

SUBJECT:	ICT HARDWARE
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider proposals for ICT provision and approve budget allocations in the General and Housing Investment Programmes for implementation.

2. Background

- 2.1 A number of interdependent workstreams need addressing to support the ongoing provision of ICT at the Council. This includes, replacement or alternative delivery of core infrastructure, review of applications and investment in desktop equipment.
- 2.2 When workstyles were introduced, different job roles were assigned different types of desktop equipment suited to the requirements of their work. Some roles were issued laptops and others retained fixed terminals at their workspace. For those issued laptops in the initial roll out, these devices are ageing which is affecting how well they currently operate. For officers using the remaining terminals, these are no longer fit for purpose causing significant operating challenges.
- 2.3 The platform that terminals currently need to operate relies heavily on core infrastructure processing power (over 50%) and with the current infrastructure close to capacity, users are receiving a poor experience. Additionally, the desktop on terminals is slow to refresh as it is not carried with an individual and terminals cannot be taken into meetings which is inefficient for the user when needing to access information to contribute and is reliant on taking notes by hand and then typing up or adding into the system.
- 2.4 The age of devices used by the Housing Repairs Service (HRS), alongside the need for devices that are compatible with applications and ways of working means that these devices are also in need of replacement.
- 2.5 The tablet devices used by elected members are also end of life and due for replacement.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 An assessment across services reviewing device models, options and docking stations needed over the coming year has been undertaken. 269 terminals need replacing with laptop devices and 99 laptops need replacing. The cost of this investment is £345,000. This includes docking stations and monitors that are important for workplace health and safety requirements.
- 3.2 The HRS team are currently trialling device options to determine the most suitable rugged tablet device for the workforce. A budget of up to £60,000 will be needed, subject to final selection on the preferred device following the trial.
- 3.3 Members may find a laptop device more practical to undertake their roles, being able to view and annotate papers and to easily navigate the hub and other online directories, enabling them to find information to signpost and support residents, make online reports and access guidance. A budget of up to £20,000 to replace member devices following further engagement is needed.
- 3.4 Training and support at roll out for those receiving new devices to make sure that they have the tools and skills to maximise the use of their device.

4. Benefits

- 4.1 Staff will see an improvement in efficiency with their devices and how these connect with the server and applications and will address some of the challenges and delays currently being experienced across services.
- 4.2 The improvements will help both staff and members find information quickly and be able to provide more immediate support for residents seeking advice or making reports by enabling information to be shared or reported into services there and then, wherever they are working from.
- 4.3 The way that new devices are rolled out and the allocation to individuals will support improvements needed in relation to asset management identified by audit.
- 4.4 Replacing terminals with laptops is an important factor in developing options for replacing the Council's infrastructure and upgrading applications as needed as these impact how devices connect to the servers and networks.
- 4.5 A reduction in printing is also expected as individuals will have devices that they take with them to access papers.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 Do nothing – delaying replacing devices is not recommended at this time given the regular challenges the workforce is experiencing in connecting and operating their devices and systems and in turn undertaking their roles.

- 5.2 Replace all devices at once - this is not recommended, as although further existing laptops will need replacing in future years, they have not yet reached end of life and have value.

6. Strategic Priorities

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report support City of Lincoln Council's One Council approach, in turn enabling delivery of the Council's strategic priorities.

7. Organisational Impacts

7.1 Finance

7.1.1 Capital Implications

Desktop provision devices, whether those are laptops or tablets, meet the definition of capital expenditure of "an asset that yields benefits to the Council and the services it provides for a period of more than one year" and that by treating the number of laptops as one acquisition, the de-minimis levels are achieved for capitalisation.

- 7.1.2 As set out in this report, the estimated cost of the new devices, split across the General Fund and HRA (this includes the costs of devices in the Housing Repairs Service), are estimated to be as follows:

	General Fund £	HRA £	Total £
Laptops/Monitors/Docks	280,000	65,000	345,000
Rugged Devices	0	60,000	60,000
Member Devices	20,000	0	20,000
Total	300,000	125,000	425,000

- 7.1.3 The General Fund cost of £300,000 will be funded from unallocated General Fund capital receipts, of which there is currently a balance of £1.159m.

- 7.1.4 The HRA cost of £125,000 will be funded through Direct Revenue Financing (DRF) allocated from the Housing IT earmarked reserve.

7.1.5 Revenue Implications

There are no direct revenue implications arising as the expenditure is being classified as capital. However, any future replacement of individual devices or the acquisition of new devices will be treated as revenue expenditure unless the de-minimis level is reached. These costs will be required to be funded from within existing cash limited service budgets.

7.2 Legal Implications Including Procurement Rules

The procurement of new desktop devices will be undertaken in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023. These are being reviewed to determine the appropriate procurement route for the devices with advice from procurement and legal services.

7.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination.
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

There are no direct implications from this report, however there are some additional benefits that laptop devices have in relation to accessibility and alternative format options available.

8. Risk Implications

- 8.1 There are no risks identified with the recommendations in this report. There are associated risks with the 'do nothing' option as this could result in decline in device operability, and at some stage loss of service. Delays in device replacement from terminals to laptops is a risk to preparing options for updating the Council's infrastructure.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Executive are asked to approve the inclusion of the budget allocations of £300,000 in the General Investment Programme and £125,000 in the Housing Investment Programme (funded through capital receipts and DRF) for investment in the Council's ICT provision.

Is this a key decision? Yes

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? None

List of Background Papers: None

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