



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

17th OCTOBER 2019

HWB TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME FUNDING

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR NORRIS)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the receipt of funding from Welsh Government as part of the Hwb transformation programme for improving the use of digital technology for teaching and learning in schools.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - i. Note the information contained within the report;
 - ii. Note the receipt of £3.99 million funding for financial year 2019/20 from the Welsh Government;
 - iii. Agree to the approach outlined in section 6.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To advise Members of the receipt of grant monies, conditions on expenditure and proposals for spend.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Over a number of years through the Hwb programme, the Welsh Government, working in collaboration with all local authorities across Wales, has made significant digital investment in areas including high

speed broadband, in-schools infrastructure such as WiFi/Networks and the HWB digital learning platform.

- 4.2 In anticipation of the forthcoming changes to Education in Wales such as the inclusion of digital competence at the heart of the curriculum, a detailed independent assessment of school networks was recently undertaken by Welsh Government. The assessments identified areas of improvement for in-school infrastructure across Wales to help address and/or alleviate any potential constraints faced by schools when exploiting ICT to deliver teaching and learning in the classroom.
- 4.3 Following recent discussions between the Welsh Government and the Society of IT Managers (SOCITM) Cymru group, an intervention plan has been developed, which will deliver extensive investment that seeks to build upon previous investments and learning from work already taking place across Wales.
- 4.4 Equitable funding is to be provided across all of Wales to support all schools to achieve a minimum level of ICT standards and consistency as part of a proposed 3 to 4 year programme. The funding is set at £50million in 2019/20 across Wales with further funds to be provided for the duration of the programme; however it is anticipated that funding will be reduced year on year with a requirement for an ongoing sustainable funding model to be implemented by each Local authority.
- 4.5 For Rhondda Cynon Taf, the funding has been confirmed as £3.99M for 2019/20.
- 4.6 Funding will be allocated against set waves of eligible spend and all works must be completed to meet set standards before work may commence in any school on the next wave. Once any work has been initiated on the next wave, a Local authority would not be eligible to seek further funding for a prior wave. The waves of eligible funding and delivery are:
 - Core Infrastructure e.g. cabling, broadband, network switches, cabinets and WiFi access points
 - Mobile Device Management e.g. solutions to ensure that all school devices may be efficiently maintained with centrally controlled and up to date patches, software updates and appropriate security controls
 - Software Licencing e.g. acquire relevant software licences
 - User Devices e.g. laptops, tablets, desktop computers
 - Teaching & Learning Tools e.g. digital casting, projection and screens
 - Curriculum Delivery & Support e.g. staff and learners enhance their ability to exploit technology as part of the curriculum

- 4.7 The Welsh Government is establishing a national EdTech Catalogue to allow for the ease of procurement of the above items and to also maximise the opportunity to deliver economies of scale across Wales and to ensure alignment with defined national ICT standards.
- 4.8 An element (15%) of the Council's allocation will be funding to support initiating, managing and delivery of the overall programme. The remaining 85% must be spent upon the EdTech Catalogue items.

5. PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 The Welsh Government is seeking a number of principle commitments from each local authority which will underpin the significant work required for the programme and to build a sustainable model of ICT within schools for future years.

Specifically the Welsh Government is requesting each local authority to:

- Undertake and maintain readiness/baseline assessments of schools to inform a holistic Council delivery plan and strategy, with regular (minimum six monthly) reports to Welsh Government
- Take strategic responsibility for all maintained schools ICT infrastructure and services and act as a single point of contact for the HWB programme
- Ensure all Hwb programme funding allocations are aligned to strategic plans and budgeting cycles
- Be accountable for all ICT financial capabilities and sustainability plans as a direct result of the Hwb programme funding

- 5.2 The key milestones set for delivery during 2019/20 are:

- (i) Return of the Memorandum of Agreement and the Grant Award Letter returned – 31 October 2019
- (ii) Council delivery plan defining proposed spend for all schools – 31 October 2019
- (iii) Programme funding claimed in full - 31 March 2020

6. PROGRESS TO DATE & NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Preparatory work is well underway with initial Headteacher briefings undertaken and discussion with the School Budget Forum to progress a

consultation paper on how to best build a financially sustainable model for ICT in schools in years beyond the proposed programme.

- 6.2 The requirements to meet the key milestones (as set out at para 5.2 (i) and (ii)) are well underway with baseline inventory details being finalised to inform the Council's delivery plan. Indications are that due to the age of the majority of our current schools core infrastructure, spend will likely be concentrated on an initial wave of replacing this to a modernised and fit for purpose platform.
- 6.3 To underpin the programme, lead Council Officers are engaging with schools, the Regional Education Consortium and the Welsh Government to develop a strategy for future ICT & Digital delivery within our schools.
- 6.4 A core delivery team will be established to manage and deliver the programme, which will form part of the Council's wider digital work. Monitoring delivery will be aligned to existing governance arrangements via the Digital Leadership Group.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. This exercise has shown that a full EqIA is not required.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation with key stakeholders with regard to the programme has been undertaken. Further engagement will be undertaken with stakeholders in the planning and delivery of the project.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 The funding allocation is £3.99 million for financial year 2019/20. Of this 15% can be used to support the delivery of the programme, with 85% to be spent on items to be procured via the established Welsh Government EdTech catalogue. The 85% of the funding is being held by Welsh Government.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set out in this report.

11. **LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 11.1 The proposals support the Council's Corporate Plan Economy priority, specifically the theme Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools will be amongst the best in the country, with all children achieving the best they can.

The proposals also support the Well-being of Future Generations Act in the following ways:

- **A prosperous Wales** – provides the platform that allows for more innovative teaching and learning for the development of children and young people's digital skills and in turn, employability skills.
- **A healthier Wales** – by children and young people accessing relevant and accurate information to support them in their decision making, building aspiration and independence through online tools and research materials.
- **A more equal Wales** – equality of provision and access for all children and young people irrespective of social demographics.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** – By providing the infrastructure and access to the latest technologies where pupils and young people can collaborate effectively and safely with schools, further and higher education establishments along with businesses nationally and internationally. This will allow pupils and young people to learn together, receive advice and support and collaborate on projects together.

12. **CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 The allocation of funding as part of the Hwb transformation programme will support improvement in the use of digital technology for teaching and learning in schools. It provides additional support to the ongoing transformation of Digital Services within Rhondda Cynon Taf.
