

Report to Cabinet
28th June 2020

Wards:
All

Every Child Connected – provision of devices to pupils in Hull

Report of the of Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Family Services

This item is not exempt
Therefore exempt reasons are not applicable

This is a key decision. The matter is in the Forward Plan
Key Decision Notice 0031/21

1. Purpose of the Report and Summary

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the progress of the 'Every Child Connected' group, in particular in relation to levels of access to IT equipment and connectivity of children and young people in the city.
- 1.2 To seek authority to enter into a procurement exercise to purchase additional devices for the benefit of children and young people in the city.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Director of Legal Services and Partnerships and the Director of Children, Young People and Family Services be delegated authority to progress a procurement exercise using the Technology Products and Associated Services framework (TePAS RM6068) and to award a contract for the purchase of laptops to contribute to the shared city wide initiative being managed in conjunction with schools in the city to provide access to digital technology to children and young people for educational purposes who would otherwise not have that access.
- 2.2 To authorise the Director Legal Services and Partnerships to progress initiatives with providers to support enabling low cost access to network connectivity.
- 2.3 That £250k from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund be used to fund the schemes.
- 2.4 That, following the procurement exercise, the devices are provided to schools and academy trusts in the city to manage and enable their use for those pupils who have been identified as lacking access to devices.

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3. Reasons for recommendation

- 3.1 The Coronavirus Pandemic has brought into sharp relief the need for access to digital technology for children and young people in the city to enable them to access educational resources and undertake their school work despite the constraints arising from social distancing strictures.
- 3.2 The Council has established a steering group ('Every Child Connected') to work with schools and academies in the city to identify pupils who would not have access to equipment without wider support. That work established a need for equipment and connectivity for a significant number of young people across the city.
- 3.3 The steering group has worked with private business in the city and network providers to develop a co-ordinated approach to address the digital deficit facing Hull pupils. The recommendations will allow the Council to contribute to these initiatives through the purchase of devices to complement donations from organisations in the city who share the ambition to ensure that pupils have access to digital learning to support educational outcomes.

4. Impact on other Executive Committees (including Area Committees)

- 4.1 There is no impact on other executive committees although the recommendations, if approved, will have city-wide benefits.

5. Background

- 5.1 Since the Prime Minister announced the partial opening of schools during the early spring term, Hull City Council has worked with colleagues from the Hull Learning Partnership and Community & Voluntary Sector to establish the 'Every Child Connected' group.
- 5.2 The Terms of Reference identify the following key functions of the group, who meet fortnightly:
 - Drive the strategic ambition that 'every Hull child or young person is connected and able to access high quality remote learning' during and following the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Maintain an up-to-date strategic oversight of the digital deficit in Hull for children and young people (CYP) in Key Stages 2 to 5
 - Co-ordinate the strategic interface with the public, private and community voluntary sector in order to procure suitable devices, data and connectivity for all Hull CYP in Key Stages 2 to 5

- Work with the Hull Learning Partnership to co-ordinate and prioritise the distribution of devices and data/connectivity to Hull CYP in Key stages 2 to 5
- Maintain an effective communication strategy to keep stakeholders informed and updated of progress in relation to the strategic ambition
- Liaise with the Teaching School Hub to ensure that the provision of high quality professional learning is available through recognised partners (Edtech Demonstrator, Accredited Google Educators) for all education professionals supporting CYP from Key Stage 2 to 5.

6. Issues for consideration

Access to devices

- 6.1 During the pandemic there has been a significant national focus on access to devices to support home learning and general digital inclusion. There has been much activity in this area, which can be summarised as:
- DfE is providing more than 1.3 million laptops and tablets nationally to help disadvantaged pupils and young people with remote and face-to-face education during coronavirus.
 - In addition a number of MATs in the city have made investments in devices for the benefit of their pupils.
 - A further DfE scheme in the summer term of 2020 provided c1,500 devices to pupils in Hull who are known to social care services.
 - Esteem LEP provided funding for the purchase of 22 devices for children and young people
- 6.2 The Every Child Connected Group has, with the assistance of the Hull Learning Partnership and its constituent academy trusts, undertaken an audit of device accessibility for school age children and young people in the city. As of 18 March 2021 the deficit position across the city was that 3,285 pupils were without a device (this equates to 14% of the surveyed Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5 cohort).
- 6.3 Over the course of the spring term the group was successful in securing 1,160 devices to meet this deficit These were made up from the following donations:
- Cranswick Foods donation of 1,151 devices to East Hull primary schools
 - Hull Children’s University donation of 9 recycled devices to Westcott Primary School
- 6.4 In addition, the group has successfully engaged with another Hull based company who have expressed an interest in making a further donation alongside developing a longer-term relationship with a small group of schools in a multi-academy trust in the West of the City centred around careers, information, advice and guidance and reducing NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) levels. The company are keen to support schools in the West Locality and are considering a donation of 200 devices. This proposal would help to eradicate the deficit in four of the schools in the MAT.

- 6.5 Further efforts will be made to engage with companies in Hull with a view to securing additional donations.
- 6.6 This report seeks authority for the LA to purchase 1,000 devices to further reduce the digital deficit in the City. It is proposed that this be funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund.
- 6.7 It is advised that Hull City Council complete a procurement using the Technology Products and Associated Services framework (TePAS RM6068) using a further competition, as this is fully compliant with Public Contract Regulations 2015. The use of the framework will allow us to attain bulk discount on the purchase with supplier margins capped and audited by Crown Commercial Services. The framework will also allow us to include a quality element to allow for additional services such as delivery, configuration and user handover should it be necessary from the Schools perspective. Finally, the council can also include key stakeholders in the evaluation as part of the procurement process.
- 6.8 The impact of the additional devices secured by the group since 8 March 2021, has been to reduce the device deficit in the city from 3,285 pupils. Including the potential additional donations from HCC & the private provider mean the deficit would reduce to 2,085
- 6.9 The LA is currently undertaking an exercise to ascertain the specification requirements of the MATs in the city. This will determine the likely eventual cost of any additional donated devices. However an initial procurement scoping exercise has been undertaken, in excess of 1,000 devices would be purchasable, based on the assumed specification.
- 6.10 These costs will be further refined during the proposed procurement exercise outlined in the recommendations.

Connectivity

- 6.11 As of 18 March 2021, the connectivity deficit position across the city was that 1,746 pupils were without sufficient data/connectivity (6 per cent of the surveyed Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5 cohort).
- 6.12 Throughout the past year the DfE have worked with network providers to provide a number of solutions to help disadvantaged children - such as 4G wireless routers, increased data caps and access to Wi-Fi Hotspots. The current scheme is due to expire in summer 2021 and no further details have been announced.
- 6.13 It is widely expected that remote learning will be required in some capacity over the coming years and as a result the continued support around connectivity for disadvantaged pupils is still of vital importance.
- 6.14 Devices provided will be managed through schools and be able to access internet connectivity via home networks. Where there is no access to home networks some access is being made available for the present through support in the short term provided through the Department for Education through mobile providers. The Council is working with network providers operating in the city to supplement this provision. Enhancing access through wifi hotspots that have been developed across the city as well as facilitation of low cost services from providers and will be part of that offer.

7. Options and risk assessment

- 7.1 Option 1 – Do nothing. This is not recommended. The Council are looking to proactively bridge the gap of hardware access for children in the city who do not currently have access to the correct equipment.
- 7.2 Option 2 – use the CCS Procurement Portal – This option is not recommended. The use of the procurement portal is typically for small low volume purchases and will not include bulk discount on orders. It will also not allow for flexibility with additional quality services as is possible in a further competition. However, adequate stock is currently available through this platform and it is likely the quickest route to market should other arrangements be made for intake and distribution.
- 7.3 Option 3 – Use the TePAS Framework – This is the recommended option – The TePAS framework allows the Council to run a further competition to ensure best available pricing is achieved and allows the Council to include additional requirements that would be required of purchases of this size, particularly around delivery arrangements and device setup.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The use of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund falls within the delegations of the Council, and therefore no formal consultation is required. The issue of digital deficit and its impact on children and young people in the city has been the subject of ongoing dialogue with academy trusts in the city. However, as noted above, the proposed procurement route does allow for stakeholder views to be taken into account.

9. Comments of the Monitoring Officer (Director of Legal Services and Partnerships)

- 9.1 The TePAS framework contract has been procured to replace the existing Crown Commercial Services Contract through which Cabinet authority has hitherto been in place for the purchase of the Council's device requirements. It provides an appropriate framework contract to facilitate the purchase of the required devices that has been let in accordance with the Procurement Regulations.

10. Comments of the Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance and Transformation)

- 10.1 The use of the TePAS framework in the tendering process for the purchase of the IT equipment will ensure best value is achieved. The funding for this scheme has been identified from the authorities Covid C.O.M.F resources, the recommendations can therefore be supported.(JM)

11. Comments of Assistant Director of HR & OD and compliance with the Equality Duty

- 11.1 There are no staffing issues arising of the Council, in terms of equality impact there is a benefit to young people.

12. Comments of Overview and Scrutiny

12.1 The Forward Plan entry related to this decision will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting of 7 June, 2021. The Committee will decide if the report should be subject to further scrutiny, and if so which Scrutiny Commission will carry out that work. (Ref. Sc6214 (FH))

13. Comments of the Portfolio Holder for Learning, Skills and Safeguarding Children

13.1 In a city that is surround by water on two sides, using technology to bridge the gaps and gain access to customers and markets is an economic imperative. For our younger generation it is vital that every child has the ability to use the technology that can mitigate our geographical location and connect them to the wider region, country and world. As Covid has disrupted everyone's routines it has clearly impacted the ability of our poorer children to access education and highlighted the digital divide. As more and more of education, economic and social life takes place online it's vital our young people are not cut out from a progressive technological future; leaving them behind. I wholeheartedly welcome this funding on behalf of those young people in Hull who will benefit.

Contact Officer: Richard Skog Telephone No. : 616375

Officer Interests: None

Background Documents: - None

Implications Matrix

This section must be completed and you must ensure that you have fully considered all potential implications

This matrix provides a simple check list for the things you need to have considered within your report

If there are no implications please state

I have informed and sought advice from HR, Legal, Finance, Overview and Scrutiny and the Climate Change Advisor and any other key stakeholders i.e. Portfolio Holder, relevant Ward Members etc prior to submitting this report for official comments	Yes
I have considered whether this report requests a decision that is outside the Budget and Policy Framework approved by Council	Yes
Value for money considerations have been accounted for within the report	Yes
The report is approved by the relevant Assistant Director	Yes
I have included any procurement/commercial issues/implications within the report	Yes
I have considered the potential media interest in this report and liaised with the Media Team to ensure that they are briefed to respond to media interest.	Yes
I have included any equalities and diversity implications within the report and where necessary I have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment and the outcomes are included within the report	Yes
Any Health and Safety implications are included within the report	Yes
Any human rights implications are included within the report	Yes
I have included any community safety implications and paid regard to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act within the report	Yes
I have liaised with the Climate Change Advisor and any environmental and climate change issues/sustainability implications are included within the report	Yes
I have included information about how this report contributes to the City Plan/ Area priorities within the report	Yes
I have considered the impact on air quality, carried out an appropriate assessment and included any resulting actions or opportunities necessary to improve air quality in the report.	Yes

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