



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Digital & Customer Services
LEAD OFFICERS:	Director, Chief Executive's
DATE:	13 th June 2024

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	All
WARD/S AFFECTED:	(All Wards);
KEY DECISION:	N

SUBJECT: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) End of Life Devices

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Executive Board paper approved in July 2023 for the provision of new devices to replace current devices that are over 5 years old. This report also provides an overview of the options available to disposing of the c.1468 devices that will be replaced in the Device Refresh project due to commence in Summer 2024. It seeks approval from Executive Board on the recommended.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Executive Board:

- a) Notes the contents of this report.
- b) Approves the proposal to donate the laptop devices for reuse in the local community. It is anticipated that the exact number of devices donated will be determined by the number of devices deemed viable for reuse, by demand and by the ability to distribute effectively.
- c) Approves the proposal to make 'The Making Rooms' our primary delivery partner, alongside other partners that have the sufficient infrastructure in place to support redistribution to benefit local communities.
- d) Approves the proposal to recycle laptop devices that are not donated.
- e) Approve the distribution of other end-of-life devices through the same channels.

3. BACKGROUND

Following the plan outlined in the July 2023 Executive Board paper, the department has made significant progress on replacing legacy devices that are failing. A specification for the devices has been created and the procurement of the new devices and services through the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) RM6068 framework for technology products and associated service is underway. Subject to tender award in late May, the department aims to commence the roll out of new devices from early Summer, with an anticipated project closure date of end 2024. As a result of the Device Refresh project, c.1468 ageing devices will be replaced and brought back into the Department's

possession. There are several options available to dispose of these devices and these are detailed later in the report.

4. KEY INFORMATION

There are a number of factors that have been considered prior to the development of the recommendations due to the nature of the schemes proposed.

4.1 Device Recycling

BwDBC has previously used a contractor to recycle and securely wipe end-of-life devices and there has been no income generated from this approach. Enquiries have been undertaken in recent months with vendors who are able to provide some monetary recompense in return for the devices and they have returned average current valuations to an approximate maximum of £73.33 per device. These valuations are based on the end-of-life devices being in best condition and it is expected that not all the devices will meet these requirements. These valuations are also subject to change, and will deteriorate over time, however this valuation does provide an indicative amount for the potential income that could be raised if the assets were recycled.

It is anticipated that many devices will be recycled due to the number of devices deemed viable for reuse and the demand for donated laptops for community use, however numbers will only be known post device inspection. The Department aims to commence the recycling of the end-of-life devices from July onwards and expects the duration of this to last 12 months. The proceeds of taking advantage of such recycling schemes would be reinvested into the department.

4.2 Device Donations

BwDBC is committed to ensuring that *No-one is left behind* and our Corporate Plan 2023-2027 outlines how we will do this. A component of this stream of work is digital inclusion because we know that there are sections of our population who are not able to use the internet in ways that are needed to participate fully in modern society. A Digital Exclusion Review undertaken by Ofcom suggests that at a national level, 6% of households did not have access to the internet at home in 2021. At a local level, the Greater Manchester Office of Data Analytics has generated a series of maps which highlights the groups of residents and locations which are at risk of digital exclusion based on a number of factors. These include age, disability, employment status, geography and deprivation. BwD has been given a Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI) score based on these maps, of 3, where 0 represents a low risk of digital exclusion and 10 represents high risk.

BwDBC is now actively engaging with national partners such as National Digital Inclusion Network and the Digital Poverty Alliance Network to better understand the local situation. We are also engaging with local partners to identify the range of activity being undertaken locally to support residents who are digitally excluded. To help us meet our aspirations around digital inclusion, we have explored the possibility of recycling used assets back into the community. We have engaged with local community groups including The Making Rooms to understand how the process of donating devices could be undertaken and the benefits this would realise. The Making Rooms provided the following information about the process:

“Our project, Blackburn Repair Space, will collect e-waste laptops from local organisations. We will use these devices to teach community members and young people repair skills. The laptops will then be donated to increase digital inclusion across the borough and provide beneficiaries with digital literacy skills through training sessions, on-going support and signposting to other support available.

During the pandemic, our remote-delivery sessions highlighted the digital divide within the borough, with some young people logging onto the sessions with 2 devices to follow along on a computer with the digital creativity software sessions, and others logging on with a parent’s phone only able to be an observer to the activity. In other sessions, this digital divide manifests as a wide range of computer literacy. With a background in developing education electronics products and activities, our team knows

the importance of encouraging young people to engage with technology at an early age before harmful self-defeating narratives and technophobia set in.

A positive, indirect effect of training people to repair recycled devices is that they then have these skills for life. The project will support people who are currently digitally excluded or underserved and young people and community members who are interested in learning repair skills.

With the borough set to benefit from more technical jobs through the continued growth of the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre and the National Cyber Force with the prospect of 2000 jobs - projects like Blackburn Repair Space will support young people who currently lack significant computer access to gain high-level employment in these sectors.”

Taking into consideration the above, partnering with The Making Rooms would enable BwDBC to donate devices to a well-established local community scheme that serves to improve the skillsets of local young people, improve educational and employment prospects, and make the borough more digitally inclusive. BwDBC will work in collaboration with The Making rooms as they possess the required skills for the end-of-life devices to be maintained for reuse, as the end-of-life devices are anticipated to require consistent maintenance to continue to function. BwDBC will further work closely with The Making Rooms to ensure the devices provide maximum benefit to all sections of communities. The Department aims to commence the donation of the end-of-life devices from July onwards and expects the duration of this to last 12 months. These are all aspirations that align with our Corporate Plan 2023-2027.

4.3 Other Digital Devices

It is acknowledged that further digital end of life devices will need replacing and there is potential for these devices to be considered for donation to local community groups or recycled in the same manner as the laptop devices.

4.4 Issues and Risks

There were a number of considerations that had to be undertaken prior to the recommendations being drafted.

Device Recycling

The vendor who recycles the devices must be able to meet our stipulations to wipe end-of-life devices securely and will provide the Council with a certification of data destruction. A stringent criteria will be assigned to the project to ensure that our legal obligations are met and security is not compromised. An additional consideration is that any device valuations provided for the purpose of this report are likely to deteriorate over time and will be subject to change, pending an assessment of their condition at point of exchange.

Device Donations

Donating the devices comes with the risk of ensuring data security prior to handing over the devices and, when handing over the devices, ensuring that there is no liability on BwDBC to repair, maintain and support these devices. BwDBC is considering The Making Rooms as the primary partner for donating the laptop devices due to their capability and skills to remove this risk, as well as the additional social value The Making Rooms will generate for the Borough when teaching residents to repair the devices.

The Making Rooms have additionally been awarded a £55,000 grant to tackle electronic waste and help communities in need get online which will be utilised to support the delivery of this initiative. This project has been named ‘Repair Space Blackburn’ and will use the donated devices to teach residents skills in repairing laptops. The refurbished equipment will then be utilised by those within communities who are digitally excluded. The BwDBC Adult Learning Team will also work closely with The Making Rooms in order to utilise the donated laptops to provide training and teach IT skills for those residents who use the service and for those who are digitally excluded.

Data Security

When considering the donation of the devices, it must be ensured that any confidential information is removed from the laptops, prior to donation, for data protection purposes. BwDBC will ensure that the hard drives are formatted for this purpose, ensuring that no sensitive information remains on the devices. To further ensure the highest level of secure data destruction on donated devices we will work in conjunction with the Making Rooms as they possess the necessary skills and experience to help achieve this.

Maintenance of the Devices

When considering the donation of devices to local community groups, BwDBC will not be able to support any ongoing obligations to support, maintain and manage the assets donated henceforth. It must be clear in any agreement with a distribution partner such as The Making Rooms, that BwDBC forgoes any responsibility for the devices once they have been handed over. The Making Rooms also possess the necessary skills to maintain the devices for reuse and therefore they are being considered as BwDBC's primary partner. In the anticipated case of The Making Rooms becoming BwDBC's primary partner, liability is taken away from BwD to repair, maintain and support these devices including software to allow the device to be functional as this will be passed onto the Making Rooms. This agreement will also have the additional benefit of generating social value for the Borough, with The Making Rooms teaching residents how to repair the devices, training and upskilling residents within the process.

Supplementary to the above, there must be no obligation on BwDBC for the readiness of these devices for handover to a distribution partner. However, BwDBC will ensure that the hard drives are formatted for data protection purposes to ensure that no sensitive information remains on the devices. We will also ensure that any security features installed on the hardware are removed.

There will be a cost implication for securely wiping the devices, as this will include purchasing a software licence. The approximate cost for securely wiping a device is £10 per device. There will also be a resource and time requirement to undertake this activity, which is expected to be approximately 30 minutes per device. These requirements must be considered when deciding on an option for the best method of disposal.

An additional consideration is that there is a potential for reputational risk to BwDBC, if it transpires that any distribution partner cannot meet our stipulations, despite previously committing to them. Alongside this, consideration must also be given to the quantity of devices that any local community group could accept as part of the agreement. Several partnerships may be required for distribution of the full total of end-of-life devices.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

If the recommendations are accepted by Executive Board, then this would be a new policy position for BwDBC as this has not been undertaken before. There have been suggestions in previous years of disposing of end-of-life devices via an employee buy back scheme, but these were not undertaken. The policy position will only change following a review of the scheme (if the recommendations are accepted) and a caveat must remain that future disposals will be undertaken following a thorough assessment of the circumstances.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recycling of the end-of-life devices will provide some monetary recompense in return for the devices. Based on current valuations, each device when in its best condition is valued at a maximum of £73.33. The quotes we have secured reflect the highest value that would be available for equipment that is in the best possible condition. The value also reduces by approximately 5% per month. Given that this equipment is around 5 years old and the scheme will take many months to deliver, it is very

unlikely that higher values will be realised. The grant Making Rooms has secured is to train local staff in repairing broken laptops. As such we will be providing Making Rooms with broken devices as well as old working devices (for them to upgrade), so that they can deliver the training needed. Naturally many of those devices will have little financial value. Given these factors we are able to take equipment that has low financial value and derive significant social value for the community. Subject to how many devices will be recycled, the full monetary recompense will be determined, however this will need to be determined by the number of devices deemed viable for reuse and by how much demand there is for donated laptops in the community. Updates of the exact number of devices that are recycled and donated will be provided to the Executive Board in due course. The proceeds of taking advantage of such recycling schemes would be reinvested into the department.

It is important to note that any monetary recompense in return for the devices will be offset by the cost of purchasing the licences for securely wiping the devices to ensure that no sensitive information remains on the devices. The approximate cost for securely wiping a device is £10 per device. There will also be a resource and time requirement to undertake this activity, which is expected to be approximately 30 minutes per device.

The social value of donating the devices to the community to ensure that there is digital inclusion across the Borough committing to BwDBC's mission that *No-one is left behind*, as well the environmental sustainability of donating the devices as this will reduce the Council's carbon emissions, will need to be considered by the Executive Board in line with the financial implications of this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The local authority has a duty to ensure that all hard drives are formatted to ensure compliance with relevant legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The proposed disposals comply with the requirements of rule 12 of the Council's Contract Procurement Procedure Rules on disposals of surplus goods/equipment. For the Device Recycling three quotes were obtained and for the Device Donations as these devices are likely to be of little value and so only requires demonstration of value for money which has been set out above including the significant social value.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There will be an implication on staff time if devices have to be formatted prior to donation. It is anticipated that 30 minutes per device should be assigned for this process.

10. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA link here*)

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

10. CONSULTATIONS

Consultation has been undertaken with a local provider, The Making Rooms, to help facilitate understanding of the process involved in recycling devices to the community.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Corinne McMillan
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DATE:	13th June 2024
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	EBD1: Executive Board Decision (blackburn.gov.uk)
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