



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 24 NOVEMBER 2021**

SUBJECT: INFORMATION REPORT: ICT STRATEGY FOR SCHOOLS

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Committee on the progress made towards the development of the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Development and Digital project within the Improvement and Modernisation Programme (IMP) and the revised strategy for the use of ICT within schools.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (A) (35) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to ensuring that the organisation, administrative and management processes of the Council are designed to make the most effective contribution to achieving the Council's objectives and to keep these procedures under review.
- 1.3 The Committee is asked to note the progress update on the development of the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Development and Digital project within the Improvement and Modernisation Programme (IMP) and the revised strategy for the use of ICT within schools and in particular the effect that the covid pandemic and staff shortages have had on this work.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of this Committee on 6 October 2021, it was agreed to provide an update to the November meeting on the progress of work in relation to the Digital Strategy, which had been delayed due to Covid and changes in staffing (para 10 of the minute refers). Since that meeting, appointments have been made to the vacant posts referred to and officers will all take up appointment by early December. This does, however, mean that the reduced staffing available for this work has continued to have an impact and to limit progress. New officers will require some lead in time to become familiar with all areas of work in their remit in order that they can advance council priorities and this will be a key focus of their early induction to their new roles.

Strategy for the use of ICT within schools

- 3.1 Reference is made to the report to the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee on 18 November 2020 when progress against the ICT Strategy for Schools and Curriculum Development approved by Children and Young People's Services Committee on 27 May 2015 (paragraph 13 of the minute refers) was reported along with the impact of covid and planned work to update the strategy taking account of lessons learned from the previous strategy, the experience of COVID-19 and best practice guidance around digital learning and teaching.
- 3.2 The Committee noted the work being undertaken towards the development of a revised ICT Strategy for Schools and Curriculum Development and it was planned that a revised strategy would be reported to this Committee in June 2021.
- 3.3 At the time the Schools and Curriculum Development ICT Strategy Group had been tasked with developing a strategy to determine how ICT should be used in education in the future so that all schools were equipped for the Classroom of 2020. The strategy was therefore building the capability for the digital classroom and was largely developed around 3 core themes of infrastructure, hardware and people to create an appropriate environment for digital learning and teaching.
- 3.4 The strategy group was reformed following the initial covid response period in Oct 2020 in order to continue the development of the revised strategy and met regularly until June 2021 when staff turnover impacted on progress. As part of the strategy development the three work streams became Digital Inclusion, Curriculum and Learning & Teaching and the working title was reviewed to be Digital Innovation Strategy. This was to encompass more than just the actual technology used within schools but also to include the training, learning and teaching elements.
- 3.5 With changes within Education the draft strategy requires additional work due to revised proposals and emerging issues reported by schools, including suitability of device options
- 3.6 In addition to the strategy work, ICT have continued to follow the lead of the strategy group whilst responding to the schools urgent needs during covid. As part of this process ICT rolled out in excess of 2000 1:1 laptops as part of the SG Digital Inclusion Project and schools refresh project. To allow staff and pupils to work from home or in school securely with these devices, a solution was rapidly put in place called Always on VPN. ICT hope to further enhance this provision to improve resilience (i.e. enable load balancing and failover) but this will be dependent on the final direction the strategy takes. In more general terms, work has progressed in identifying connectivity issues across the school estate and recent appointments to an additional post within the ICT service have created further capacity to move forward with this.

- 3.7 The Learning Technologists have also maintained networks of colleagues in other Local Authorities and are keeping abreast of approaches in other authorities including platforms, devices and partnerships with companies. They have also supported ICT colleagues in the work to establish any barriers currently being faced.
- 3.7 Following the recent appointment of the Project Manager (Education), a project management approach has been developed which will involve both staff and pupils in testing a range of possible 1:1 device options. This approach will help to ensure the best fit option for Moray primary, secondary and ASN pupils.

Raising Attainment: Curriculum Development and Digital

- 3.8 As reported to the Council on 15 September 2021, the Curriculum and Digital project is at an early stage and due to the rapidly evolving development of technology and its uses in education, it will particularly benefit from specialist input and learning from elsewhere. With the recent appointment made to the Project Manager (Education) this work has now commenced, including discussions with external parties on options being deployed elsewhere and how this might fit with the Scottish Government commitment to ensure that all children have access to a laptop or tablet. A plan is being prepared to take this work forward in order that options can be presented for consideration taking account of learning through covid and in other council areas. It will be important to ensure that there is involvement from staff in schools and users of the technology and this is being incorporated into planning work.

4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The strategy for the use of ICT within schools will incorporate best practice guidance from the National Improvement Framework and support the outcomes contained within the Corporate Plan and LOIP with respect to the vision for Education in Moray.

(b) Policy and Legal

Statutory requirements and council policies will be considered in the preparation and delivery of the strategy.

(c) Financial implications

No additional financial resources are required to support the development of the strategy, however, the Raising Attainment: Digital and Curriculum project will rely on investment through the IMP and will assist in the delivery of the strategy. The investment options will form part of the project work being developed and will be reported to committee/council as appropriate in due course.

(d) Risk Implications

The main risk at this point, is resourcing to develop the work outlined in this report. There is a small central team and both the central team and school resources are particularly stretched as they manage the covid education recovery, the impacts of which are likely to be long term. It is vital to have input from these staff to the development of digital technology in education to ensure an effective impact and so the pace of work will have to be adjusted to take account of the whole range of service priorities to be managed, which may mean speeding and slowing progress.

There is as yet little clarity on the Scottish Government intended roll out of devices and there is also a risk that the council progresses work and later finds this is not well aligned to emerging national priorities. However, the counter of this would be to hold off progress and on balance it is considered better to make local progress on as flexible a basis as possible and to take account of advice as it becomes available.

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff are critical to the success and adoption of the strategy to meet the challenges of achieving the objectives of the council's corporate plan. Consultation will take place with all stakeholders to ensure their input is incorporated into the final strategy and plan.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities

Central to the new strategy is to tackle digital inclusion. Provision of devices on a fair and equitable basis would support addressing digital exclusion and some of the equalities issues associated with that. However it is also noted that there are geographic issues of internet access that need to be taken into account

(h) Consultations

The Head of Education, Head of HR, ICT and OD and Project manager (Education) and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments incorporated.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Progress on the development of the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Development and Digital project within the Improvement and Modernisation Programme (IMP) and the revised strategy for the use of ICT within schools has been significantly impacted by the covid pandemic and staff shortages. However, recent appointments will help to advance this and planning is underway to develop options for investment to be reported to a future meeting.**

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Background Papers:	Previous Committee Reports
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