



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Ordinary Meeting of the Council

Wednesday 14 December 2022

Responses to Supplementary Questions/Requests for Clarification

Request for Clarification

Question (1)

Following Councillor Macaulay's response to a question by Councillor T. Ferguson on the provision of laptops/tablets to primary and secondary school children, Councillor Foster, on a point of order in terms of Standing Order 14.11, queried the accuracy of the Cabinet Member's response, on the basis that the Chromebooks may have been provided through the Council's Cost of the School Day Fund and not by the Scottish Government.

Councillor Macaulay undertook to clarify the position with regard to the funding of devices.

The undernoted clarification has now been provided for Members' information:

Clarification

The Scottish Government commitment to the provision of access to a digital device to all school-aged children

In its **manifesto for 2021**, SNP made the commitment to "provide every child in Scotland with a device to get online, including a free internet connection and the support to use it" (pg 61). In NAC, we received **a letter from SG officials on 19 October 2022** explaining the current position as follows: "As you know, the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that every school-aged child has access to a device to support their learning by the end of this Parliamentary Session in 2026. We know that many councils have already invested in devices or digital infrastructure (or both) across the school estate. To inform our plans, we need to understand more fully what existing digital provision looks like across the country."

The history of provision of devices in North Ayrshire

During the first part of the pandemic, North Ayrshire Council purchased around 2300 devices in total to support digital inclusion and engagement with remote learning during the pandemic. These devices have been retained by learners. The funding for these devices (in 2020) was largely provided by Scottish Government, but this was enhanced through North Ayrshire Council's own budget. As part of the budget setting process in March 2021, £250k was committed in North Ayrshire Council's revenue budget to provide digital devices to those who need them most. This equates to approximately 1000 devices and connectivity solutions per year. Now in its second year, NAC has purchased a total of 2000 devices and will continue to purchase at the rate of 1000 devices per year for as long as this budget remains in place.