

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES**CULTURE, LEARNING AND LIBRARIES – INSPIRE: DEVELOPMENT UPDATE AND SIXTH YEAR REVIEW****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Committee on the development of Inspire in the delivery of cultural, learning and library services across Nottinghamshire and its achievements in the sixth year of operation.

Information**Context**

2. Inspire – Culture, Learning and Libraries (Midlands) was established as an independent Community Benefit Society with charitable status in June 2015 and commenced the delivery a range of cultural and learning services on behalf of the County Council from 1st April 2016. The change in operating model was part of the Council's 'Redefining Your Council' strategic vision and identified as part of the 'Strategy for Nottinghamshire's Libraries' approved by full council in December 2011.
3. Inspire has a contractual arrangement with the Council which outlines the scope and range of services to be delivered on the council's behalf. A detailed services specification and performance mechanism has been established and is reviewed and reported on between the Council and Inspire on a regular basis. This initial five year agreement was renewed by the County Council for a further five years in April 2021.
4. Inspire acts as the council's agent in the delivery of its contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to provide adult community learning and 16-18 college programmes.
5. Inspire is also contracted by Arts Council England (ACE) as a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) and to host the Nottinghamshire Music Education Hub (NMEH).
6. A high level of service delivery has been maintained and further developed since April 2016.
7. Staff transferred to Inspire on 1st April 2016 and are employed by the Society as well as being members and have an elected staff member on the Inspire board.
8. In addition to the smooth transfer of staff, senior staff of Inspire have established systems and policies to enable the organisation to be financially robust, be compliant with legislation, maintain its charitable status, ensure it can meet its contractual agreements and agreed levels of performance.

9. This report and an accompanying presentation by the Chief Executive Officer of Inspire will inform the Committee of progress since April 2021.

Review of Year Six

Performance and Quality Assurance

10. Inspire has met most performance requirements as laid out within the service specification and reported quarterly to the council. Some targets have not been achieved due to covid restrictions on the provision of Inspire services and the overall restrictions customers and learners have experienced in the last year. However due to expansion of the online and remote range of services provided since April 2020, overall annual engagement with library services is projected to be over 3.2 million.
11. Inspire has also achieved several external accreditations and awards to validate its performance. These include:
 - **Customer Service Excellence (CSE)** – Inspire wide accreditation with 8 compliance plus areas identified (March 2022)
 - **MATRIX** – Inspire wide accreditation to the national Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) standard (March 2022)

Inspire is also working towards the Investors in Diversity (IID) standard, being Alzheimer friendly, the Sunflower scheme and breast-feeding friendly schemes.

Reaccreditation for the Archives service is due later in 2022, with libraries due to undertake the new national libraries accreditation assessment in 2023.

Finance

12. Inspire achieved £1m savings as it went live in April 2016 including £500,000 from the change to charitable status of the new organisation.
13. The initial 5-year contract period (2016 – 2021) delivered a further total of £1.2M of savings for the council.
13. Inspire as an independent organisation and employer has been able to drive through greater efficiencies and has been flexible enough within the first contract period to manage financial pressures without reduction of service provision.
14. Inspire continues as a financial going concern and continues to deliver value for money across its range of services

Entrepreneurial Dividend/Grants/Continuous Improvement

15. Inspire applied to the Arts Council England (ACE) to become a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) to deliver cultural programmes through the library network aimed at children and young people. Inspire was awarded £1M between 2018 – 2022. Inspire is one of only 6 library-based organisations to be awarded NPO status. Due to Covid 19 this award has been extended by a further year. An application to remain an NPO 2023-2026 will be undertaken during 2022.

16. Bidding for further grants will be pursued within the framework of the strategic aims of the organisation and where greatest impact can be made.
17. Since 2016 the amount of additional grant funding brought into Nottinghamshire by Inspire has amounted to £4.4M, with an additional £890K through partnership bids.

Governance

18. The independent Inspire board has been operating since April 2016 and is now fully established. The board has established committees to scrutinise and support the development of the organisation. These include: Music; Culture and Heritage; Learning and Skills; Finance and Audit; Staffing and Standards and Development.
19. Inspire continues to gain from the wide-ranging skills and experience of board members.
20. Inspire membership is drawn from staff and members of the public over the age of 16. A review of the membership roll is currently underway.

Achievements / Highlights

21. During a second year dominated by the Covid emergency, Inspire has maintained a range of services whilst adhering to the changing covid guidance and restrictions.
22. All services have provided a level of service during the whole of the year with a mixture of face to face, home delivery and virtual services.
23. Since restrictions ended in July 2021, a planned approach to service recovery has been undertaken. A particular focus has been on regaining library footfall and enrolment of adult learners as core users of Inspire services.
24. Inspire has also focussed on supporting communities to reconnect, business growth, employment and specific support for children and those young people we work with through the Inspire Learning College and Inspire Youth Arts.
25. Recovery was progressing well during the autumn of 2021, until the Omicron variant became dominant, which had a negative impact on people's confidence and willingness to visit public places. However, since the start of 2022 there are positive indications that the recovery is progressing well, and audiences returning.
26. Business Innovation and Patent Centres (BIPC) is a national network of business support centres provided in partnership between local library services and the British Library (BL). Through a new partnership with Nottingham City Libraries and the BL, Inspire has established 3 satellite centres in Beeston, Mansfield and Sutton Libraries. This initiative provides support to new and growing small businesses and gives access to a range of business support, market and patent information sources held by the BL.
27. Light Night 2022 showcased Inspire's creative and artistic work with young people to create and produce a digital light installation at St Mary's church, which received 4,500 visitors. In addition, a dance performance by Nottinghamshire young people alongside the Tom Dale dance company was performed at the Nottingham Contemporary with all 4 performances being sold out.

28. The Able Orchestra is a project to ensure talented disabled and able young people, and professional musicians are brought together to create and perform music. A recent immersive performance at Portland Colleges new theatre was performed with the Chairman of the County Council in attendance. This original piece, titled Immersion used traditional instruments, electronic sounds (some taken from Papplewick pumping station) and live digital light projections. This formed part of the Minor 2 Major project.
29. Inspire Music are actively supporting the development of talented young people to excel in music. Working in partnership with Orchestra's Live a project titled 'Tributaries' supported gifted young musicians to compose and perform remotely and live at the Royal Concert Hall in Nottingham. This is in addition to the ongoing partnership Inspire has developed with the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain to develop, support and give Nottinghamshire young people access to choral teaching of the highest quality.
30. Inspire Learning College is the new name for the study programme for 16–18-year-olds. Over the last two year this programme has continued through a mixture of face to face and online teaching. Face to face vocational training in hospitality and construction continued through restrictions.
31. Library services for children are as popular as ever and as restrictions lifted demand for Bookstart, rattle rhyme roll sessions, children's theatre and summer reading scheme has been very high. Over 8,000 children participated in the summer reading challenge 2021.
32. Libraries are well placed in local communities to host a range of community activities. Following the lifting of restrictions in July 2021 regular meetings and activities have returned. Through the community makers volunteering programme launched in September 2021 the range of new opportunities for people to connect has increased. The development of 'Places of Welcome' is offering a weekly opportunity for people to meet for tea/coffee, chat and connect.
33. Community and family learning provided a range of online courses and returned to face-to-face courses in August. Now offering a mixture of online, face to face and blended courses access has improved.

Investment

34. The County Council approved funding to upgrade the public computer and network facilities which will be completed during 2022. The importance of providing digital access has been highlighted during the pandemic.
35. During 2022/23 the council will undertake refurbishment of 6 small libraries part funded through a grant award from the DCMS Libraries Investment Fund. This will focus on improving establishing these small libraries as village hubs. Libraries included are Bircotes, Blidworth, Bilsthorpe, Burton Joyce, Langold and Woodthorpe.
36. Through towns fund investment at Stapleford, Sutton and Kirkby Libraries will be made to develop additional learning facilities.

Customer and Learner Satisfaction

37. Across all services areas there is a regular process of gaining satisfaction levels and feedback. Complaints are very low and outnumbered by compliments, both are reported to the Council monthly. Customer and learner satisfaction levels (good or very good) target of 90% is set within the performance specification.

Covid 19 – Recovery

38. Inspire will focus its service offer on economic and community recovery.
39. Inspire as an employer is participated in the governments kick start employment support scheme which offered 6 months of paid work experience for 18-25-year olds. Inspire hosted 20 places.
40. Inspire will launched its membership volunteering and engagement programme 'Community Makers' in September 2021 to enable greater use of local skills and support to help communities to re connect and recover. A focus on well-being activity, reaching those who are isolated at home and promoting libraries as places of welcome and connection has been prioritised across Inspire. The learning programme will continue to offer a range of wellbeing courses and Inspire will work with ABL Health to support healthy lifestyles.

Relationship with the Council and Stakeholders

41. The Council has a good working relationship with the organisation and maintains two nominated places on its main board. The Council also has board observer status for senior officers.
42. The Local Government Association and Arts Council England peer review of Library services undertaken in February 2021 highlighted the good relationship with the council and opportunities to ensure the service and wider Inspire services can further deliver council priorities and objectives.
43. An agreed communications protocol between the Council and Inspire was approved by the former Culture Committee and is working well.
44. Other funders, Arts Council England, Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency, continue to engage in a positive way with Inspire.
45. Good working relationships have been developed with a range of organisations, including – Nottingham Playhouse, Lakeside Arts University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University, First Arts Creative People and Places, The Royal Concert Hall Nottingham, NYCGB, The Harley Foundation, UNESCO City of Literature, BFI / Broadway Cinema, Orchestras Live, Fun Palaces, York Explore, LibrariesUnlimited and Suffolk Libraries, Nottingham City libraires, ABL Health, REACH, West Notts College, Portland College, District Councils and DWP.

Other Options Considered

46. No other options were considered.

Reason for Recommendation

47. To enable the Committee to exercise its delegated responsibility.

Statutory and Policy Implications

48. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

49. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

1) To endorse the development of Inspire in the delivery of cultural, learning and library services across Nottinghamshire and its achievements in the sixth year of operations.

Derek Higton

Service Director, Place and Communities

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Constitutional Comments (EP 11/03/2022)

50. The Communities Committee is the appropriate body to consider the contents of this report.

Financial Comments (RWK 10/03/2022)

51. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Launch of Inspire – report to Culture Committee 19 April 2016
- Inspire communications and marketing activity protocol – report to Culture Committee 1 November 2016
- Inspire review and Forward Plan 2020 - October 2017
www.inspireculture.org.uk/uploads/documents/IAR_for_web.pdf
- Inspire Annual Review 2020/21 – October 2021 (digital only)
www.inspireculture.org.uk/about-us/annual-review-2020-21/

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All.