
Report To:	Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee	Date:	16 June 2020
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	PR/27/20/NG
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Subject:	Education ICT infrastructure and pupil access to ICT from home		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Sub-Committee on the ICT action required by Education Services in response to the changed pattern of learning that will be in place from August 2020 including the upgrading of Wi-Fi provision and connectivity across the school estate, supporting remote learning by providing pupils with laptop computers and internet access at home and the proposed purchase of a new online platform which will support schools to deliver home learning to pupils.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Currently, schools are providing learning to all Inverclyde children and young people through a blended learning approach which involves the use of both paper and digital resources. With the expected return of students to schools on 11 August 2020, it is clear that all Inverclyde learners will still be required to access some of their learning remotely from home on a part time basis. In order to ensure that this learning can be successfully delivered from school buildings and be accessible to all pupils, Inverclyde Council need to ensure that both a strengthened school digital infrastructure is in place and that pupils have access to technology and an internet connection within their homes.
- 2.2 Inverclyde Education Services needs now to ensure that there is improved connectivity and Wi-Fi infrastructure across the full education estate. This will require further investment into some school buildings in terms of Wi-Fi infrastructure upgrading and the improved connectivity across the full education estate.
- 2.3 The procurement and issuing of laptops for direct pupil use at home is a specific response to the unique situation education is facing during the Covid-19 pandemic. This requires a new approach to the delivery of digital learning and will need to be supported with appropriate maintenance and technical support.
- 2.4 Education Services propose that a number of changes are implemented which improve pupil access to digital learning devices, supports learning in school and at home, and helps to address aspects of inequity across the Inverclyde area.
- 2.5 Funding for this investment is proposed to come from a combination of unallocated Attainment Funding, Pupil Equity Fund, Connecting Communities and a request for one off funding from the Covid Earmarked Reserve.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Executive Sub-Committee:

- (i) Approve the proposal to increase connectivity to all of the Education estate and again to note the use of Pupil Equity Funding to support this improvement.
- (ii) Approve the use of unallocated Attainment monies to improve Wi-Fi infrastructure in five secondary school buildings including Craigmarloch School.
- (iii) Note that Education Services will also work with the Primary Schools to identify whether they also wish to proceed with the upgrading of their Wi-Fi infrastructure through the use of their Pupil Equity Funding, over the course of the next two sessions.
- (iv) Approve that the one remaining Early Learning Centre which does not have Wi-Fi infrastructure upgrade, will have this work addressed from the 2019-2020 ELC funding underspend.
- (v) Approve the purchase of 250 laptops for allocation by the Service to support remote learning on a prioritised basis, the one off cost of £100,000 to be charged to the Covid Earmarked Reserve.
- (vi) Approve the purchase of Clickview at a cost of £20,000 funded from the Attainment Challenge budget.
- (vii) Note that the Policy for providing laptops to certain pupils will be the subject of a report to the September Education & Communities Committee.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
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4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Currently all schools are connected to the web and other telecommunication services through the Scottish Wide Area Network. The existing fibre network has reached its maximum capacity and needs refreshed to provide sufficient connectivity for the schools.
- 4.2 In 2018, ICT Services carried out a Wi-Fi feasibility study across the Inverclyde education estate. This survey resulted in some schools opting to upgrade their Wi-Fi access. Additionally early learning and childcare (ELC) funding also provided the opportunity to have that upgrade extended into most ELC establishments as part of their refurbishments.
- 4.3 In early 2020, ICT Services identified the costs of further improving levels of education establishment connectivity. Clearly as schools increase delivery of streamed lessons to learners at home or make greater use of digital applications, many of which involve the use of video and sound media, the current connectivity is likely to be insufficient.
- 4.4 Although some Inverclyde schools have already used Pupil Equity Funding to improve the wireless access within their school building, it is the combination of improved connectivity and upgraded Wi-Fi infrastructure which will improve the quality of staff and pupils' experience when working with technology.
- 4.5 Over the lockdown period, Inverclyde schools have been monitoring the levels of learner access and engagement across the digital applications they have been using. Discussions with families have highlighted the difficulties they have been experiencing in accessing digital resources. In some cases, the older pupils, have been accessing these resources through their mobile phone devices only and therefore this has not allowed them to fully engage in their learning activities.

5.0 PROPOSAL TO STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTIVITY AND SPEED OF WI-FI FROM SCHOOL BUILDING AND TO PROVIDE A SUITABLE PLATFORM TO OPTIMISE DIGITAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.1 In order to support digital learning from school buildings it is important that the capacity of connectivity of SWAN is increased. This has to be undertaken across the whole school estate at one time and will cost approximately £130,000. Schools will have a significant underspend in the overall PEF spend for academic year 2019/20 mainly due to events of Covid-19. The proposal is that the cost of increasing the SWAN connectivity across all of our education establishments be funded from the schools' PEF underspend to ensure that high quality digital lessons are possible from within the school building.
- 5.2 The speed of Wi-Fi in schools will also make a difference to access to digital technology. Whilst some schools have an enhanced Wi-Fi speed, others do not. The proposal in this paper is to increase the speed of Wi-Fi in secondary schools through the anticipated underspend in the Attainment Challenge Resources budget. The cost of increased Wi-Fi speed for secondary schools will be approximately £263,000. Secondary schools are being prioritised because of the necessity of ensuring that pupils have the best chance of accessing course work in the senior phase. If primary schools wish to use PEF to increase Wi-Fi speeds then they will be supported to do so. There is one remaining early years establishment that will need to have further work undertaken to enhance Wi-Fi and the proposal is to complete this work with funding from the ELC funding budget.
- 5.3 Increasing the connectivity and speed of Wi-Fi will mean that schools will have the capacity in their buildings to be able to cope with blended learning and a variety of digital platforms. In order to support pupils and families with high quality learning at home it is the intention to purchase licences for an appropriate high quality digital platform for all our schools for the academic year 2020/21.
- 5.4 A digital platform will allow teachers to access professionally produced video clips which will enhance and support the modelling and exposition element of teaching both in live lessons

but also as part of the remote learning offer. Teachers can also produce their own content and add this to the platform.

- 5.5 The anticipated annual cost of a digital platform will be approximately £20,000 and it is proposed that a pilot year for this platform will be met from the Attainment Challenge resources budget.

6.0 PURCHASING DEVICES FOR PUPILS

- 6.1 Inverclyde Education Services has sought to gather together a more accurate picture of the access issues through the use of a survey and also by asking schools from their knowledge of the family, to highlight issues with access to computers. The combination of parental survey and school knowledge, has highlighted that there is an inequity of provision across Inverclyde which is largely linked to deprivation.
- 6.2 The Belville Garden Project, working with Education Services and resourced by a mixture of National Lottery, Charitable donations and other funding, identified a number of S1 –S6 pupils in secondary schools who needed to be given laptops and internet dongles to be able to participate in the online learning. To date they have provided 134 devices to individuals across the secondary schools and care experienced young people. Together with the help of all of our schools, they have identified funding for a further 243 younger secondary pupils/care experienced young people and 115 primary 7 pupils who may also need similar devices.
- 6.3 The Connecting Scotland programme is also seeking to put out a small number of devices with 12 months of broadband access, to Inverclyde Council, which can be issued to digitally excluded people on low incomes who are at greater risk of isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A few of these may be directed to families with children who are currently not able to access their learning online. Fuller details of Phase 3 of this programme looks set to be shared with Inverclyde Council in the coming weeks. It is expected that further devices will be forthcoming but the exact amount and specification is not yet known.
- 6.4 The immediate reaction of the third sector and national programme has been very welcomed and has meant that pupils without a computer have been able to quickly access digital learning during the Covid-19 crisis. The wider roll out of any programme needs to be carefully considered and well-resourced in order to ensure sustainability and equity for learners. Maintaining and replenishing computers needs to be managed and there needs to be an underlying set of principles to take forward a wider digital strategy.
- 6.5 It is proposed to manage any roll out of devices through a set of entitlements. The paper proposes that the first phase of this roll out will be a core entitlement that any pupil in the senior phase of school (S4-6) who is entitled to free school meals and a clothing grant on a deprivation basis will receive a computer package including Wi-Fi if required.
- 6.6 To support this process it is proposed that the Council initially purchase 250 laptops for allocation by the Service to support remote learning on a prioritised basis, the one off cost of £100,000 to be charged to the Covid Earmarked Reserve.
- 6.7 The computers will remain the property of the school and be loaned to pupils. A limited support service will be available to maintain the computers. Although the exact costs of this service have yet to be fully identified (and are estimated in the costs shown), the need to provide additional technician and advisory support is something which we have anticipated will need to be a longer term feature of our Education provision.
- 6.8 All students and their parents will be asked to sign a user agreement which identifies the expected online behaviours, a need to monitor the use of data and aspects of their care, before receiving a device. In the agreement, students leaving their Secondary school will be asked to return the laptop, so that they can be used by another student following a cleansing process. Education services will explore insurance but this may be costly and pupils will be asked to add this where possible to their household contents insurance.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

The funding for the proposals in this report comes from a number of sources. It should be noted that all these sources are one off and any recurring costs will be identified in a subsequent report and will be contained by the Service.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
PEF	ICT Connectivity	20/21	£130,000		Costs to be shared by all schools. Improvement will extend to ELC buildings.
Secondary Attainment Fund	WiFi	20/21	£264,000		Based upon 2018 costings.
Rainbow Family Centre	WiFi	20/21	£13,000		Based upon 2018 costs. Fund from ELC Revenue.
Attainment Fund	Teaching Resources	20/21	£20,000		One year agreement. The schools would need to support future annual costs if desired.
COVID	ICT Equipment	20/21	£100,000		250 laptops subject to Committee approval.

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Schools	Support & Maintenance	20/21	tbc		Subject to a further report but to be contained by the Directorate.

7.2 Legal

No implications

7.3 Human Resources

No implications

7.4 Equalities

Equalities

- (a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

✓

YES

NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

- (b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

✓

YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.

NO

- (c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

✓

YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

NO

7.5 Repopulation

No implications.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 N/A.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 N/A.