

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

Portfolio Holder Report 26th September 2012

REPORT AUTHOR: Steve Rogers Head of Schools Service

SUBJECT: Ystradgynlais Schools Modernisation Programme: ICT

REPORT FOR: Decision

Summary

Portfolio Holder for Learning and Leisure is asked to consider and approve the request for additional ICT capital funding as per the detail in this report. Funding is required to complete the final ICT element of Phase 1 of the Ystradgynlais Schools Modernisation Programme by approving expenditure for the Welsh Medium Primary School - Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn y Glowyr.

Proposal

The Ystradgynlais Schools Modernisation Programme is the most ambitious building programme undertaken by PCC. It is a trailblazer project, acting as the benchmark for all future schools modernisation programmes in Powys. As such, it provides an excellent opportunity to modernise school design and implement new ways of using ICT to enhance delivery of all the activity that takes place in schools, including teaching, learning and business support systems. The potential benefits to the wider community are also significant.

The Ystradgynlais Technology Project is the first opportunity to create and deliver a vision for ICT enabled learning and business support on an area basis.

The project aims to implement 21st Century technology, accessible from anywhere using a range of devices to:

- help deliver improved outcomes (standards and well being) for children and young people
- support innovative teaching and learning to capture the imagination of children and young people to help them engage and succeed.
- deliver more efficient business support services on an area or where appropriate County / regional basis.
- contribute to the wider regeneration agenda in the Ystradgynlais area by providing benefits to citizens using other PCC services, local businesses and the wider community.
- Improve integration between service providers (within and outside PCC) to enable citizens to have seamless access to and benefit from service provision.

There is broad agreement that appropriate use of ICT resources contributes positively to raising standards, both at national level and as a result of more local research.

Nationally Becta has presented evidence that 95% of teachers believe that the use of technology is raising standards in schools and colleges (Raising standards, Becta, 2010). In the report "The impact of digital technologies on learning" (Becta, 2009) evidence was presented that classes with online learning, whether completely online or blended, on

average produce stronger learning outcomes than learning face-to-face alone. There were also positive impacts from interactive whiteboards on literacy and mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2 once teachers had experienced sustained use and the technology had become embedded in pedagogical practice.

Continuous professional development of teachers is also supported by ICT. In their review for Becta, the Institute for Education highlighted the role that communities of practice can play in CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and the importance of individual access to technology to make best use of that (Continuing Professional Development in ICT for Teachers: A literature review, Becta, 2009).

Penrhos school in Ystradgynlais has been part of a pilot programme for Year 6 laptop use where students are allocated individual machines to use. This has shown significant progression for students. The proposed capital spend includes provision for Ysgol Dyffryn y Glowyr to adopt a similar scheme.

The equipment proposed in this report is designed to work and enable full realisation of the value of networking equipment and teaching and learning resources already approved for installation in the school, including interactive whiteboards and projectors.

Corporate Improvement Plan

Improvement Objective Learning and Community Sub programme 2: Schools Modernisation:

We will reconfigure schools provision to match places to students and ensure our schools are financially viable and fit for purpose.

'Council' Improvement is another one of the 5 Improvement Objectives identified in the Powys Change Plan (Stage 1) June 2011. The 'Council' Investment Objectives aims to constantly challenge what the Council delivers and how it is delivered to improve quality and reduce cost by

- transforming the ways in which our workforce operates,
- improving how we communicate with both the community and workforce
- Utilising modern technology to improve productivity.

Support Services Transformation is one of the sub programmes within the Council Investment Objective and includes significant reference to how ICT can increase capacity and capability and provide efficiency savings

The project supports the following objectives of the LSB One Plan

- People in Powys can easily access services
- People in Powys have the skills to pursue their ambitions

The project addresses the objectives in the respective Schools Services Strategy, 21st Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme, the ICT Service Strategy, the Schools Service ICT Strategy and the Powys Community Focussed Services strategy. It is also informed by the Regeneration Strategy.

Options Considered/Available

Four options have been considered. The aim is to implement a 21st century ICT model into the school complemented with a robust training programme to maximise the technology and create efficient teaching ability with the technology.

The four options are:

- Minimum new spend (£16,100) – redeploy existing equipment into the new schools at a small cost
- Medium spend (£74,900) – fully provision the school with a mix of new and reconditioned computers, deliver laptops for all teaching staff, and tablet computers similar to the level already deployed in the other primary schools in the area
- Full spend (£115,760) – full provision for school with new equipment, to the ideal specification agreed between the school and the Council

Minimum New Spend Option

The existing Welsh Medium schools have very little in terms of modern ICT resource and what they have is concentrated in leased equipment. Compared to the primary schools already modernised they have a poverty of provision. However, experience in the English Medium schools has shown that reconditioning machines do perform adequately, if not well, in the majority of tasks.

Much of the existing equipment is, in ICT terms, antiquated and becoming unreliable. Some of the computers are 8-10 years old and are not capable of meeting basic school needs such as internet browsing. Additionally this older equipment tends to be physically bulkier and using CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) rather than flat monitors which make the ICT more dominating of physical space and makes the classrooms less flexible.

The audit of existing equipment suggests that only around 12 computers owned outright by the schools are currently suitable for continued operation, based on a very modest minimum specification. In this model these would be supplemented by a number of reconditioned devices from Ysgol Maesydderwen. These could be supplemented by extending the leases on 24 computers. If there was no additional investment in ICT, the school would be left with a poor pupil to computer ratio, be unable to confidently and reliably use the interactive whiteboards specified as part of the new build, and there would be no mobile or personal ICT for staff to support their own development.

In the short term this model, through the use of cascaded reconditioned equipment, will increase ICT provision in the school, but system reliability would quickly decline, and as a corollary to this use by teachers and students would drop. Classrooms would quickly become unable to effectively make full use of investment in the new buildings, including the whiteboards. In addition, opportunity for students' and teachers' professional development would be reduced through lack of access to resources, ideas and their wider professional community. Finally the role the school might directly or indirectly play in the wider community would suffer. Opportunities for community use of facilities to improve skills or simply access the internet could not be reliably offered.

The capital cost of this would be near zero (excepting the cost of moving and reconnecting ICT), but the school would be required to spend significant sums in the near future to even maintain the current level of opportunity. Revenue commitment from the schools would include maintaining existing leases, and entering a new contract for printing and copying which would combine capital and revenue.

MINIMUM NEW SPEND

	Budget
Software (Primary)	£0.00
Printers (Primary)	£0.00
Total	£0.00
Desktop ICT - Dyffryn y Glowyr	£4,000.00
Total	£4,000.00
NAS - Dyffryn y Glowyr	£0.00
Total	£0.00
Project Management	£9,600.00
Install	£2,500.00
Contingency	£0.00
Total Funding Required	£16,100.00

Medium Spend Option

A middle ground between a zero and optimal investment would be to focus on key infrastructure improvements for the school and use refurbished and reconditioned machines available from the high school to offer a good level of provision but without the expense of entirely new computers. This would offer the school a significant improvement from its current position, though it must be stressed that the current provision is extremely limited.

This would allow confident use of ICT facilities for all teachers and pupils and would deliver the planned pilot of tablet computers in the primaries.

This would prevent the investment in infrastructure from being wasted and gives the school a number of options over its deployment of ICT

This approach does include a laptop per teacher in all the schools to encourage and support their personal development.

The ICT provision met under this budget would include:

- New and reconditioned machines to equip all classroom benches fully
- Laptops and mobile devices for student use to allow teachers to plan for 1:1 access for students to computers
- 1x new desktop for each whiteboard in all the schools
- 1x laptop per member of teaching staff
- 1x new desktop for the office

Compared to the full budget, cuts have been made to budgets for software, upgrades of existing computers, printing and installation/training. This will have an effect on the immediate familiarity and ability of teachers to use the ICT equipment, but the baseline provision will be in place. The lack of funds for training and support in using the equipment is the big risk to overall success and value of ICT in schools in this option.

The prices used to calculate the cost of desktop and laptop computers are based on the prices achieved in the earlier procurement for the three English Medium primary schools and the high school. Around 110 new devices would be bought, and 50 reconditioned computers used.

Based on the prices achieved it is possible to include the tablet computer pilot. This includes the provision of a class set of tablet computers to the school. The intention is to build on the pilot of laptops for year 6 in Ysgol Penrhos, to investigate the potential for the use of these devices in the classroom. There is existing evidence of the impact of Windows-based Tablet PCs on staff confidence and use of ICT back as far as 2005 (Tablet PCs in schools, Becta, 2005) and a series of current projects including a large scale collaboration between the eLearning Foundation and Carphone Warehouse (<http://www.e-learningfoundation.com/tablets-for-schools>). Tablet computers are achieving wide acceptance internationally as tools for learning – particularly supporting some ALN, individual creativity and self-paced learning. Experience in an area such as Ystradgynlais would create a demonstration site for other schools in the county looking to apply this technology themselves.

MEDIUM SPEND

	Budget
Software (Primary)	£4,500.00
Printers (Primary)	£3,750.00
Total	£8,250.00
Desktop ICT - Dyffryn y Glowyr	£47,440.00
Total	£47,440.00
NAS - Dyffryn y Glowyr	£1,410.00
Total	£1,410.00
Project Management	£9,600.00
Install	£6,100.00
Contingency	£2,100.00
Total Funding Required	£74,900.00

Full Spend

This model, as discussed with the headteacher, would be a complete provision with new ICT across the school. New computers would be installed with each interactive whiteboards and staff would be given individual access to laptops to support their planning, administration and on-going development. Each classroom would be fully provisioned with new desktops and laptops would be available for two classes at any time to have personal use of ICT.

Personal equipment for teachers is expected to increase the opportunities available to staff to locate and design resources; to manage data on pupils to inform personalisation of lesson content; and to participate in the wider professional community to get ideas and expertise from the rest of the county and country.

The school would have a class set of tablet computers, plus a number of new and legacy laptops capable of being deployed flexibly by teachers. Schools have expressed enthusiasm for the flexibility of mobile devices to cater for a variety of learning and lesson styles.

Around 300 new devices would be purchased.

FULL SPEND

	Budget
Software (Primary)	£6,000.00
Printers (Primary)	£3,750.00
Total	£9,750.00
Desktop ICT - Dyffryn y Glowyr	£82,000.00
Total	£82,000.00
NAS - Dyffryn y Glowyr	£1,410.00
Total	£1410.00
Project Management	£9,600.00
Install	£10,000.00
Contingency	£3,000.00
Total Funding Required	£115,760.00

Preferred option and reasons.

The preferred option is the Medium spend option. This will achieve a balance between level of provision in the schools and the need for fairness and austerity in comparison to the rest of the county.

The school will be able to benefit from an acceptable level of ICT, and staff will be able to fully participate in professional development. If available, extra resources should also ideally be identified for staff training and support.

Particularly the reuse of equipment combined with the purchase of new allows the council to demonstrate an emphasis on sustainability within its capital programmes, and prevents future upgrades needing to be a 'big bang'.

The cost of this model is higher than that for an individual English Medium primary school as already delivered, but this fairly reflects the larger number of students and classes, and the extremely low level of existing provision that severely restricts the re-use options from within the schools. For comparison this proposal is around 1.6x the spend on one of the other new primary schools.

Notes on revenue (all options)

The School Service has retained a sum of £60,000 in current financial year that, together with the funding held and budgeted for in the High School delegated budget, will be used to provide a repairs and renewals fund for an ICT maintenance and replacement programme. There remains a potential small shortfall (10k) in the proposed repairs and renewals fund which will be addressed as part of the Fair Funding Formula Review.

Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

The recycling, reuse and upgrading of some of the existing ICT equipment supports the Council's environmental programme.

Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

N/A

Local Member(s)

N/A

Other Front Line Services

N/A

Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)

The Principal Accountant (Capital) confirms that in the first instance it is proposed that the £74,900 is funded from within the overall capital budget for the Ystradgynlais schools. If there is insufficient underspend to fund all or part of the £74,900 the balance will need to be funded from Schools Major Improvements capital. In any event, it is proposed that the £74,900 is reimbursed from School Improvement capital budget over two years to maintain the overall capital provision for schools modernisation. The ongoing revenue costs of £18,510 have been identified by the Schools Service.

Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

N/A

Communications

N/A

Statutory Officers

The Strategic Director Finance and Infrastructure (S151 Officer) has commented: "I note the comments of the Principal Accountant that sufficient funding can be identified to meet this investment and sustain renewals thereafter."

The Strategic Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) has commented: "I have no comments over and above those of the S151 Officer."

Members' Interests

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
To implement the Medium Spend Option.	To complete the ICT workstream of the Ystradgynlais Schools Modernisation Programme

Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Stephen Rogers – Head of Schools
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	October 2012

Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Jennifer Owen Adams	01597 82 6448		jennifer.owenadams@powys.gov.uk

Background Papers used to prepare Report:

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