

**Press Statement**

Wednesday 25 July 2018

**Minister Ring announces major investment of €7.8 million in digital services and facilities in public libraries**

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Mr Michael Ring TD, today (Wednesday), announced a major investment package for digital services and facilities in public libraries. The investment will enable ICT infrastructure upgrades, meeting space technologies and digital learning suites in public libraries across the country. The €7.8 million investment comprises €5.2 million from Minister Ring’s Department and a further €2.6 million contribution from Local Authorities.

The funding will enable the provision of ICT upgrades, meeting space technologies and facilities, and digital learning suites for up to 300 public libraries in 2018.

It will support provision of the following:

* iPads/tablets/smart devices for users and for staff to assist users
* Computers and workstations including image deployment technology
* Software to support design, gaming and coding
* Meeting space technology
* Podcasting equipment and workstations
* Mobile LCD screens with audio
* Interactive whiteboards
* Digital training suites

Speaking at the announcement of the investment at the South Dublin County Library in Tallaght, Minister Ring said: “I am delighted to announce this major investment that will enhance the technological capacity across the library network and will further position our public libraries as an invaluable community resource.

“The funding will support a programme of ICT upgrades and developments to ensure libraries can provide a service that is not only in line with the needs of library users, but which can also deliver new and innovative services. It will develop digital learning centres and innovation centres, providing users with access to latest technologies and supporting library users who are not confident with technology.

“This investment will contribute significantly to the strategic actions in *Our Public Libraries 2022* – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities which seeks to establish the library as an important enabler of digital services and facilitator of digital skills development.

“Today’s announcement follows on from the allocation of €3.4 million by my Department in 2017 for for self-service technology and hot-desking facilities in public libraries. All of this will transform the facilities and services on offer in public libraries throughout Ireland.

“This investment and the new strategy is focused on public libraries delivering a modern, progressive library service which connects and supports communities and individuals. It is an ambitious strategy which is aimed at increasing library membership and usage of our public libraries. It focuses on removing barriers to access by eliminating fines and other charges, and challenging the belief that the library is only for certain sectors of society.”

ENDS

**Notes to Editor**

***Our Public Libraries 2022– Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities***

The strategy has three *Strategic Programmes* that reflect the core functions of the public library service –

* Reading and Literacy,
* Information and Learning, and
* Community and Culture.

It focuses on removing barriers to access and improving accessibility for all.  The library service will draw on capacity across the library network to support and facilitate services provided by other sectors, developing existing relationships and building new ones to support delivery of integrated public services.

Libraries will also work with local partners to reach disadvantaged, marginalised and new communities, increasing these communities’ awareness of services available and firmly establishing the library as a resource for all.

The strategy will be delivered using enablers such as: –

* infrastructure and services with a focus on fit-for-purpose buildings and ICT capacity,
* library team development with skilled staff taking a more proactive and confident customer-focused approach,
* promotion and marketing, at national and local level, to raise visibility and awareness generally, but also to reach out to those communities that may not consider the library a place for them,
* high-quality collections based on the latest technology and innovative solutions, and
* continued investment to support infrastructure, ICT, staffing and collections development.