Inverclyde council

Report To:	**Education and Communities Committee**	**Date:**	**13 March 2018**
Report By:	**Head of Education**	**Report No:**	**EDUCOM/34/18/RB**
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Subject:	**Increasing Wi-Fi provision for schools in Inverclyde**		

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Education and Communities Committee of the outcome of the recent Wi-Fi feasibility study for schools to increase Wi-Fi capability for schools in Inverclyde.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 Wi-Fi is in place in all schools in Inverclyde. At the request of head teachers, a report was commissioned to investigate the current condition of Inverclyde education wireless infrastructure and advise what changes (if any) are needed to meet the evolving needs of the service. Head teachers requested the report because of the increasing use of mobile digital technology to support the needs of learners. Schools who had initially hoped to enhance digital technology through their Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) found that the infrastructure was not in place to support the use of devices.

2.2 The report has identified the Wireless Access Points (WAPs) that are needed to provide full coverage for each site and costings have been provided. Some schools will opt to use their PEF funding to enhance the Wi-Fi capacity in their schools and the proposal is to support this through SEMP funding.

2.3 Currently non-supported devices e.g. tablets and kindles cannot access the network in primary schools. This means that some devices in schools cannot be used effectively because they cannot access Wi-Fi. This paper seeks permission to open up the wireless network to non-supported devices through the use of a password in primary schools.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Education and Communities Committee is asked to approve the use of SEMP funding to support schools to take this initiative forward.

3.2 The Education and Communities Committee is asked to approve the proposal to open up the Wi-Fi networks to unsupported devices in primary schools.

Ruth Binks
Head of Education

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The School Estates Management Programme is due to be completed by 2020. All schools and Early Years will have been renewed or refurbished by 2020.

4.2 When building or refurbishing schools, an allowance was made for Wi-Fi provision but in an ever-changing, and increasingly digital world this is now struggling to meet the demands being placed upon it.

4.3 On 5 May 2015 an update was given to the Education and Communities Committee about Wi-Fi availability, in particular this was to look at the capability of Wi-Fi to enable Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) in schools. The Committee decision was that BYOD capability should be opened up for all secondary schools in Inverclyde.

4.4 Whilst the term BYOD has historically been linked with pupils bringing in their own devices to schools, it is perhaps something of a misnomer because the term actually refers to it opening up the Wi-Fi network via a password to devices that are not directly supported through ICT services.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

5.1 There are many educational benefits for increasing the use of technology in learning which include increased flexibility of where learning can take place, the use of apps to support specific outcomes, more motivation for learners, shared documents which can be accessed at any time and specific support for ASN needs. ICT no longer refers only to computers but increasingly refers to the use of mobile devices such as tablets and kindles. In recent years, some schools have been gifted mobile devices by businesses and would like to us the devices as part of curriculum use. The limiting factor to some schools using ICT is the ability to use these mobile devices on the network. Whilst access has been opened up for the use of mobile devices in secondary schools this is not the case in primary schools. This means that teachers cannot make the use of Wi-Fi to update mobile devices and often have to take devices home in order to download materials/upgrades etc. All devices accessing the network would have to be added through a password administered by the school so the use can be monitored. The access is very simple to open up as the facility is available but dormant at this moment in time. This access is referred to as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) access, however as stated earlier, this is something of a misnomer because the access that is being requested is for unsupported devices to be added to the network rather than pupils bringing their own devices into school.

5.2 Schools would like to increase their ICT provision through their Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) allocation. In addition to the availability of Wi-Fi, the speed and strength of the signal often limits the use of lots of different devices at once and in certain areas of schools the lack of signal hampers the usefulness of ICT for learning and teaching.

5.3 A core provision of Wi-Fi was identified for every school in Inverclyde as part of the School Estates Management Programme. Whilst the core provision will give basic coverage, increased use and ever changing uses of technology demands increasingly enhanced Wi-Fi provision. Schools requested that a feasibility study was undertaken to enhance Wi-Fi to the best possible standard in every school. The enhancement of Wi-Fi makes sense because it gets the best value for money and means that any ICT hardware that is purchased to support learning can work to maximum effect. This means that schools are increasingly able to make the best use of ICT to enhance learning and teaching.

5.4 A comprehensive feasibility study of every school was undertaken by ICT services and schools are now in possession of their individual reports. There are differing costs which are down to some infrastructure issues, the design and size of the building, and the initial transfer of wireless access points.

5.5 Because there is already a core provision of Wi-Fi in schools, there is no additional core funding to pay for enhanced Wi-Fi provision. The nature of PEF means that schools, alongside their communities identify the priorities for their schools. Different schools will have different and sometimes competing priorities as to the allocation of PEF, but Education Services support schools to take their chosen initiatives forward. By working in this collegiate way schools can learn from each other, and get best value. In this way, Education services propose to support those schools who choose to allocate PEF funding to enhancing Wi-Fi.

5.6 The proposal is to support schools through the following:

- There is an initial £50K cost to setting up the capability to enhance Wi-Fi regardless of uptake. The directorate would absorb this cost through SEMP and this would not be charged to the schools. This means that schools enhancing Wi-Fi in the first year are not absorbing the cost for those who may come on board at a later stage.
- The proposal is to limit the spend for any one primary school to £20,000 and for any individual secondary school to £50,000. Again the additionality would be paid for out of SEMP.
- If the spend for any primary school is greater than 50% of their PEF then they will receive extra support.

5.7 Because schools are working together and this can be classed as a project, ICT will work with partners, including Capita via the SWAN Value Added Services Framework Agreement, to negotiate the most advantageous market pricing available.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

6.1 Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
SEMP		18/19	150		Based on uptake from Schools to a maximum of £150k
PEF		18/19	546		Based on uptake from Schools
Total			**696**		

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

Legal

6.2 This report has no legal implications.

Human Resources

6.3 This report has no human resources implications.

Equalities

6.4 Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

☐ Yes   See attached appendix

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

Repopulation

6.5 This report will enhance the quality of our schools and thus encourage repopulation in Inverclyde.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 Initial consultations have taken place with Head teachers. ICT services have been fully involved at all times.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Increased Wi-Fi opportunities will enhance the opportunities for learning and teaching in Inverclyde schools.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 May 2015 report to Education and Communities Committee on the use of handheld and mobile devices in schools.