

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL
LEARNING AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

3 MAY 2023

VIRTUAL CAMPUS (SECONDARY EDUCATION)

Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)
(Report No. 23/129)

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report sets out the key features of the Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) Virtual Campus in secondary schools; including the purpose, delivery mechanism and audience for this method of learning. The Virtual Campus is part of a wider Tayside offer to which teachers and children and young people are key contributors and participants. The Virtual Campus is one strand of the broader digital learning approach delivered across secondary schools in Perth and Kinross.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- Notes the contents of the report; and
- Agrees the following recommendations:
 - The PKC Virtual Campus is planned to grow proportionately to create and widen opportunities for all young people;
 - The PKC Virtual Campus continues to sit within the wider PKC Digital Framework and evolves and adapts in line with, and taking account of, wider Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative (TRIC) and National developments;
 - PKC to continue to explore virtual delivery models to create more opportunities for children and young people; and
 - An update on the continued development of the PKC Virtual Campus be provided to all elected members by way of an Elected Member Briefing in March 2024.

3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:

- Section 4: Background
- Section 5: Proposals
- Appendices

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The PKC Virtual Campus is a part of the Senior Phase curriculum at Higher and Advanced Higher in certain subject areas. The Higher and Advanced Higher offer is targeted at S5 and S6 learners. It also provides a range of resources at National 3 level which allows young people to be supported in their learning across eight subject areas. The National 3 offer is targeted at S4 learners and is widening the offer for all pupils but particularly benefitting those who require the most support with their learning.
- 4.2 PKC Virtual Campus courses are a key part of each school's option programme in Perth and Kinross together with TRIC virtual campus courses delivered through the school college partnership by University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) (which includes their own virtual offer); SCHOLAR virtual learning; e-Sgoil and courses from other providers such as the Open University. The current PKC Virtual Campus offer is Higher Politics and Business Administration; Advanced Higher Physical Education and National 3 level qualifications across eight subject areas. At Higher and Advanced Higher, these courses are designed for young people who have developed the sophisticated skills necessary to manage their own learning with appropriate support. However, at National 3 level, these courses are designed to be delivered to young people by teachers who may not have in-depth subject knowledge; for example, support for learning teachers.
- 4.3 The virtual learning programme is carefully managed to ensure that young people are well supported to achieve success, in what is a style of learning very different to that previously experienced, and one that is not always appropriate for every young person.
- 4.4 The virtual learning programme is accessed by young people in school within a designated classroom, equipped with the necessary IT equipment. It can also be accessed at home, and this has benefitted those young people who are experiencing barriers to attendance. The National 3 virtual learning programme has been particularly successful in supporting those learners.
- 4.5 In late October each year, a planning group, which includes all school timetablers, Education and Children's Services Officers as well as representatives from UHI Perth, meet to carry out a needs analysis for the following year's timetable and virtual learning offer. The views of young people are collated on desired programmes of study, as well as consultation with staff undertaken, regarding suitability of a virtual learning environment for individual subjects. All of this information is considered, and the following year's programme is then determined and advertised to all young people as part of the Senior Phase course choice process across all PKC secondary schools.
- 4.6 Recurring funding of £136,000 was allocated through the Council budget setting process from financial year 2021/22 for the delivery of the PKC Virtual Campus. This has been used to create Virtual Learning Co-ordinators in each secondary school who have time devoted to the promotion and support of virtual learning in each school.

Individual teachers who create and deliver courses have the equivalent of one day a week to do so and the programme is supported centrally by Education and Children's Services Officers.

- 4.7 An additional £61,000 of recurring funding was allocated through the Council budget setting process from financial year 2023/24. This will enable the further, considered, expansion of the subjects able to be offered for the next again academic session ie, 2024-2025.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The proposals are designed to ensure that the PKC Virtual Campus grows and develops proportionately to broaden the full curricular offer within PKC secondary schools.
- 5.2 Careful and regular monitoring of progress is a key component of the ongoing success of the virtual campus learning offer to match or outperform the comparator face to face learning offer in each subject offered.
- 5.3 The virtual offer at PKC is matched to meet the learning needs of young people and ensure that the offer has the skilled and experienced practitioners to deliver effectively and fully complements the TRIC and UHI offer.
- 5.4 The key objective is to use the additional funding granted to grow the PKC Virtual Campus offer by five subjects for session 2024/2025 with participation in all secondary schools.

It is intended to grow this area through alternative qualification routes, in particular, using the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework to explore National Progression Awards - these are non-traditional courses allowing young people to attain qualifications which are at an equivalent level to National 5 or Higher but are not assessed through a traditional examination. These courses have been chosen as they are more relevant for many of our young people and prepare them better for transition into the workplace or further training opportunities.

- 5.5 It is proposed that:
- The PKC Virtual Campus is planned to grow proportionately to create and widen opportunities for all young people;
 - The PKC Virtual Campus continues to sit within the wider PKC Digital Framework and evolves and adapts in line with, and taking account of, wider TRIC and national developments;
 - PKC to continue to explore virtual delivery models to create more opportunities for children and young people; and
 - An update on the continued development of the PKC Virtual Campus be provided to all elected members by way of an Elected Member Briefing in March 2024.

Author

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Approved

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes/None
Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	Yes
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	None
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No. (ii).

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No (ii).

- 1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Vision, Values and Priorities in respect of the following key Priority area:

- Learning and Achievement

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report other than those reported within the body of the main report.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no direct workforce implications arising from this report other than those reported within the body of the main report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 N/A

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

The proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

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

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

- 3.2.1 The proposals have been considered under the Act and pre-screening has identified that the PPS will have no or minimal environmental effects, it is therefore exempt, and the SEA Gateway has been notified. The reason(s) for concluding that the PPS will have no or minimal environmental effects is that there are no activities associated with this proposal that have a potential environmental impact.

Sustainability

3.3 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Council also has a duty relating to climate change and, in exercising its functions must act:

- In the way best calculated to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets.
- In the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaption programmes.
- In a way that it considers most sustainable.

3.3.1 N/A

Legal and Governance

3.4 N/A

3.5 N/A

Risk

3.6 N/A

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 N/A

External

4.2 N/A

5. Communication

5.1 The proposals are being communicated to young people, parents, carers and teachers through the existing school networks.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report:

3. APPENDICES

3.1 Appendix 1 – Virtual Campus 2023