

Creating a World-Class Education System: Update on Digital Centre for Excellence at Newbattle Community High School

Report by Dr Grace Vickers, Head of Education

1 Purpose of Report

The Centres of Excellence model is a core part of our strategy to create a world-class education system in Midlothian. This is an ambitious project designed to deliver excellence and equity with a particular emphasis on interrupting the cycle of poverty. The purpose of this report is to update Council on progress towards this new Digital Centre of Excellence and to seek approval for further capital funding.

2 Background

- 2.1** A report was submitted to Council on 7 February 2017 giving the background to the proposed development of Newbattle Community High School as a Centre of Excellence in Digital. Council approved the appointment of a Centre Coordinator and the appointment was ratified by Cabinet on 22 May 2018.
- 2.2** A bid for funding of £1.3m to support the additional capital and initial revenue costs estimated at that time to establish a Centre of Excellence at Newbattle Community High School was included as part of the original Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region (ESESCR), Skills and Innovation bid (City Deal Project G). As reported elsewhere on today's agenda the Integrated Regional Employability and Skills Programme strand will be developed over an eight-year timeline commencing in 2018/19 and will be supported by Scottish Government funding of £25m. Discussions on the extent to which Centres of Excellence, including Newbattle would be able to secure funding from this strand have still to reach a conclusion.
- 2.3** On 27 June 2017 Council approved investment of £0.457 million in the mainstream digital technologies required for the School, Library and Leisure Centre. This coupled with the existing provision for asset replacement brought total investment to £0.630m. In addition reflecting the uncertainty over the level and timing of City Deal funding Council on 13 February 2018 approved further investment in digital technologies to support the curriculum, of £0.220 million funded from the Resources earmarked in the Capital Fund for City Deal projects so allowing the digital technologies to be procured and available for the 2018/19 academic year.

3 Further Work on the Digital Centre of Excellence

- 3.1** 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.

3.2 Partnership Working with the University of Edinburgh

Officers 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 to develop a number of shared priorities, 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 signed 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.

4 Capital Funding for Digital Assets

In addition to the £1.307 million of capital investment in digital assets already approved further areas of investment have been identified which would allow the School to further develop the curriculum during academic year 2018/19 These total £180,000 for the following items :

- Networking and Infrastructure £80k
- Computing technology and multimedia £100k

As detailed above there is no certainty of City Deal funding and officers are continuing to explore alternative sources of funding through the University of Edinburgh and directly with Scottish Government. Given the uncertainty on funding and the lead time to implement the technologies one option would be to include a further provision of £180,000 in the General Services Capital plan, met from the Capital Fund. If alternative sources of funding come to fruition this will negate the requirement to utilise the Capital Fund.

4.1 Additional Staffing and Operational costs

The original City Deal bid identified a need for funding across the first three years of operation until the centre was able to mainstream these needs or to secure longer term funding sources to meet such costs.

The three year costs reflected the following additional posts and running costs :-

Detail	Three year cost
Enhanced academic staffing	£223k
Technical Support Officer	£124k
Technical Support Assistant	£91k
3 x Apprentices (part funding)	£91k
Total	£510k

Given the City Deal position and the wider budget challenge officers have explored alternative options to meet these costs and have identified a package of funding which can meet the majority of the costs. Work is also ongoing to secure a commitment to City Deal funding and to lever in support from partners and Scottish Government.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Resource

To allocate an additional £180,000 in the General Capital Services Plan for the additional Capital investment detailed in section 4.would require a further provision in the general services capital plan in 2018/19 met from the Capital Fund. This in turn will reduce the resources available to fund the overall Capital Strategy investment requirements, a draft of which is also on today's agenda.

5.2 Risk

The additional investment in digital assets and the identified package of funding to meet the additional operating costs minimises the risk associated with the continued uncertainty over the level and timing of city deal or other funding sources to provide further investment in digital assets within the centre.

5.3 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

5.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

5.4.1 Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child:

- Children and young people are supported to be healthy, happy and reach their potential.
- Inequalities in learning outcomes have reduced.

5.4.2 Improving Opportunities for the People of Midlothian:

- Midlothian residents are successful learners and young people go on to positive destinations when they leave learning.

5.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The centre provides 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.

5.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The provision of further 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.

5.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The wider learning community has been involved in the development of the Centre.

5.8 Ensuring Equalities

One 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.

5.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The digital learning strategy and future asset management plans for the digital estate will need to ensure that the cost of maintaining and replacing digital technologies deployed in the Centre and the wider learning estate are identified, affordable and sustainable in the context of the wider capital investment demands.

5.10 IT Issues

This report sets out the actions to ensure that the centre has the digital technologies necessary for it to be fully effective and for the Newbattle Community High School to deliver a full curriculum.

6 Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- Note that Midlothian have signed the Heads of Terms in partnership with the University of Edinburgh.
- Approve the addition of £180,000 to the General Services Capital Plan in 2018/19 to fund the proposed investment met from the Capital Fund, in the absence of any external funding.
- Note the ongoing work to support the development of Newbattle Digital Centre of Excellence.

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