Culture and Sport Committe

10am, Tuesday, 8 March 2016

Libraries People's Network Computer Service - Update Report

Item number	7.6
Report number	
Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	All

Executive Summary

This report provides details of the progress of the Peoples Network refresh project. The purpose of the refresh was to provide a robust public computing service which meets the needs of those who have no or limited access to computers and to support the continuing development of digital skills.

Links

Coalition pledges	P35
Council priorities	CO2, CO19, CO20, CO23-CO26
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4

Report

Libraries People's Network Computer Service - Update Report

1.   Recommendations

1.1   Notes the successful completion in providing an improved public computing and internet access service for all citizens.

2.   Background

2.1   The People's Network Service provides a free public access service to citizens available through all libraries which enables free internet access through a network of PC's. The service has been updated with new hardware and software to meet anticipated demand on free public access computing. The demand for the service is projected to increase as a result of digital by default strategies, particularly in areas affected by welfare reform. Computer provision has been updated to reflect digital inclusion issues in local communities.

2.2   The new service comprises 280 computers and free WIFI across all 28 library locations. All internet access is filtered to protect users from inappropriate content and prevent illegal or offensive material.

2.3   Updated equipment and software provides improved customer experience in response to consultation feedback, including screen reader software as standard on all computers.

2.4   The Peoples Network service enables access to information and services wherever and whenever citizens want them in their locality. This supports Strategic Aim 2: Libraries Promoting Digital Inclusion of "Ambition and Opportunity: A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland ".

3.   Main report

3.1   The refresh of the People's Network service has been informed by and responds to customer comment and consultation carried out in advance of the programme of work. Feedback was received from over 600 customers focusing on three areas for improvement, including the security, age of hardware and software, and printing, and the new service has sought to address these priorities.

3.2 The new Peoples Network service comprises 280 computers and free WIFI at 28 library locations. The internet connection is provided by BT using 'firewalled' bandwidth on the CEC corporate network. All internet access is filtered to protect users from inappropriate content and prevent illegal or offensive material.

3.3 The introduction of the new service was delayed due to issues with the supply of critical software for the computers which was outwith the control of the council. However, installation of the new service has now been successfully completed.

3.4 The new service is designed to take advantage of the increased bandwidth being provided at all libraries through the Council's partnership with CGI. The support and maintenance of the Peoples Network service has been improved by updating the infrastructure as well as the computer hardware and software to reduce the risks of failure.

3.5 The new hardware and software provides faster internet browsing for customers and offers a choice of browsers. NVDA screen reader software is installed on all computers to improve access for people with visual impairment.

3.6 Customers can choose to print in either black and white or colour options using networked Xerox Multi Functional Devices (MFD) which will also provide public photocopying services.

3.7 New software adds customer protection against spyware by resetting computers to their original state at the end of every customer session. New antivirus management keeps computer protection up to date and reduce the risk of failure on all computers.

3.8 Customers are now able to access new online information services provided by Libraries including PressReader which has over 4,000 UK and worldwide publications from over 100 countries in 60 languages. Articles in any language can be translated in to 16 other languages.

3.9 The updated infrastructure provides more efficient and effective processes to add new or additional software on computers to meet customer needs, and customer sessions are not interrupted by software updates as the new service will do this after opening hours.

3.10 Future development will include the addition of Boardmaker software to public computers at 6 libraries. Boardmaker contains symbols that can be used with anyone with a disability or impairment affecting communication or memory to create visual schedules, reminders, or social stories. Parents and teachers will be able to create accessible curriculum materials for students of all abilities.

3.11 In addition, Officers are looking at ways to increase the reach of the service beyond library buildings and are currently working with colleagues in Communities and Families to progress the introduction of People's Network WIFI access at Young People's Centres.

4.   Measures of success

4.1   Key indicators of the overall success of the People's Network Service include:

4.1.1   A robust up to date public access service across all libraries.

4.1.2   Increased customer satisfaction with the People's Network.

4.1.3   Increased usage of the People's Network.

4.2   Robust service -There have been no computer failures or interruption to service since the redeployment of new computers in November.

4.3   Customer satisfaction- The service has received positive feedback both about the speed of the internet access and reliability. Comments from service users include:

4.3.1   It's so much faster to log in and the games work much better too.

4.3.2   Really happy with the new service.

4.4   There have been no complaints about printing since the refreshed service came into operation which was previously been a source of customer dissatisfaction.

4.5   Usage- The first month of operation (December 2015) saw usage of the People's Network computers increase by 7% year to year, with the computers in use for more of the available time than previously.

5.   Financial impact

5.1   The one off cost of replacing the computer hardware and software was £245,000.

5.2   The revenue impact of the new service is a reduction in the annual support costs from £80,000 to £50,000. These revenue costs will be contained within existing budget levels.

6.   Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

6.1   All internet access is filtered according to customer profile, i.e. there are separate profiles for children, teenagers and adults.

6.2   All customers using the service are required to provide name and address detail, and must accept the Terms and Conditions of use before they can log on to wifi or a public computer.

7. Equalities impact

7.1 The new Peoples Network computers and introduction of WIFI provides improved and easier access to ICT for all customers and in doing so contributes to the delivery of the Equality Act 2010 general duties of advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

7.2 Specialist software has been installed on all computers to support access for those with visual impairment.

8. Sustainability impact

8.1 The new service will help to achieve a sustainable Edinburgh by continuing service improvements to the local community and creating further access to council information and online transactions available in the library.

9. Consultation and engagement

9.1 The refresh of this service has been informed by customer comment and consultation carried out in advance of the programme of work. Comments received from over 600 customers emphasised three areas for improvement, security, age of hardware and software and printing. Library staff are currently receiving positive feedback from customers on the improved service.

10. Background reading/external references

None

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11. Links

Coalition pledges	P35 - Continue to develop the diversity of services provided by our libraries
Council priorities	CO2 - Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities

	CO19 - Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm
	CO20 - Culture, sport and major events – Edinburgh continues to be a leading cultural city where culture and sport play a central part in the lives and futures of citizens
	CO23 - Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community
	CO24 - The Council communicates effectively internally and externally and has an excellent reputation for customer care
	CO25 - The Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives
	CO26 - The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives
Single Outcome Agreement Appendices	SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric