Creating a World-Class Education System: Update on Partnership working with the University of Edinburgh

Report by Dr Grace Vickers, Head of Education

1   Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on partnership working with the University of Edinburgh, specifically the preparation of the Heads of Terms.

Committed to the creation of a world-class education system through excellence and equity, partnership between the University of Edinburgh and Midlothian Council will help to deliver equitable high-level skills-based curricula designed to equip children and young people to compete in the 21st Century global knowledge economy, in particular data driven innovation. This is an ambitious project designed to deliver excellence and equity with a particular emphasis on interrupting the cycle of poverty and inclusive growth.

2   Background

The proposed partnership between Midlothian Council and the University of Edinburgh will focus initially on the development of the Newbattle Digital Centre of Excellence, which is a key part of Midlothian Council's vision to create a world-class education system. The Centre of Excellence will offer opportunities for deeper learning through an enhanced curriculum, specialist teaching, dedicated resources and high quality vocational experiences.

Activities within the Centre of Excellence for Digital will also align closely with the University of Edinburgh-led Data-Driven Innovation programme within the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal and the aim of providing skills to support the digital and data economy of the future.

Two further Centres of Excellence are planned by Midlothian Council; Science on the A701 Corridor and Creative Arts at Shawfair. The terms of reference will be further reviewed with the potential to extend it to these centres once the Digital Centre of Excellence is established.

3   Key Objectives

The first Centre of Excellence in Midlothian, focused on Digital, will open in June 2018 at the Newbattle Community High School, in the most deprived data zone in Midlothian. This first phase of partnership between Midlothian Council and the University of Edinburgh will focus on the launch of the Newbattle Centre of Excellence in Digital. In preparation for the opening of the Centre of Excellence, and in its first year (to June 2019), our partnership aims to:

- Develop and deliver demonstrator projects, to run during the school's summer 2018 term and in the following school year, that showcase the opportunities presented by the Centre of Excellence for Digital and help pupils, parents, teachers, and members of the wider community engage with these.

- Collaborate on curriculum development, in consultation with pupils and staff, to develop data science teaching and other related materials related to the Curriculum for Excellence.
- Provide Newbattle teachers with CPD to support the enhanced skills teaching which will take place in the Centre of Excellence, and foster a workplace culture where digital learning is valued and embedded.
- Provide consultation opportunities for pupils and teachers (as appropriate) to feed into Centre of Excellence development.
- Offer learning and work placement opportunities to pupils through the University.
- Plan additional collaborative work between Midlothian Council and University of Edinburgh.
- Evaluate impact and outcomes and share knowledge, to ensure wider future benefit.
- Provide enhanced placements in the Centre for student teachers from Moray House.
- Provide research opportunities for PhD and other University students and personnel.
- Collaborate on innovative platforms for learning.
- Create new learner pathways leading to higher education courses within the University, in particular around Digital.

4 Research and Development

4.1 Research and development on the Centre of Excellence continues and a number of workstreams are planned to support its implementation. Workstreams include:

- Curriculum – exploring the enhancements to the curriculum that will emerge from collaboration with further education, higher education, industry and commerce.
- Community Ownership – ensuring students, staff and wider community have a strong voice in the development of the Centre and its services.
- Professional Learning – addressing the need for the up-skilling of teachers and other centre staff to be comfortable with an enhanced level of technology.
- Digital Technology – identifying appropriate technology to support each curricular area, in particular to straddle the school, further and higher education and industry.
- Support – ensuring that the support arrangements meet the needs of a Digital Centre of Excellence.
- Partnership – developing strong partnerships across education sectors and with local, national and international technology companies.
- Digital Participation – looking for innovative ways of ensuring that the Centre aspires to deliver best practice in digital inclusion, ensuring learners are equipped for learning in the digital age.
- Enterprise – looking for ways that the centre can engage with the wider community, supporting local business and attracting funding streams to support its activities.
- Digital Hub – establishing the Centre as a hub for the delivery of digital learning across Midlothian, including curriculum for excellence, lifelong learning and professional learning programmes.

4.2 In addition to the opening of the new Digital Centre of Excellence in June, we will also be launching the new Centre for Research and Innovation in Learning on 22nd June. We are delighted that Dr Avis Glaze, International Advisor *and former Ontario Education Commissioner, has agreed to be the Patron of this new Centre.*

The aim of the Centre for Research and Innovation in Learning are to:

- ➢ Promote practitioner enquiry as a consistent and deliberate practice.
- ➢ Promote Collaborative efficacy within and across schools.
- ➢ Promote Collaborative Impact and use of impact coaches (Visible Learning).
- ➢ Promote the use of research and evidence based practice to support improvement.
- ➢ Support staff undertaking Masters level research and learning.
- ➢ Commission research with partners that enhances pedagogical practice for improved learner outcomes.
- ➢ Support external researchers undertaking work with permission in Midlothian.
- ➢ Support distribution and sharing of practitioner enquiry and effective pedagogies.
- ➢ Support publication of research within Midlothian via various means including social media.
- ➢ Ensure central records are kept of relevant Practitioner enquiry or formal research for staff to access.

5   Heads of Terms

We are continuing to work closely with the University of Edinburgh on developing the concept of the centres of excellence. Working together in this way will help us to develop a number of priorities which we share particularly in terms of a skills solution for Midlothian and potentially the wider South East of Scotland area. We can now update members that we have jointly prepared the Heads of Terms which is a partnership agreement between the University of Edinburgh and Midlothian Council, this is a significant step to ensure that we have the continued support and expertise of the University moving forward. The Heads of Terms was finalised in April 2018. The document is not legally binding and does not commit the partners in any way but is an important statement of our joint work and plans for future working.

6   Report Implications

6.1   Resource
The Heads of Terms is a commitment to work together and does not specify specific resources as this is a high level document.

6.2 Risk

The Heads of Terms includes a section on risk and mitigation as follows:

Risk	Mitigation
Technological infrastructure not suitable for delivery of world-class digital and data education.	Regular review of technology and infrastructure provision, working towards world-class status. Consideration of possible back-up options within demonstrators projects.
Ability to source budget to support, maintain and refresh technology on an ongoing basis	Regular review. UoE Information Services to provide advice and review of technology purchase decisions as appropriate.
Carry out teacher education and provide subsequent support – potential for digital learning not realised, or is not sustained in longer term	Plan and deliver bespoke CPD for teachers; individual development to be fostered through line management.
Change in education policy resulting in work developed through this project no longer fitting the needs of schools	Schools work within the Curriculum for Excellence and the new Technologies framework has just been released. Alongside the deficit of digital skills in the workforce suggests a change in policy would be outwith the timeframe of this project.
Demonstrator projects pitched at a level which is inappropriately high for school and community participants.	Teaching materials reviewed by experienced subject teachers (external and internal to school).

6.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

☐ Community safety
☐ Adult health, care and housing
☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
☒ Sustainable growth
☐ Business transformation and Best Value
☐ None of the above

6.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

It is proposed to provide Digital Technology which is fit for 21st Century delivery of education and other services and gives children, families and the local community access to modern education and leisure facilities.

6.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The provision of digital technology across the Centre will support the delivery of positive destinations for pupils and the wider community. It will also produce more effective working practices for Midlothian staff.

6.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The wider learning community has been involved in the development of the Centre. Once the position of the City Deal funding bid is known, this will trigger a wider consultation on the range of services that could be delivered as a Digital Centre of Excellence.

6.7 Ensuring Equalities

Once of the core principles of the Newbattle Digital Centre of Excellence is to help tackle social and economic inequalities and develop skills, knowledge and ambition in the wider community, thereby improving outcomes and positive destinations for young people. Wider aspirations include reducing the poverty based attainment gap.

6.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The initiative seeks to deliver a sustainable level of digital technology within the centre.

6.9 IT Issues

There will be regular review of technology and infrastructure provision, working towards world-class status. Consideration of possible back-up options within demonstrators projects.

7 Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Authorise officers to sign the Heads of Terms in partnership with the University of Edinburgh.
- Note the opening of the new Centre for Research and Innovation in Learning.

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