

THE CABINET 4/08/20

Present-

Councillors: Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Dilwyn Morgan, Ioan Thomas and Catrin Elen Wager

Also present-

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department) and Annes Sion (Democratic Team Leader).

Item 6: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Dwyfor/Meirion Area Education Officer) and Huw Ynyr (Assistant Head, Information Technology).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn, Cllr Nia Jeffreys, Cllr Gareth Thomas, Cllr Cemlyn Williams and Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JUNE 2020

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2020 as a true record.

6. DIGITAL EDUCATION STRATEGY

Submitted by Garem Jackson.

DECISION

- a) To approve the strategy in principle
- b) That we ask the Governors of each school individually to note whether they would be willing to underwrite the cost of renewing the devices from their budgets / school funds and if not, why not;
- c) That the service opens discussion urgently with relevant stakeholders in order to elaborate more on how it is intended to sustain the system and how it is intended to be paid for, with a view of including this in the strategy;
- d) Assuming that we will not receive all monies for delivering the strategy in September, that the service considers and sets out the scheme for the gradual introduction of the strategy;
- e) That a further report is submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 8 September, noting where we have reached with all of this, with a view to either approve the Strategy in its final form or to approve the first order being placed;

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the report sought approval in principle to the strategy. It was expressed that money was available from Welsh Government to spend on equipment that had been procured nationally. It was noted that the investment strengthened the information technology infrastructure in schools in order to enrich the experiences of young people. It was added that Covid-19 had highlighted the value of information technology in enriching education in terms of the blended learning and that distance learning had been key in order to keep in contact throughout the period.

It was expressed that the strategy that had been drawn up was exciting and highlighted a clear pathway. It was explained that a bid had to be made for initial funding and in order to do so, the Cabinet needed to adopt in principle to proceed with the work. It was added that a further report would be submitted to the Cabinet following discussions with the stakeholders.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the Government would be funding the initial part of the strategy when the information technology equipment would be purchased, but that the money to update and support the devices would need to be identified.
- It was expressed that the strategy and the intention was excellent, but that it was a substantial commitment. Enquiries were made about the standard that Welsh Government hoped to reach and about what other authorities were doing. Enquiries were made about the availability of other options and the importance of consulting with schools was emphasised. It was noted that the equipment currently available was not good enough and that this was to be

seen across Wales. The expected standards, including security and device management standards, were highlighted. It was emphasised that Gwynedd was eager to provide a device for every child at secondary school so that they could use it in each lesson, thus providing an opportunity for each child to continue with their learning at home as well.

- It was highlighted that the cost of upgrading the equipment would be approximately £2m and that the strategy noted contributions by schools, which was fair enough, but the need to hold discussions with the schools was emphasised. It was noted that discussions had commenced and that it was highlighted that the amounts were too high for some schools as it was a long-term commitment.
- The vision was welcomed, but it was noted that there were concerns about the information and that the funding elements were not completely clear.
- It was noted that the Council was eager to reduce the carbon footprint and that the devices had a relatively large footprint, it was asked what would be done to reduce this. It was also enquired whether the Welsh language would be used for the software on the equipment. It was noted that the current equipment was dated and consequently used a high level of electricity and therefore the new equipment would be greener. In terms of the linguistic element, it was noted that everything would be done via HWB and then select language in the operating platform.
- It was expressed that the strategy was very ambitious compared with other authorities but it was also an opportunity to address the new curriculum.
- It was highlighted that discussions had been held with every secondary school along with the Primary Schools Federation.
- It was expressed that the digital provision in education across the county needed to be improved and support was shown to the scheme. It was identified that many questions were arising, such as how to ensure that it was sustainable. The need to discuss with stakeholders, governors and schools was highlighted, and a request was made for a further report to the Cabinet on 8 May in order to commence the process and to buy time so that the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee also had an opportunity to consider the strategy.

7. TEST TRACE PROTECT PROJECT

The report was presented by Cllr Gareth Griffith

DECISION

- To commit to the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) with other north Wales local authorities to manage the work of recruiting and managing additional staff to implement the Track, Trace, Protect project;
- To give delegated authority to the Head of Environment Department in consultation with the Head of Finance and Head of Legal to reach agreement on a final document and complete the agreement.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that a number of discussions had been held on this item. The decision was highlighted, noting that it would commit the Council to an agreement that would manage the work and recruit the work for Test, Trace, Protect. Attention was drawn to the observations of the statutory officers that could be seen in the report.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Support to the scheme was expressed, noting that it highlighted the collaboration across the north and ensured that the authorities did not compete for the same staff.
- It was noted that she was glad that robust arrangements were in place, however, as the recruitment and human resources elements would be undertaken by Flintshire, it was asked whether it would be possible to ensure that the language standards were maintained, along with the hours within the contract. It was emphasised that the Welsh language would be prioritised when creating a short-list in Gwynedd, and it was noted that the hours within the contract corresponded to the work - there could be busy periods and quiet periods. It was also noted that it was not obvious how many staff would be required for the work, but that people would be available should the need arise across the county.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.05 pm

CHAIRMAN