

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	5 March 2024
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Education Digital Futures; ICT Supply and Support from October 2025
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide an update on ICT Supply and Support following the end of the current ICT Managed Service Contract with RM Education, known as 'Education Digital Futures'

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Education Resources Committee is asked to approve the following recommendations:-

- (1) that it be noted that digital learning and inclusion is a priority for schools and services to deliver the curriculum, develop young people's skills and improve the outcomes for learners;
- (2) that the council's commitment to provide schools and services with a Managed Service model and the benefits which have accrued from this investment by the council, as highlighted in paragraphs 4 and 5, be noted;
- (3) that the steps being taken to proceed with the procurement of a managed service for the provision of digital services and ICT supply for schools and services from October 2025, following the end of the current Managed Service Contract with RM Education on 30 September 2025, be noted; and
- (4) that the risk factors in paragraph 3.8 and the mitigation in paragraph 3.9 along with the budget that has been set and the potential implications for the service and for the procurement process are noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council awarded a 7-year contract to RM Education for an ICT Managed Service for Education and SLLC (South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture SCIO) which commenced on 1 October 2013, and which was subsequently extended for 5 years until 30 September 2025. The value of this extension is £27.2m.
- 3.2. The Council has previously engaged with RM to provide ICT services in 1998 (ICT provision for Secondary schools), 2000 (WAN), 2003 (ICT Managed Service contract for all Education establishments, public libraries and LAACs (Looked After and Accommodated Childrens units) which was extended from 2010 to 2013). Each contract was awarded through OJEU (Official Journal of European Union) procurement exercises.

- 3.3. RM has proven to be a highly performant and responsive supplier who has worked in true partnership with the Council to deliver a service which is widely appreciated with high rates of user satisfaction and solutions which are actively transforming learning and teaching.
- 3.4. Supply and support for Education ICT has never been delivered by an in-house team in SLC.
- 3.5. A Project Board has been established to consider the provision of digital services for Education from October 2025, noting the time required for procurement and for transition arrangements should a new provider be awarded the contract.
- 3.6. Following consultation with stakeholders, an options appraisal was undertaken which considered a range of delivery models and the implications of the available budget on the level of provision for schools and on the approach to procurement.
- 3.7. Having considered the merits and demerits of the options, it was agreed that:-
- ◆ the Council would proceed with the procurement of a managed service for the provision of digital services for education from October 2025
 - ◆ the contract would be for an initial period of 7 years
 - ◆ the core revenue budget provided would be around the same as was provided for the current contract extension period, however capital funding is subject to capital budget approvals and may reduce given overall Council grant levels. Additional one-off funding provided for the current extension period would also not be replaced and therefore the overall contract value will be reduced.
 - ◆ given the financial pressures, an alternative procurement method be employed to allow for negotiation with applicants, acknowledging that it is unlikely that the new contract will be able to match the provisions of the existing contract
- 3.8. Given the limited budget and the hard deadline for the end of the current contract, there is a risk that there will not be a contract in place for 1 October 2025 either by failing to secure a bid that will meet service/budget requirements or by failing to have sufficient time/resource to allow for transition to a new contract.
- 3.9. To mitigate the financial risk, the Council's external Legal Advisors provided advice on the procurement options and recommended the Council consider the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation (CPN), rather than an Open or Restricted Procurement, as the preferred route to market. The procurement exercise is now underway on that basis and a further report will be provided to update Committee on the outcome.
- 3.10. It is noted that CPN will result in a lengthened tender process, which is a risk in itself in terms of allowing sufficient time for contract exit and transition. However, the ability to negotiate with bidders was deemed a significant benefit, reducing the risk of failing to secure an acceptable bid.

4. The Current Role of Digital in Education

- 4.1. The focus of the SLC Education ICT Managed Service has been to enhance learning and teaching and to support the efficient use of teacher time in schools in areas such as reporting to parents. While this continues to be a priority, the role and requirement for digital devices, infrastructure and services has changed significantly as it has in all aspects of people's lives, including the workplace.

Digital technologies form an integral element of:-

- ◆ the infrastructure for learning
- ◆ communication and engagement with partners and stakeholders including parents/carers
- ◆ the secure management of data and information
- ◆ supporting school improvement
- ◆ inclusion and accessibility
- ◆ an increasing element of curricular courses and programmes
- ◆ support for digital assessment
- ◆ providing solutions and support through Google classrooms and online platforms

4.2. As a result, the requirement to have the right digital tools in sufficient numbers and appropriately supported has grown. This has been further accelerated by the requirements for remote learning, remote access to resources and for remote live teaching, particularly within the digital inclusion agenda.

4.3. The national focus on raising attainment and closing the gap has resulted in an increasing requirement for and reliance upon digital technologies to transform and enhance learning and teaching across all sectors and to support schools in their ambitions to improve the learning experience and outcomes for every child.

4.4. An increasing number of NQ Courses include a mandatory IT element.

4.5. The impact of digital technologies is an important element of HMIE inspections. The digital offer in SLC schools supports the positive inspections our schools have achieved. Appendix 1 (a,b,c) includes extracts from recent HMIE reports, Digital Schools Awards and good practice examples.

4.6. There is growing momentum for digital assessments and the demand for Additional Assessment Arrangements for pupils sitting SQA examinations is growing year by year. Innovative, inclusive solutions are evolving to allow pupils independent access to digital tools in the classroom and for assessment. For example, digital readers and speech to text functionality have proved an effective and affordable alternative to providing support assistants and teachers to act as reader/scribes.

4.7. Nationally, 33% of all pupils had additional support needs recorded in 2021 and digital solutions help to bridge the accessibility gap and allow for independent working.

5. Provisions in the Existing Managed Service Contract

5.1. The current contract delivers:-

- ◆ a fully managed ICT platform/service for all SLC schools and nurseries, Youth Learning establishments, plus SLLC public libraries, LAAC units and Older Peoples' Homes
- ◆ network connectivity and infrastructure, Wide Area Networks, local and wireless networks
- ◆ servers, cloud hosting, network filtering, web space and a full range of security services to over 200 establishments
- ◆ a core provision of desk top stations, mobile devices
- ◆ core software including Microsoft licensing
- ◆ training

- ◆ whole class teaching screens

There are around 25,000 devices on the service and over 50,000 service users.

- 5.2. This managed service provision has also successfully enabled delivery of all ICT solutions for the Schools Modernisation programme.
- 5.3. Monitoring arrangements are in place which demonstrate strong performance in terms of customer feedback and service level agreements.
- 5.4. Detailed stakeholder engagement has been carried out and Appendix 2 provides a summary of responses:-
 - ◆ Stakeholder satisfaction is high
 - ◆ Users have access to a robust, performant and modern range of digital tools which meet their evolving needs
 - ◆ There is strong evidence of digital tools having a direct impact on learning, outcomes and engagement

As a result, Education Resources, together with the SLLC and Social Work establishments which are included in this Managed Service Contract, are in a position of strength.

6. Project Governance

- 6.1. This project is on the IT Service Plan for Education Resources.
- 6.2. A Project Review Board and Project Steering Group have been established along with several working groups, as shown in Appendix 3.
- 6.3. A Scrutiny Board has been convened to oversee the procurement exercise.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The financial commitment is being explored to quantify deliverables given the currently available budget of £4.388m per year, subject to approval for the capital element.

	Annual Budget £m
Contribution from capital *	1.600
Contribution from Education Revenue	2.665
Contribution from Social Work	0.035
Contribution from Leisure	0.088
Total recurring Funding	4.388
5 years *	21.940
7 years *	30.716

* £1.6m is confirmed for 24/25, Figures beyond this date are not yet confirmed. 5 and 7 year funding levels are based on 2024/25 level continuing

The procurement exercise will be subject to review by the Council's Procured Spend Review Group to ensure efficiencies are identified.

- 7.2. The Council's external Legal Advisors were initially required to develop the Contract, due to resource shortages within the internal Legal team. They will also be required to support the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation process due to its specialised nature. It should be noted that this will result in additional cost which will be monitored by the internal Legal team.

8. Employee Implications

- 8.1. Significant resources from Education Resources and Finance and Corporate Resources (IT Services, Legal Services, Procurement Services, Finance Services) are required at all stages of this project.

9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 9.1. There are no significant implications for climate change, sustainability and the environment arising from the recommendations in this report.

10. Other Implications

- 10.1. A Project Board has been established to consider the provision of digital services for Education from October 2025, noting the time required for procurement and for transition arrangements should a new provider be awarded the contract.

- 10.2 The risk factors associated with this procurement process are highlighted in paragraph 3.8 with mitigations highlighted in paragraph 3.9.

11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 11.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

- 11.2 Consultation, dialogue and engagement has taken place with legal services, the procurement service, the Project Board, the Corporate Management Team, Finance and IT services, schools, headteachers and other services to look at the options, budget and the steps to be taken to secure a new managed contract.

Carole McKenzie

Executive Director (Education Resources)

13 February 2024

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Education and learning: Inspiring learners, transforming learners and strengthening partnerships

Previous References

- ◆ Executive Committee Report - 13 February 2013

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact: - Stewart Nicolson, Head of Education

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2020-22 Education Scotland Inspection Report (extracts from South Lanarkshire schools and nurseries)

Source: <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/inspection-reports>

Coulter Primary School

Teachers use technology very well to enrich learning experiences. Children record their learning using digital cameras and access a range of interactive tasks using virtual learning platforms. Recently, children created podcasts for the local community to showcase their learning. Children's digital literacy skills are developing well because of this approach.

Children have daily and weekly check-ins using digital platforms. This helps manage their emotions and regulate their behaviours successfully. Staff use this information effectively to monitor children's wellbeing and respond quickly and sensitively to any worries and concerns.

Milton Primary School

The school has recently been awarded the 'Digital Schools Award Scotland'. This is in recognition of the effective approaches teachers take to integrating digital technologies in learning and teaching. The headteacher highlights the hard work and commitment of all staff to improving their digital skills during the pandemic. Commendably, all staff continue to build on these skills to enhance the quality of learning and teaching.

Loch Primary

Practitioners made effective use of digital technologies to support continuity of learning well during the pandemic. Parents received support and information through the school app. Practitioners shared ideas for parents to play and learn with their child at home.

St Cadoc's Primary

Teachers make good use of the school campus to deliver learning which is interesting and motivating. This includes making good use of open spaces and digital resources to capture children's interest. This results in children being eager to learn and engaging well in their learning in most lessons.

St Mark's Rutherglen

Following successes in remote learning and teaching, groups of staff now collaborate to develop the technologies curriculum across all stages. During periods of remote learning, members of the senior leadership team and class teachers regularly communicated with parents. This helped sustain engagement in learning for all children. As a result, staff have improved relationships with parents and engage them more effectively in their child's learning and progress during this challenging time.

Hareleeshill Primary and Nursery Class

Children benefit from using digital technology, visual prompts and signing to support their communication. Digital technology is a positive feature of almost all classes. Most teachers use this successfully to enhance learning and teaching and support learners to evidence their learning. In addition, teachers use technology well to reduce communication barriers and reflect better children's prior learning and successes in learning. Children can create and record imaginative stories very well using digital media. This creative approach has removed barriers to communicating their ideas. They are proud of their stories and are excited to share them. The use of digital media allows the children to return to their story and quickly see it as a moving image.

Larkhall Academy

The school has a clear strategy in place to make better use of digital technology. The widespread and considered use of a virtual learning environment has encouraged improvements in approaches to revision, learning and homework. Staff and learners have used software well to promote motivation and inclusion. By helpful use of a video-sharing platform, voice recognition and text technology, young people show a greater level of engagement and are encouraged to research and submit work more readily. In more than a few classes, learners are benefiting from the use of this digital technology that is enhancing learning.

Summary Comments of Digital Schools Awards

Milton Primary – May 2022

The emphasis on developing self-aware and responsible digital citizens was apparent from discussions with staff and pupils. Teachers clearly feel empowered to innovate and share how they use software and hardware to support learning and teaching. Differentiation is used to ensure that all learners are challenged and enthused. Those with high motivation and attainment were able to show how ICT supported and enhanced their learning. It should also be noted that the school ensures equitable approaches to digital technologies to meet the needs of all pupils.

The variety of technologies and software used effectively by the school helps to ensure that every pupil has an opportunity to become a confident individual. Furthermore, during my discussions with staff it was apparent that they saw digital technologies as embedded in the curriculum and they used it effectively to enhance the learning experiences of all pupils.

Calderglen High School – December 2022

Tracking engagement through Google Classroom allowed for early interventions. In addition, the use of Google Classroom for homework assignment, tracking through the platform to directed study or revision, allowed for bespoke provision to be provided. Google Classroom and other digital supports such as virtual jotters and audio feedback to support individuals and groups of learners, led to increased feedback by teachers digitally, verbally and written and was recognised in surveys as being highly effective.

School staff are given the opportunity to engage in professional development programmes to enhance learning and teaching through the use of ICT/digital technology. The school evaluates the impact that its CPD provision in digital technology has on teacher confidence and makes changes to it accordingly. A Sway has been created to support staff employee review and development. The school encourages teachers to be innovative and self-directed and to share ideas within and beyond the school, and teachers routinely explore new digital technologies and have the confidence to take the lead in digital initiatives.

Cathkin High School - December 2022

Faculty staff seek out and employ appropriate resources to diminish potential disadvantage. School leaders were keen to point out that the school has yet more to achieve in their digital journey but are highly enthusiastic and rightly proud of progress to date. Participants took time to cite the contributions of colleagues rather than themselves, indicating the level of collaborative working in digital technologies. There was a shared drive for growth in digital skills and recognition of the value of peer tuition and support. Staff who lack confidence have ongoing, discreet, drop in CLPL opportunities so that the vision becomes attainable for all. This sensitive approach has enabled colleagues to overcome difficulties, increase skills and explore potential new avenues in curriculum delivery. This is how a school vision for pedagogically based digital technologies becomes a reality.

Digital technologies are embraced by the school community, with enthusiastic engagement throughout. The school digital culture is very strong and digital skills are applied appropriately.

Underbank Primary – June 2022

There is a strong sense of equity through the deployment of both devices and access to appropriate accessibility applications. Pupils are provided with the tools they need to be successful digital citizens. The journey into inclusive technology is relevantly new within the school but already staff and learners are reaping the benefits. The technology being used is a tool to help unlock so much potential within a number of pupils for whom traditional teaching methods are often producing limited results. It was a joy to hear the enthusiasm from the learners who have experienced these benefits already. Differentiation is used to ensure all learners are challenged and those pupils who are highly motivated by technology are encouraged to use their skill set in a variety of creative ways.

Digital technologies were a big area of focus when the school moved to their new building. The infrastructure was planned in such a way that allowed for a complete modernisation in the way devices were used. Wifi is available in the outside courtyard area of the playground which has enabled the school to really embed their use of technology in their outdoor learning curriculum. The opportunities this has lent to the staff and pupils to creatively engage new ways of learning were clear to see. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the various projects they have been part of such as their award winning anti-bullying video.

Underbank Primary clearly demonstrates that it has a strong digital presence throughout the school. Staff and pupils have grown in confidence with the digital technologies available to them and key staff and the pupil Digital Leaders, ensure that the school keeps up to date with new developments and lead change. In discussions with staff, it was clear that a well formulated digital culture has been embedded in the curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about tasks that they had/were undertaking using digital technologies and how they felt that it had enhanced their learning.

Coalburn Primary June 2021

All classes are mature digital learning environments with a range of fixed and mobile devices readily available to learners. These devices are used extensively and result in creative, media rich outcomes. Coalburn PS has made good use of existing stock and has continued to invest in additional devices to support digital technologies across the curriculum. Formerly timetabled, resources now are widely deployed across the classes, and some have been given to disadvantaged families to ensure ease of accessibility, especially during periods of lockdown. A mix of cloud and network facilities are used to record, store and share learning. A range of digital tools are used to support learners with many applied to assess progress. Diagnostic features of software is used to complement teacher judgement and inform next steps in learning.

Duncanrig Secondary – April 2021

The school is well resourced, and the school's infrastructure can support the full range of activities happening in classes. There is a range of programs in use, and pupils are given opportunities to learn skills and apply these across the curriculum. School staff and pupils are making highly effective use of the productivity tools available to them. The school is a strong and innovative user of all tools in the Google Ecosystem. Microsoft 365 tools are also used. Learning skills across platforms widened the pupils' knowledge of software capabilities and enabled pupils to select the most appropriate tool for the task at hand.

Teachers who were unable to speak with me on the day of my visit recorded videos to give me a flavour of their creative use of digital technology, and I was in awe of the range of digital tools they were using in the most creative ways.

Appendix 1c

Current Initiatives Showcasing ICT

- Video conferencing solution to deliver Consortium arrangements, with the objective of delivering high quality lessons to provide individualised and personalised learner pathways and widen access of opportunity to high quality learning and teaching to all learners, regardless of the school attended. This relies not only on robust technology, but digital skills and expertise of staff and pupils. This opens up opportunities to pupils which would not otherwise be available.
- The ability across all schools to book and host parents' evenings online.
- Vast numbers of Google Classroom users (30k users weekly), where lessons and materials can be posted online for completion, and teachers can deliver remote support for example for exam preparation and study schools.
- Robust and growing network of Google certified trainers, which promotes the sharing of skills and use of modern, innovative and free classroom tools.
- Rural schools collaboration, sharing of pedagogy and a shared digital strategy to support small and remote schools and allow pupils to socialise and collaborate on shared work. This is particularly beneficial for pupils in very small schools to grow their social network, work on projects with pupils in other schools, benefit from expertise of teachers in another school, and can smooth transition to high school.
- Digital ambassadors where pupils provide and lead on digital support and grow their own expertise and a range of other organisational, social and technical skills.
- Rollout and uptake of Texthelp accessibility tools, for pupils and staff, which allows for a real shift in promotion of independent learning and dignity and builds transferrable skills which can move with the pupil into the workplace. It also reduces the need for scribes at exam time and makes digital exam papers a viable option.
- Migration of schools to a Microsoft cloud solution, which can be accessed remotely, and removes the need for local server storage. This is a direct outcome of our learning from the pandemic and the real need for teachers to have better and more robust access to tools and data. It also reflect the reality of the desire universally to work more flexibly while maintaining security.

Consultation for Education Digital Futures

As part of the options appraisal process, significant stakeholder consultation has been carried out with all services in Education Resources (plus Social Work and SLLC) in a variety of ways, including a large face to face gathering of key stakeholders, an online survey and short life working groups for each sector to gather requirements.

The importance of digital provision is very clearly highlighted in stakeholder statements:

- 'ASN interventions are done daily on a range of hardware which make a direct impact on pupil attainment'.
- 'The technology has been transformative in so many. Attainment has risen across the board in many areas and it has been used successfully for targeted interventions as well as for other activities where the children have personalisation and choice'.
- 'Technology has been used by our school to engage learners that have issues with attendance. They are able to access materials at home and continue working towards qualifications. We have had numerous pupils leave school with qualifications that they otherwise would not have achieved without the use of digital technology'.
- 'We believe that the provision and use of ICT is at the heart of teaching and learning – not using computers to do the same things more efficiently but changing the process of learning through digital media itself. Access to ICT is as fundamental as access to a pencil and jotter'.

Key elements from the stakeholder consultation process include:

- The current service provision is valued very highly across the board.
- Performance of the current supplier (RM) is also rated very highly, including technical staff, project planning and performance, sales and account management. The fact that there is a single point of contact/service desk is an invaluable element of the solution.
- Stakeholders note that they rely heavily on technical ICT components, that they have high expectations of connectivity, security, filtering, device performance. Overall, they agree that the ICT service provision is successful, in that it 'just works' and gives them time to teach.
- Reduction of supplier performance, or reduction of what stakeholders currently get in the way of provision and response, would be unwelcome – there is nothing in the current service provision that they do not need or want. In fact, demand continues to grow exponentially, for more and varied devices, faster connectivity anytime, anywhere, and for access to a vast range of resources and tools.
- Generally, demand for increased volumes of devices for both staff and pupils.
- Review device replacement terms, try to retain devices for longer, longer support terms.
- Review range of devices, esp tablets for younger pupils
- Whole class teaching devices for all sectors – replace projectors, replace old smartboards and e-beams, interactive screens for large numbers of classrooms.
- Role of ICT Coordinator and time commitment/expertise required.
- Connectivity, filtering, security and wifi vital. Infrastructure needs to support seamless usage and there can be no degradation. Where there are issues around connectivity or coverage, these are seriously service impacting.
- Investment in improving staff skills to make best use of the technology.
- There is nothing in the current provision that stands out as not being required or valued. There are no major criticisms of how the contract is structured or what it delivers – issues raised are all around scope and budget.
- External wifi provision – particularly for Early Years.
- Curricular software, subscriptions to services (eg Learning Journals, Tig Tag, Sumdog, IDL)
- Peripherals – speakers, DVD drives, Bluetooth mice,
- MDM for iPads – can this be delivered differently, and at lower/no cost
- Specialist ASN equipment
- Improve eco credentials
- Sharing learning with parents
- Bookable shared resources eg Virtual Reality
- The role of Glow – vital to continue!
- Online access to Seemis/ ability to access from a range of devices

Project Governance

Group	Members
Project Review Board	Stewart Nicolson (project sponsor), Murray Husband, Fiona Leggate, Karen MacLeod, Andy Smith, Joanne Sturgeon, Steve Duffy, Isabelle Murray, Fiona Clelland, Elaine Fitzpatrick, Maria Neil, Alan Russell, Carol Wright, Louise Harvey, David Hinshelwood, Claire Rogers, Irene Peacock, Anne Walker
Project Steering Group	Colin MacLeod (chair), Karen MacLeod, Emma Dobinson, Mary Hunter, Claire Reid, Frank Thomson, Mairead Maxwell, Claire Docherty, John Rimmer, Lesley Marshall, Paul Telfer, Derek Brown, Elspeth Blair, Jen Graham, Maureen Waddell, Lesley Yule.
Primary Working Gp	Claire Reid, John Rimmer, Emma Dobinson, Jill Kennedy, Deborah Lee-King, Yvonne McKegney, Robbie O'Neill, Annabel Rodger, Frances Welsh, Karen MacLeod
Secondary Working Gp	Colin MacLeod, Lesley Marshall, Barry Jack, Leesa McCabe, Kevin Prentice, Anne Walker
ASN Working Gp	Jennifer Graham, Elspeth Blair, Maria Neil, Paul Telfer, Julie Brown, Gillian McCallion, Martin Dornan, Kat Morrison, Elaine Simmons
Early Years Working Gp	Mairead Maxwell, Stephen Mungall, Deborah Shaw, Tammy Henderson, Martin Hughes, Claire McQuoney, David Cairns, Mary Hunter
SLLC	Mark Wakefield, Heather MacLean
Social Work	Angela Walker, Mary Tedford, Laura Arthur