Herefordshire Council

MEETING:	SCHOOLS FORUM
DATE:	23RD FEBRUARY 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY GRANT: % RETENTION BY LA TO PURCHASE EDUCATIONAL DIGITAL CONTENT AND HARDWARE FOR ALL SCHOOLS (REVISED 02/02/2010)
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CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide – All Schools (or just Primary, Special and PRUs)

Purpose

That Herefordshire LA retains a proportion of the 2010/11 Harnessing Technology Grant (as permitted under the rules of the grant) for the purchase of digital content and specific hardware at substantial discounts and as part of strategic county-wide, properly supported initiatives for schools.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation

That School Forum approves the retention of

- **27% of the Harnessing Technology Grant for primary schools, special schools and PRUs (£204,672) and**

- **A fixed sum of £3,515 per secondary school (i.e. between 10% and 29% depending on school size)**

for the specific purchases / projects outlined below.

Key Points Summary

An element of retained Harnessing Technology Grant will enable the purchase of:

- Education City – a high quality digital content which will be embedded into the VLE to provide a rich resource on which teachers can draw to support the needs of individual pupils. A bulk purchase will secure this product at half the normal cost. Schools need to ensure pupils have access to learning outside the classroom through some kind of learning platform. The purchase of high quality online digital educational content, such as Education City, for integration into their Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) will:

    - Incentivise schools to fulfil their obligations with regard to the provision of learning outside their classrooms by making the VLE more attractive for all pupils and teachers

    - Provide them with high quality resources - that have been chosen for their suitability for learning at home as well as at school- fully embedded and functional within their particular learning platform (LP).

    - Bring huge financial savings for schools compared with individual school purchases

    - Enable a more effective whole LA approach to training and support with excellent integration into the learning platforms across the county.

- A project with Promethean which will secure a set of Promethean's new learner response system, ActivExpression for all primary schools, special schools and PRUs and sets for each secondary school. This is a cutting edge product (the market leader in its field) that allows for effective and versatile assessment of pupil attainment. This links into the current emphasis on APP and AfL in schools. The project will not only secure the kit for schools at a greatly reduced price but provide a structured programme for its effective introduction into classrooms. Support for this programme will be provided by Promethean (for secondary schools) and Herefordshire's School Improvement team (for primaries, specials and PRUs).

Alternative Options

1. Funding could be retained and used in this way by just primary schools, just secondary schools or just special schools and PRUs

2. The Education City content purchase or the ActivExpression project could stand alone.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. Schools currently purchase content and hardware individually. Large discounts are possible through bulk purchases.

4. LA coordinated purchases allow us to develop a proper strategy for ICT across schools and result in improved outcomes for all because

    a. Common platforms and services means that better sharing of resources and experiences between and across schools can take place.

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b. Extra benefits arise from the providers of centrally purchased resources (such as proper integration into a common Learning Platform) because relationships are developed with the providers of these resources at LA level.

c. Providers of technical support for schools work more efficiently when similar core packages are used in the schools they support.

d. Support for the core applications and services from LA advisers and consultants (not just ICT) is of a higher quality because core resources can be built into the training and support that is offered to schools.

5. AfL and APP are big issues for schools at present. The proposed ActivExpression project will assist with both as well as helping schools to meet requirements of the Harnessing Technology Grant (see 7 below).

Introduction and Background

6. 2010/11 is the third and final year of a DCSF / Becta programme (supported by £639.5 million of standards grant funding) entitled *Harnessing Technology*. The DCSF has allocated over £3.6 million across three years (2008-11) to Herefordshire Schools to ensure key priorities are addressed in using and applying technology to help support personalisation, closing the attainment gap and the move towards universal access to technology.

7. The Harnessing Technology Grant has particular goals that should be achieved as laid out in the BECTA guidance for local authorities (March 2009):

    - Greater flexibility in and choice of learning options – using technology to offer differentiated curricula and learning experiences that help meet children's and young people's needs and preferences
    - Tailored and responsive assessment – both formative (for example, more immediate feedback on learning, better information about progress) and summative (for example, flexible end-of-stage assessment)
    - Engaging learning experiences – for learners of all abilities, in all contexts, including children and young people who are hard to reach

    The proposed ActivExpression project (below) will help schools to deliver these goals:

    - Promethean's ActivExpression and ActivInspire software will deliver a differentiated curricula and learning experiences designed to meet the needs of teachers and young people.
    - Using ActivExpression and ActivInspire, teachers can easily tailor both formative and summative assessments to produce more immediate feedback on children's learning and better information about progress
    - ActivExpression will help learners to engage in their learning experience, irrespective of their abilities and contexts and including those children and young people who are hard to reach.

8. A proposal to purchase digital content centrally using DSG was rejected (along with other proposals) in December. At the same time Schools Forum requested a proposal for a similar

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approach using HTG retained funding

Key Considerations

9. **Digital Content:** A learning platform, while offering many tools to help learning, does not include much by way of stimulating educational content. Some can be found for free, eg from the BBC, but most of the really exciting and desirable content must be purchased separately. All publishers of quality content have been working hard to ensure it is ready to be embedded into a VLE. It is far more accessible and flexible that way.

10. Many local authorities have used the 25% retained funding recommended by the DCSF to make bulk purchases on behalf of their schools.

> - Local authorities are able to retain up to 25 per cent (or more with the explicit agreement of their Schools Forum) of their allocation centrally to undertake collaborative purchasing on behalf of all schools where improved value for money can be achieved. ... With the agreement of schools in their area, local authorities can retain a further proportion of the funding where there is evidence that this will achieve efficiencies from collaborative approaches to procurement such as regionally or local authority wide deployed learning platforms where the majority of local authorities have secured improved value for money.
>
> *(Becta guidance)*

11. In Herefordshire, for the first two years of the grant, the entire budget has been devolved to schools (except for the retention of £25,000 in year one for the purchase of a server). This has given schools greater autonomy but it has not resulted in best value for money. This proposal is that a certain amount of grant retention be considered to secure better deals for schools through the bulk purchase of subscriptions to high quality digital content and to help schools fulfil certain obligations of the HTG guidance. The two parts of this proposal are:

12. **Education City:** Herefordshire schools currently have an extended free trial of this product. The idea behind the trial is to try to coordinate a bulk purchase and so achieve a discount for schools. In reality we will only manage to secure a 25% discount at best - a county wide purchase will bring 50%. Education City is a vast collection of 10 minute "games" covering English, Maths, Science and PMFL. It is aimed at primary, early secondary and secondary SEN. One of its great strengths will be as a homework resource: it is very engaging for children. There are considerable advantages to using this product embedded in a VLE, most especially that the product will then track individual progress and allocate reinforcement activities where appropriate (precisely what a VLE is about). Schools are already giving very favourable feedback to the trial and many have already placed orders (now on hold).

We have held negotiations with Education City and have an acceptable way forward for reimbursing schools that already subscribe. Our relationship with the company, and therefore the support we can expect from them will be considerably enhanced by a bulk purchase. The terms of the contract we propose with Education City include free full integration into the VLE - this work would normally cost £5000 (no payment will be made for the content until this is achieved).
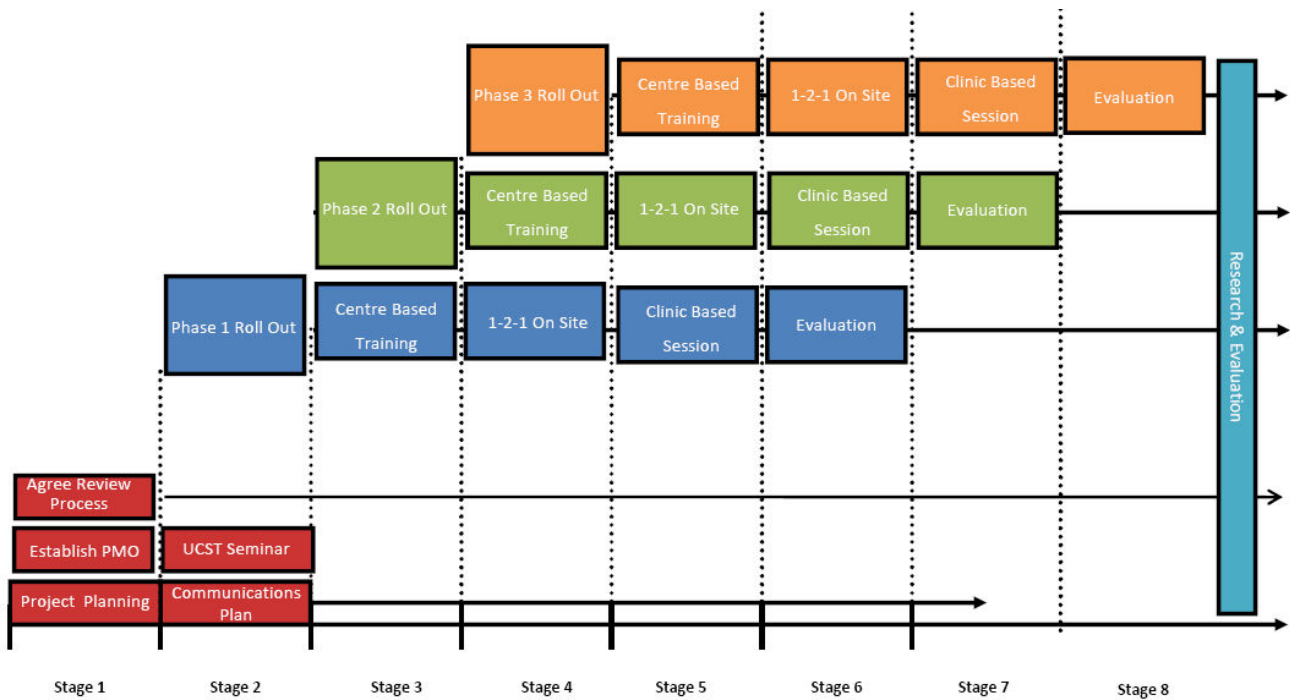
13. **ActivExpression purchase and project:** The aim of this project is to rollout Promethean's ActivExpression (sets of 32 learner response devices) across all schools. A bulk purchase of the kit will bring considerable cost savings; training and support will ensure maximum

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educational benefits. Promethean have achieved a high degree of success with two similar projects (in Southampton and Plymouth) during 2009. Our project will draw on experiences gained and resources developed during these. For secondary schools, a full training and support package has been brokered with *Promethean* and their partner *I3:Learning.* High schools will to fund this separately at £462 per school from another budget (it is not possible to cover this cost from the HTG capital grant). Similar training will be provided by the Herefordshire School improvement Service ICT team though *Hands on Support* for primaries, special schools and PRUs.

Project rollout: To ensure smooth delivery of the project, it is proposed to roll out the hardware, software and training in three phases. Each phase will consist of approximately 35 schools in regionally based groups. The project is anticipated to start from April 2010 and extend over the course of a year. Although the final detail is still to be worked through the complete project will consist broadly of the following stages:

1. Orientation Sessions and Hardware Delivery (4 x 1 hr per phase)
   - Designed to provide a demonstration of the technology and outline the roll out project
2. Centre Based Training (4 x 3 hrs per phase)
   - Designed to provide hands on product training to users in a group environment
3. One to one school based training to each school
   - Designed to embed the technology in each schools own environment and set up
4. Clinic / user groups (8 sessions distributed around the county)
   - Designed to provide an opportunity for users to share experiences, best practise, receive updates, new resources and receive additional support with any usage query, technical or application based
5. Online software training throughout the project
   - Designed to provide low touch, high level of support ensuring high skill uptake from the schools using the technology

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Outline Project Plan will look like this:

Community Impact

14. A VLE is about "any time any where learning" it means that students can access work started in school, out of school and that teachers can produce content (electronic) to extend children's learning more effectively to anywhere outside school. It is also about parental engagement with children's learning and improving communication between school and home. All of this will only happen if schools and teachers engage properly with this new and exciting technology.

Financial Implications

15. The table below is based on costings provided by Education City and Promethean and includes a comparison between schools purchasing individually and a bulk LA purchase.

16. Special schools and PRUs have been deemed primary, precise needs of these schools will need further discussion; this will not have a significant impact on the costings.

17. Many schools already subscribe to Education City and a refund will be due to for the time remaining on their contracts. This will be dealt with on an individual basis by Education City.

18. Content licences are for 2 years to overcome potential revenue / capital issues. A sinle payment will be made for these based on NOR at October 2009 (as illustrated in this document)

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	Primary, Special + PRU (88)	Secondary (15)
Total HTG (2010/11)	**£763,701**	**£327,300**
Education City (2 year license)		
LA purchase *	£92,867	£11,881
School purchase *	£185,734	£23,762
Difference	£ 92,867	£11,881
ActivExpression Project		
LA purchase *†	£ 111,805	£38,022 ‡
School purchase *	£167,812	£56,970
Difference	£56,007	£18,948
Total LA spend (prim / sec)	**£204,672**	**£49,883**
Total LA spend (all phases)	£254,555	
Total school spend	£433,666	
Total Saving	£179,111	
Percentage of HTG required	**26.8%**	**10 – 29%** **(depending on size of school)**

* **LA purchase** = central purchase for all school, **School purchase** = the same purchase by schools individually

† Costings for secondary include full support and training from Promethean (primary school support will be from SIS ICT team through Hands on Support)

‡ An element of £462 per secondary school will need to be added to this (from other funds) to pay for the training brokered with Promethean and their partners. It is not possible to fund this revenue item from the HTG capital grant. Training will be an important component for the project to be a success.

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19. The table below shows costings for the smallest, an average and the largest primary and secondary schools and all specials and PRUs. Please note that these figures are based on NOR October 2009 and are therefore for illustration purposes only.

	NOR (Oct 2009)	HTG	HTG retained (% for highs)		School purchase total	LA bulk purchase total	Difference (between school / bulk purchase)	Net Saving for school
Lord Scudamore Primary	597	£19,400	£	5,199	£5,923	£3,280	£2,643	**£724**
Weobley Primary	143	**£8,516**	£	2,282	£4,303	£2,470	£1,833	**£2,021**
Dilwyn CE Primary	31	**£5,828**	£	1,562	£3,819	£2,228	£1,591	**£2,257**
The John Kyrle High	1281	£35,828	10%		£5,758	£3,515	£2,243	**£2,243**
St Mary's RC High	693	£22,972	15%		£5,758	£3,515	£2,243	**£2,243**
QE High, Bromyard	299	£12,260	29%		£5,758	£3,515	£2,243	**£2,243**
Barrs Court Special	79	**£6,980**	£	1,871	£3,831	£2,223	£1,608	**£1,960**
Blackmarston Special	54	**£6,380**	£	1,710	£3,903	£2,259	£1,644	**£2,193**
Westfield Special	30	**£5,804**	£	1,555	£3,791	£2,203	£1,588	**£2,236**
The Brookfield School	62	**£6,572**	£	1,761	£3,867	£2,241	£1,626	**£2,106**
The Aconbury Centre	12	**£5,372**	£	1,440	£3,959	£2,287	£1,672	**£2,519**
St David's PRU	27	**£5,732**	£	1,536	£3,959	£2,287	£1,672	**£2,423**
The Priory PRU	19	**£5,540**	£	1,485	£3,959	£2,287	£1,672	**£2,474**

Legal Implications

20. None known

Risk Management

21. There are no known risks at this stage

Consultees

22. Extensive meetings have been held Education City and Promethean. Proposals and costings in this document are based on the outcomes of those discussions which are ongoing.

23. Schools Forum has already commented on the benefits of bulk purchases through an earlier proposal brought to them in December 2009.

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24. The Primary Heads ICT Strategy group have approved this proposal and recommend it to Schools Forum. (See minutes of their meeting on 21st January)

25. ActivExpression has been demonstrated to Secondary Strategy leaders at their meeting on 12th January.

26. Primary ICT coordinators have been briefed on this proposal (with a demonstrations of Education City and ActivExpression (at their conferences in the summer term 2009 and spring term 2010) and are enthusiastic about the possibilities.

27. Consultation has taken place with both primary and strategy teams within the School Improvement Service. Both teams support this proposal. Individual consultants have expressed a desire to be involved in supporting the ActivExpression project from their own subject areas.

Appendices

28. *None*

Background Papers

Detailed proposals from Education City, Promethean an i3:Learning are available if required.

Detailed costings and savings per school available if required.

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