

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 3rd July 2013

Review of the Wirral City Learning Centres – Summer 2013.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It was resolved at the Schools Forum meeting held on 10 April 2013 that a review should be undertaken into the use of the Wirral City Learning Centres (CLC).

Appendix 1 briefly describes what a CLC is and the key services they provide to Wirral schools.

Appendix 2 identifies some questions that should be considered before decisions are made regarding CLCs.

Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 have formed part of previous reports written for Schools Forum.

Key Issues / Background

Wirral's 3 CLCs are funded through a Combined Budget in 2013-14 - Schools Budget £814,700 and Children and Young People's Budget £116,900. The schools budget makes provision for the running costs of the CLC's, whilst the Council's budget contribution meets the additional PFI contract costs over and above the PFI costs funded from the West Wirral Works (WWW) and The Learning Lighthouse (TLL) budgets. This budget remains in place for the Financial Year 2013-14. At this stage of the consultation the PFI costs for West Wirral Works and the premises costs for The Discovery Centre have been excluded. If a school was to take on the use of a CLC, then the funding formula could be adjusted to enable them access to the appropriate funding for PFI. It is considered to be prudent at this stage to exclude this section of funding.

Although as part of the consultation on schools funding there was support for the continued provision of CLC's going forward, particularly in the Primary sector, mainstream Secondary School Headteachers have expressed concern that their sector do not get value for money from the CLCs. Recently they have indicated that they would prefer to have their portion of the budget delegated from 1st April 2014.

The Managers of the CLCs are finding it increasingly difficult to run the centres efficiently and effectively on the funding provided. In particular the absence of a capital budget is making ongoing repair and replacement of hardware and software very difficult. Furthermore, it is proving impossible to develop a strategy for investment in new and emerging equipment.

Staff structure

Currently there are separate Governance, Management and Staffing structures for each CLC. Each CLC has their own Management Committee with a similar structure. The Committee is made up of the CLC manager(s) and representatives from schools, the community and the Local Authority. The Chair of the Management Committee is chosen from the group.

Each CLC has a Manager, staff who prepare and deliver workshops/training/outreach, technicians and administrative staff. The Manager role in the Learning Lighthouse is shared between 2 members of staff. The managers of each CLC also prepare and deliver workshops/training/outreach.

Equipment replacement

A further complication has been identified by the Managers of the CLCs. The current funding for each individual CLC is insufficient to repair and, more importantly, replace the leading edge technology that the CLC were aimed to provide. Without a planned investment plan, what was once cutting edge and inspirational, is already becoming in need of repair and dated.

Financial Implications

Currently the Local Authority has indicated that there is no intention to reduce their level of funding. **Any reduction in schools budget funding must be delegated to schools.**

The total portion of the combined budget that comes from the Dedicated Schools budget (£814,700) is divided equally between the 3 Centres (£271,500 each). Staffing and PFI/premises are the major costs. Table 1 below shows these costs.

Table 1 – DSG income and costs for staffing and PFI/Premises

	West Wirral Works (WWW) (£)	Discovery (£)	The Learning Lighthouse (TLL)(£)	All CLCs (£)
Income (£)	271,500	271,500	271,500	814,500
Staff Costs (£)	199,527	209,100	219,600	628,227
Premises/PFI	53,136	34,500	40,400	128,036
Balance available to “run” the Centre(£)	18,837	27,900	11,500	58,237

Cost %	WWW (%)	Discovery (%)	TLL (%)	All CLCs (%)
Staff Costs	73	77	81	77
Premises/PFI	20	13	15	16
Total	93	90	96	93
Balance	7	10	4	7

School usage

The time span used for the review of usage is the Summer Term 2012, Autumn Term 2012 and Spring Term 2013.

CLCs keep records of usage by Primary, Secondary and Special schools.

For the time period specified:-

- All Primary Schools, except one, have used one or more of the CLCs.
- All Secondary Schools have used one or more of the CLCs.
- All Special Schools have used one or more of the CLCs.

The usage figures for each of the CLCs is shown below in Table 2:

Table 2 - % Use from April 2012 – March 2013

	WWW (%)	Discovery (%)	TLL (%)
Primary Schools	68	85	74
Secondary Schools	31	9	17
Special Schools	1	6	9

Table 3 shows the potential funding that could be delegated to the appropriate sector of schools when these percentages are applied to the budget for each of the CLCs. The PFI costs have been excluded from this calculation.

Table 3 – Amount Delegated

	WWW (£)	Discovery (£)	TLL (£)	Total (£)
Primary Schools	148,094	201,450	171,576	521,121
Secondary Schools	67,169	21,330	38,393	126,891
Special Schools	3,101	14,220	21,131	38,452
Total £	218,364	237,000	231,100	686,464

Table 4 shows the value per pupil this funding would generate for each of the 3 sectors based on the pupil population shown/.

Table 4

Number of students	£ per student
Primary (24,000)	23
Secondary (18,000)	7
Special (980)	43

Conclusion

- Wirral CLCs are a valued resource, especially for the majority of Primary and Special Schools who do not have the individual size or purchasing power to provide the hardware, software and technological expertise required for their pupils to access appropriate levels of learning and progress.
- The flexibility that Primary Schools have for visiting the CLCs result in them visiting the resource more than other sectors.
- Secondary schools use the CLCs in a different, more remote way.
- The use of the CLCs is not uniform between the schools in each sector.
- The provision that is available from the CLC would not be replaced if they were closed down.
- Based on the current funding and organisational model, 3 CLCs are not sustainable. In order to maintain a high quality and sustainable service for all schools, Schools Forum are asked to consider a reduction in the number of CLCs with subsequent transfer of resources to the 2 remaining centres.

From Table 1 a reduction from 3 to 2 CLCs, whilst maintaining the current level of funding for 2 further years (2013/14 and 2014/15) will enable a phased Governance, Management and Staffing re-structure.

During this time (2013-2015) an agreed strategy to establish a sustainable resource and a robust system of evaluating the impact of the centres on improved educational outcomes can be devised and implemented and the level of funding can be monitored and evaluated to establish whether any further change is needed.

The reduction in costs that result from the reduction to 2 CLCs and a staffing re-structure would enable strategic investment in new equipment and repair/replacement of existing equipment. Table 5 shows potential annual funding based on a percentage reduction in staffing costs.

Table 5 – potential annual funding available for strategic investment if current staffing costs are reduced.

Current staffing costs (£)	5% reduction	10% reduction	15% reduction	20% reduction
628,227	31,411	62,823	94,234	125,645

Consultation

The Schools Group and Non-schools group are asked to consult and consider the contents of this report with their appropriate groups prior to decisions being made at the Schools Forum scheduled for 3 July 2013 on the following questions:

Question 1:

- a. Should the Combined Budget for CLCs be reduced from April 2014?
- b. If the budget is to be reduced, then what level of reduction should be implemented?
- c. Once the level of budget reduction is determined, how should this funding be delegated to schools?

The recommendation is that the Combined Budget for CLCs should not be reduced. The benefit that Wirral pupils receive from having access to the CLCs is beneficial to all schools.

Question 2:

- a. Should the number of CLCs be reduced?

The recommendation is that the number of CLCs should be reduced to 2. One of the CLCs should be closed and the building re-assigned for an alternative use. The activities and equipment that are provided by this CLC should be transferred to the remaining 2 Centres.

Question 3:

- a. Should the Governance and Management Structure of the CLCs be changed?

The recommendation is that the structure should be changed. It is recommended that one Management Committee is established to oversee the Governance of the CLCs. Furthermore the staffing structure is changed and one staffing structure is established for both remaining CLCs with one budget being managed for both CLCs. The newly formed Management Committee will work with the Manager of Wirral CLCs to:

- devise and implement a strategy for their sustained use and development;
- devise and implement a strategy for evaluating the impact of CLCs on improving educational outcomes for Wirral children and young people.

The start date for this new structure will be 1 April 2014.

Appendix 1

WHAT IS A CITY LEARNING CENTRE

The three CLCs were established ten years ago to provide enhanced ICT based learning across the whole curriculum for pupils and teachers and to provide access to education for the wider community.

WIRRAL CITY LEARNING CENTRES

There are 3 CLCs:

- **Discovery** based at Ridgeway High School
- **The Learning Lighthouse** based at Wallasey School
- **West Wirral Works** based at Hilbre High School

Some of the key services CLCs provide:

- Wirral CLCs support the latest pedagogical thinking
- The services provide learning opportunities and equipment that are outside most schools budgets
- The services provide centrally available expertise
- Provision is made for teachers and students to try technology prior to purchase for their schools
- Wirral schools benefit from a wide range of imaginative, cross curricular workshops & specialist project support
- Users of Wirral CLCs benefit from extended schools support
- Centres for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) - learning from experience
- Enable innovation and research & development

The **Types of use provided to schools** are shown in the list below – schools use the CLCs in different ways. Visits to the CLCs for whole classes are used more often by Primary schools. Use of cutting edge technology to support individual projects and examination courses are used more by Secondary Schools.

- Supported session
- Unsupervised session
- Outreach for pupils (excluding training and advice)
- Outreach for staff (excluding training and advice)
- Training and advice on site at CLC
- Training and advice at school site
- Remote manufacture
- Equipment loan
- Equipment loan - “try before you buy” facility

Appendix 2

Questions to consider when discussing the future of Wirral City Learning Centres (CLCs)

General questions to consider:

- Is the development of skills in using a wide range of cutting edge technologies important to the young people of Wirral?
- Is the development of skills in using a wide range of cutting edge technologies important to the young people of your school?

School Development/Improvement planning

- Are the services provided by CLCs taken into consideration when school development/improvement plans are written?
- Are the services provided by CLCs taken into consideration when subject or curriculum area development/improvement plans are written?
- Secondary schools – do you know what experience your pupils have from using the CLCs at their primary schools?

If the CLCs remain open:

- If you feel you currently do not make effective use of the services, how do you plan to do so in the future?

If the CLCs close:

- Do you have the expertise and infrastructure to collaborate with other schools to provide opportunities for the pupils in your community to use and develop skills in using equipment of the same quality?
- How will you as a school keep up with cutting edge technological development and maintain the experience and development of skills in using these technologies if the CLCs close, especially under the current financial pressures?