



Older Persons Sub- Committee

Date: 17th November 2022

Title: 55UP Project

Purpose of the Report:

To provide an update on the proposal to launch a digital tablet device lending scheme.

Contact Officer:

Nina Bailey, Cultural and Economic Support Officer

Corporate Objective/s	To tackle loneliness and isolation in older residents through digital inclusion	
Implications:		
Financial	No	
Human Resources	No	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	To manage the storing, distribution and overseeing of the tablet lending scheme
Procedural/Legal	No	
Risk/Health and Safety	No	
Environmental Aims	No	

1 RECOMMENDATION/S

Should the Committee be minded, the proposals are:

- 1.1 To note the report.
- 1.2 To endorse the proposed procedure to establish a tablet lending scheme.
- 1.2 To continue to ringfence the £15,000 allocated to the tablet lending scheme, to be used for other aspects of the 55UP programme (see separate budget report).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the 'Digital Exclusion Risk Report' published by Citizens Online it was identified that approximately '7,700 adults may not own a laptop or PC and of these 1,650 may not have any device at all, including a smart phone' Citizens Online (2022), *Digital Exclusion Report*. As part of the Town Council's 55UP project, seeking to tackle loneliness and isolation within the older community, officers were recommended to research the options for establishing a tablet lending scheme.
- 2.2 The overall budget for the 55UP project is £80,000 with £15,000 allocated towards a tablet lending scheme.
- 2.3 Research was undertaken in summer 2022 regarding established tablet lending schemes and device/software providers. Initial information was shared with the Sub Committee at its meeting on 19 August 2022 and it was noted that there were some complex issues to consider further, including how best to manage devices and the data protection considerations if the Town Council was to establish its own tablet lending scheme.
- 2.4 It was noted that the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) was already providing a device lending scheme in other parts of the county and agreed to explore possible collaboration between Leighton-Linslade Town Council (LLTC), BRCC and Citizens Online further.

3 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Several discussions have taken place between all three parties to see how we can work collaboratively to maximise the success and impact of existing schemes and avoid duplication.
- 3.2 Following discussions, it was agreed between all parties that it would be possible to collaborate and benefit from the existing BRCC "You can do IT" scheme, with referrals made through the existing digital champion network set up through Citizens Online. This would allow residents of the parish to not only access digital skills support, but where needed to also access loan tablets and routers to complement this scheme.
- 3.3 Procedural documents have now been finalised between Citizens Online, BRCC and the Town Council to encompass a tablet lending scheme into the digital support offering for Leighton-Linslade Parish.
- 3.4 The proposed procedure is as follows:

All device and router loans will be made through a referral by a Citizens Online Digital Champion (a volunteer who provides on the ground support to residents).



Digital Champions will have completed at least 2 face-to-face support sessions with an individual before referring them for a device or router loan.



Once recipient has been identified, a Digital Champion will complete a short referral form which will be sent to Town Council Support Officer, including recipient's name, address, contact details and reason for loan. Recipient will be made aware that loan will be from BRCC and they will need to sign a device loan agreement with the BRCC when receiving the device/router.



When referral has been received by Support Officer, contact will be made with individual to arrange a time/place for delivery of device/router. If recipient is able, they will collect device/router from Town Council offices but if this is not possible then other arrangements can be put in place.



At point of exchange, recipient will complete BRCC device loan agreement and will be given device/router. Town Council will take copy of agreement for records and will then forward agreement to BRCC.



Loan duration will be for up to 6 months then review will take place in collaboration with BRCC, Town Council and Citizens Online. Support Officer will make contact with recipient 2 weeks prior to end of loan agreement to arrange either collection of device/router or to discuss extension.



Once loan is complete, Support Officer will collect device/router. Town Council will store approx. 2 tablets and 2 routers at the Council offices and will contact BRCC if more is required.



During loan period, if recipient is having any difficulties using their loaned device they will initially contact Citizens Online. If the issue is found to be with the device/router itself then recipient will be advised to contact Town Council Support Officer initially. Support Officer will then speak with BRCC to make decision either to reset device, replace device or terminate the contract with the recipient.

4 TIMESCALES

- 4.1 Following on from the procedure agreement, LLTC support officer will be collecting a set of devices and routers from the BRCC offices on Thursday 10th November 2022.

- 4.2 A date will be arranged to introduce the tablet lending scheme and referral form to the Citizens Online Digital Champions.
- 4.3 Efforts by both Citizens Online and the Town Council will then be made to identify residents in need of this scheme using established connections with local organisations including Leighton-Linslade Health Connections, Leighton Linslade Helping Hands and the Leighton-Linslade Community Agent.
- 4.4 Estimated date for offering a tablet lending service to residents is December 2022.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 £15,000 was allocated to the tablet lending scheme from the £80,000 ringfenced for the 55UP project.
- 5.2 Through working with BRCC to loan tablets and routers, the Town Council will be able to establish the device lending scheme with no additional costs.
- 5.3 Therefore, it is suggested to Councillors that the £15,000 allocated to the scheme continues to be ringfenced for the 55UP project and used towards other aspects of the programme.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Citizens Online, BRCC and Town Council to collaborate to provide a tablet/router lending service to complement the current digital skills support service provided by Citizens Online.
- 6.2 Following sign off of procedural documents, it is estimated that the tablet lending service will be in operation from December 2022.
- 6.3 There will be no additional costs to establishing this tablet lending scheme.
- 6.4 It is suggested to Councillors that the previously allocated funds of £15,000 for the tablet lending project remain ringfenced for the 55UP project and are used towards other aspects of the programme.

End.