

Title of Meeting:	Inspire Board –Minutes
Location:	West Bridgford Library & *Teams Meeting
Date:	Tues 11th Feb 2025
Time:	4 to 6.10pm
Attendees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Leon Dale – Member Elected Director Mark Dorrington – Member Elected Director Vicki Dunstall – Co Opted Director Peter Gaw – Chief Executive Officer, Inspire *Jackie Hewlett-Davies – Member Elected Director Margot Madin – Co Opted Director *Diana Meale – Member Elected Director Ann Penn – Staff Elected Director John Cottee – County Council Nominated Director (Chair)
Invited:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Margaret Anderson – Chief Finance Officer, Inspire Kirsty Ellis – Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Inspire Carol Newman – Director of Culture, Inspire Lucy Reid – Music Services Manager, Inspire Katharine Say – Executive Officer, Inspire *Claudine White – NCC Group Manager, Place Commissioning, NCC

Agenda No.	Agenda Subject	Action
1.	<p><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pauline Allan – County Council Nominated Director – Aidan La Mola – Commissioner, NCC – Mark Walker – Observer - Interim Service Director, Place & Communities, NCC 	
2.	<p><u>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 7 correction – minutes should state that community partnership libraries (CPLs) are not a sustainable model going forward to be rolled out to additional libraries. The contributions of volunteers are very much appreciated at the current CPLs. • Members then agreed that the minutes from 19th November 2024 were a true and accurate record and were happy to approve. • Matters arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Item 13 – KE, MM and VD responded to the Community Benefits Society law consultation. – Item 15 – MD agreed to be the additional board member to join the Staffing & Standards committee. 	
3.	<p><u>Declaration of Conflicts and Interests</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None. 	
4.	<p><u>CEO Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PG presented his report for December 2024 to January 2025 and highlighted some of the many events, activities, results and developments. • ICT separation programme due for completion by 1st April 2025. • Places of Welcome now taking place weekly at 25 libraries and led by fantastic volunteers. • Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) has agreed to cover majority of inflationary pressures within the contract price for 2025/2026, but the organisation still faces ongoing financial challenges. 	

- Service Design Reviews are progressing and will contribute to being able to set a balanced budget.
- April to December 2024 staff sickness rate is below the expected average for public sector and the number of library engagements is particularly good.
- Inspire has received over £100k of funding awards from Arts Council England (ACE), Natural England and Libraries Connected and is making funding applications to East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) Adult Skills Fund Contract for Services.
- NCC has agreed to extend Inspire’s current contract for a further 2 years, ending in March 2028 via a direct award.
- Elections for 3 community board director roles will run April to July 2025. Members invited to join PG and KE at library drop-in sessions to promote participation. Recruitment for coopted director roles is ongoing.
- MD asked if there was a reason behind the significant increase in web traffic. KE confirmed that the statistics had been verified and partly a result of using QR codes more extensively, increased advertising and social media activity.
- DM congratulated Inspire for the low staff absence rate and queried the rise in ICT issues. PG clarified that this was because of the ICT separation from NCC and that now all reports go to the Inspire ICT service desk rather than split between Inspire and Notts CC ICT helpdesk. A small number of issues relating to the migration of the new library management system are being worked through.

The board noted the progress of the organisation and range of issues.


5. **Finance Update & 2025/26 Budget Approval**

- MA presented management accounts for April to November 2024, predicting a £10k surplus compared to the originally budgeted £258k deficit. Contributing factors to the reduced deficit are the discretionary spending and recruitment freeze, lowered contingency for utility costs, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system costs have been removed from the forecast as this will now happen 2025/26, small improvements in income and bank interest remaining steady. These figures include the local government pay award 2024/2025.
- Members noted that the £10k outturn is better than projected but extending the vacancy lag is not sustainable and there is still a significant draw on restricted funds – £288k of Learning and £66k of Music funds.
- Members reviewed and discussed the use of reserves and MA explained that Inspire Learning follows the academic year and there is lagged funding.
- The 2025/26 proposed budget shows a £132k deficit and includes an estimated 3% pay award, National Insurance increase and income from NCC to cover inflationary pressures for NCC contract services (income generating services such as Learning Education Library Service (ELS), Music and National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) must cover their own pay award and inflationary pressures). The current staffing reviews should help reduce the deficit.
- MD noted that there still was not any expenditure against New Burdens. MA explained this will now be in 2025/26.
- Members reviewed the Medium Term Financial Plan through to March 2028. Proposed staffing structures for Learning and ELS are included in 25/26 figures and also show an unsustainable position for Inspire Music if action is not taken.
- MM noted that the Finance & Audit committee reviewed and discussed the report on 4th February.
- PG thanked MA and the finance team for all their hard work.

The board noted the contents of the report and approved the 2025/26 budget as presented and authorised MA to make adjustments until the end of March to incorporate changes that have occurred in the last 2 weeks.

6.	<p><u>Risk Log</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 5 – increased risk relating to financial impact of changes in Teachers Pension contributions rate and reduction in funding. JHD asked whether the sustainability of the Music service should have its own risk. It will remain under item 5 and KE will reword as it is now an issue. Item 12 – new risk of potential negative impact of employment rights bill and restriction on casual workers for libraries and learning. Members asked how many casual employees Inspire has (MA to provide) and should Inspire contribute to future consultations by developing a briefing note to advise on risks and implications for the organisation. Item 13 – new risk of potential impact of local government reorganisation, could be both a risk and offer opportunities. <p>The board noted the risk register.</p>	<p><u>KE</u></p> <p><u>MA</u></p>
7.	<p><u>Annual Review of Approach to Risk Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual opportunity for board members to review and discuss the approach to risk management and the risk management framework. PG clarified that members were not involved in the Business Continuity Plan. MM felt comfortable with review of financial risk at quarterly Finance & Audit committee meetings and at main board and that other members review the people risk at Staffing & Standing committee meetings. VD asked how often the Inspire leadership team (ILT) met. PG confirmed that they meet weekly and monthly where items on the risk management framework are reviewed regularly in detail and PG and JC (chair) meet every month. If necessary, a special board meeting would be called. <p>The board discussed the approach and were happy to continue with the current risk management framework.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Board Development Feedback</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KE presented the feedback report and summary of actions from the board development session held on 30th Nov 2024. KE confirmed that skills gap is from the audit taken in January 2023. Members discussed the advocacy briefings (KS to resend) and KE advised that Inspire will provide any supporting information that the board would find useful. Agreed that colour coded name badges would be useful for networking at future events. Members agreed meeting spotlights are useful so would be helpful to include when possible. <p>All agreed that there were both advantages and disadvantages to hybrid meetings and recognised the importance of not excluding anyone. No decision at this time to change how the board meets but agreed a ‘best effort’ approach to attendance and KS to review again the time of meetings via a poll.</p>	<p><u>KS</u></p> <p><u>KS</u></p>
9.	<p><u>Music Service Review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PG advised members of the financial challenges facing the service due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – uncertainty of funding support for the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS) from the Department for Education (DfE) – Impact of increase to National Insurance contributions – Impact of pay award – Impact of reduction in income – Increased level of demand for remission of fees for teaching LR - Inspire Music Services Manager summarised all the reviews and measures already undertaken and members discussed and questioned the options and proposals. PG advised due to the uncertainty of further DfE support past August 2025 and the decline in income that a service model review is required in order to ensure a sustainable future for the service. A team will work on a plan, consultations with staff and trade unions will be undertaken and a full report presented to the Staffing & Standards committee. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently the Music service operates a generous remission scheme in comparison to the rest of country and members agreed that this also should be reviewed. DM asked if the remission scheme could have separate charitable funding and LR confirmed that a sponsorship scheme is being looked into. <p>The board noted the contents of the report and supported the overall approach.</p>	
10.	<p><u>Health & Safety Annual Report & Policy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KE presented the annual report to inform and update members on Inspire’s Health & Safety (H&S) performance and activities. As before, the main issue in the organisation is anti-social behaviour and Inspire continues with its zero approach and supporting staff with security guards when required and working with local police. During 2024 Inspire implemented a new H&S management system which has brought the organisation up to date and is supported by the NCC H&S team. KE advised that the latest version of the H&S policy includes only minor amendments. PG noted the importance of the new management system and thanked KE and colleagues for a fantastic piece of work. <p>The board noted the contents of the report, reviewed the new H&S System Overview Document and approved the Health & Safety policy.</p>	
11.	<p><u>ACE Investment Principles Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CN explained that as part of the funding agreement with ACE as a NPO, Inspire has to supply a report for each year. ILT have reviewed the report and plan and board members were asked to review the progress made during quarter 3 and the draft plan for 2025/26. CN will be finalising the plan in the next few weeks and welcomed any comments before submission on 2nd April 2025. CN noted that ACE had listened to feedback regarding the reporting spreadsheets and will be using word documents going forward. <p>The board noted the contents of the report and approved the draft plan for 2025/26.</p>	
12.	<p><u>Annual Volunteering Review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KE presented a progress report on volunteering over the last year and the proposed plan for the next 12 months. There are now over 1,700 people signed up to Inspire’s Community Makers volunteering site and in 2024 there were 138 opportunities available for 85 different roles across all the sites. A new Workforce Development Manager will be starting shortly and will be assisting in a review of the training offer for volunteers. <p>The board noted the contents of the report and work plan for 2025.</p>	
13.	<p><u>Committee Reports and Minutes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance & Audit Committee – Tues 4th Feb 2025 - the board noted the report 	
14.	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. 	
15.	<p><u>Forthcoming meeting and events</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weds 7th May 2025, 4 to 6pm at Inspire HQ & Teams Inspire Awards Celebration, Thurs 26th June 2025, 6 to 9pm at Mansfield Central Library Tues 16th Sept 2025, 4 to 6pm at Notts Archives & Teams Inspire AGM, Weds 8th Oct 2025, 7 to 8.30pm, venue TBC Tues 25th Nov 2025, 4 to 6pm at Beeston Library & Teams Inspire Christmas Concert, Mon 8th Dec 2025, 6.15 to 9pm at Royal Concert Hall 	
16.	<p><u>Meeting Review – opportunity for chair/vice to discuss all aspects of the board meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not completed due to time. 	

Noting of approved minutes	
Name:	John Cottee
Signature:	
Title:	Chair of Inspire Board
Date:	21/02/2025