

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Personnel and Management Services Committee - 20 August 2001

REPORT ON: ICT Support In Schools - Establishment of Posts in Information Technology Division

REPORT BY: Director of Education, Head of Information Technology, and Director of Personnel and Management Services

REPORT NO.: 430-2001

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To establish 10 new posts in order that critical support is provided to ensure the sustained and effective use of Information Communications Technology (ICT) networks in Dundee City Council's secondary and primary schools.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the establishment of 10 posts of Assistant ICT Officer, AP3/4 (£16,173 - £20,397).

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The costs associated with the proposal for 10 Technicians on grade AP3/4 will be £96,100 in financial year 2001/02 and £207,000 in a full year 2002/03. The expenditure in 2001/02 will be met from the funding available for taking forward National Grid for Learning, i.e. Education Revenue Budget and Excellence Funding. It is envisaged that, from 2002, this expenditure will be met from Phase 2 of National Grid for Learning Funding, which has sustainability and support for existing networks as a key element.

4 AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Providing adequate resources to support the expanding ICT networks in schools will not only increase their sustainability but also ensure that effective and prolonged use is made of the ICT investment.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 As part of the National Grid for Learning Programme, targets have been set for numbers of modern computers per pupil in both primary and secondary schools. The targets of one modern computer to five secondary pupils and one modern computer to eight primary pupils will be met by the end of session 2001/2002 this will see over 3,200 modern computers in Dundee schools.

- 6.2 Over the past two years, more than 1,500 new personal computers have been installed in Dundee schools. All schools are now linked into sophisticated networks for learning and teaching, and for administration. These networks will allow information to be stored and exchanged and will give all teachers and pupils access the Internet and e.mail. This unparalleled growth has been achieved through a combination of Council resources and funding provided by the Scottish Executive through the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) programme of the Excellence Fund. Development has focused on the implementation of hardware and software to provide a fully integrated computer network in all schools. School networks link over 2,500 computers with some 25,000 users. This represents a 1000% increase in capacity.
- 6.3 The provision of ICT networks is being supported by a major ICT training initiative which, over the next two years, will ensure that ICT training will be made available for every teacher and school librarian in Dundee City Council. This expenditure will be met from the New Opportunities Fund.
- 6.4 The current level of growth in the provision of ICT in education is unlikely to reduce in the foreseeable future. Appropriate resources to support this level of growth are critical and are required on an urgent basis. A significant increase in the level of ICT support resources is considered essential to meet two critical areas of need:-
- Increasing integration of ICT into all aspects of the curriculum leads to an ever-increasing reliance on ICT to deliver key aspects of learning and teaching. The effect of this increased reliance means that teachers and pupils require near-instantaneous localised response to low level technical problems. The alternative will see critical systems (teaching labs or whole networks) being offline.
 - The complex ICT networks in schools require considerable inputs of time to ensure that network maintenance is carried out, passwords are updated and new users are logged on to the system. These are considered low to intermediate system administration tasks. They are best carried out in school in contact with staff and pupils. It is considered inappropriate (in reviews such as Time for Teaching) that senior staff (Assistant Head Teachers and Principal Teachers) should be diverted from learning and teaching to carry out these tasks.
- 6.5 The Council's Information Technology Division currently provides the support of ICT in schools. This service is organised and monitored using annual Service Level Agreements (SLA's) between the IT Division and each school.
- 6.6 A six-month pilot of localised support has taken place at St John's High School and its cluster primary schools. St John's High School was the first Dundee secondary school to have a whole school ICT network installed. A member of staff from the IT Division was seconded to the post and located in the school for a six-month period to provide first line technical support and network administration.
- 6.7 This localised ICT support has provided fast response to faults, assistance in the effective use of ICT by staff and support for network administration. The school, Education Department and IT Division have reviewed the effectiveness of the pilot and concluded that it represents an effective model to deliver the crucially important first line ICT support to schools. All parties are of the view that adequate support resources and ongoing training is crucial if we are to ensure continuing effectiveness and future development of educational ICT Networks.

7 **PROPOSAL**

- 7.1 To ensure the sustainability of critical systems, deliver the fast response times required in schools, and ensure effective use is made of the substantial investment in ICT, it is proposed that the Committee establishes 10 new posts of Assistant ICT Officer.

- 7.2 Each Assistant ICT Officer will have responsibility for a secondary school and its primary school cluster. The employees will be responsible for 'first-line' fault rectification, installation and support of ICT networks.
- 7.3 While many of the support tasks currently carried out would continue to be carried out by staff in the IT Division, the additional support will complete an integrated package of ICT support.
- 7.4 Although deployed to schools on a cluster basis, the 10 posts would be added to the IT Division establishment and would report to the appropriate IT Team Leader. This will ensure that the employees work to the schools/IT Division Service Level Agreement, integrate with current Helpdesk arrangements, and avoid duplication of the infrastructure and administration of ICT support to schools.
- 7.5 ICT implementation priorities in schools will be determined in consultation with Head Teachers and the Education Department ICT Development Officer. This would build on the close and effective liaison between IT Division and Education which emerged during the NGfL Programme.
- 7.6 It is proposed that the posts be graded at AP3/4, with a qualification bar at the top of the AP3 scale. Progression beyond the bar will be dependent on the Head of Information Technology agreeing that an employee's technical competences and experience merit progression. The post grading reflects the need to attract applications from appropriately trained and experienced staff. It is hoped that staff currently employed by the IT Division or by the Education Department as School Technicians will be eligible to apply.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Support Services have been consulted on the contents of this report, as have the relevant trade unions.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 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 this report.

10 SIGNATURES

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Date

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Date