

MEETING	Cabinet Cyngor Gwynedd
DATE	4 August 2020
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams
OFFICER	Gwern ap Rhisiart Huw Ynyr
TITLE OF ITEM	Digital Education Strategy

1. DECISION SOUGHT

Cabinet is asked to approve the strategy.

Cabinet is asked to consider how the strategy could be financially supported by contributing towards the sustainability costs of the plan.

2. WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

There is inconsistency in the quality of our learners' digital learning experiences. A significant number of devices are outdated and therefore unsuitable for delivering the new curriculum. They are also a weakness for 'cyber' attacks.

Our schools are supportive of the strategy but many schools state that they cannot contribute to the sustainability costs of the scheme without financial support.

Cynnal has been supporting Information Technology in our schools for some time. With a significant increase in the number of devices, we anticipate the need to discuss alternative support models.

3. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Significant financial support is provided by the Welsh Government, with the money held as credit to spend against a nationally procured catalogue of equipment, and the expenditure prioritized on the basis of meeting published standards by the Government.

The support we have received so far from the Government means that we can fund a significant proportion of the strategy, and if the funding continues as announced before the crisis period, it will fund it full.

However, an annual investment is required to upgrade the devices.

The annual sustainability cost of the scheme will be £559,414.

Without new financial support a primary school with 100 children would be expected to contribute approximately £ 3,120, a school with 200 children approximately £ 6,240 and a school with 300 children approximately £ 9,360.

Without new financial support a school with 400 children would be expected to contribute around £ 14,500, a school with 700 children around £ 25,500 and a school with 1000 children about £ 36,400.

4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

The timetable set by the Welsh Government states that the order for the devices must be in by 11th of September.

Should the Cabinet approve the strategy and we agree with the schools on a way to fund the scheme in the future, we will order a laptop for every teacher in Gwynedd in September, with the rest of the expenditure committed for laptops for secondary pupils.

We will start a discussion on suitable models of support in September.

5. OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

The Monitoring Officer:

I note that it is the establishing of the principle of the strategy which is under consideration. The Cabinet will consider adopting the strategy when information in respect financing the scheme is received following further discussions with stakeholders. Matters in relation to equalities will also be presented at that time. On this basis therefore I have no further comment in respect of propriety.

Head of Finance:

I have worked with the authors in the preparation of this report and support the fundamental intention. Having considered the options, it is clear that a similar financial commitment (of circa £560k) will be required to maintain whatever selection of equipment may be bought using the grant (circa £2.8m). Consequently, I am willing for the Cabinet to adopt the direction recommended in the Digital Strategy to improve the technology that will support teaching in Gwynedd's schools, subject to being clear how we will fund the scheme in the future. I trust that Cabinet members will want to take positive steps to introduce this digital learning provision, and agree a way to jointly fund the scheme with schools.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy