
Meeting: Schools Forum
Date: 20th September 2010
Subject: **Harnessing Technology 2010-11**
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Summary: Mitigation of impact of the reduction/removal of the Harnessing Technology Grant

Contact Officer: Neil Turner & Cathy Piotrowski, e-Learning Strategy Team, Learning & Strategic Commissioning
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council
Reason for urgency (if appropriate) 50% cut in Harnessing Technology Grant for 2010 - 2011

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. To reduce the contribution for the web MIS system by 50%**
- 2. Broadband costs charged in full to schools**
- 3. No change to current charging methodology for Broadband**
- 4. To note the impact from July 2011 on implementing Learning Platforms and software resources**
- 5. To reduce the 40% devolved allocation to schools by 50%**

Background

1. Harnessing Technology is a three year funded grant which started in 2008 and has been administered by Becta (a government agency that has been leading the national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning).

The table below details the funding over the three year period:

2008-09	Bedfordshire County Council	£1,951,236
2009-10	Shared Service	£1,850,073
2010-11	Central Bedfordshire Council	£1,121,341

2. It was resolved at the Schools Forum Meeting of the 13th March that each year 60% of

this grant would be retained centrally and 40% devolved to schools. Each funding year Becta published guidelines as to how the grant should be used to support learning and teaching with ICT. This arrangement continued for 2010-11.

3. The Harnessing Technology grant has been used in the past two years for the following:
 - Funding support for broadband revenue costs
 - Funding support for implementing learning platforms
 - Funding resources for use within the learning platform e.g. Encyclopaedia Britannica, espresso
4. In July 2010 the new Coalition Government cut this grant, firstly by 25% then by 50%. The grant Central Bedfordshire will now receive for April 2010 – March 2011 is £560k.
5. However, commitments have already been made by the LA to fund programmes centrally and schools have been advised of the value of the 40% devolved to each school.
6. The commitments made for April 2010 – March 2011 are as follows:
 - Resolved at the Schools Forum meeting of the 19th October to support Schools in the transition to a web based Management Information System (MIS)
 - Funding support for broadband costs
 - Funding support for implementing learning platforms
 - Funding support resources for use within the learning platform (paid until July 2011)
 - 40% Devolved Allocation to Schools
7. The eLearning Board has been made aware of the above commitments for April 2010 – March 2011. This Board has Head Teacher representation from the different school phases. The group has responsibility for monitoring governance and accountability on matters relating to ICT.

Update

Web Based MIS

8. The support for the transition to a web based MIS for the Nursery, Lower and Special schools aimed to cover; data transition, licence fee, annual support and data hosting charges for the first year.
9. Following majority decision of the Lower, Nursery and Special schools the preferred MIS system is Integris G2. The transition to IntegrisG2 was undertaken during the summer term 2010 and involved 4 Nursery schools, 6 Special schools and 83 Lower schools (total 93). A further 7 Middle schools also transferred to G2.
10. The actual cost of funding those schools in Central Bedfordshire that have transferred is approx £200k. For a number of schools (particularly those that previously used SIMS), a major incentive to transfer to a web MIS was the agreement that the LA would pay for costs covering the transition and support charges for the first year.

11. This will be discussed at the briefing session for Head Teachers. However, due to the reduction in the grant the LA only has funds to support 50% of the costs.

Broadband

12. The broadband network is nearing the end of a renewal process to ensure all schools have a greater bandwidth. The renewal of the schools network has incurred significant excess charges which have been paid for from the Harnessing Technology Grant carry forward from 2009-10. The carry forward was the result of savings made through aggregated purchasing on behalf of all schools.

13. Taking into account the reduction in the grant, and to continue funding the broadband network, the average costs to schools will need to increase by approximately 40% from April 2011. This would mean that:

The average Lower, Nursery & Special School costs would increase from **£3,063** to **£4,288**

The average Middle School costs would increase from **£5,569** to **£7,797**

The average Upper School costs would increase from **£7,240** to **£10,136**

14. Schools are charged according to the school phase and number of pupils in school. Schools are not charged based on the geographical location of the school or the ease of which internet suppliers can provide services to that location. (i.e. the excess charges to connect a small rural lower school in the middle of the county costs over £20,000).
15. At the last meeting of the Central Bedfordshire e-Learning Board (our ICT governance group) the issue regarding schools needing to fund the increase in costs for broadband services via e2bn (the regional broadband consortium) was discussed. Head Teacher representatives agreed that the impact of increased charges for broadband warranted further discussion in a larger forum in the Autumn Term. This will be discussed at the briefing session on the 15th September.

Implementing Learning Platforms and support resources

16. The annual maintenance charge for learning platforms would cost schools approximately £4.00 per registered pupil per year. This equates to

- A typical Lower school would expect to pay £600
- A typical Middle school would expect to pay £2000
- A typical Upper school would expect to pay £4000

However it should be noted that negotiations for pricing are still being discussed at Local Authority level and it may be that these figures will be reduced.

17. Integrated learning platform and school based digital learning materials will also be affected by the reduction in grant and includes:

- Espresso: this would cost approximately £4 – £6 per pupil per year.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica: this would cost approximately £1 - £2 per pupil per year

18. The impact on the Learning Platform and support resources will be applicable from July 2011, as these have been funded in advance.

Devolved Allocation to Schools

19. Schools were advised in March 2010 the amount of the devolved allocation to Schools for the financial year 2010-11. Schools are paid termly in advance and to date have received five months allocation (April – August). Due to the cut in the HT grant the LA cannot pass on the remaining seven months allocation as previously advised. One final payment will be made to schools in September to the value of 50% of the amount previously advised. should the proposal be agreed.

Recommendations

- (1) Contribution of the HT Grant to support the transition to a web based MIS be reduced by 50%.
- (2) To note the need for full cost recovery on the Broadband network.
- (3) To continue with the current charging methodology based on phase and pupil numbers.
- (4) To note the implications from July 2011 on charges relating to implementing the Learning platform and support resources
- (5) To reduce the 40% devolved allocation to Schools by 50% in line with the overall cut to the Harnessing Technology Grant

Appendices: None