

Title of Meeting:	Inspire Board –Minutes
Location:	Inspire College, High Pavement House & *Teams Webinar
Date:	Tuesday 12th May 2026
Time:	4 to 6pm
Attendees:	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 Cllr Dawn Justice – NCC Appointed Margot Madin – Co Opted Director, chair Emma Pitchford – Staff Elected Director Cllr Jody Stoll – NCC Appointed
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

Agenda No.	Agenda Subject	Action
1.	<u>Learning Spotlight</u> Simon Cook, Head of Inspire College gave board members a tour of the facilities and highlighted another incredible year of GCSE English and Maths re-sits pass rate results for Inspire College students.	
2.	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u> - Apologies received from: - Sophie Collier - Member Elected Director - Vicki Dunstall – Co Opted Director - Diana Meale – Member Elected Director - Claudine White – Head of Communities, Culture and Protection, NCC	
3.	<u>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</u> - Members then agreed that the minutes from 12th May 2026 were a true and accurate record and were happy to approve. - Matters arising: - Item 2 Volunteering Membership – data has been cleansed. - Item 5 Safeguarding Training – last board member to complete as soon as possible.	
4.	<u>Declaration of Conflicts and Interests</u> DJ and JS are councillors for Nottinghamshire County Council.	
5.	<u>CEO Update</u> - PG presented an update on the current development and delivery of Inspire services and highlighted items for members to note. <u>Quality Assured Minor Works</u> – board members previously approved the use of an agreed allocation on a range of small refresh projects. These are scheduled for completion this September at Bingham, Beeston, Carlton libraries. Carlton Hill has been delayed until spring 2027. <u>Sustainable Inspire</u> – Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) have approved a £1.6M scheme to relocate Sutton Library to Brooke Street and create a state of the art library and learning centre due to open in late summer 2027.	

	• <u>Pay Award 2026/27</u> – Inspire adheres to the local government national pay bargaining which has been agreed at 3.3% and will be applied and back dated to all staff (excluding music teachers). The same offer has been made to music trade union colleagues and Inspire is awaiting agreement. New pay rates and back dated award will be made in the October payroll. • Release of annual National Portfolio Organisation video • <u>Dashboard Performance</u> - on target and no areas of concern. RH asked for more information regarding the increase in stress related absence. KE to find out more and look for any trends. There will also be another staff survey carried out in the autumn. MM asked if vacancy lag was contributing to stress. PG responded that Inspire has a strong approach to health and wellbeing and its sickness absence rate is significantly lower than other local government organisations. MM noted that the library service engagement figure seemed high. PG explained Inspire were exceeding targets and ALM added that these were monitored at every quarterly contract meeting and NCC is comfortable with the statistics and reflects the use of libraries and Inspire's performance. • <u>Funding Awards</u> – Pride in Place Worksoptown Board for events and activities, National Archives for Discover Creative Careers and Arts Council England (ACE) for Baby Steps to Wellbeing. NCC Crisis Resilience Funding (CRF) to help deliver a programme of services by adult learning and libraries. A report outlining the scheme will be provided to the board at a later date. • <u>Funding Applications</u> – Kirkby North Gateway Project collaboration which will hopefully produce a new library for Kirkby. • <u>Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)</u> – PG's update included the recent announcement by the government to pause the programme. Most members attended the recent LGR briefing sessions so feel informed of Inspire's strategic approach and considerations. The board development day in November may be rescheduled to early Spring depending on the announcement. Inspire's contract with NCC finishes on 31st March 2028 so will have to make plans for recontracting beyond March 2028. ALM confirmed that this is also on NCC's radar. • JS asked for more detail regarding Inspire's cyber security strategy and costs since separating from NCC ICT services. PG explained that overall the separation has saved money and the in-house ICT team are focused and have worked hard to ensure the network is robust. A Cyber, Data & ICT Assurance report is presented annually to the Finance & Audit Committee and Cyber Essentials application has just been submitted which will be followed within 90 days with Cyber Essentials Plus. A Cyber Governance Code of Practice was brought to the board in November 2025 and an ICT and Data assurance report is made to the Finance and Audit committee each November. The Board: noted the progress and performance of the organisation approved the annual pay award 2026/27 approved the strategic approach to LGR	<u>KE</u> <u>PG</u>
6.	<u>Statutory Reports & Accounts 2025/26</u> • MA presented Inspire's report and accounts for 2025/26 and was pleased to report that the audit went very well. The Finance & Audit Committee have reviewed the accounts and committee members and auditors were very pleased with the report and audit and highly complementary of MA and her team particularly for her work on VAT treatment. • The report and accounts will be presented to Inspire members at the AGM on 30th September 2026. The board approved the 2025/26 statutory reports and accounts.	
7.	<u>Finance Update</u> • MA presented period 3 management accounts for April to June 2026. The reforecast for the full year shows a predicted deficit of £94k compared to the originally budgeted deficit of £103k. The original budget included a pay award of 2.5%. The forecast includes the	

	3.3% pay award, the impact of the additional 0.8% and the assumption that NCC will cover the additional £78k for contracted services. - MA noted that the Reserves table has been presented slightly differently to be brought in line with the statutory accounts. - The Medium Term Financial Plan did not go beyond March 2028 due to LGR however, because of the review announcement a new plan extending beyond March 2028 will be presented at the next Finance & Audit meeting. The current plan assumes that that a 2.5% pay award will be made but this may change. For Learning it is assumed that income will remain at a standstill. Inspire Music plan reflects the reduction in employer contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme from April 2027. - JH asked where Inspire needs to be financially in terms of negotiating for the next contract. PG explained that the principles of the organisation are not about making money but being financially secure and having reserves in order to be a going concern. Inspire is now in a strong position and will continue to operate in the same way. A key element of Inspire's contract is NCC's contribution to financial pressures around inflation. - RH thanked MA for the helpful supporting notes to the report and gave credit on how well Inspire manages the pay award and its overall finances. - MA advised that the Finance & Audit Committee had reviewed and approved minor amends to the Financial Regulations along with a decision to support the divestment of Inspire's cash funds with more ethical banking organisations. MA to provide a report for November board meeting. RH asked how often the Reserves policy was reviewed. MA confirmed it was reviewed annually and can be found on Inspire's website. The Board: noted period 3 2026/27 Management Accounts and Reforecast Position noted the Forecast 2026/27 Reserves Position noted the Balance Sheet as at 30/06/2026 noted the Cash Flow for July 2026 – October 2027 noted the Medium Term Financial Plan to March 2028	<u>MA</u>
8.	<u>Annual Compliments & Complaints Report</u> KE presented the annual report and was pleased to inform members that compliments have increased and complaints have decreased. Inspire's level of complaints remains very low especially when considering the huge number of customer and learner interactions. Centralised monitoring and reporting are in place to ensure excellent customer service and reports are reviewed at management team and NCC contract meetings to identify any trends and required actions. During the year there has been a high level of compliments across all areas and most complaints related to the implementation of the new library management system and heating. The Board noted the report.	
9.	<u>Annual Impact Report</u> - KE explained that Inspire staff are asked to send in their stories of where they have made a difference to people. The annual impact report goes some way towards showing how they go above and beyond and the impact it has on people's lives. - Members very much enjoyed the report. RH asked if it was shared with the whole organisation as a really positive way of celebrating the wonderful things staff have done. KE will share in the staff bulletin and with volunteers. JS asked if it could also be shared with NCC Comms team. The Board noted the report and its use for advocacy.	<u>KE</u>
10.	<u>Safeguarding Update Report 2025/26</u> PGu highlighted that overall, the picture remains positive. Consistent reporting processes are embedded across Inspire and staff are well engaged and receive training throughout the year. The safeguarding framework continues to provide effective oversight and assurance across the services.	

	• Inspire staff have remained effective in handling incidents of mental health issues and self harm and referrals are appropriately handled and support offered. • PGu will continue to monitor trends and emerging risks and look at staff development, sourcing resources and training particularly for college staff as most incidents occur within Inspire Learning. JHD asked if some of the training could be available for volunteers. • RH asked if there was any insight to the peak in incidence numbers during November 2025 and if any preparations could be made to anticipate another peak. PGu explained that is when learners are coming on to programme and beginning to build trust with tutors who begin to be aware of issues they are facing, as well some late joiners and refining of the enrolment process that all contribute to the peak. The Board noted the report.	<u>PGu</u>
11.	<u>Policy Review</u> • KE presented the following policies for discussion and approval: • <u>Safeguarding Policy</u> – PGu advised that a new member of the safeguarding working group who was previously a headteacher had brought a fresh approach. The policy has been thoroughly reviewed and amended including a revised volunteers section, keeping children safe in education update and increase in number of posts requiring DBS checks. RH asked if Inspire are confident that a policy that covers both children and adults gives as much care and attention to adults as children and young people particularly because of the number of interactions in libraries. KE explained that Inspire’s approach is different because of the different services involved, relationships with adults are usually less intense and the policies are more around how to report issues. PGu added that there had been an increase in adult learning referrals which shows that the process is working despite the library setting being more transactional and harder to build trust. PGu will be providing safeguarding training at the library staff conference in February 2027. PG added staff will also receive training on promoting and working with adults as part of the Crisis Resilience programme. • <u>Prevent Policy</u> – PGu to provide training for board members: RH commented on the overlap with Hate Crime and that this is a critical area to watch out for. KE advised that Inspire are running staff training sessions on managing situations in response to a recent increase in Hate Crime. • <u>Attendance Management Policy All Staff</u> – updated to meet current legislation and to have one policy for all staff (previously 2 policies, one for TUPE’d staff and another for those who joined after 2016). • <u>Acting Up & Honoraria Policy All Staff</u> – previously an appendix to the Pay Policy but has been made into a separate policy for ease and clarity. • <u>Pay Policy Post April 2016</u> – reviewed and new section on Market Supplements added. RH asked who can ask for a job evaluation and can they appeal if they don’t agree. KE advised that an employee and manager can request a job evaluation but no process of appeal and a need has never arisen. • <u>Reference Request Policy All Staff</u> – a new policy to provide a framework. Written with feedback and advice from trade union members. • <u>Domestic Abuse Policy & Guidance</u> – reviewed and updated. RH asked at what point would a safeguarding referral be desirable. KE advised that any manager with concerns would take advice from their safeguarding lead if needed. DJ felt that this could potentially worsen the situation and probably the best route would be to refer and work with the professional support organisations. The Board approved the policies.	
12.	<u>Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Music Hub Partnership Board Update</u> • Inspire as the Hub Lead Organisation continues to meet the reporting requirements of ACE. The partnership board is meeting on 23rd September to review governance and latest feedback from ACE.	

	- Nottinghamshire Music Hub is forecasting a surplus and Nottingham Music Service a small deficit for academic year 2025/26. The updated music plan, finance and performance reports will be presented at the next Inspire Board meeting in November. - The hubs depend on schools buying into the music service so the next priority is to reach low-engaging schools targeting children, young people with special needs and children in care. An improved progression timeline so young people can track their success and see future goals. In general, buyback from school is encouraging and Inspire Music has successfully recruited 5 excellent new teachers. - PG advised that it has just been announced that the Department for Education has awarded the contract for the new National Centre for Arts Education to a three way partnership with Etio, Birmingham Conservatoire and Chartered Institute of Teachers. PG hoped that the strength of the work from ACE goes forward without heavy governance and will have to wait and see how this may affect funding. The Board noted the update.	
13.	<u>Risk Log</u> - KE advised that the only risk that has changed is the reduction/ improvement of the financial risk that the contract price from NCC is reduced. - Formatting error - to change risk 7 from red to amber. The Board noted the risk register.	<u>KE</u>
14.	<u>Committee Minutes</u> - Culture & Heritage on 16/06/2026 - Learning & Skills on 23/06/2026 - Finance & Audit on 08/09/2026 The board noted the committee minutes.	
15.	<u>AOB</u> PG to provide DJ with an Inspire College case study to share Inspire's approach for use in DJ's role with East Midlands Combined County Authority.	<u>PG/DJ</u>
15.	<u>Forthcoming meeting and events</u> - Inspire AGM on Weds 30th Sept, 2.30 to 3.15pm – Arnold Library & Online - Inspire Board Development Finance Session on Thurs 8th Oct, 4 to 5.30pm – Online 10th Celebration Evening on Weds 14th Oct, 6.30 to 8pm – Mansfield Central Library 10th Celebration Afternoon on Weds 4th Nov, 3 to 4.30pm – Beeston Library - Inspire Board Development Day on Sat 7th Nov, 10am to 2pm – Arnold Library - TBC - Tues 24th Nov, 4 to 6pm – Beeston Library & Online - An Inspired Christmas Concert on Mon 7th Dec, 6.15 to 9pm – Royal Concert Hall & Online	
17.	<u>Meeting Review – opportunity for chair/vice to discuss all aspects of the board meeting</u> MM offered members the opportunity to discuss the meeting.	

Noting of approved minutes	
Name:	Margot Madin
Signature:	
Title:	Chair of Inspire Board
Date:	