REPORT TO: SPECIAL EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 14 DECEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNISATION PROGRAMME: RAISING ATTAINMENT CURRICULUM BREADTH AND DIGITAL PROGRESS UPDATE

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

1.   REASON FOR REPORT

1.1   To up-date Committee on progress in development of the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital workstream within the Council's Improvement and Modernisation Programme and seek direction on the development of the project.

1.2   This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) 1 of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercising all the functions of the Council as an Education Authority.

2.   RECOMMENDATION

2.1   **It is recommended that Committee:**

i)   Consider and note the contents of the Digital Inclusion Outline Business Case and reaffirms the intended outcomes for the IMP Curriculum Breadth and Delivery workstream (Appendix 2);

ii)   Determines whether to cease, put on hold or continue with the development of this project;

iii)   If the committee determines to proceed with the project development guidance is sought on the further development of the project based on the options set out in the report:

a. infrastructure and Education Digital strategy development to ensure readiness for digital development only; or
b. infrastructure and strategy development plus workforce preparation; or
c. Infrastructure and strategy development, workforce preparation and device roll out ;

iv) **Note that the next steps for the development of the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital project would include stakeholder engagement and preparation of Full Business Case to inform the options and approach for the project; and that**

v) **Note that further reports will be presented to committee to determine next steps and in particular to define the level of investment as options and costs become clearer.**

3. <u>BACKGROUND</u>

Development of Education IMP projects

3.1 The Council has established an Improvement and Modernisation Programme (IMP) to deliver transformational change across the authority, which was first approved by the Council on 12 December 2018 *(*para 5 of the minute refers).

3.2 The IMP contained eight workstreams one of which was focused on Education related projects. A further report to Moray Council on 12 May 2021 (para 13 of the minute refers) outlined two new Education workstreams for development: Raising Attainment (Curriculum Breadth and Digital) and Raising Attainment (Well-being). The Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital Delivery workstream aims to provide and enable a digital learning environment to improve equity and access to the curriculum in order to deliver a range of outcomes **(Appendix 1)**.

3.3 These outcomes include:-

- Improvement in attainment
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive destinations
- Reviewing and transforming the learning environment
- Improved attainment at both the Broad General Education and Senior Phase
- Young people are better prepared for life beyond school and for the workplace
- Providing and enabling a digital learning environment to improve equity and access to curriculum
- Developing staff skills to improve learning and teaching, including digital
- Quality focus on improving learning and teaching
- Releasing and enabling leadership capacity

3.4 This report also noted that "work based on digital solutions require further development and consideration of issues, risks and benefits in order to ensure that the investment has been properly scoped and options for progress assessed".

Appointment of Consultants: CGI

3.5 Consequently, the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 26 January 2022 (para 11 of the minute refers), agreed that up to £50,000 from earmarked reserves for Council priorities could be allocated for the appointment of a specialist ICT Education consultancy to assist Officers with the development of a Digital Inclusion Strategy for Moray learners.

3.6   This award was made on the basis of progressing the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital workstream and with the aim of determining whether an investment by the Council in digital education would support the realisation of the above outcomes.

3.7   A preliminary step in the development of a digital project was the development of an Outline Business Case which would determine if there was an evidence base to deliver the above outcomes for this workstream and to explore other related risks and benefits before a decision was taken to embark on the full development of the curriculum breadth and digital project.

3.8   Following the Council's decision to award development funding, a Prior Information Notice (PIN) resulted in CGI Consultancy being identified as the only firm that met the Council's requirements.

3.9   Through engaging with Council Officers across Education and the Transformation team, an Outline Business Case for the Curriculum Breadth and Digital project has been developed in partnership with CGI Consultancy **(Appendix 2**).

Outline Business Case

3.10   The Outline Business Case presents evidence to reaffirm and support the contribution that digital inclusion can make to realising the outcomes aligned to the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital workstream. It includes a Strategic, Economic, Financial and Management Cases for determining the benefits of investing in digital inclusion throughout the Moray learning estate, including investment in 1:1 devices.

3.11   The evidence base to support the outcomes aligned to the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Delivery workstream are mainly addressed in the Strategic Case section.

3.12   The Strategic Case identified the close alignment of the development of a Moray Council digital inclusion project with the Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework, the Scottish Government's Digital Strategy and with the Council's Corporate Plan and education priorities. There is also a strong evidence base that an investment in digital technology can enhance the learning and teaching experience and, based on the experience of other local authorities, support the improvement of attainment at the Broad General Education and Senior Phases.

3.13   The Economic Case highlighted that investment in digital inclusion was particularly important for Moray compared to many other local authority areas in Scotland in light of the traditional employment profile characterised by relatively poorly paid occupations and a heavy reliance on manufacturing and retail jobs. As highlighted by the Moray Growth Deal, digital technology will be integral to a more competitive Moray economy that attracts inward investment and retains its young people after completing full-time education. A digitally skilled workforce is a prerequisite in achieving this aim.

3.14   The Financial Case focused on the level of investment that would be required. While the Strategic and Economic Cases identified a strong rationale for the development of a digital inclusion strategy, the financial case identified that if funding from the Scottish Government is not provided, then an investment in digital devices to enable a transformational impact on learning and curriculum delivery in Moray would require a substantial investment by the Council.

3.15   CGI Consultancy have provided information on the Scottish Borders Council, 'Inspire Learning Programme', which represented a £16m investment to provide 1:1 devices for all children and young people from the Early Learning and Childcare to the Senior Phase. While the full costs for Moray would need to be more accurately determined, this example provides an illustration of the level of investment that could be required to deliver a local digital education solution over a number of years. However, there is no provision within the current capital plan for such an investment.

3.16   A range of different options that could be considered and further explored related to different stages of education and levels of provision are set out in section 7.4 of the Outline Business Case. The most comprehensive provision is to allocate 1 to 1 devices to all pupils and staff from early years to S6 in secondary with an indicative cost of £16m, down to providing minor improvements to the current pupil: device ratio with an estimate of £1.2m. A description of the scope and high level strengths and weaknesses for each option is set out in **Appendix 2**. It should be noted that at the stage of outline business case, this is not a detailed assessment but is to help inform thinking in defining the next stage of the project. Should the project proceed, extensive further work would be required to develop a preferred option, which would include working with stakeholders to inform and influence the option appraisal.

3.17   The Project Business Case concludes that in the absence of the provision of funding for devices and digital development in education from the Scottish Government, the scale of investment required to deliver a digital inclusion strategy for Moray learners and teachers is beyond the budget identified to date for this project from the Council's transformation reserves. Therefore, should the Committee decide that the council should proceed to the next stage of this project, careful consideration is required of the long term aims and the most effective allocation of available budget to achieve those over time.

The Way Forward

3.18   Do Nothing: It is open to the committee to determine that there is no further work to be undertaken and to stop the project or put it on hold. The report to the Corporate Committee on 30 August 2022 (para 6 of the minute refers) noted that the Improvement and Modernisation Programme has at its core financial sustainability and explained that a project review had been carried out to sharpen this focus given the challenging financial period ahead and the importance of delivering savings from transformation where possible. The Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital project was one of the projects identified as not bringing a financial advantage but being focussed on other drivers and benefits, in this case attainment. The report to Corporate Committee noted that it was planned to consider how to proceed with the Digital project at the outline business case stage.

3.19 If the Digital project was to cease at this stage, the council will be less prepared to leverage impact from any investment in digital in schools that does emerge from the Scottish Government. There is also a risk that Education in Moray does not keep pace with digital developments other authorities are implementing across Scotland and that our Educational outcomes do not improve in line with the increasing number of authorities who are making that investment, which is of particular concern given the council's priority to improve educational attainment. However, to proceed there will be demands on already stretched resources in terms of both officer time and budget and these would not be incurred if the project ceased.

3.20 <u>Continue Project Development:</u> If the committee is minded to support the development of this project, guidance is invited on whether to pursue only Stage 1, or to plan development through to Stage 2 or to Stage 3 below.

    a. **Stage 1**: preparation and development of ICT infrastructure to ensure readiness for digital development and of the Education Digital strategy and approach; or

    b. **Stage 2**: infrastructure and strategy development plus workforce preparation; or

    c. **Stage 3**: Infrastructure and strategy development, workforce preparation and device roll out.

3.21 The above is based on a potential staged approach to the development of digital inclusion in Moray's schools which may allow for preparations to be made pending clarity on the Scottish Government's approach to the provision of devices for all school pupils. The proposed staged approach is based on the requirement firstly, to ensure that the digital environment is ready for the increased use of devices and curriculum tools and that the strategy and approach to be deployed across schools to drive the educational outcomes is clearly established.

<u>Stage 2</u> would be to prepare the workforce ensuring that they have the leadership, skills and digital confidence they need and that a culture is created to support enhanced use of digital in schools by preparing pupils and parents and ensuring support is available for the new approach.

Finally, <u>Stage 3</u> would be to roll out devices to staff and pupils at a scale and over a time period that is affordable and takes account of any external investment, in particular from the Scottish Government. This is likely to be over a number of years, for example Scottish Borders invested over a 7 year period.

3.22 This staged approach has been identified in light of the report from CGI and associated costs of a full scale project in order to provide an option to progress the development of digital education that may represent a more affordable way forward given the council's financial position. As indicated below, if this is supported by Committee, further work would be required to investigate, specify each stage, develop and appraise options and work out all of the resource and risk implications for more detailed consideration.

3.23   However, to inform consideration of the stages:

a.   Stage 1 with development of infrastructure and strategy would be the lowest cost option and the minimum investment required if there was to be any degree of enhancement to current provision. While there has been success from recent interventions to improve digital connectivity in schools, a number continue to experience issues and there would be advantages in undertaking stage 1 even with no further investment. The development of a Digital Strategy for schools is likewise a longstanding planned piece of work that has been delayed by the covid pandemic and would assist in informing the current annual refresh of ICT equipment in schools so would be an area that the service is keen to progress with or without investment in devices.

b.   Stage 2 adds the workforce element to the project and would be the mid-range cost option. There would be varying levels of investment that could be considered as part of the development of this stage. As with Stage 1 this development would have value with or without investment in devices as there is some digital capacity in schools now. This element of the work would have to be scaled to match any planned roll out of devices over time.

c.   Stage 3 delivers an increase in the number of digital devices for staff and pupils and is the highest cost option. There would be a range of options to manage cost but there is currently no capital budget allocated to increase digital devices in schools. This investment would deliver the greatest impact as it brings the most opportunity for change and delivery of the benefits set out in the initial IMP project brief.

Next Steps

3.24   If based on this Outline Business Case and the possible stages to phase project development as set out above, the Committee determines to progress the development of a Digital Inclusion project, then the following steps are proposed.

3.25   An extensive stakeholder engagement programme would be undertaken. This programme would aim to determine the optimum digital platform for Moray learners and teachers. Based on the best practice approach implemented by CGI Consultancy at other local authorities, this programme would incorporate workshops and tests of change with teachers, learners and their parents.

3.26   Informed and running in parallel to this engagement programme, work would continue to explore the investment options and outline these in more detail as part of the Full Business Case.

3.27   Both the stakeholder engagement programme and the Full Business Case would then inform the contents of the Digital Inclusion Strategy. As the project develops, there would be further reports to committee to determine next steps and in particular to define the level of investment as options and costs become clearer.

4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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

The Improvement and Modernisation Programme is the development of the commitment in the Corporate Plan to a programme of modernisation and improvement to contribute to a financially stable Council.

The report also relates to "Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray" as part of the LOIP and the to the priority "provide a sustainable education service aiming for excellence" as part of the Corporate Plan

(b) Policy and Legal

None.

(c) Financial implications

On 12 May 2021 (para 13 of the minute refers), the Council agreed to invest up to £6m in the second phase of the Improvement and Modernisation Programme. At that time, the £3.2m was identified against 2 workstreams for education that required further development. Subsequently on 15 September 2021 (para 14 of the minute refers), the Council agreed to allocate £2m of this transformation fund to the Raising Attainment: Well-being project. Therefore, £1.2m of the funding identified across the workstreams remains. There are two remaining projects to be considered. The digital project reported in this paper and the Raising Attainment: Well-being Pastoral care project which in broad terms relates to pastoral support (akin to a Guidance role in secondary schools) in primary schools and early years.

While in total up to £50,000 has been allocated to this Improvement and Modernisation workstream, to date £14,154 has been committed. If Council decides to progress with the further development of the Digital Inclusion Strategy it is proposed that the remaining funding will be used for this purpose.

In the context of funding the digital inclusion strategy, the Committee will note the following;

Corporate Management Team Additional Expenditure Warning.

When the Council approved the budget for 2021/22 on 3 March 2021 (paragraph 3 of the Minute refers) it balanced only by using one-off financial flexibilities. The indicative 3 year budget showed a likely requirement to continue to make significant savings in future years.   All financial decisions must be made in this context and only essential additional expenditure should be agreed in the course of the year. In making this determination the committee should consider whether the financial risk to the Council of incurring additional expenditure outweighs the risk to the Council of not incurring that expenditure, as set out in the risk section below and whether a decision on funding could reasonably be deferred until the budget for future years is approved.

(d) Risk Implications

Across the council, there is pressure on services and resources. Although project resources would be sought for any significant development of this project work, there would remain a requirement for service specialist input and this will bring pressure upon the central Quality Improvement Team and will call on staff in schools. However, the benefits that this work would bring are judged to warrant the allocation of resources to deliver them. Therefore, this pressure will be assessed as the project develops and consideration given to identifying mitigations to offset the risk as part of the development of the next stage of work if this is agreed (e.g. additional budget for supply time or temporary backfill to release specialist time).

If the Committee decides not to proceed with this project, there is a risk that our digital practice and curriculum offer in schools falls behind those of other local authorities who are enhancing digital approaches and that Moray's comparative performance in educational outcomes such as attainment falls.

The costings in the outline business case are very high level. There is a risk that as the project develops and options are defined, the budget available is insufficient for substantial expansion of digital devices and approach. In that case, if the Council is unable to allocate additional funds, the impact of the project may be insignificant and the value of investment limited.

If Council decides to agree the recommendations outlined in this report then risk and issues relating to this project will be overseen by the Digital Inclusion Project Management Group.

(e) Staffing Implications

If Committee decides to agree the recommendations outlined in this report, the major staffing implication is securing time for teachers, head teachers and support staff who are already involved in a demanding workload to take part in the project management group, workshops and tests of change. This issue will need to be further explored as part of the Digital Inclusion Project Management Groups preparatory work and as noted above, mitigations considered.

There will also be resource implications for the ICT team to support the development of infrastructure, connectivity and device management as well as other support staff, such as trainers and technicians to ensure the effective deployment of the solutions on an ongoing basis. This has been factored into the high level estimates for the full devices roll out option but will be investigated and defined further as the project develops.

(f) Property

There are inter-dependencies between this project and the modernisation of the Council's Learning Estate. Officers will ensure good

communication between these initiatives and the Learning Estates Manager will also sit on the Digital Inclusion Project Management Group.
.

(g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**
For the purposes of this report an Equality and a Socio Impact Assessment are not required as only high level direction is sought. The completion of the Digital Inclusion Strategy and Implementation Plans will however need to be assessed.

(h) **Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**
There are no immediate climate change implications directly arising from this report. The future commissioning and de-commissioning of digital devices will however have an impact on the Council's carbon footprint and this will need to be assessed in due course.

(i) **Consultations**
Head of Education (Chief Education Officer), Chief Financial Officer, Procurement Manager, Quality Improvement Manager (East), Head of Economic Growth and Development, Learning Estates Manager, Quality Improvement Manager (West), Head of HR, ICT and Organisational Development, ICT Infrastructure Manager, ICT Applications Manager, Learning Technologists, Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer

A full programme of stakeholder engagement would be prepared if this project is to develop further, including work with the recognised trade unions.

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 **The Outline Business Case presents evidence to reaffirm and support the contribution that a digital inclusion strategy can make to realising the outcomes aligned to the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital workstream.**

5.2 **Committee is asked to determine whether to cease this project or continue with development. If the committee is minded to continue the development of the project, guidance is sought on the 3 staged approach outlined in the report that aims to manage affordability. Committee is also asked to note that there is currently no capital allocated for the expansion of devices in schools and that the transformation budget envisaged for this project may limit the options and their potential impact.**

5.3 **If Committee agrees to continue to progress plans for the development of a digital inclusion project, the proposed next steps are the implementation of a stakeholder engagement programme and more detailed cost options as part of a Full Business Case with further reports to future committee to determine the further definition and investment.**

Author of Report: Denise Whitworth/ Robin Paterson, Project Manager (Education)

Background Papers:

Ref: SPMAN-1468114179-36 / SPMAN-1468114179-41 / SPMAN-1468114179-37