

## FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** **EDUCATION AND YOUTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** **THURSDAY, 30 JULY 2015**

**REPORT BY:** **CHIEF OFFICER (GOVERNANCE)**

**SUBJECT:** **EDUCATION ICT REVIEW**

### **1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To inform the Committee of the results of consultation with schools on reconfiguring the Education ICT Service which were approved by Cabinet on 16 June 2015.

### **2.00 BACKGROUND**

2.01 For many years the Education ICT Service was a part of Lifelong Learning. It was a standalone service, which catered for all ICT needs within schools. With the introduction of large national projects such as LiDW the capacity of the service was stretched, highlighting the lack of resilience due to its small size.

2.02 As part of Phase 1 of the ICT review and the adoption of the new operating model it was agreed that:-

- Education ICT should be merged with Corporate ICT.
- A review of the service should be undertaken to seek to improve its capacity to meet customer demands.
- The service would be remodelled to make the 30% savings required of all services.

2.03 A consultant was commissioned to review customer needs and then make proposals to meet the three objectives. The consultant met with all secondary school headteachers plus representatives of the primary schools to establish their requirements. In summary these were:-

- Service provision enables and supports teaching and learning and use of management information systems.
- Schools have the option to undertake work currently undertaken by the ICT Unit – where there is willingness and a capability to do so.
- Schools able to prioritise the nature of support to be provided.
- Service delivery is regularly evidenced against agreed targets.

- Service delivery reflects best practice approaches.
- Service provision reflects the money paid for it.

2.04 The consultant then considered different potential models for the service, concluding that a mixed delivery model be adopted consisting of a traded service at the centre, the schools themselves hosting some services and the remaining elements outsourced. A summary of his report is at Appendix 1 and a visual representation of the proposed service is at Appendix 2. A copy of the full report is in the Members' library.

2.05 Following discussion and agreement with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, a period of intense consultation and engagement was undertaken with the school community between January and March 2015. Officers attended the primary and secondary heads federations on several occasions, the schools budget forum, drop in sessions and one to one discussions with headteachers. These resulted in 81% of primaries and 83% of secondary schools expressing formal support for the proposals.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 The proposed model works on the principle that schools should be given as much autonomy as possible and that the County Council should retain control of only those services that are absolutely necessary. In practice this will result in a three way split as follows:-

- 1) The County Council will provide SIMS support, control the network infrastructure, server support and maintenance, high level technical support and business partnering.
- 2) Six schools will host federated technicians serving cluster primary schools with day to day technical support, software installation. Procurement and installation of devices, projector maintenance and VLE (virtual learning environment) support.
- 3) Schools themselves will procure out of warranty repairs, managed print and projector repairs.

3.02 By carefully aligning schools with federated technicians it is possible to produce clusters of roughly equal numbers thereby ensuring a reasonably consistent level of support. It is also possible to create a Welsh speaking cluster thereby making it easier to facilitate support in Welsh, which is not currently offered. The final location of each technician will be agreed with the schools, but it is hoped that they will be in schools with pre-existing ICT teams in order to provide support and management.

3.03 The model requires several Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to be drawn up. There will be an SLA governing services provided by the

County Council to schools. There will also be a similar SLA between the host schools and the clusters they support governing the services provided by the federated technicians. These will be drafted jointly with the schools community again increasing autonomy.

3.04 The proposals were agreed at Cabinet on 16 June 2015 with discretion to amend the proposals to reflect any comments that this committee might make.

3.05 Preparatory work has begun as the schools are keen to progress, and because vital upgrades to the SIMS server were required before the exam results were published. Schools are glad to be involved in the process and steady progress is being made.

3.06 A commencement date for the new service has not been determined. Again, it will need to be agreed with the schools community. Given the work that remains to be done to implement the proposed model April 2016 seems the realistic date to start. In the meantime the service will continue on its current lines.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 That the committee agrees that the proposals are likely to:

- improve the IT service to schools
- increase autonomy
- improve satisfaction with the service

4.02 That the committee comments on any improvements to the proposals which it believes can be made.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 The proposed model delegates more budget to the schools in order to support the increased level of autonomy. The devolved budget for 2015/16 is £365K approximately and under the proposed model this would increase to £680K. In reality this is far below the cost of provision in the private sector which means that schools are being provided with cost effective services that they could not otherwise afford.

5.02 By making changes to the establishment structure (see below) the proposals are able to reduce the base budget for the service from £766,132 in 2015/16 by £227,969. This equates to a saving of 29.75%. The saving figure is based on certain assumptions about the job evaluation outcomes for reconfigured posts.

#### **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 None directly arising from the report.

## **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 None directly arising from the report.

## **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.00 As mentioned grouping Welsh medium schools into a single cluster will enable the provision of service in Welsh.

## **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 By amalgamating the Education ICT Service into Corporate ICT it is possible to:-

- Reduce management costs.
- Place employees in larger teams where they can have greater support.
- Offer employees a wider range of experience and development opportunities.

9.02 The schools community has agreed to give prior consideration to employees already within the service when recruiting the federated technicians. This will give the employees greater security and enable talent to be retained.

9.03 There is a separate report later on the agenda showing proposed structure for ICT services at the County Council.

## **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 Schools budget forum and primary & secondary heads federations on implementation, noting that a working group from across the community has been established to help shape the implementation.

## **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 The consultation already undertaken has been described in the report. Likewise the further consultation to be undertaken has also been mentioned.

## **12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 Appendix 1 – Summary of consultant's report.  
Appendix 2 – Diagram of proposed service delivery model.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Detailed consultant's report  
Summary and detailed proposed budget delegations

Proposed location for federated technicians.

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