REPORT TO: **EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 26 JANUARY 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 seek approval for budget to appoint a specialist ICT Education consultancy to support the development of the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital workstream within the Council's Improvement and Modernisation Programme (IMP).

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (A) 2 of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to considering Capital and Revenue Budgets and long term financial plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee agrees to the allocation of up to £50,000 from the earmarked reserves for transformation, for the appointment of a specialist ICT Education consultancy to assist Officers with the development of the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital workstream to enable the council to make an informed decision on any investment in this area.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council has established an Improvement and Modernisation Programme 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 Improvement and Modernisation Programme contains eight workstreams and one of these workstreams is focused on Education related projects.

3.3 The report to Moray Council on 12 May 2021 outlined two Education workstreams for development. The Raising Attainment - Curriculum breadth and Digital Delivery workstream aims to provide and enable a digital learning environment to improve equity and access to curriculum in order to deliver

outcomes including improved attainment and improved employability skills (**Appendix 1**). The 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" (para 3.17 of the report refers).

3.4   These issues, risks and benefits relate to the challenges faced due to the age profile of equipment in some schools, the continued use of a profile based system across the school estate and broadband limitation in some schools. This is in addition to exploring best value options including if devices can be utilised by learners at both home and at school.

3.5   It is also relevant that the Scottish Government has made a commitment to provide 700,000 primary and secondary aged pupils with access to an appropriate digital device, and where necessary a home internet connection, by the end of this parliamentary term. This represents a significant transformational investment in learning.

3.6   There are a number of complex and specialist considerations in the further development and definition of this workstream and while this is a new area of work in Moray there are councils within Scotland and wider that have developed their digital approach to education delivery including the use of digital devices by teachers and learners to support curriculum delivery and attainment. Therefore, initial enquiries were made which established that other councils had engaged the support of external expertise to guide and support their projects and ensure that the most up-to-date technical advice and expertise was available to them.

3.7   Taking this into account, preliminary work was undertaken to identify the nature of support that was available on the market, including a Prior Information Notice to ascertain the extent of providers of the services identified as being of interest for the development of work in Moray, in particular who would have the skills and experience to help support the Council to further develop its digital approach to raising attainment and to improving access to digital technology for all of our learners. **Appendix 2** sets out the identified requirement. It is considered that this would ensure that the Council has access to expert advice and knowledge to support the key areas of strategic definition including how digital technology can support learning outcomes; the use of 1:1 devices; advice on ICT infrastructure options across the learning estate and deployment of the solutions. This insight and expertise from prior experience in this area will assist in the management of the risks associated with the programme of work should the Council decide to invest in due course.

3.8   Specifically, the PIN invited expressions of interest from consultancy firms who:-

➢ can demonstrate a creative and an innovation approach throughout the process of developing the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy;
➢ can meaningfully engage with all stakeholders and most importantly our learners in Moray in developing our strategy;
➢ can work with Officers as a trusted expert and advise both education and ICT colleagues;

- ➤ who share our aims and values;
- ➤ can access digital platforms for the 1:1 device options appraisal that Council does not currently operate; and
- ➤ have a proven track record of success in this area with other local authorities and can share their insights.

3.9   The PIN has identified one supplier who is able to deliver the requirements, that would be ready to work at pace, have appropriate experience (at scale and size) and can deliver tangible project outputs within a short lead in time.

3.10   Following the outcome of the PIN, Committee approval is sought for the allocation for up to £50,000 funding, from earmarked reserves for Council priorities, for the appointment of a specialist ICT Education consultancy to assist with the development of the Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital workstream to enable the council to make an informed decision on any investment in this area.

3.11   It is considered that this cost is warranted in the context of the extent of the investment under consideration and the long-term benefits of improved learning outcomes for Moray Learners and therefore represents best value.

3.12   If approved, this external support will be used to assist and advise on the development of the workstream in order to prepare a report to clarify the scope, costs and benefits of the projects in more detail and to enable the Council to determine how to proceed.

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**
       This reports recommends that up to £50,000, from the earmarked reserves for transformation, for this workstream. Although this amount is the upper limit that is permitted to be awarded through the Council's Procurement Quick Quote regulations, where possible efforts will be taken to reduce this expenditure.

(d)   **Risk Implications**
       At this stage, the following high level risks are highlighted that may impact on the delivery of this project

The Council has yet to formally determine whether to invest in this workstream and hence the extent of any investment. There is a risk that the level of investment that emerges as being required will be in excess of the scale envisaged by the council and that the investment may not proceed or may require significant modification to fall within an acceptable affordability margin.

Local authorities are waiting for guidance in terms of the provision of 1:1 devices, which could include financial assistance or the direct provision of devices. There is a risk that uncertainty delays local progress or that the eventual national solution is not consistent with the preferred approach in Moray. It is considered that the engagement of the external expertise proposed will assist in managing this risk by ensuring an outcome led strategic approach which should be sufficiently adaptable to work with the device provision that emerges nationally.

(e) Staffing Implications
Should the workstream progress following this stage, the major staffing implication is securing time from teachers and pupils involved in a demanding workload. This will require to be a key consideration in terms of membership of project management and reference groups as well as involvement in the tests of change and any pilots.

(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 Economic Impact Assessment are not required. 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 carbon footprint and this will need to be assessed in due course.

(i) Consultations
Head of Transformation, Head of Education (Chief Education Officer), Head of Finance, Procurement Manager, Quality Improvement Manager (East), Head of Education Resources, Communities and Education and Social Care, Learning Estates Manager, Quality Improvement Manager (West), Head of HR, ICT & Organisational Development, ICT Infrastructure Manager, ICT Applications Manager, Learning Technologists, Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Through approving funding for the appointment of a specialist ICT and Education Consultancy, Committee is asked for their support in further

developing the Council's Raising Attainment: Curriculum Breadth and Digital workstream to enable the council to make an informed decision on any investment in this area

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Background Papers:
Ref: SPMAN-1468114179-17 / SPMAN-1468114179-18 / SPMAN-1468114179-19