

SUBJECT: ICT in Schools – Update to the Business Case

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 6th January 2016

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: NONE

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update cabinet on the ICT in schools business case and the number of schools signing up to the ongoing SLA agreement with the SRS.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That cabinet agree to continue with the phase 1 investment to upgrade ICT infrastructure in schools in the light of 3 schools declining to enter into the SLA agreement with the SRS.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 In July 2015 Cabinet agreed the ICT in schools Outline Business Case and the funding arrangements for the upgrade and renewal of the ICT infrastructure in schools, enhancing the teaching and learning experience and bringing schools up to a common standard in line with WG and 21st century schools aspirations. The agreement was predicated on a 100% sign-up to an SLA agreement with the SRS, ensuring the substantial capital investment was sustainable going forward.

3.2 The deadline for schools to sign up to the SLA was initially set for the end of the summer term 2015, but was subsequently extended to the end of October 2015 in order to give school governors more time to make an informed decision. A comprehensive communication campaign with both schools and governors ensured that all queries were answered. Further detailed discussions ensued with a small number of schools after the deadline had passed, and in late November 2015 we finalised negotiations. Three primary schools, Goytre Fawr, Cantref and Llantilio Pertholey have declined the offer of an SLA and capital investment on the grounds that their current arrangements suit their needs. A further school currently has no pupils on its' role and is the subject of consultation on its' future, so will also not enter into an agreement.

3.3 There are several implications of a less than 100% sign-up, not least of all the agreement of Cabinet and Council that the significant up-front investment in upgrading the ICT infrastructure would not proceed without it.

3.4 Schools that have signed up are anxious that the infrastructure investment go ahead, as it is critical to the ongoing teaching and learning environment and the enablement of digital skills and expertise of young people. Without this investment there would be a continued decline in the ability

to keep up with digital technology and children will suffer for differing digital knowledge and skills when entering secondary education.

3.5 In the event that a decision is made not to proceed with the investment or SLA agreements in the light of a less than 100% sign up, it will be necessary for schools to procure alternative ICT provision in the external market in a very tight timeframe, with extra cost and disruption to the school.

3.6 The proposed SLA charges were originally estimated on the basis that all schools would sign up to the agreement. It is crucial that the SLA is sustainable in order to provide the appropriate level of support to enable schools to deliver digital teaching and learning. A reduction in SLA income could have an impact on the viability of the SLA. The estimated SLA charges consist of a fixed element to cover technician salaries, and capital replacement as well as a variable element to cover OVS licences and PSBA line rentals. The figures have been re-worked in detail, and have taken account of recovery of costs of the internet lines and security infrastructure for the 3 schools that have not signed up, as well as income from special schools that were not expected to be part of the agreement initially. The re-calculations indicate that the SLA is still viable at the charges estimated in March this year, and there will be no change to the charge to schools, other than index linking the charges each year.

3.7 It's important to note that delays in achieving sign-up to the SLA will have a knock on effect on the timescales for implementation of the Phase 1 infrastructure upgrade. Work will begin on phase 1 in January 2016 instead of the proposed target date of October 2015, and will be completed in the summer of 2016. Schools have been informed of the priority order for implantation of their equipment upgrade, SIMS in the classroom and migration of servers to the SRS.

4. REASONS:

4.1 The Outline business case was agreed on the basis that all schools will sign up to an ongoing SLA agreement with the SRS. All but 3 schools have signed up, and indications are that one school is to remain closed next year.

4.2 A recalculation of the SLA agreement has been undertaken to ensure it is still viable in the light of 3 schools not signing up to the agreement. This recalculation has indicated that the SLA is viable and it recommended that the programme of upgrading the ICT infrastructure proceeds.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The resource implications are outlined in the report above in paragraph 3.6. There are no changes to the resources required for this project.

6. FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS:

The investment in ICT in schools will have a positive effect as outlined in the Future Generations report attached.

7. CONSULTEES: SLT, All MCC schools, the SRS

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE

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