CYNGOR SIR *POWYS* COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE
19th May 2020

REPORT AUTHOR:	**County Councillor Cllr Graham Breeze** **Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance and Engagement** **County Councillor Phyl Davies** **Portfolio Holder for Education and Property**
REPORT TITLE:	**Edtech Programme update (including Covid-19 response)**
REPORT FOR:	**Information**

1. Purpose

1.1 This report is for information to explain Welsh Government's education technology programme (Edtech) and funding. The report gives information on the background of the programme, current progress, the implications of Covid19 and the next steps for the programme.

2. Background

2.1 During FY2019/20 The Welsh Assembly Government introduced a new scheme to help fund digital education with a pan-Wales approach. The funding is designed to be used to equip schools with the new EdTech equipment. This will ensure all schools are working towards the Education Digital Standards published on Hwb and will lay the foundations for a sustainable digital education infrastructure. Additionally, the programme will mean less bureaucracy for schools, freeing up time for teachers and head teachers, and will give learners access to an enhanced and more consistent learning experience.

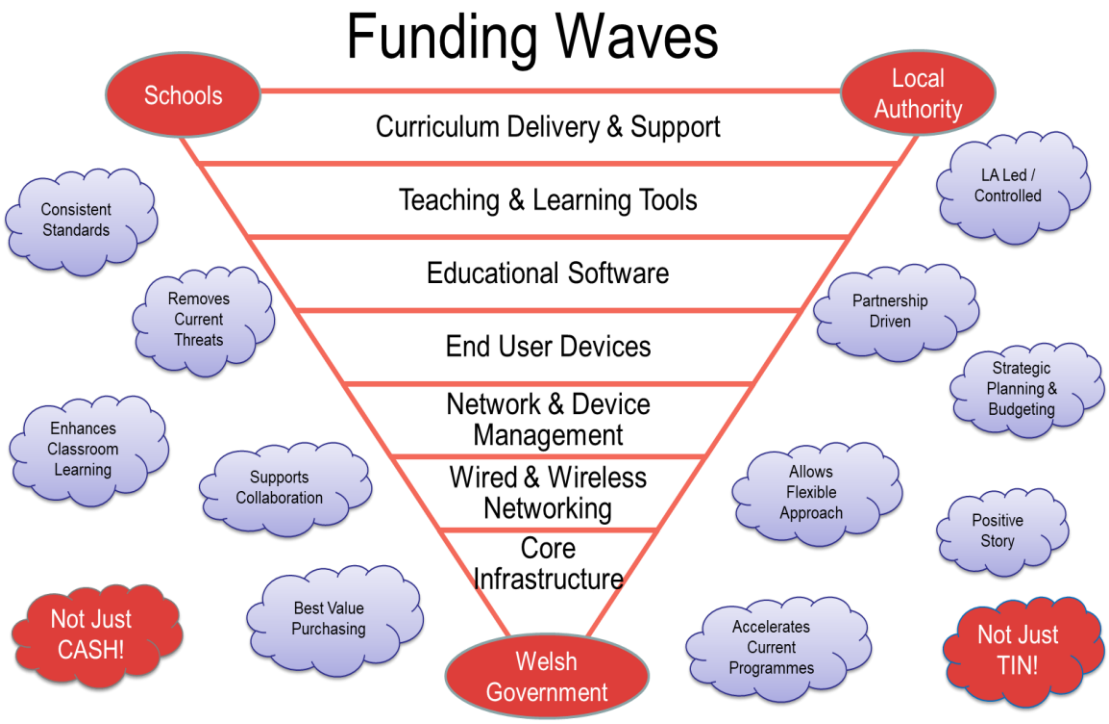
2.2 The Capital Programme is worth a total value of £105 Million (Between all Local Authorities) over a four-year period, with an indicative breakdown as follows; Year one- £50 million, Year two- £30 million, year three- £15 million and year four- £10 million. This will be proportionally segmented and allocated to each Local authority to plan and implement their digital upgrades.

Powys County Council has received approximately £2.4 million in the FY2019/20 and will be allocated £1.16 million in FY2020/21.

The way in which this differs to previous schemes (LiDW) is that the funding has been provided to the local authority rather than the individual

schools. This approach looks to ensure there is consistency to the roll out with the end result providing a One Wales approach for Digital standards.

2.3 Welsh Government have set the programme into Waves; each wave must be completed and have a sustainability commitment in place before progressing to the next Phase.



3. Progress

3.1 Welsh Government have set a target of completing the first two Waves, Core Infrastructure and Wired & Wireless Networking, by the end of August 2020. Using the £2.4 million of FY2019/20 funding, Waves 1 & 2 have been baselined, orders placed, and have been signed off with Welsh Government. This has permitted a move onto Wave 3, and to make an initial engagement with establishing the requirements for Wave 4 end user devices. Progress on Waves 1 to 4 is as follows:

3.2 **Waves 1 & 2**

- Baselining of all Secondary and Primary schools core infrastructure and networking requirements.
- Order and receipt of core infrastructure and networking equipment via the EdTech Caerphilly Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).
- Claim of the £360,096 Hwb-In-Schools Infrastructure Grant (HISIG) to assist with data cabling in schools.
- Engagement with contractors, via Heart of Wales Property Services, to install the data cabling.

- Tender issued for Secondary School data cabling.
- Data cabling in Primary Schools commenced.
- Switch installs in Primary schools commenced.

3.3 **Wave 3**

- Establishing, in conjunction with partners and 3rd parties, server requirements for schools.
- Order and receipt of servers via the EdTech Caerphilly Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).
- Distribution of servers to schools.
- Purchase of Microsoft server licencing.

3.4 **Wave 4**

- Digital Secondary Schools Workshops carried out to determine the End User Device requirements for the remaining £130K of FY2019/20 WG funding.
- Order of 411 laptops via the EdTech Caerphilly Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).
- Delivery of laptops due at the beginning of July.

4. COVID 19 Implications

4.1 As part of the work to inform the continuity of learning arrangements and various announcements from the Minister for Education, the Edtech programme became a robust resource for all schools to support the planned approach for 'stay safe, stay learning' and the focus on remote learning through the Hwb platform.

As part of the Continuity of Learning Plan, lead Education Director wrote out to all Directors of Education to explore the position across Wales of our digitally excluded learners and identify possible solutions/options available to support these learners during this unprecedented time. A digitally excluded learner has been defined as '*a learner who does not have access to an appropriate internet connected device to engage in online learning activities from home'*.

4.2 Implemented approach to support digitally excluded learners

The plan required local authorities to initiate a device scheme to support digitally excluded learners. The approach is predicated on the rebuild of certified 'older laptops' in schools using the Neverware software (lightweight Chrome operating system which can be integrated into Hwb's

secure device management console). We anticipate the steps needed will be:

- Powys estimated that we had 800 digitally excluded learners to inform the number of devices needed.
- In conjunction Welsh Government provided wider national communications activity advising the families of digitally excluded learners to contact their schools.
- Laptop stocks were gathered by school / local authority technicians and rebuilt and enrolled to the Hwb's secure Google device management console, which enables the local authority/school to manage the device.
- In parallel, the Welsh Government liaised with the major teleco's services (BT/EE and Vodafone) to secure a stock of 4G mobile connectivity devices to allocate 'a stock' to each local authority as required.
- All 'recycled laptops' have been distributed on 4th/5th May to learner that requires one, along with appropriate end user agreement.
- Using the local authorities EdTech funding allocation, we will work to prioritise the replacement of any school laptops used.
- Mobile connectivity devices are due to be received w/c 11th May for 600 families
- To provide this solution one-off cost are estimated at £36,500 and ongoing monthly costs of £9000 for each month the solution is required which will impact on the overall budget remaining for future investment.
- If the solution is required for more than 12 months costs of a further £9600 will be incurred.

4.3 Welsh Government have confirmed EdTech funding allocation, will meet the following costs via the EdTech Capital funding:

- All licence costs associated with the rebuild of the existing laptops
- All costs associated with mobile connectivity devices (for 30 day rolling periods).
- Replacement of all recycled laptops.

4.4 Digitally excluded learners with no access to broadband or mobile coverage

It is anticipated the numbers of learners that fall into this category will be very low. We are continuing to work with the WG Infrastructure team to explore alternative options, however it is expected there will be some learners in rural communities who may not be able to benefit from the above intervention. For your information, it is likely alternate provision will need to be offered for these learners, Where MiFi is not available, schools will discuss with parents the best way to provide schoolwork for their child

4.4 Safeguarding

BT/EE and Vodafone who have worked closely with the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) to bar the relevant content as advised by the BBFC as the governing body.

As a brief overview, the carriers have confirmed content barring will be applied to all SIM accounts on the Caerphilly CBC/Welsh Government account. As an example, the content barring will prevent the users from accessing things such as:

- Voting for television programmes
- Participating in lotteries online
- Downloading music and videos including artists such as Eminem or Guns N' Roses
- Gambling sites
- Sites that are pornographic in nature

Welsh Government appreciate this doesn't provide a full filtering solution, however hopefully this update provides some reassurance and insight around the controls in place on the MiFi units and will complement our own terms of usage or local device solutions.

4.5 Contractors implementing the works for Waves 1 and 2 in our schools have been on hold due to staff on furlough, which will cause a 3-week delay on overall project timeframes. This has now been reviewed and all contractors will commence works w/c 11th May 2019. Contractors have been made aware of the location of childcare hubs to avoid contact.

5. <u>Next Steps</u>

5.1 On 1st May 2020, Welsh Government released details of the capital funding for 2020/21. Powys will receive £1,166,153.
In line with the guidelines for the use of the Ed Tech programme funding, Powys will implement the next wave on the Ed Tech programme, Wave 4 - Devices.

The short term actions in implementing the programme are:

- The Schools ICT Governance Group will outline the use of devices to support the Powys Schools ICT Strategy to support learning.
- Identification of the number of devices needed to support learning in each school.
- Draw up and agreement between schools and Powys County Council for the replacement of devices

- Purchasing and installing of devices.

5.2 The longer-term objectives are:

- Ensure that as Powys County Council, we provide pupils with a digital environment fit for the 21st century curriculum.
- Ensure all pupils develop digital competence skills to enable the confident, creative and critical use of technologies and systems.

6. Recommendation

For information only

Contact Officers:	Diane Reynolds
Tel:	01597826008
Email:	diane.reynolds@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Diane Reynolds
Corporate Director:	Ness Young