

MEETING	Cabinet Cyngor Gwynedd
DATE	8 September 2020
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams
OFFICER	Gwern ap Rhisiart Huw Ynyr
TITLE OF ITEM	Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy

1. DECISION SOUGHT

The Cabinet’s approval is sought to accept Welsh Government grant to invest in IT equipment for Gwynedd’s schools and to support the financial sustainability to renew the equipment in future years, through asking for a further report to the Cabinet to adopt the finished Strategy as soon as possible.

2. WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

Following the Cabinet meeting of 4th August, further information was sought to assist the full or partial approval of the strategy on the basis of what could be achieved within any financial constraints. The Welsh Government grant cannot be accepted and the intended equipment for Gwynedd schools can’t be ordered without a decision and approval.

3. UPDATE ON 4th AUGUST CABINET OUTCOMES

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;

A correspondence was sent to each Chair of School Governors in, sharing with them the draft copy of the Digital Strategy with two specific questions:

1. There are financial obligations outlined in page 19 of the Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy for sustainability planning. Will your school be subscribing to these costs?
2. If you won’t be subscribing to these costs, please note why.

We were unable to complete this during August due to the schools being closed.

c) That the service opens discussions 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;

A meeting has been arranged between officers and elected members from Cyngor Gwynedd Council and Isle of Anglesey County Council, also including the Chief Executive of Cwmni Cynnal on the 3rd September, a verbal update from the meeting can be shared with the Cabinet on 8th September.

We were unable to convene this meeting in August due to a number of absentees due to holiday commitments.

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;

Two options are detailed below to supply equipment to deliver digital learning through the Hwb platform. The first option has been outlined in the Digital Strategy, with the second option detailing the renewal of equipment within the schools computer suites.

Option	Setup Cost (one time)	Renewal Cost (annual)
Option 1 (Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy)	£3,046,184	£572,377
Option 2 (Renewal of equipment only)	£2,746,312	£440,903

A minimum Investment of £2,746,312 is required to keep the same level of equipment in our schools, replacing old with new equipment, ensuring a fit for purpose estate to support digital learning. A further annual commitment of £440,903 will be required to keep the equipment current. A further additional Investment of £299,872 would be required to transform digital learning as outlined within the Digital Strategy and an annual commitment of £131,474.

Further options will be considered before submission of a final version of the Digital Strategy.

4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

We shall return to the Cabinet with an update on the above items, including a final copy of the Digital Strategy. In the meantime, we ask the Cabinet to provide approval to spend the Welsh Government grant to improve digital learning within our Schools.

5. OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

The Monitoring Officer:

The report is an interim step in adopting the Digital Strategy for Gwynedd schools. The need for further work is reflected in its contents in order to reach a point where it can be finally adopted. It also highlights the need to complete the work with the schools in order to ensure that the maintenance and renewal of the equipment is arranged in an appropriate way which accords with their delegated responsibilities and budgets. I can provide further guidance at the meeting.

Head of Finance:

It's inevitable that if we accept the significant grant from the Welsh Government to invest in equipment for our pupils that financial commitment of between £440,903 and £572,377 will be required by the Council to renew the equipment in future years.

The situation is unusual, there isn't a request to fund the expenditure during this year. I suggest that the funding stream to fund the renewal is specified within the final and approved Strategy and for the 2021/22 budget, providing the Education Department enough time to consult with Gwynedd's schools.