Title of Meeting:	**Inspire Board –Minutes**
Location:	**Beeston Library & *Teams Meeting**
Date:	**Tuesday 12th May 2026**
Time:	**4 to 6pm**
Attendees:	Sophie Collier - Member Elected Director Mark Dorrington – Member Elected Director, vice chair Peter Gaw – Chief Executive Officer, Inspire John Hess – Co-Opted Director *Jackie Hewlett-Davies – Member Elected Director Ruth Hyde – Co Opted Director Margot Madin – Co Opted Director, chair Diana Meale – Member Elected Director
Invited:	Margaret Anderson – Chief Finance Officer, Inspire *Kirsty Ellis – Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Inspire *Pippa Guthrie – Quality & Student Services Manager, Inspire *Aidan La Mola – Commissioner, NCC Katharine Say – Executive Officer, Inspire Rebecca Streets – Youth Arts Manager, Inspire

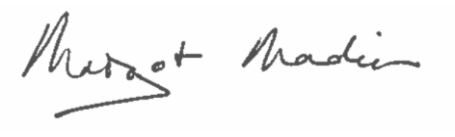
Agenda No.	Agenda Subject	Action
1.	**Welcome and Apologies** • Apologies received from: - Richard Darrington – NCC Appointed - Vicki Dunstall – Co Opted Director - Cllr Dawn Justice – NCC Appointed - Emma Pitchford – Staff Elected Director - Claudine White – Head of Communities, Culture and Protection, NCC	
2.	**Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising** • Members then agreed that the minutes from 10th February 2026 were a true and accurate record and were happy to approve. • Matters arising: - Item 4 Safeguarding Training - MM urged the last outstanding member to complete as soon as possible. - Item 12 Volunteering Membership - KE to check if data cleansing required.	**DD** **KE**
3.	**Declaration of Conflicts and Interests** • None.	
4.	**Service Spotlight – Able Orchestra** • Rebecca Streets, Inspire Youth Arts (IYA) Manager presented an update on the progress and impact of Able Orchestra (AO) 2024 – 26. See appendix 1. • A National Lottery Project Grant for £100k has been submitted to Arts Council England (ACE) in partnership with Beech Academy. Successful application for Newark Pride in Place programme funding for ensemble in Newark. • Able Orchestra 2026 video • AO Evaluation Full Report 2024-2026.pdf • AO Final Evaluation Summary 2024-2026.pdf • JH noted that AO's age group is 11 – 25 and asked what happens for young adults afterwards. RS explained this was recognised as a need but also an ongoing challenge. It is difficult to go beyond the age of 25 as then adults are in the same group as children but the	

	team try and signpost to other opportunities and provide pathways but there is a lot of work to do across sector to create genuine career opportunities. • PG commented on IYA's long track record and the inspiring and important achievements of AO. The challenge is now how to provide the resources to keep it going. • DM asked what level of funding IYA were seeking. RS explained that to support a years' worth of work they would need to apply for £100k although the actual costs would be nearer to £250k as the specialist artists, transportation costs and time in venues are expensive.	
5.	**CEO Update** • PG presented an update on the current development and delivery of Inspire services against its forward plan 2022 – 2026 and highlighted the main issues of the organisation. • Board Governance - RH left the meeting whilst members discussed her co-option. A board appointment panel recently met with RH and based on her previous experience (recently retired as CEO of Broxtowe Borough Council and a range of charity board positions), commitment to public and community service and links to local government and public sector, unanimously recommended her co-option to the board. This was proposed by MM, seconded by MD and approved by all members present. RH returned to the meeting and was formally welcomed to the Inspire Board. • ICT Separation Programme – Inspire has achieved full separation and independence from Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) ICT services. Inspire is now self-sufficient saving money and in full control of assets and services. • Heritage Services Management Plan 2026 – 30 – taken through the Inspire Culture & Heritage Committee and approved by NCC. • Minor Works – the board had previously approved the use of reserves for investment in small library buildings and a programme of minor works is now being planned. • Sutton in Ashfield Library – the current library building is beyond economical repair. NCC carried out surveys and found it was not fit for purpose and currently proposing relocation to a former housing office in Brook Street. Inspire are involved in the design which includes an innovation centre and will be a real uplift to the community. Awaiting final approval from NCC in June. JH asked if the announcement would be part of Inspire's 10th birthday celebrations. PG explained that Inspire will coordinate with NCC as part of service development and use comms and marketing and programme planning to inform current and reach new audiences. PG noted the fantastic and creative library team at Sutton who are excited about the relocation. MD asked what size the new building will be. PG confirmed it will be the same as the current library but better laid out over 3 floors. • Performance 2025/26 – PG highlighted the healthy indicators across the service and noted that library physical visits are increasing and not declining like in other areas of the country. MM commented on the increase of jobs advertised and staff leaving and asked if this was related to the uncertainty around local government reorganisation (LGR). PG explained the figures reflect the service reviews held in the year and LGR is not currently affecting recruitment but may in the future. • Safeguarding – PG encouraged all members to complete if they haven't already done so. • LGR – No update since the board last discussed LGR so no requirement for a longer discussion at this stage. PG highlighted the 3 options currently proposed and their impact on Inspire. ILT will start in depth discussions this month. MD asked when a decision would be made. PG explained central government are due to make an announcement this summer and then a special board meeting will be called to discuss strategy. RH recommended that Inspire continues to confidently raise the consciousness of Nottinghamshire as a whole on the success of Inspire and its delivery model. When the reorganisation starts there will be a mindset that looks for the easiest path of delivery so a model that is successful and has ideas about opportunities and the future and will be very attractive and grabbed with both hands. People within local government will look at how they might be involved in such important services such as Inspire.	**ALL**

	• NCC Contract Award 2026 – 28 - extension award for Inspire to deliver services on behalf of NCC has been confirmed and completed on 31st March with minor amendments and updates to terms and conditions. **The Board noted the progress and performance of the organisation.** **The Board approved the appointment of Ruth Hyde to the board as a co-opted director.**	
6.	**Finance Update** • MA reported that she is currently working through the adjustments for all of 2025/26 and presented period 11 management accounts for April 2025 to February 2026 which shows a favourable outturn compared with budget for this period, before the movement of funds of **£297k**. The reforecast shows a predicted surplus of **£150k** compared with the originally budgeted deficit of **£127k**. • The forecast includes the impact of the service reviews and a small amount of redundancy pension strains will span into April 2026. The figures include income from NCC to support the costs for Archives and support staff. Savings from the restructures are coming through and the Music service is in a much better position and there has not been a decline in the number of schools buying back since the review. Revised project timings have meant a delay in spending down of some designated funds. MA assured members that progress will be made this year in spending against New Burdens, CRM project will begin this month and it has been a strategic decision to spend less against designated book fund in light of the future Sutton in Ashfield Library relocation. • MA drew attention to the statement in her report that Inspire is not aware of any instances of breaches of internal controls in the periods to which the accounts relate and advised members of a letter from the external auditors that was shared with the Finance & Audit Committee setting out the key elements of their proposed audit. Members understood their role in the governance of Inspire to ensure there are adequate procedures in place to prevent fraud or breaches of internal controls and were satisfied that Inspire is a going concern. MA reassured members that within the finance team there are regular and robust reconciliations and segregation of duties and payment runs are checked and authorised. If any incidents occur then these will be reported. • RH asked if there is an internal audit on fraud systems. MA advised there wasn't. MM added that external auditors address it as required and that the question of an internal audit has been raised before however, due to the capacity of such a small finance team it has not been possible. RH felt that as ICT is now internal it might be worthwhile getting someone in for additional reassurance as they are both big risk areas. PG and MA noted the high level of scrutiny from the external auditors and the rigorous procedures already in place but agreed this should be reviewed again and added to the next Finance & Audit Committee agenda. • MA has been exploring banking options to maximise return, minimise risk and be mindful of ethics and environmental impact of investments. The Finance & Audit Committee approved Inspire using an organisation subject to MA gaining clarity regarding the risk level. Further information has been provided and a report will be given at the next Finance & Audit Committee. • The Medium Term Financial Plan has been updated to include the latest NJS pay offer of 3.3%, the original budget included a 2.5% pay award. This has not been agreed yet. MA explained that projections don't go beyond 2028 due to the uncertainty around LGR. • RH asked about the review of reserve levels. MA and PG advised they are currently working on updating Inspire's Financial Regulations. **The Board noted the Period 11 25/26 Management Accounts and Reforecast Position.** **The Board noted the Forecast 2025/26 Reserves Position.** **The Board noted the Medium Term Financial Plan.** **The Board noted the Balance Sheet as at 28/02/2026.** **The Board noted the Cash Flow for March 2026 – March 2027.**	**KS**

7.	**Safeguarding Update** • PGuthrie gave an update and reassured board members that safeguarding in Inspire remains effective, robust and monitored across all services. Safeguarding reporting is a standing item for oversight and scrutiny. • PGuthrie advised that the increase in reported incidents reflects improved guidance and reporting rather than increased risk. Staff are positively reporting that they feel more confident about raising and escalating concerns and incidents. • Learning staff have been asked to watch the Run Hide Tell video to ensure they would know what to do in the event of a terrorist attack. This was in response to receiving an update from DfE that the threat level for the UK is currently severe. Board members were recommended to review the video – RUN HIDE TELL | ProtectUK. • PGuthrie and DM have met to discuss processes, practices and reviewed case examples to thoroughly understand the process and be assured they are robust. DM noted that the mental health category includes self-harming and the concerning rise in incidents amongst young people across the country. • Mental Health remains the highest category of incidents and most significant area of concern and there will a review of mental health training. PGuthrie and Michael Reid (Director of Learning) will be visiting college bases. Board members are welcome to join the visits. KS to share dates. **The Board noted the contents of the report.**	**ALL** **KS**
8.	**Fundraising** • PG proposed that in light of the increasing competition from key funders and lowering success rates that Inspire move forward on a specific fundraising project utilising current members of staff rather than commissioning a fundraiser. Additional backfill of resources will allow enable colleagues to develop the campaign and general donations can be given online and linked to the focussed campaign. • The area of focus suggested for 2026/27 is the Able Orchestra. Governance for this would come through the Culture & Heritage Committee as it part of its Terms of Reference. There will be plenty of opportunities for all board members to be involved. • MD asked if focussing on AO fundraising would exclude other areas from developing their own work. PG confirmed it would not. JH commented that it is very competitive with lots of organisations pitching to the same people so may be frustrating and require small steps. MM added that people need to recognise that Inspire is a charity. DM felt that it is important to engage with members too for awareness, smaller amounts and legacy donations. SC raised the involvement of volunteers in sharing the campaign. JHD added that there needs to also be a wider fundraising strategy developed for the longer term that also considers the wider population. PG agreed that this would be something that the Culture & Heritage Committee could look at but the more pressing need was the AO provision. **The Board noted and approved:** - **the approach outlined in paragraph 2** - **the focus will be on The Able Orchestra** - **the approach to governance and board input.**	
9.	**Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Music Hub Partnership Board (NNMHPB) Update** • JH is a member of the music hub board. It meets 3 times a year and its role is to check, challenge and champion strategic decisions on spending funds for music education in the city and county. • Ian Burton, CEO of Nottingham Music Service will retire this summer and invited members to join him at RSE Day on 25th June at Broadway Cinema and Robin Hood Orchestra on 21st July at St Mary's Church. IB also promoted the Nottingham Young Creatives awards scheme as this now covers the City and suburbs. **The Board noted the progress of the music hub.**	

10.	**Risk Log** • Each risk area is reviewed by the leadership team every quarter and summary report presented at each board meeting. KE highlighted that: - The risk of lack of capacity and resilience to support Inspire services has reduced because of ICT separation from NCC. - The negative impact of Employment Rights bill on Inspire services has increased. - The potential impact of LGR has increased. • KE advised that colleagues are working through options and waiting for more detail on both the Employment Rights bill and LGR. **The Board noted the risk register.**	
11.	**Policies** • KE presented 2 policies for discussion and approval. • AI Policy – this is a new policy and informed by a working group across Inspire staff. RH commented that the policy was well written, simple and clear and suggested section 7 and 10 should also have important words written in bold and that an annual review would be beneficial. JH also found the policy clear and useful and suggested it may even require reviewing on a 6 monthly basis, as it is a fast-changing technology. • Recruitment & Selection Policy – overall this has been tidied up, made fit for purpose and reflects current practice. The main change has been the removal of a clause that guaranteed applicants with a disability an interview if they met the minimum requirements of the job. This was done after a great deal of discussion with union colleagues and advice from NCC HR and has been done as part of Inspire's commitment to be as equitable and inclusive as possible. RH noted that it is important to keep records of data of recruitment practices so that it will be possible to see the impact of removing the clause. RH also asked if Inspire will reflect back on this change. KE said Inspire will try but the issue is that the organisation doesn't know about any disabilities unless people declare them. The difficulty has been from inferring data. RH added that Inspire needs to be able to recognise if its workforce doesn't reflect its community. **The Board approved the updated policies.**	
12.	**Committee Reports & Minutes** • Learning & Skills – 23/02/2026 • Culture & Heritage – 17/03/2026 • Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Music Hub Partnership Board – 26/03/2026 • Finance & Audit – 28/04/2026 **The Board noted the minutes.**	
14.	**AOB** • None.	
15.	**Forthcoming meeting and events** • Board development finance session – Thurs 18th June 2026, 4 to 5.30pm – Teams • Board meeting - Tues 15th Sept 2026, 4 to 6pm – High Pavement House & Teams • AGM – Weds 30th Sept 2026, 2.30 to 3pm – Arnold Library & Online • 10th Birthday Celebration Evening– Weds 14th Nov 2026, 6.30 to 8pm – Mansfield Central Library • 10th Birthday Celebration Afternoon – Weds 4th Nov 2026, 3 to 4.30pm – Beeston Library • Board development session – Sat 7th Nov 2026, 10am to 2pm – Arnold Library • Tues 24th Nov 2026, 4 to 6pm – Beeston Library & Teams • Inspire Christmas Concert – Mon 7th Dec 2026, 6.30 to 9pm – Royal Concert Hall & Online	
17.	**Meeting Review – opportunity for chair/vice to discuss all aspects of the board meeting** • MM offered members the opportunity to discuss the meeting.	

Noting of approved minutes	
Name:	**Margot Madin**
Signature:	
Title:	**Chair of Inspire Board**
Date:	**14/05/2026**

Inspire Youth Arts
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Able Orchestra

Review of Able Orchestra (AO) 2024-2026

- Creative Production and team
- AO delivery model
- AO Pioneers (young leaders)
- Marketing and Communications
- Events and performances
- AO evaluation and impact
- Future and fundraising

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Able Orchestra

Able Orchestra (AO) enables disabled* young people aged 11-25 across Nottinghamshire to engage in high-quality music and digital art, using digital accessible instruments and tools alongside analogue instruments.

AO is led by professional artists, creatives and mentors with progression routes into the creative industries.

* we use the term 'disabled young people' to mean any young person with a physical and/or learning disability and/or who are neurodivergent.

Description: Five young performers are on stage some are singing into microphones, one is playing guitar and another is playing the CMPSR. All wear yellow AO t-shirts.

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Photo at AO 360 at Fletchers Theatre November 2025

AO Creative Producers and Team

Able Orchestra

Creative Producers: Inspire Youth Arts

- Inspire Youth Arts Manager – Rebecca Streets
- Creative Producer – Megan Dawes
- Senior Producer – Jennifer Manderson-Smith
- Technicians- Brendon Gravell and Lokki Li

Inspire

- Management, finance, marketing & comms

Freelance team:

- Music artists – digital accessible instruments/technology
- Digital artists
- Disabled artists mentors
- Marketing Officer
- Evaluator
- Film/photographers

AO Steering group

- Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Music Hub
- Orchestras Live
- SEND setting partners
- Disabled artists

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Description: Digital Artist Natasha is supporting a young person with a CMPSR instrument and he is drawing on an iPad.
Photo at Able Orchestra North ensemble session.

Able Orchestra

AO Delivery Model

- AO Taster sessions
- AO ensembles (North, South, Beech Academy)
- AO@TOL (The Old Library)
- AO 1:1's
- AO Pioneers (young leaders)
- Performances
- Conferences

Description: Lead Musician Ben is supporting a young person with a CMPSR instrument during an AO 1:1 session.
Photo at Ash Lea School, Cotgrave.

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AO Pioneers - young leaders

Able Orchestra

- Mentoring from professional disabled music mentors
- Creation of original music – individually and as a group
- Recordings and releases
- Album launch
- Mixing and mastering
- Co-delivery (teaching) with AO artists to other disabled young people
- Advocacy work
- Podcast series
- Development of digital technology
- Work with professional musicians/ensembles

Description: Two AO Pioneers are high fiving and smiling at each other. Their CMPSR instruments are attached to their wheelchairs.
Photo at Unlocked, Nottingham Contemporary, April 2025.

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AO marketing and comms

Able Orchestra

- Visual identity – wordmark, consistent fonts, colourways, icons which connect to IYA and Inspire's identity
- Accessible formats
- Social media assets
- Updated website structure
- Improved visibility
- Increase engagement
- New webpages
- New social media channels
- Able Orchestra | Inspire - Culture, Learning, Libraries

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Able Orchestra

Performances

- Unlocked
- AO 360
- HRH Princess Anne – SENSE
- Music Mark
- MEHEM
- Inspire Awards
- Inspire Christmas Concert
- Hockley Hustle Festival, Nottingham
- Kings Mill Hospital
- Performances in SEND settings

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AO in numbers

372 young people took part in AO activities in some way over eighteen months up to March 2026.

11 regular AO North members

Image: A group of young people wearing yellow Able Orchestra t-shirts on stage performing.

6 regular AO South members

Image: A group of people on stage performing on guitar, CMPSR, clarinet and singing. They are wearing black, yellow and pink Able Orchestra t-shirts.

7 AO Pioneers

Image: A group photo of the AO Pioneers, their artists/mentors and IYA staff smiling. 1 person is holding a guitar.

241 workshops and rehearsal sessions

Image: 2 young people in a classroom. One is calling something out with their hand next to their mouth. The other is playing CMPSR.

Image: 2 people from behind sitting down, playing CMPSRs and looking at a laptop on a table.

30 taster workshops involving **292** young people

Image: 7 musicians are centre stage playing. The Able Orchestra logo is projected behind them. Audiences are seated watching.

14 performances to audiences of **1,432** people

Able Orchestra

Evaluations, reports and resources

- Case studies
- Online questionnaires
- 1:1 and small group interviews
- Meetings with creative practitioners

- Full internal evaluation report
- Public facing evaluation summary
- ACE final report
- AO review film

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Impact, creative content and highlights

Able Orchestra

- Films
- Showreels
- Behind the scenes
- Podcasts
- Recordings
- Access content

Able Orchestra highlights | Inspire - Culture, Learning, Libraries

"When I came across Able Orchestra, that was really exciting for me, because it was the first time I had been able to feel properly involved. I was surrounded by music, but often felt, honestly, quite sad that I couldn't properly participate, so Able Orchestra has given me an amazing way to do that. The inclusion and the community, where I don't feel like I need to fight to be included – it's hard to do justice to how much it has meant to me. I think it's changed my life, really giving me a completely unique opportunity."

(Athena Troke – AO Pioneer featured right)

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Able Orchestra

AO Future plans

- Commissioned a business modelling report
- Fundraising plans
- to support existing model
- Beech Academy part of Nexus Academy Trust – National Lottery Project Grant – Academic year Sept 2026- end Nov 2027
- Develop long-term fundraising campaign
- Recent success: Newark PiPP funds AO Newark ensemble

Performers are on stage with instruments, djembe drums, music stands and digital equipment, a performer is sat on a drum in the centre, the work 'Equality' is projected behind.

Photo at AO 360, November 2025, Fletchers Theatre

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Any Questions?

Please contact:

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