ANGUS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 30 APRIL 2002

SCHOOL ICT REQUIREMENTS – RESOURCE ALLOCATION - 2002/03 AND FUTURE YEARS
REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Abstract

This report outlines proposals to provide schools with greater flexibility in determining ICT priorities in the context of the overall corporate framework.

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1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

    It is recommended that the Education Committee approves the content of this report.

2. **BACKGROUND**

    The Education Committee, at its meeting of 20 November 2001, approved the purchase of ICT equipment for schools. This has ensured the level of ICT infrastructure within Angus is of a high standard. There has been significant investment in ICT over the last 3 financial years, partly as a result of funding available from the Excellence Fund, augmented through Council resources. Subject to the availability of adequate financial resources, the likely funding available for the next 3 years is set out as follows:

	2002/03 £000s	2003/04 £000s	2004/5 £000s
Revenue Funding (Previous Excellence Fund)	274	274	274
IT Renewal and Repair Fund *	60	250	250
Capital	100	250	250
Total	434	774	774

    * The level of funding in 2003/04 and 2004/05 is indicative at this stage.

    While the investment in ICT has been most welcome, equipment does need to be replaced/updated in exceptionally short timescales (4/5 years) and the Director of Information Technology has confirmed that approximately £700k per annum would be required to maintain existing levels of equipment.

3. **FUTURE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

    It is important to ensure that maximum educational benefits are attained from the available resources. The pupil computer ratio has been met in all schools (primary 7.5:1 and secondary 5:1) and there are networks within all schools (extensive networks within secondary).

    Furthermore it is expected that performance of the corporate network will improve with the introduction of broadband technology, which has already commenced.

    While the significant investment in ICT infrastructure and pcs over recent years has been welcome, this has also established a requirement in the current and future years in respect of refreshing equipment in schools. It has recently been possible to replace/enhance servers in secondary schools (Report 1330/01 refers), but there is an emerging problem in respect of pcs. In addition, increasing the level of hardware is directly related to the cost of maintenance and support. It is important therefore when considering procurement decisions that the whole cost of ownership is addressed.

    There are a number of options for utilising available non-devolved resources in 2002/03 (and future years). Within the corporate framework, schools are developing their own ICT priorities

(as part of the Development Planning process) and utilising devolved funds to augment core provision, including the purchase of pcs, peripherals, additional networking etc. At the same time however new technologies are emerging and it is no longer appropriate to concentrate non-devolved resources solely on pcs.

Accordingly the current arrangements of centrally determining how resources will be utilised in each school ought to be reviewed. In effect schools should have flexibility to determine how best challenging ICT targets should be met, with support and guidance available from the Education ICT Team.

It is proposed therefore to give schools some discretion as to how to utilise their notional allocation of the total budget available. This could be achieved by providing a list of available equipment and giving schools flexibility to decide their own priorities.

For example it may be possible to offer schools the following options, with a notional points allocation (at this stage for illustrative purposes only) set against each specific piece of hardware:

	Notional Points
▪ Replace current pc in secondary school (may be linked to network)*	6
▪ Replace RM Window Box pc (may be linked to network) *	6
▪ New RM Window Box pc	8
▪ Extend network in school (5 datapoints and electric etc., assumes all contained in one building)	15
▪ Electronic whiteboards	20
▪ Digital Projector	15
▪ Laptop computers (not linked to network)	13
▪ Dreamwriters or equivalent	5
▪ Printer	2
▪ Scanner	2
▪ Fileserver	45
▪ Digital camera	4
▪ Digital video camera	10
▪ Radio network system (20 laptops)	300

*   Assuming existing machine is replaced and software is transferred to replacement pc

It should be noted that it is proposed to utilise a points allocation rather than cash as this will allow emphasis to be given to particular pieces of hardware; the monetary value of individual items is constantly changing and by using points a degree of certainty can be built into the system from a school perspective. In effect any risk in respect of price variation will be largely removed from individual schools.

Assuming that a secondary school were to be allocated 220 points, it might choose to use the allocation as follows:

▪ 30 pcs	180
▪ 4 digital video cameras	40
	220

or

▪ 15 pcs	90
▪ fileserver	45
▪ extend network	15
▪ 2 projectors	30
▪ 2 electronic whiteboards	40
	220

Similar flexibility would apply to primary schools.

There will be a requirement to place some limits on the level of flexibility to ensure the integrity of the infrastructure. For example schools which chose not to use any part of their allocation to replace pcs and/or servers, may encounter difficulties in respect of speed of machines, software issues etc. and in such circumstances it may also be necessary for older equipment to be

removed from the network. Head Teachers will therefore be required to ensure that their decisions maintain the integrity of the school's ICT infrastructure. It is proposed for 2002/03 that each school plan must be agreed with the Education ICT Manager (notionally 50% of allocated points will be used for pcs and/or fileservers). This process complements other arrangements for development planning in schools. It is also intended to provide schools with the opportunity (albeit within an agreed framework) to carry forward part of their allocation, assuming this fits in with their own ICT plan for the school.

4. PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES - PRIORITIES FOR 2002/03

Given the relatively low sums available in 2002/03 it is suggested there is a requirement to consolidate the current situation, particularly in secondary schools but at the same time create some flexibility for schools to pilot emerging technologies.

Taking into account pupil:computer ratios and relative networking complexities, it could be argued that available resources should be allocated between secondary and primary sectors notionally on a 55:45 basis. It is recognised there will be some investment which will equally benefit both sectors.

It is proposed that over a three year period the ratio of expenditure between primary and secondary schools should be attained, but it may be appropriate to weight allocations differently in each specific year. Given that there was a major procurement of pcs for primary schools in March-May 2001 and the need to upgrade secondary school infrastructure, this is reflected in the allocation of available budget outlined as follows:

	2002/03 £000s	2003/04 £000s	2004/05 £000s	Total £000s
Central Initiatives/Other services [1]	110	120	120	350
Primary	124	324	286	734
Secondary	200	330	368	898
Total	434	774	774	1982

Note 1: Video conferencing pilot, administration systems, internet bandwidth, Community Education Service etc.

The priority for 2002/03 would be for schools to consolidate their network provision, upgrade servers, provide/replace pcs to finalise their own plans. Within this context, assuming one point equals £100, sums would be allocated to each school in 2002/2003 on the following basis:

Primary	£700 flat rate (7 points) - balance on roll basis
Secondary	£10,000 flat rate (100 points) – balance on roll basis

5. BENEFITS/IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSALS FOR SCHOOLS

The approach outlined will provide schools with a level of flexibility not available at present. This will enable schools to work with the Education ICT Team to determine the most appropriate use of the available resources. There will also be an onus placed on school managers to ensure that the implications of any decisions are considered on a whole school basis (eg. will purchase of additional hardware peripherals or software impact on network performance). This situation emphasises the importance of building on the good and developing relationships between schools and the Education ICT Team.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is provision within the Education Revenue and Capital budgets to implement the proposals in 2002/03. The figures for 2003/04 and 2004/05 are indicative at this stage and may be subject to change.

7. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Finance, Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Information Technology have been consulted in the preparation of this report. The principles of this paper were approved at the departmental ICT Strategy Group which includes representatives of primary and secondary schools.

8.   HUMAN RIGHTS

There are no Human Rights implications arising directly from consideration of this report.

9.   CONCLUSION

There is a need to ensure ICT is developed on a corporate basis but at the same time allow schools flexibility to utilise resources in accordance with priorities set out in their own development plans. This model is consistent with the devolved environment in which schools operate. At the same time there will be absolute transparency in the way resources are allocated and schools will also have responsibility to manage resources effectively, ie. the financial situation will be clearly understood and the full cost of ownership will need to be considered when making investment decisions. This model will complement the new arrangement for providing ICT support to schools.

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NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.