

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**Lifelong Learning Committee – 15 August 2012****PERTH CITY CAMPUS****Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)****ABSTRACT**

This paper outlines an innovative proposal for a sustainable model of course choices and 'virtual learning' opportunities that will enhance the learning opportunities for senior pupils across the four Secondary schools within the City of Perth - Perth Academy, Perth High School, Perth Grammar School and St John's Academy, and in continued partnership with Perth College.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1.1 Agrees the proposals for establishing and developing a Perth City Campus approach to aspects of the Senior Phase in the four Perth Secondary schools and to the continued development of a virtual learning environment; and
- 1.2 Instructs the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to present a progress report by August 2014.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Although there have been a number of shared curricular arrangements between Secondary schools in Perth, these have been very limited and have developed on an ad hoc basis rather than as part of a carefully considered strategic plan for developing a model of a Perth City Campus. Perth Grammar and St John's Academy have had recent success in the development of a Sports Comprehensive approach involving shared resources, joint planning and working collaboratively. A report to Lifelong Learning Committee on 23 March 2011 (Report No 11/131 refers) acknowledged the good work that had been done and the leadership that had been shown in both schools.
- 2.2 In March 2012, a Programme Board, chaired by the Head of Education Services (Secondary) and including the four Perth Secondary Head Teachers was established to enable a more coordinated approach to the development of a "Perth City Campus" model of curriculum planning within a context of implementing curriculum for excellence and in respect of the close geographical locations of the four schools. The Board has been able to consider possible options for closer collaboration including the sharing of senior phase opportunities and how the schools might work together to support all relevant student pathways in a consistent, staff-efficient and viable way.

- 2.3 In November 2011, information from the four Secondary schools indicated that there were 55 Advanced Higher courses being undertaken and around 388 participants. Although many of these classes would be taught as part of a bi-level approach involving Higher and Advanced Higher pupils, the number of pupils in an Advanced Higher course ranged from 1 – 22. The average number of participants per course was 7. It was acknowledged that a more creative approach to the sharing of resources and assets across the four schools could increase opportunities for some pupils and provide significant benefits to the achievement potential of the young people studying in these schools. The number and nature of Advanced Higher courses being offered in the four schools varied significantly, from 10 to 21. This effectively meant that a pupil had twice the opportunity to sit Advanced Higher courses in one of our Perth schools than in two of the others.
- 2.4 Furthermore, in some schools, courses were offered to pupils at the outset of the academic year 2011/12 but were not able to be run as insufficient numbers of pupils opted to choose them, thus making them unfeasible. This would have resulted in disappointment for those pupils that had chosen the courses as this may have been their particular area of interest. If unaddressed the lower levels of interest in some courses may necessitate the school to consider the capacity to continue to offer the subject. This has already happened in certain curricular areas in some schools.
- 2.5 Over recent years the range of vocational and academic courses offered to secondary pupils through close partnership working with Perth College has increased. The opportunity to further build on this will be key to continuing to extend the availability of learning choices for young people.
- 2.6 The Perth City Campus Programme Board will oversee an innovative programme for additional course choices and ‘virtual learning’ opportunities for senior pupils across the four Secondary schools within Perth – Perth High, Perth Academy, Perth Grammar, St John’s Academy – to enhance the learning opportunities for senior pupils in S5 and S6. Perth College will also be included as a key partner in the developments. The breadth of curriculum options will become more equitable across the four schools and lower demand subjects may be protected from extinction. It will further develop cooperation and good relationships between young people and across schools and enhance on line virtual learning opportunities in schools – including the prospect of an on line course choice form that will encourage the flexible course choices across school boundaries throughout Perth and Kinross.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The proposals offer an innovative step forward in education service provision and service redesign as the four Perth Secondary schools develop an agreed “campus” approach toward meeting the needs of senior pupils by developing the necessary timetabling requirements and the eventual “e coordination” of agreed Senior Phase course choices. Each school will encourage and

oversee the development of “centres of excellence” for subjects to become the hub for future virtual learning developments.

- 3.2 Each secondary school in Perth will identify Senior Phase courses and programmes that will be timetabled in such a way as to ensure equal access for all Senior Pupils from the Perth Secondary sector. This means that for example an Advanced Higher course that is currently only taught in one of the four schools may be made available to appropriate senior pupils in the other three schools. This will ensure access to courses in each of the schools for some Senior Pupils regardless of the original school in which they were enrolled. These pupils will have more opportunities to achieve across a wider range of learning options.
- 3.3 The new course option arrangements will also include additional virtual learning opportunities which will be available on-line to offer a more flexible approach to learning. Such developments will build on existing good practice involving Scholar (Heriot Watt University interactive courses), the Glow based virtual school project, school websites, commercially produced websites and those that are free to use e.g. BBC Bite size and Homework and revision sites developed by staff for their own schools. It is intended that, once established, a range of online learning opportunities will also be made available to S5 and S6 pupils in other Secondary schools throughout Perth and Kinross to again improve equity. Senior pupils will benefit from more flexible learning opportunities.
- 3.4 In order to further develop the timetabling requirements, coordinate the course choice developments and to further develop the virtual learning possibilities it is proposed to appoint temporary posts of Project Leader and Virtual Learning Development Officer for the school session 2012/13. Each school will also be funded to build capacity at senior management level for a period of 5 months to assist with the necessary planning arrangements including timetabling, course options, pupil support arrangements, transport, parental engagement, virtual learning developments etc.
- 3.5 It is intended that the development of a common timetable and access to increased subject choices across all four secondary schools in the City of Perth will be available to Senior pupils making course choices for session 2013 /14.

4. BENEFITS OF THE CITY CAMPUS MODEL

- 4.1 The key benefits that will be delivered by implementation of the proposal include:
 - attainment and achievement levels of young people will rise;
 - a wider and more equitable range of learning options will be available to meet the learning needs of Senior Phase pupils;
 - these learning opportunities will be more flexible and accessible;
 - the relationships and cooperation between our young people and schools will improve;

- resources will be used more efficiently; and
- the collegiate approach across schools and with Perth College will be further strengthened.

These benefits are described in more detail below.

- 4.2 The amalgamation of Higher and Advanced Higher courses available in all four secondary schools to form one timetable will result in opening up a much wider range of opportunities for pupils. Opportunities to incorporate suitable courses at Perth College within this timetable will also be considered. By providing a structure within the Senior phase of secondary school that enables pupils to move between schools to access the courses of their choice and ability will allow young people more opportunities to engage in courses that are of specific interest to them and fewer “forced choice” scenarios for young people in senior school. This can only lead to raised attainment of young people.
- 4.3 Education and Children’s Services will continue to work closely with Perth College to further develop a range of course options including innovative ‘virtual learning’ courses. When fully implemented the introduction of this approach will have improved the diversity of learning opportunities.
- 4.4 In addition to enhancing the range of learning choices the new campus approach will provide an opportunity to develop proactive cooperation and good relationships between young people across schools, building on the existing excellent citizenship approaches within schools.
- 4.5 By developing the Perth City Campus, a positive collegiate ethos will be established that will encourage increased development of other non-academic achievement opportunities across the four schools, such as the development of a Rugby Centre of Excellence at Perth Academy, the use of the climbing wall at Perth Grammar School and facilities at the North Inch Community Campus.
- 4.6 Through the continued development of a virtual learning environment, staff will access and benefit from appropriate Continuing Professional Development related to the following:
 - Production of online materials – ICT skills
 - Copyright legislation
 - Child protection (CEOPS) training
 - How to support learners using a VLE

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Head of Democratic Services, Head of Legal Services and Head of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.
- 5.2 The Head Teachers from the four Secondary schools are core members of the Programme Board and are the consultative links with the schools

involved. They have confirmed that they have communicated the rationale to key stakeholders including staff, pupils and Parent Council representatives and that there has been positive feedback so far. There will be continued communication and consultation as the programme develops further.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Any financial implications contained within this report will be contained within each school's budget, or from the £195k allocated by Council to support the programme's start up costs (Strategic Policy and Resources Committee – 28 March 2012, Report 12/136 refers). This is distributed as follows:

- Project Leader costs and Virtual Learning Education Support Officer staff costs (secondments) - £115k.
- Allocation to Secondary schools to support planning and implementation – £80k.

7. COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012

7.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. This report relates to the following objective:

(iv) Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens

7.2 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the following key policy area:

- Learning: Realising Potential

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

8.1 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

9 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

9.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).

9.2 However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Perth City Campus project and the further development of virtual learning environments aims to deliver an enhanced educational experience with improved opportunities for choice, achievement and attainment for all pupils within the Perth City area by working in partnership to maximise the use of the resources available .

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Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

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