

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT

1.	Meeting:	Deputy Leader Delegated Powers
2.	Date:	13th January, 2015
3.	Title:	Updated Computer Re-Use Policy
4.	Directorate:	Resources and Transformation

5. Summary

This document is an update on a report which was presented to the Deputy Leader in December 2014. The original report explained the challenges that RMBC was experiencing in fulfilling requests for computer donations, particular in terms of ongoing support for the devices.

The December 2014 report called for a tightening of controls around the laptop donation/sales process in order to reduce the support burden. Subsequent to the publication of the report it was suggested that RMBC may be able to identify a local partner organisation who could take on the responsibility for taking receipt of old RMBC laptops and distributing them to groups and individuals as appropriate.

Having so far being unable to identify a suitable partner it is now proposed that RMBC ceases the practice of donating/selling its old computers. Instead, the Council will either re-use old equipment internally or dispose of it in accordance with the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE Directive).

6. Recommendations

The Deputy Leader is asked to:

- **Support the proposal to cease the practice of selling or donating surplus RMBC computers.**
- **Support the proposal that the situation be kept under review with the view to potentially re-commencing donations in the future should a suitable partner be found.**

7. Proposals and Details

In April 2008 SLT approved a new RMBC hardware re-use policy which prevented surplus RMBC equipment being sold to Members or officers for personal use or being donated to community groups.

At that time the number of people employed by the Council was still increasing year-on-year and, as such, it was rare for computers to become surplus as they could generally be re-used internally. A further barrier to re-use of computers in 2008 was the complexity introduced by the nature of the Council's outsourced ICT provision. RBT had resisted offering machines for re-use and previous attempts to agree commercial terms on this topic had been unsuccessful.

In 2013 the Council's headcount began to reduce and this could sometimes lead to computers becoming surplus to requirements. In May 2013 the Corporate ICT, Information Governance and Web Strategy Board agreed to begin to offer computers for re-use and a proposed policy was approved by the Board.

In the period since May 2013 RMBC has sold or donated 137 laptops, the vast majority of these having being donated to community groups or schools. In the same period some 400 further laptops were re-used within RMBC or sent for secure disposal.

Due to the large number of ex-RMBC machines now in circulation it has become excessively burdensome for Corporate ICT to administer the process, particularly considering the expectations of most recipients that the laptops will be supported by RMBC indefinitely. In light of recent headcount cuts Corporate ICT does not have the resources to offer technical support on equipment that has been donated.

In an attempt to find a way to continue the practice of donating equipment we have approached the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Network (RDIN) with a proposal which would see RDIN receiving ex-RMBC laptops and then redistributing and supporting them as appropriate. RDIN considered this offer at their meeting on December 11th 2014, ultimately deciding to decline the offer for a variety of reasons, these include:

- Laptops are often not the best way of encouraging the digitally excluded to get online as they can be seen as complex and threatening. Tablet computers are usually a more user friendly way of introducing people to the Internet.
- Due to licencing constraints (RMBC has to remove all the software it owns) the laptops will have a non-standard operating system and office software installed. This will add further confusion for the novice user.
- RDIN (like RMBC) are unable to offer ongoing support for the machines and this will be frustrating for many users.
- RDIN feel that modern digital inclusion initiatives are less focused on the provision of computers. Rather the group would tend to concentrate on providing access to wifi whilst showing users how to get more out of the computers/phones/tablets that they already own. RMBC is assisting RDIN with this work.

We have been unable to identify an alternative organisation to RDIN who could fulfil this role. This leaves RMBC with 2 options:

- Option 1: Cease the donation and sale of old RMBC computers pending the identification of a community partner.
- Option 2: Continue donating computers but recruit extra staff to support the machines and users post-donation.

Recommendation

Given the budget constraints facing the Council and in light of the questionable digital inclusion benefits offered by these laptops (as described by RDIN, above) it is now proposed that RMBC ceases the practice of donating/selling its old computers. Instead, the Council will either re-use old equipment internally or dispose of it in accordance with the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE Directive).

We will continue to review the situation and may elect to re-commence laptop donations if a suitable community partner can be found to administer the process.

8. Finance

There are no cost implications associated with this proposal.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

None.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

None.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Report to The Deputy Leader – Computer Re-use (December 2014)
- Rotherham Digital Inclusion Network – meeting minutes – (11th December 2014)
- RMBC ICT Strategy (2011 to 2015)

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