

COMMUNITY SERVICES – EDUCATION COMPUTER SERVICE REVIEW.

1. SUMMARY

The audit of the Education Network which was undertaken by Audit Scotland in 2004/2005 highlighted several recommendations that required action. The Audit Committee of 27th March requested that the Head of Planning & Performance provide and an explanation for the delay in the implementation of the recommendations of the Education Computer Service Review.

The contents of this document seek to explain the delays.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The contents of this report are noted by the Audit Committee.

3. DETAILS

3.1 The report by Audit Scotland highlighted several areas as “Medium” and “High” priorities to be addressed by the ICT Development Manager.

As reported to the Audit Committee on 19th March and 6th June 2007, all of these tasks have been completed with the exception of the development of Virtual Local Area Network (VLAN) configuration to separate “Curricular” and “Business” data on schools networks. After discussions with 3COM, supplier of the active network equipment in schools, a technical solution has been identified and the configuration work required on the schools networks will be completed over the summer months.

3.2 The delay in implementing the recommendations contained in the original Audit Scotland report was caused by several mitigating factors. The following pieces of work which were, with the exception of commissioning work related to the NPDO schools, never envisioned.

3.3 In November 2006 the Scottish Executive announced additional funding was to be allocated directly to schools. Argyll & Bute’s schools were allocated over £720K to be spent on “education materials and equipment for use in schools”. The Education Management Team advised schools via Head Teachers meetings that ICT equipment should be the focus of much of the expenditure, to ensure that schools were best prepared for the National SSDN/Glow project.

Argyll & Bute Council were the first Local Authority to organise a centralised purchasing mechanism from which schools purchased in excess of £500K worth of IT equipment, gaining discounts on standard prices of between 15% and 18%. Over 200 additional Desktop and Laptop devices were ordered and configured by the ICT Technician Team in Inveraray from February 2007, generating around 60 days additional “engineering days”.

- 3.4 In early February 2007, BT announced the withdrawal of their “BT Surftime” product which was used across the Primary estate to provide low-cost ISDN calls to enable access to the Internet and Schools e-mail systems. BT’s decision meant that if Argyll & Bute did not replace these circuits, the schools would have incurred an additional £120K in call charges.

The ICT Technician Team in Inveraray commissioned an alternative Business Broadband product in the 70 affected schools between March 2007 and August 2007, generating 58 additional “engineering days”.

- 3.5 The installation of new Local Area Network (LAN) equipment was agreed as part of the plans for the NPDO Project schools. The installation of the new equipment ensured that the schools had a modern LAN with appropriate Wireless LAN (WLAN) devices that would ensure that the schools provided a “best fit” in delivering access to ICT resources. The ICT Technical team in Inveraray commissioned the LAN and WLAN resources at each of the schools and assisted the Schools own ICT Technician (where available) in commissioning the ICT equipment. Assisting the local ICT Technicians in schools generated varying amount of “engineering days” with the total amount of days being just over 150 on the five NPDO sites.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The reasons stated in the “Detail” section of this report give an indication of the additional support pressures that were placed on the ICT Technician Team in Inveraray and explain why the implementation of the actions identified in the Computers Services Review were delayed.

5. IMPLICATIONS

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| 5.1 | Policy: | None |
| 5.2 | Financial: | None |
| 5.3 | Personnel: | None |
| 5.4 | Legal: | None |
| 5.5 | Equal Opportunities: | None |

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