ORDINARY MEETING 28 OCTOBER 2026	5.10

IN-KIND USE OF BARLOW PARK BY NORTHERN PRIDE RUGBY LEAGUE LIMITED

L&C | 52/7/6-07 | #7952246

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. **Approves a Funding Agreement with Northern Pride Rugby League Limited for a period of one (1) year from 1 January – 31 December 2027 for the use of West Barlow Park up to the value of $131,355 ex GST In-kind, with two (2) one (1) year Options, on the same terms and conditions and at a value to be determined; and**

2. **Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009,* to negotiate and finalise any and all matters in relation to the Funding, Options and related Agreements.**

INTERESTED PARTIES:

Stephen Devendish
Alanah Guiffrida
Andrew Leith
Dean Payne
Joel Reithmuller
Kym McFee-Smith
Mark Whitnall
Garreth Smith – Secretary

Note: The identification of interested parties is provided on a best endeavours basis by Council Officers and may not be exhaustive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Northern Pride Rugby League Limited (the Pride) have been using Barlow Park for training and home games under an in-kind arrangement with Council since 2011. This report details their proposal for continued support for the BMD Women's team and Men's HCP team to train at West Barlow Park in 2027.

It is noted that Main Barlow Park will not be available in 2027, 2028 and 2029 due to the planned redevelopment of the Western Grandstand under the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Legacy upgrades program. Northern Pride will hold their home games at an alternative venue until such time as the Barlow Park upgrade is complete, however training will continue to take place at West Barlow Park.

Council provides annual financial support to assist organisations in providing the community with cultural and recreational opportunities in accordance with its Community Grants Policy. Tailored arrangements such as the ongoing support to the Pride, are formalised by Resource and Performance Agreement which must be approved by Council resolution, as required.

The current Resource and Performance Agreement with Northern Pride Rugby Limited for financial assistance of up to $274,096 ex GST expires on December 31, 2026.

A significant decrease ($142,741) in the revised quotation for the 2027 period has been noted due to an alternative venue hosting all home games, with only training taking place at West Barlow Park for the next three years until such time as the Barlow Park redevelopment is completed. All costs associated with playing homes at an alternative venue will be covered and managed by the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA) displacement strategy.

While the Resource and Performance Agreement is for in-kind support it should be noted that there are service costs incurred by Council (i.e. casual staff, lighting, power) in providing this in-kind support and any approved increase would need to be facilitated via budget adjustment as part of future budget process.

BACKGROUND:

The Northern Pride compete in the Queensland Rugby League Hostplus Cup (Men) and BMD Premiership (Women) competitions and is one of three feeder clubs for the North Queensland Cowboys, who compete in the National Rugby League competition. Northern Pride seek financial support from Council to assist their sporting endeavours on the field and to develop their off-field community work.

In May 2011, Council resolved to install the Northern Pride as one of two anchor tenants at Barlow Park by way of a Resource and Performance Agreement. These agreements have continued as three-year agreements since inception, with the current agreement to expire on December 31, 2026.

The Pride have now requested Council extend its financial assistance to the club by way of a new funding agreement for the 2027 season. Whilst the Pride is agreeable to an extension term of 12 months, officers recommend seeking approval for a further two x one year options for the 2028 and 2029 seasons, to cover the redevelopment period. It is anticipated that Pride training will continue to take place at West Barlow Park during this period.

Arrangements with the Pride and other Barlow Park user groups during the redevelopment project have been advanced with the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA) and operational costs associated with their relocation from Barlow are being covered via GIICA displacement funding.

COMMENT:

In addition to the Funding Agreement, Northern Pride's use of Barlow Park will be managed by way of a User Agreement. In return for Council's financial assistance, Northern Pride will provide the following sponsorship benefits:

- ensure the Council logo appears on all Northern Pride letterhead and associated stationery
- ensure the Council logo is included on the Northern Pride website and on all other advertising material
- provide four premium tickets per game for use by the Mayor and/or Councillors
- ensure players are available for one advertising campaign per year of Agreement conducted by Council
- assist and support Council's efforts in the following key performance areas:
    - future developments of Barlow Park
    - event procurement and development
    - program support to relevant Council initiatives (such as Go Clubs).

Further to the Funding Agreement, Northern Pride's use of West Barlow Park is subject to the Barlow Park Management and Scheduling Guidelines (Guidelines) to ensure cohesion between the numerous users of the facility. The Guidelines allow Council to be transparent in the prioritisation of regular and high-profile event usage of Barlow Park.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (Recommended)

1. Approves a Funding Agreement with Northern Pride Rugby League Limited for a period of one (1) year from 1 January – 31 December 2027 for the use of West Barlow Park for training up to the value of $131,355 ex GST In Kind, with two (2) one (1) year Options, on the same terms and conditions and at a value to be determined; and

2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2009, to negotiate and finalise any and all matters in relation to the Funding, Options and related Agreements.

Option 2

That Council does not approve a Funding Agreement offer to the Northern Pride Rugby League Limited.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

In accordance with the provisions of the Funding Agreement, Northern Pride will be required to:

- Provide Council with a Key Performance Area Annual Initiatives Report before the start of the season
- Attend a pre-season meeting with Council to discuss Key Performance Area Initiatives for the season
- Attend a post-season meeting to review performance against Key Performance Area Initiatives
- At the end of the QRL season, provide an annual Activity Performance Report including:
    - audited financial statements

- statistical data broken down in relation to the number of participants, spectators, and volunteers
- any other pertinent information reasonably requested by Council.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

The fees associated with accommodating Pride for training at West Barlow Park for the 2027 season are indicated in the below table (NB – prices are GST exclusive and based on Council's fees and charges schedule 2026/27).

The table below presents the distribution of costs and identifies the amount payable by Council, with figures provided for both actual costs and costs inclusive of venue hire:

Training @ West Barlow	**Amount ex GST**
Training 222 sessions @ $299.82/session = 4.30pm – 8.30pm	$66,560
Lights 6pm – 8.30pm @ $72.73 x 187 sessions	$13,600
Staff after hours @ $113.64/hr 207 sessions x 1.5hrs = 310.5 hrs (Casual use runs until 7pm & the venue is staffed in this time) 35 Saturday sessions x 4hrs = 140hrs Total staff hours 450.5hrs	$51,195

Fees for the 2028 and 2029 season will be based on the relative fees and charges schedule for that year but are not anticipated to differ substantially, other than by normal Council adopted increases.

Community and Cultural Heritage:

The Pride provide pathways for local athletes to ensure talent is recognised at a State and National level which has been cemented with the Cowboys affiliate club agreement. It is a requirement of Council's funding agreement with the Northern Pride that they provide a copy of their annual report at the conclusion of the season

Corporate and Operational Plans:

This recommendation supports Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2030

Policy:

Council is committed to aiding the development of strong, vibrant communities through its grant funding programs and provides a variety of financial and In-Kind assistance to groups and organisations offering projects, events and programmes that enrich the wellbeing of the Cairns region.
Assistance to the Pride will be offered in accordance Council's Community Grants Policy.

CONSULTATION:

Given the Pride have been established at Barlow Park for a number of years, it is considered that the community is adequately aware of their use of Barlow Park as a home ground. Consultation in the preparation of this report has occurred between venue management, the Pride and Barlow Park user groups generally.



Tim Dendle
A/Director Lifestyle and Community