PE1524/I

City of Edinburgh Council Letter of 15 October 2015

Dear Mr Sharratt,

Further to your recent communication to the Chief Executive's office, a report was prepared for, and agreed by, the Council's Finance and Resources Committee on 30 September 2014 and is attached below.

Allan McCartney
Clerking Manager
Governance Service - Committee Services
City of Edinburgh Council

Finance and Resources Committee

2.00pm, Tuesday, 30 September 2014

Council's response to Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee on public access to Wi-Fi

Item number	7.8
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	ALL

Executive summary

The Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee has invited comments from The City of Edinburgh Council on a recent petition titled **Free Wi-Fi in Scottish public buildings.**

The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to:

- urge the Scottish Government to issue a code of practice which will set out minimum standards for Wi-Fi connections provided by public authorities to members of the public; and
- urge all Scottish public authorities to provide Wi-Fi connections that meet this standard in all their public buildings.

The Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee agreed at their meeting on the 6 August 2014 to seek the views of a number of local authorities, including the City of Edinburgh Council, on this topic. This reports sets out the current position of Council-provided Wi-Fi and a response to the points raised in the petition.

Links

Coalition pledges	P15, P16, P24, P28, P31
Council outcomes	CO7, CO8, CO19
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

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THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Report

Council's response to Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee on public access to Wi-Fi

Recommendations

1.1   To approve the response to the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee, as detailed in this report.

1.2   To note the efforts taken to date to ensure that Wi-Fi provision is available in locations where it can augment the services that the Council provides.

Background

2.1   The Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee on 5 August 2014 considered Petition PE1524, which states:

"*Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to issue a code of practice setting out a minimum standard for wifi connections provided by public authorities to members of the public; and to urge all Scottish public authorities to provide wifi connections that meet this standard in all their public buildings.*"

2.2   The Committee agreed to write to a number of councils, including the City of Edinburgh Council, to seek their views on the petition and the related topic.

2.3   The Council's response to this request is detailed in sections 3.1 to 3.13, below.

Main report

3.1   The City of Edinburgh Council is committed to empowering its citizens through the use of ICT. This includes rolling out Wi-Fi appropriately within its public buildings, to the highest standard possible at the location, and where it can enhance the customer experience.

3.2   Significant steps have already been taken to provide Wi-Fi in the Council's public buildings, including the City Chambers complex, key offices and libraries throughout the city.

3.3   The Council continues to promote and provide public-access Wi-Fi in public buildings in Edinburgh, not just those operated by the Council.

3.4   In addition to this, the Council has supported the provision of Wi-Fi on buses and trams in the city, with full coverage expected by December 2014.

3.5   The Council has also sought to enable the provision of public Wi-Fi in core open spaces. As previously reported to Committee the Council entered into a contract with Gowex, for Wi-Fi provision on a concession basis, e.g. no direct public funding for the scheme. Gowex subsequently went into administration and the Council is currently working on a re-tender exercise to deliver this important service.

3.6   The Council recognises that it has a role to play in the management and provision of services, whilst ensuring that it offers best value. The Council also understands that Wi-Fi users have an expectation that where it is available it should be easy to connect to and reliable.

3.7   The provision of WiFI in public areas is currently delivered through a co-ordinated approach, with a range of different providers. As a result any move to regulation, either mandatory or voluntary, would be complex and challenging, involving various stakeholders. It should however be noted that Wi-Fi already operates to a series of agreed standards[1] and there is merit in ensuring appropriate compliance. Much of this compliance is driven by the software and hardware used to provide a Wi-Fi access point.

3.8   The performance of Wi-Fi (speed of service, accessibility, etc) is determined by a range of factors including, but not exclusive to:

- the device being used to connect to the Wi-Fi hotspot;

- the number of devices connected to the Wi-Fi hotspot;

- the underlying speed of the network, or broadband connection the Wi-Fi hotspot is connected to; and

- network security requirements.

3.9   The focus of the Scottish Government on increasing the provision and coverage of Superfast Broadband is welcomed as a key element of increasing Wi-Fi provision across Scotland.

3.10   As noted in the work of the Scottish Government Digital programmes the provision of broadband is not, at present, universal. As a result bandwidth limitations have an impact on whether a local authority may be able to meet a given standard.

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[1] Standards for Wi-Fi delivery are defined by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). Details can be found at: http://standards.ieee.org/about/get/802/802.11.html

3.11   There are also cost implications of mandating the provision of Wi-Fi in all public buildings, without reference to the needs of citizens. Where Hotspots can be provided they require to be managed to establish use, service peaks and troughs, and whether additional Hotspots are required at specific locations. This is similar to mobile phone connectivity and the need at times for additional masts.

3.12   The regulation of Wi-Fi provision and practice could, potentially, have an adverse impact, limiting supply where the code of practice could not be met.

3.13   The approach that the City of Edinburgh Council would prefer to see established would be good practice guides for the provision of Wi-Fi in public buildings, focusing on the user experience and the security of the networks. This would support consistency through common practice rather than legislation.

Measures of success

4.1   Not applicable.

Financial impact

5.1   There could be significant cost implications were the provision of Wi-Fi in public buildings to be mandated, particularly in locations with poor network connectivity.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

6.1   There is no direct risk, policy, compliance and governance impact as a result of the report.

Equalities impact

7.1   There is no direct equalities impact as a result of the report.

Sustainability impact

8.1   There is no direct sustainability impact as a result of the report.

Consultation and engagement

9.1   This report is a response to consultation from the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee.

Background reading/external references

- Link to Petition: PE01524: Free Wi-Fi in Scottish public buildings
- Scottish Government's Scotland Digital Future
- Urban Broadband Fund
- The City of Edinburgh Council's ICT and Digital Strategy
- Connected Capital Broadband Voucher scheme
- Connected Capital Programme Report at Finance and Resources Committee, 20 March 2014

Alastair Maclean

Director of Corporate Governance

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Links

Coalition pledges	P15 - Work with public organisations, the private sector, and social enterprise to promote Edinburgh to investors P16 - Examine ways to source new funding to support small business. P24- Maintain and enhance support for our world famous festivals and events P28- Further strengthen our links with the business community by developing and implementing strategies to promote and protect the economic well-being of the City. P31 - Maintain our City's reputation as the cultural capital of the world by continuing to support and invest in our cultural infrastructure
Council outcomes	CO7 - Edinburgh draws new Investment in development and regeneration CO8 - Edinburgh's economy creates and sustains job opportunities 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
Single Outcome Agreement **Appendices**	SO1 Edinburgh's Economy Delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all