



Title of Meeting:	Inspire Board –Minutes
Location:	Nottinghamshire Archives & *Teams Meeting
Date:	Tuesday 16th September 2025
Time:	4 to 6pm
Attendees:	*Leon Dale – Member Elected Director Mark Dorrington – Member Elected Director *Vicki Dunstall – Co Opted Director Peter Gaw – Chief Executive Officer, Inspire John Hess – Co-Opted Director *Jackie Hewlett-Davies – Member Elected Director Cllr Dawn Justice – NCC Appointed Margot Madin – Co Opted Director, chair *Diana Meale – Member Elected Director Ann Penn – Staff Elected Director
Invited:	Margaret Anderson – Chief Finance Officer, Inspire Sophie Collier - Observer Kirsty Ellis – Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Inspire Aidan La Mola – Commissioner, NCC Carol Newman – Director of Culture, Inspire Katharine Say – Executive Officer, Inspire

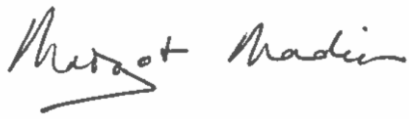
Agenda No.	Agenda Subject	Action
2.	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members introduced themselves. Apologies received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cllr Richard Darrington – NCC Appointed Claudine White – Head of Communities, Culture and Protection, NCC 	
3.	<u>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members then agreed that the minutes from 7th May 2025 were a true and accurate record and were happy to approve. Matters arising – none. 	
4.	<u>Declaration of Conflicts and Interests</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PG registered a conflict of interest for agenda item 18 and so will withdraw. DJ noted she is a councillor for Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC). 	
5.	<u>CEO Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PG presented his report for 2025 that relates to the Inspire Forward Plan and highlighted some of the many events, activities, results and developments. <u>Dynamic Inspire</u> – dealing with the last few issues of ICT separation before gaining full independence from NCC, saving us money and giving us flexibility and control. <u>Inclusive Inspire</u> – submitted a full application to NCC for their Libraries Investment Fund, will hear outcome in February 2026. <u>Quality Assured Inspire</u> - Worktop Library new café provider going very well. <u>Sustainable Inspire</u> – Inspire, Arc and NCC submitted bid to Arts Council England (ACE) for improvements to The Old Library, Mansfield (base for Inspire Youth Arts). Unfortunately not successful but now fully aware of scale of challenge and maintenance requirements. The planned maintenance project for Sutton in Ashfield Library will be too costly for NCC so reviewing options including looking at an alternative site. <u>Finances</u> – last year’s outturn was better than projected, an achievement down to very good budget management and the hard work of colleagues bringing in extra funding. PG 	

	<p>noted that this was a comfortable position for Inspire but only a small surplus for an organisation with a £24M turnover. This is Adult Learning's first year with East Midlands Combined Council Authority (EMCCA), slightly delayed funding coming through but there has not been any impact on delivery and ALM noted that the timeline has now been confirmed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Service Design Reviews</u> – staffing reviews and service reorientation mostly completed as part of the need to reduce costs and increase income. Reviews prompted by reduction in county council contract and grant level from Department for Education (DfE), Education Skills Fund Agency (ESFA) and EMCCA. Several colleagues redeployed within the service. • <u>Highlights</u> – high attendance figures at Hands on Heritage event in May. 23 learners successfully completed their Access to HE course and a fantastic Knitting Challenge project with Inspire receiving runner up at Libraries Connected Awards. • <u>Performance Dashboard</u> – generally very positive, with Music, Learning and Volunteers exceeding targets. The Education Library Service (ELS) is still an area of concern as school buy back has declined but the service has been reviewed and a new staffing structure and manager is now in place. • <u>Funding Awards</u> – Arc Partnership have confirmed sponsorship for the next 3 years. • <u>Funding Applications</u> – always ongoing. Currently doing some work around the Mansfield Plan for Neighbourhoods. • <u>Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)</u> – in pre-decision stage and in dialogue with NCC around implications. • <u>Board Membership</u> – PG confirmed the following: Member Elected – JHD, DM, MD, SC Staff Member Elected – election now complete and Emma Pitchford elected NCC Appointed – DJ, RD Appointed Selected – MM, VD, JH. • <u>Committee Chairs & Membership</u> – members agreed the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Learning & Skills (3 meetings p/a) – JHD, DJ, EP – chair to be confirmed – Culture & Heritage (4 meetings p/a) - MD (chair), JHD, DM, JH, SC, RD – Staffing & Standards (3 meetings p/a) - MD (chair), SC, EP, RD – Finance & Audit (4 meetings p/a) - MM (chair), DM, VD, TBC – Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Music Hub – JH – Safeguarding Lead – ideally the chair of Learning & Skills committee. Members to consider and contact PG if interested. <p>DM noted that she is happy to slot in wherever needed.</p> <p>PG and MM are reviewing options on possible candidates for the remaining appointed selected vacancy. John Cottee, LD and AP will be formally thanked for their terms of office at the forthcoming AGM.</p> <p>PG to contact EP and RD to ask if they would join the Finance & Audit committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MD commented that it was good to see that unplanned closure for mobiles has dramatically reduced and asked if there was a particular reason. KE confirmed that they are employing fewer agency drivers and there has been a reduction in crashes, breakdowns and sickness. • ALM and KE having discussions with public health colleagues to look at closer working opportunities including the Best Start Strategy for young families and libraries. • JH asked if anything had been seen from Lisa Nandy on funding that to reinforce financial weakness in schools and noted that ELS had achieved a customer satisfaction rating of 99% for the last 2 years. PG replied that the government announced a new body for arts, music and education due to go live in November 2026 but as yet no further details. Only positive financial news for music hubs has been the short term support around Teachers' Pensions. However, this will cease in April 2026 and puts Inspire in a difficult position and no signs of additional funding coming through. Although the ELS rating is high it is coming from a reducing customer base. <p>The board noted the progress of the organisation and range of issues.</p>	<p><u>All</u></p> <p><u>PG</u></p>
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5.	<p><u>Statutory Reports & Accounts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA presented Inspire's report and accounts for 2024/25. The Finance and Audit committee have already reviewed the accounts. MA noted that the surplus referred to by PG is item 27 on p64 of the accounts and the £214k surplus is made up of Unrestricted Funds. There have been various movements on the Designated Funds for ELS and Bookfund (underspend because unable to buy books due to the implementation of the new library management system) and CRM (project delayed, now 2025/26). The Restricted Funds were dipped into by £266k for Learning, Music and NPO. The Fixed Assets Funds is the movement in fixed assets in the year movement. These will be presented at the AGM in October. The report and accounts will be presented to Inspire members at the AGM on 8th Oct. The board complimented the Finance and Comms teams for another clear, concise and accessible report. <p>The board approved the 2024/25 statutory reports and accounts.</p>	
6.	<p><u>Finance Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA presented period 4 management accounts for April to July 2025. The reforecast shows a deficit of £109k which is a £17.6k better position than originally budgeted. MA highlighted that following the staffing reviews in Learning, ELS, Archives and Support Services have reduced staff costs in the long term. However, in the short term they resulted in redundancy and pension strain costs of £388k which are likely to increase as the phase 2 of the learning review completes and phase 3 begins. The forecast includes this pressure along with support costs from NCC apart from costs relating to ELS which are still to be confirmed. PG added that NCC have a contractual obligation to cover costs when the council reduces funding or Inspire has to make efficiency savings. ALM confirmed that it's in the system and figures are being worked on. The figures also include the 3.2% pay award that has been approved by unions and NCC. Inspire originally estimated a 3% figure, ALM confirmed that the additional 0.2% is in the system and subject to approval. The accounts show that Learning will make a contribution to reserves of £467k which looks odd when redundancies are taking place but largely due to timings of EMCCA and LSIF funding. Full impact of learning review will be realised in 2026/27, so topping up reserves this year which will help in future years. MA outlined the 2025/26 forecast reserves position and JH asked who decides on the use of Restricted Reserves. MM clarified that the donor decides on the use of restricted funds and Designated Funds decisions are made by Inspire. Members discussed the robust reporting processes used by the council and funding bodies. MA also presented the current Medium Term Financial Plan through to March 2028 and identified the music service and ELS as the biggest risks. The DfE has only confirmed support towards employer Teachers' Pension contributions to August 2026 and national insurance to March 2026 so Inspire will have to dip into music Restricted Reserves. MA and head of Music working on charges and remission fees and income planning as service is predicted to use all of its reserves by 2027/28 if no further action taken. PG praised colleagues for the excellent music service and their hard work and that the situation is better than 9 months ago but still very worrying. Members reviewed the cashflow and balance sheet. <p>The board noted the contents of the report.</p>	
7.	<p><u>Pay Award</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA explained that Inspire has historically pegged its pay to the national local government framework. An offer of 3.2% across all pay grades has been accepted by the unions. Inspire had already built in 3% in the budget so results in an additional pressure of £19k on contracted services and £12k for services outside of the NCC contract. Education unions have also agreed to the same award for Music teaching staff. The award will be backdated to April and paid in October. <p>The board approved the 2025/2026 pay award.</p>	

	Break	
8.	<u>Risk Log</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KE explained that each risk area is reviewed by the leadership team every quarter and summary report presented at each board meeting. • Members reviewed the risk log and noted that there was no movement in the amount of risk since May 2025. • AP asked for clarification when the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tender will go out. CN confirmed that they had been waiting on capacity of ICT team and hoped it would be this financial year with implementation in spring/summer 2026. <p>The board noted the risk register.</p>	
9.	<u>NPO Investment Principles</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CN presented her update on progress towards achieving actions in the investment principle plan. As part of NPO funding Inspire is required to support 4 principles adopted by board in 2021. Members were asked to review progress made in Q4 of the 2024/25 plan and Q1 of 2025/26 plan. CN explained ACE require the plans for release of funding payment and that each year Inspire sets ambitions and actions which are brought to the board for discussion and approval. • JH asked what happens if there is a requirement to improve an environment in a building that Inspire has no control over it (NCC property). PG explained that Inspire identify the use of gas and electricity reduction as part of contribution to sustainability and link in with NCC work and plans. <p>The board noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recruitment of 3 community elected board members – Application to the new Libraries Development Framework – New provider for trade waste – Procurement of CRM system continues to be delayed. 	
10.	<u>Annual Compliments & Complaints Report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KE presented the annual report and explained that as part of Inspire's commitment to customer service it is important that the organisation has a robust process across the service so it can identify any trends and required actions. Centralised monitoring and reporting are in place to ensure excellent customer service. • KE reported that there has been a good ratio of compliments to complaints and the amount of complaints are very small compared to the number of visits and interactions. The main area of complaint was the implementation of the new Library Management System. This was the first one in 20 years and came with challenges which have taken quite a while to resolve. All complaints are investigated and action taken where needed. • AP asked why there was a massive spike of compliments in the summer. KE replied this was due to the summer activities. MD asked why there has been an increase in numbers generally. KE was not sure but staff are always encouraged to report and feedback. JH asked what the process is when people complain and KE explained there are various stages, if the customer has provided contact details then the local manager will liaise with them, if not satisfied then it's escalated to the service manager and eventually would be brought to the board if necessary. JD was surprised to read there were complaints about Barclays pop up bank. KE explained that Inspire liaised with NCC so were aligned and did everything possible to show impartiality and that there was a real need in the community for the service. Escalation process worked well. Inspire has Customer Service Excellence accreditation and the approach is always to listen and where possible improve services. <p>The board noted the report.</p>	
11.	<u>Annual Impact Report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KE explained that Inspire's staff are fantastic and there is a system in place to gather all the stories of how Inspire changes and makes a difference to peoples' lives every day. The 	

	<p>report maps some of these stories against Inspire's outcomes and board members are asked to use it in their advocacy about how Inspire impacts lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALM and JD found it an excellent report that helps breathe life into the statistics and makes a real impact when sharing stories with partners. PG added that it also motivates staff so they know what they do makes a difference. <p>The board noted the report and its use for advocacy.</p>	
12.	<p><u>Safeguarding Incident Report</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KE explained safeguarding incidents are reviewed annually and a very important aspect to the organisation. The safeguarding working group, made up of staff from across the organisation meet twice a year to look at policies and procedures. Most incidents occurred in Inspire College because that is where Inspire has the closest contact with often vulnerable young people but also incidents in other service areas. There has been a steady increase in college incidents which is reflective of the level of mental health issues that young people are finding post covid. Actions taken this year include many library staff undertaking J9 training, an initiative around providing safe spaces and signposting for people of domestic violence, amendments to training pathways and streamlined reporting procedures reviewed by Inspire's new Workforce Development Manager. <p>The board noted the report and the requirement to appoint a new board safeguarding lead.</p>	
13.	<p><u>Policy Review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KE presented the Safeguarding and Prevent policy review. The policies are reviewed every year and have been through the Safeguarding working group and leadership team. KE confirmed that safeguarding training will be arranged for all board members early in 2026. MD noted it would be useful if policy changes were highlighted in future. KE agreed in principle but on this occasion there were too many – main areas of main change were around updating staff names. <p>The board approved the Safeguarding Policy and the Prevent Policy.</p>	
14.	<p><u>Committee Reports and Minutes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning & Skills Committee – 09/06/2025 Culture & Heritage Committee – 24/06/2025 Finance & Audit Committee – 09/09/2025 <p>The board noted the reports.</p>	
15.	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. 	
16.	<p><u>Forthcoming meeting and events</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspire AGM - Weds 8th Oct 2025, 7 to 8.30pm, Beeston Library & online Board Development Day – Sat 15th Nov, 10am to 2pm, Notts Archives (limited parking) Meeting - 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 	
17.	<p><u>Meeting Review – opportunity for chair/vice to discuss all aspects of the board meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No suggestions, all good. 	
18.	<p><u>Confidential Item</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PG, KE, MA and KS left the meeting whilst members discussed item 18. MM to contact PG with the outcome of the discussion. Board reviewed a range of options in relation to senior team grading review. Option to use additional 'shadow' SCP points within existing bandings was approved. 	<u>PG</u>

Noting of approved minutes	
Name:	Margot Madin
Signature:	
Title:	Chair of Inspire Board
Date:	30/09/2025