

**ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING – Friday 8th April 2011**

Yorkshire and Humber Grid for Learning

Background

Yorkshire and Humber Grid for Learning (YHGfL) is an award-winning, not-for-profit organisation owned and funded by 12 of the local authorities in the region. Established in 2000, YHGfL commissioned and maintains a regional grid which connects local authority networks with Janet – the national broadband network for public services around the country. A new grid will be put in place in April this year which will provide high-bandwidth and high-reliability connectivity around the region – this network is for educational use and does not suffer from the high levels of contention provided by commercial providers.

For many years Rotherham has been part of the Yorkshire and Humber Grid for Learning (YHgFL). The funding for this has historically come from the Broadband for Schools Capital Grant and more recently the Harnessing Technology Grant (25% centrally held).

Funding Issues

The cost is currently £150K per year - £90K connectivity, £60K membership/ value added, the funding for this in the past has previously been from the 25% centrally held Harnessing Technology Grant which was cut as part of the coalition governments cuts.

As part of the re-procurement of the new grid last year a letter of intent was signed committing Rotherham to the new grid which is currently being installed in the Civic Buildings. The new contract is currently with Legal Services.

An additional £90,000 is required for installation in 2011/12 which could be potentially funded from the councils corporate ICT budget.

School Forum discussions

Following attendance at the Schools Forum meeting on Friday 4th March further information was obtained to establish if connectivity only could be paid for at an annual cost of £90,000. A conference call took place on Tuesday 8th March between Sue Wilson (P&Q Manager), Susan Gray (Systems and Change Manager, CYPS) and Phil Moore (Chief Executive of YHGFL). It was clear during the conference call that the costs could not be reduced to connectivity only as the running of the grid, the foundation and the consortium membership is the full amount, currently estimated at £151,000 (£90,000 connectivity and £61,000 membership) Other local authorities in the region are generally continuing to pass on the costs of YHGFL to schools to fund, whereas in Rotherham the LA have always funded this from the centrally held Harnessing Grant.

At the Schools Forum meeting on the 18th March discussions took place in relation to CYPs being willing to fund £51,000 of the cost and schools were requested to fund the remaining £100,000. Further information was requested at the meeting:

1. What would the cost to each school be if we split the £100k across schools
2. What value do schools get from YHGfL
3. What notice period would we have to serve?

1. The attached spreadsheet shows the possible costings for schools if the amount was split on a per pupil basis, with and without academies.

2. What does YHGfL do for local authorities and schools?

As well as providing the bandwidth which schools need to embed the use of ICT effectively across the curriculum, we provide a range of other services which directly meet the demands from local authorities and their schools:

- **Aggregating demand across the region** – enabling us to purchase services and products much more cheaply than individual schools or local authorities could achieve on their own: last year, we brought savings and benefits amounting to £6m to the region
- **Support for eSafeguarding**– consultancy, resources and CPD, addressing the whole continuum of eSafety/eSecurity from the attitudinal/ behavioural aspects to technical considerations in schools and local authorities
- **Access to high quality eLearning Resources** – from our own website (www.yhgfl.net) and from the National Education Network (www.nen.gov.uk), of which we are a member
- **Access to consultancy, expertise and advice** - ranging from educational aspects such as the effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning through to strategic ICT development through to significant technical expertise ranging from network design, implementation and security
- **Delivering high-quality specialist and bespoke workshops, conferences and training** for the region, including events including, for example, eSafeguarding, animation, video conferencing and personalised learning through learning platforms
- **Sharing regional and national best practice** – through seminars, conferences, online collaborative areas and the facilitation of regional groups such as the Primary ICT Consultants' Group and the eSafety and eSecurity Group: we also are part of the National Education Network which brings together organisations across the whole of the UK, providing a national perspective which is being lost through the closure of Becta
- **Technical services and products** – including network health checks, low-cost VPN, domain and web hosting

3. Notice Period

The new contract runs from 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2014 (3 years), there is a requirement for 15 months notice on the connectivity element with notice being required by December 2011 to terminate the contract by March 2013. We would therefore have to pay the full amount of £151,000 in 2011/12 and £90,000 2012/13.

There maybe some technical implications for RGFL connectivity so further work would have to be done with RBT / YHGFL to check out any implications. We would also have to contact Corporate ICT as there had been some discussions about the possibility of the link being used for corporate internet traffic in the future.