

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 24 NOVEMBER 2011

ICT IN EDUCATION AND THE NEXT GENERATION OF GLOW

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**ABSTRACT:**

This report outlines the Scottish Government's key objectives for ICT in education and its plans for the next generation of GLOW. This report also provides commentary on how Glow Futures might develop.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (i) note the developments in respect of Glow in the context of current Scottish Government objectives.
- (ii) instruct the Director of Education to contribute to the Scottish Government's ongoing dialogue about the next generation of Glow with reference to the terms of this report.

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 At its meeting of 2 June 2011 the Education Committee approved Report 398/11 which outlined ICT investment in school.

2.2 That report made reference to the increasing use being made of GLOW in Angus schools. The report highlighted the following benefits of GLOW:

- significant and varied efficiencies as well as cost savings to establishments
- improved learning opportunities for young people
- good support for pedagogy and teacher education
- the establishment of Glow groups which have facilitated:
  - the use of Glow Blogs and Glow Wikis to communicate, collaborate and share information about key curriculum developments
  - Discussion/Glow Forum boards to strengthen communication within and across schools
  - the use of Glow Meet as a means of supporting remote or distance learning
  - access to external content through web links
  - removal of the 'paper-chase' through effective use of digital document – e.g. homework being completed and uploaded into a customised web part by pupils
  - Glow 'Meets' Video conferencing contacts with other local/international schools
  - consideration of ePortfolio developments to support pupil profiling and the creation of an effective and sustainable tool for recording pupil progress

**3. CURRENT POSITION**

3.1 On 8 September 2011, the Scottish Government wrote to all Scottish Local Authorities, outlining the Scottish Government's key objectives for ICT in education and related plans for the next generation of Glow.

3.2 As a result of that announcement, the current Glow Futures procurement will stop, albeit the government have committed to ensuring users continue to have access to tools, through a single sign-on, to make the next generation of Glow more relevant and dynamic.

3.3 The key ICT in education objectives by Scottish Government envisage:

- changing the culture of ICT use in education
- improving confidence in the use of ICT in an education environment
- promoting new behaviours for teaching
- deepening parental engagement
- strengthening the position of the use of hardware and associated infrastructure in schools

3.4 The Scottish Government intends to develop its ICT strategy through continuing dialogue with key stakeholders. This will include online discussions to help share current thinking on ICT in education including through the use of blog posts on the Cabinet Secretary's 'Engage for Education' website. An ICT summit to explore recent developments and the future direction of ICT in Scottish schools is under consideration.

#### 4. **ANGUS COUNCIL POSITION**

4.1 The commitment of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to engage in dialogue with stakeholders is welcome. It is reassuring to note that the Government remain committed to an improved version of GLOW. This commitment will build on the already successful partnership between the Scottish Government and the thirty-two local authorities in respect of ICT developments. The commitment to resource this key national project is also very welcome.

4.2.1 However, since the current contract for Glow comes to an end in September 2012, there is a pressing need to ensure that appropriate project management, communication, decision-making and governance mechanisms are in place to take forward successfully the development of a new version of GLOW.

4.3 From an Angus Council perspective, trends in the usage of Glow are outlined below:

	January 2009	January 2010	January 2011
Total Unique Users of Glow per month	<b><u>2,588</u></b>	<b><u>8,114</u></b>	<b><u>13,828</u></b>
Cumulative Teachers 'Hits' per month	<b>6287</b>	<b>15218</b>	<b>19844</b>
Cumulative Pupil 'Hits' per month	<b><u>12392</u></b>	<b><u>45606</u></b>	<b><u>54492</u></b>
Cumulative 'Hits' per month for all Angus users	<b><u>18679</u></b>	<b><u>60824</u></b>	<b><u>74336</u></b>

4.4 Notwithstanding the significant benefits which it has brought, it is undoubtedly the case that Glow can be improved to better meet the needs of young people, staff and parents.

4.5 Reflecting this position and the wider context of the use of ICT in Scotland, it is suggested that the following matters be considered in developing the new Glow:

- there is a need to maintain a safe and secure infrastructure and environment which is common across Scotland, available to all users, including pupils, school staff and parents.
- there is a need to integrate GLOW with a local authority's Management Information System (MIS) to create and manage user accounts. (This should be achieved by minimising administrative requirements at school level.)
- there is a need to provide a system of content management, while maintaining the functionality of tools, such as the text editor, which offer a degree of freedom to users.
- there is a need to maintain and further improve already successful aspects of GLOW, including video conferencing, blogs, wikis
- the successful introduction of GLOW Groups should be built upon to improve communication, collaboration and the sharing of resources/information.

- appropriate and user-friendly arrangements for user authentication should be put in place
- the new version of Glow should meet the need for users to feel safe and confident in its use.
- a timeline is necessary to provide information to current users on progress towards introducing the revised Glow in 2012.

4.6 The dialogue initiated by the Cabinet Secretary will provide a welcome opportunity to consider key issues and ensure that there is a clear vision for the Glow of the future, particularly in the context of the new curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence. Such issues will almost certainly include (a) approaches to risk management, in respect of website access, and the use of social media and personal devices (b) arrangements to improve bandwidth issues across **all** of Scotland's schools.

4.7 Practical considerations which will require to be addressed with a degree of urgency relate to:

- the identity of the management agent (NB - the role of Education Scotland in this regard needs to be clarified)
- business continuity issues in the event that new software tools are introduced
- the procurement of specific services including free services
- the provision of ongoing support, given that the current Helpdesk, which is operated by RM and is valued by school staff, will no longer be available
- the potential benefits of the new version being 'cloud based'
- the impact and contribution of external/commercial parties, for example, in adopting open source solutions
- the need for flexible charging mechanisms for access to particular functionality/tools
- the possibility of a model of self-registration being available at school level, linking to local MIS, with consideration given to parental access

4.8 While it is undoubtedly the case that there are solutions to the above challenges, it is essential that these are considered holistically and that detailed consideration is given to the costs and benefits of each aspect of Glow. While committed to consultation, the Scottish Government have not confirmed, as yet, how the project will be managed, how priorities will be determined and what the governance arrangements will be. There is now an urgent requirement for the development of a project plan and timetable. The provision of clear information about the views of teachers, pupils and local authorities and other stakeholders will clearly inform that process.

## 5. RISK

5.1 This report does not require any specific risk issues to be addressed. However depending on progress in taking the project forward at national level, there may be risks for business continuity. The situation will be closely monitored and appropriate action will be taken if any specific risks emerge.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## 7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

## 8. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and single Outcome Agreement 2011-2014:

- we have a sustainable economy with good employment opportunities
- our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens.

**9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An [equalities impact assessment](#) is not required.

**10. CONSULTATION**

10.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance, Head of IT and Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report

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DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**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 a material extent in preparing the above report.

**ED/NL/CTC**