health to be implemented in 2026-27.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Included in the budget setting process for 2025-26 were savings of £75,000 from Sports Facilities and £15,000 from Sports Development, however these were to be funded from Crown Estate Funding for 2025-26.
- 2.2 The savings proposal for Sports Facilities includes the closure of Shawbost and Lionel pools along with the potential removal of early opening at the remaining four sites. The savings proposal for Sports Development was for the removal of grants to community groups.
- 2.3 The savings proposal for Facilities will remove local services, reduce opening hours and impact on the core staff based at these facilities. Service users of the identified pools would have to travel to Stornoway. Parents, who rely on public transport, may find it challenging to access the pool in Stornoway after school or in the evening.
- 2.4 Employee and premises expenses make up over 97% of the Sports Facilities budget whilst employee expenses make up over 90% of the Sports Development budget.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the Comhairle considers the commencement of a consultation exercise with service users and staff.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:**

- (a) **consider the draft Initial Impact Assessments; and**
- (b) **approve the commencement of a consultation exercise on mitigating the impacts of the budget savings.**

Contact Officer:           Iain GG Campbell, Sports Development Services Manager / Neil Macleod, Service Manager

Appendix:1               Initial Impact Assessment – Sports Development Budget Savings 2025-26

Appendix:2               Initial Impact Assessment – Sports Facilities Budget Savings 2025-26

Appendix:3               Sports Facilities Cost Centre Costs

Appendix:4               Sports Development Cost Centre Costs

Background Papers:      Budget Folder 2025/26 [AB-Appendix-B-Budget-Savings-2025-26](#)



## IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	Total savings of £90,000 require to be made.
Legal	The obligation that “a local authority shall ensure that there is adequate provision of facilities for the inhabitants of their area for recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities.” contained in the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982 was transferred to the new local authorities under Schedule 13 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 as a statutory duty.
Staffing	This Report may have staffing implications dependent on the outcome of the proposed consultation.
Assets and Property	The Report considers the closure of the swimming pools in Shawbost and Lionel and potential re-purposing of these areas within the schools.
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	The key risks are related to reputational damage and the indirect impact on Slainte Mhath membership.
Equalities/Child Rights	The Initial Integrated Impact Assessment has identified the potential for young people to be impacted disproportionately if local services are removed and there is limited public transport available to access services in Stornoway.
Corporate Strategy	Supporting children and their families to be healthy and active is a commitment in the Corporate Strategy.
Environmental Impact	Potential for increased car use for displaced service users.
Consultation	Consultation will be required with affected staff and unions.

## BACKGROUND

- 5.1 At its meeting on 25 February the Comhairle approved £1.4m of savings. Included in these savings were £75,000 from Sports Facilities and £15,000 from Sports Development. Both these savings proposals have been delayed for a year and are being funded from Crown Estate Funding for 2025-26. Draft Initial Impact Assessments for Sports Facilities (Appendix 1) and Sports Development (Appendix 2) provide an overview of the potential impacts of implementing the savings.
- 5.2 The savings proposal for Sports Facilities was as follows:  
*The service is already operating at minimum staffing levels at facilities. This is the reason to propose a days closure for the swimming pools across the islands for a second day per week (some already shut Monday, some already shut Sunday). The current proposal is to remove early opening of Sports Facilities across the islands and the full closure and repurposing of rural pools in Shawbost and Lionel. Initial Impact Assessments (IIA) will be required to ensure that the impact on staff is minimised where possible and staff are fully and fairly consulted as part of the process and public consultation on the closure of the service is carried out to mitigate the effect of the pool closures on the communities affected.*
- 5.4 The savings proposal for Sports Development was as follows:  
*The Sports Development budget includes a sum for the provision of grants to community groups. It is proposed that the grants element be funded from CEF, allowing support for these groups across the islands to be maintained.*



## FINANCIAL

- 6.1 The controllable Sports Facilities expenditure budget for 2025-26, after the savings are taken into account, is approximately £2.5m. Employee expenses account for 52.6% of the budget and premises related expenses account for 44.8% of the budget. The main costs within premises related expenses are: School – Apportionment of Operational Buildings at 20.4%; Rates at 8.7%; Energy costs at 8.1%; and Cleaning costs at 4.8%. Appendix 3 provides a breakdown of each of the cost centres within Sports Facilities.
- 6.2 The controllable Sports Development expenditure budget for 2025-26, after the savings are taken into account, is £153,126. This budget is predominately for employee expenses, accounting for just over 90% of the budget. The identified budget saving reduces the grants available from £21,041 to £6,041. Appendix 4 provides a breakdown of each of the cost centres within Sports Development.
- 6.3 Income targets are increased each year (5% increase in 2025/26) as part of the budget setting model. In order to make any savings the service would need to increase charges in excess of the inflationary increase built into the budget setting model, otherwise, there is a reliance on an increased number of Slaithe Mhath members and “pay as you go” users.
- 6.4 As at the end of May 2025, Slaithe Mhath membership stood at 2,943. Current membership costs are highlighted in the table below:

Type	Cost 2025-26
Individual membership	£22.50
Family Membership	£30.00
Individual Concession Membership	£18.00
Family Concession Membership	£22.50

## PROPOSALS

### Sports Facilities

- 7.1 The proposal for the approved saving of £75,000 included the closure of Shawbost and Lionel Swimming Pools and the reduction of opening times in the other facilities. As identified in the Initial Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) there is a risk of a reduction in Slaithe Mhath Memberships.
- 7.2 Closing both pools would generate a saving in employee related costs of £55,113 less budgeted income of £5,458 giving a net saving of £49,655. It is anticipated that the remaining saving of £25,345 would be made from a reduction in utilities costs for each of the schools. However closing the pools may result in a requirement to decommission them and potentially repurpose the areas and this would result in one off costs.



7.3 Usage figure for the pools in 2024-25 are set out in the table below (\* Ionad Spors Leodhas was closed during October and the opening hours, at both pools, were extended):

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total
<b>Shawbost</b>	132	137	183	270	238	259	*416	192	140	179	164	193	2503
<b>Lionel</b>	278	113	164	312	310	217	*465	259	172	125	136	114	2665

7.4 Some of the savings could be achieved through a reduction in opening times across the four facilities. Should opening times be reduced by one hour per day for four days per week this would be an annual saving of £54,352.86 and a subsequent reduction in staffing of 0.32 FTE. This is based on a minimum shift requirement as set out in the table below:

	Duty Officer	Annual Salary Costs	Clerical Assistant	Annual Salary Costs	Leisure & Recreation Attendant	Annual Salary Costs	Shift Costs per Hour	Annual Savings if we reduce by 1 hour per day for 4 Days per week	Reduction in FTE
ISL	1	£49,385.00	1	£38,153.00	3	£38,153.00	£104.71	£21,837.51	0.14
Tarbert	1	£49,385.00			1	£38,153.00	£45.38	£9,463.57	0.05
Lionacleit	1	£49,385.00			2	£38,153.00	£65.15	£13,588.22	0.08
Castlebay	1	£49,385.00			1	£38,153.00	£45.38	£9,463.57	0.05
								<b>£54,352.86</b>	<b>0.32</b>

## Sports Development

7.5 The proposal for the approved saving of £15,000 is to reduce the grants to community groups.

7.6 The groups affected by this saving proposal are the two ClubSport Groups (Lewis & Harris and Uist & Barra) and individuals or teams representing the Western Isles through the Western Isles Islands Games Association (WIIGA). In 2024-25 Uist & Barra received £6,000 and Lewis & Harris received £10,000 and WIIGA received £5,000. The ClubSport funding was devolved funding originally managed by Sport & Health and currently supports 73 affiliated sports clubs and 7 associations covering a further 25 sports clubs. The WIIGA grant is an historic agreement to support the association.

## CONSULTATION

8.1 It is proposed that the consultation process will include the following:

- public meetings in Shawbost and Lionel to get community views on the proposals and suggestions for mitigating the effect of the pool closures;
- meetings with both ClubSport Groups;
- meeting with the Western Isles Games Association; and
- an online questionnaire seeking the views of individuals and the potential impact once the savings are implemented.



- 8.2 Should the Committee wish, other savings options could be presented as part of the consultation process. Some examples are set out below:

Option	Risk
Increase cost of Slainte Mhath Membership.	Slainte Mhath membership drops resulting in less additional income than anticipated. Those facing financial pressures will be impacted most.
Increase pay at the door charges above inflation amount.	No risk to Slainte Mhath membership however the annual increase assumptions in budget plan would require above inflation increases.
Consider options for chargeable one to one provision.	Staffing costs may not be covered by increased income.
Capital spend to save, or prudential borrowing, to invest in renewables to reduce energy costs	Accessing capital costs will be challenging in the current financial climate.
Revenue spend to save to invest in technology to introduce out of hours provision and reduce staffing requirements.	Potential health and safety issues and reduction in staffing hours.
Review additional opening hours of Sir E Scott Games Hall.	The service is paying FES £40,000 in 2025-26 to extend the opening hours of the Games Hall above the contracted opening times. Slainte Mhath membership drops resulting in less additional income than anticipated.
Remove Cleaning Contract	Additional work for staff.

- 8.3 The Sport and Health Service faces significant pressures over the next number of years. Key areas requiring investment include building maintenance; Running Track maintenance; replacement of end-of-life gym equipment and ensuring compliance with all health and safety requirements.

