

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES****CULTURE, LEARNING AND LIBRARIES – INSPIRE: DEVELOPMENT  
UPDATE AND FIFTH 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 fifth year of operation and outline its response to Covid 19.

**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.
4. A high level of service delivery has been maintained and further developed since April 2016.
5. Staff transferred to Inspire on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and are members of the new Society and have an elected staff member on the Inspire board.
6. 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.
7. This report and an accompanying presentation by the Chief Executive Officer of Inspire will inform the Committee of progress since April 2020.

## Review of Year Five

### Performance and Quality Assurance

9. Inspire has met the range of performance requirements as laid out within the service specification and reported quarterly to the council.
10. Inspire has also achieved several external accreditations and awards to validate its performance. These include:
  - **Customer Service Excellence (CSE)** – Inspire wide accreditation
  - **Family Arts Campaign** – Winner of the Best Family Welcome Award 2018
  - **ILM** – accreditation as approved leaning centre for leadership and management
  - **MATRIX** – Inspire wide accreditation to the national Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) standard
  - **RSL** – approved accreditation centre for music qualifications
  - **TES Awards 2020** – best adult and community learning provider

### Finance

11. Inspire achieved £1m savings as it went live in April 2016 including £500,000 from the change to charitable status of the new organisation.
12. The initial 5 year contract period (2016 – 2021) delivered in total of £1.2M of savings for the council.
  - Reduction in contract price £443K
  - Absorbed inflationary pressures £762 K
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.

### Entrepreneurial Dividend/Grants/Continuous Improvement

14. 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 award £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 2023-2027 will be undertaken during 2022.
15. Bidding for further grants will be pursued within the framework of the strategic aims of the organisation and where greatest impact can be made. The following additional funding amounts have been awarded -
  1. Miner 2 Major learning and cultural activity 2019-2023 HLF - £850K
  2. Dementia film screening – NCC LIS grant
  3. Way2Way – ESF funded employability project (2020 – 2023) - £741K
  4. Kirkby and Skegby libraries garden/wildlife schemes – NCC LIS grant
  5. Old Library improving disability access project – NCC LIS grant

## Governance

16. 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.
17. Inspire continues to gain from the wide-ranging skills and experience of board members.

## Achievements/Highlights

18. During a year dominated by the Covid emergency, Inspire has maintained a range of services whilst adhering to covid guidance and restrictions

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.

**Public Libraries** have provided a range of click and collect, home delivery, e resources, information helpline through out the year, and where permissible have offered browsing, borrowing, access to computers, printing, scanning and study spaces. On the two occasions where libraries reopened after lockdown many customers said *'How lovely to see you all, and thank goodness you are open again, and how wonderful it is to be back.'*

The award of additional resources from DCMS to provide additional e book titles and fund the 'reading friends' befriending projects in addition to its home delivery service has enabled the library service to reach those who have been isolated during the pandemic. Loans of e magazines, audio and newspapers have increased by 86%. E book loans have increased by 200%. Over 107 hours of befriending calls have been made with feedback including "Your calls have been so uplifting for me, I don't see and hear from anyone for days" and *'..she has no one else to chat to, to reminisce with and she has enjoyed doing that'. 'Nobody else wants to know. It's lovely to chat when someone is interested, and you get a connection...'*

Customers comments in relation to click and collect *'it's been a life line', 'I'm so relieved that I can still get hold of books despite not being able to come in', 'It's taken one little worry away'*. Following re opening of Worksop library as customer who has been using the library for over 64 years said *'When people say what is the best thing you can think of in life, the library comes on the top of the list as it is free and informative and always a pleasure to visit. It helped me learn about people, lands, poetry, local history and so much more.'*

The wide range of cultural and community events usually undertaken were cancelled, however key programmes including Big Draw 2020 and the annual charity knitting challenge, which this year was part of the Mayflower commemoration continued, with 776 hats donated to Knit for Peace.

**Inspire Learning** – the adult and family learning programme moved all its curriculum online by June 2020 with 6450 learners enrolled. The study programme for young people has through safe classroom teaching and home online teaching enable them to continue to complete their studies and gain qualifications.

An adult learner who achieved a maths qualification said *'I couldn't have done it without you, I have learnt more than I ever did at school...thank you so much..'*

A study programme learners parent said *'you are more hands on than school was' "the tutor has been really good at considering our emotions' 'Inspire has provided a good starting block for my son .. he was raring to go even online during lockdown'*

**Archives and heritage services** – a new online research and reprographics service has enabled customers to access the rich collections Inspire holds. Use and development of the picture archive has carried on and included specific activities to support 75th anniversaries of VE and VJ day, the 400 anniversary of the mayflower alongside a whole range of online talks and presentations about the rich cultural and historical heritage of Nottinghamshire. 19 online family history surgeries were held with Ancestry sessions increasing by 90.7% (30,742) compared with 2019.

The Colour of love film screening had 156 bookings with very positive feedback including *'This was so amazing I got so much out of it very emotional which I didn't expect thank you.'*

Inspire held a weeklong History and Imagination programme of talks with 210 households logging on. Feedback was positive and included the following comments: *'I hope you will continue to do zoom events after lockdown ends because it's enabled my elderly parents to attend who would otherwise find it difficult'*

*'I was very impressed by the speaker Sarah, so enthusiastic and informative....'*

*'A real treat thank you. Off to do some research about the Land army now.'*

*'I really wanted to thank you for the two talks I attended online, Arbella and Austen & Byron. Both we're outstanding'*

**Inspire Youth Arts** continued to work with young people through online song writing, dance and performance workshops. Comments from young people have included *'IYA has benefitted me in lockdown working with Tom as it's given me a sense of normality and purpose during this lockdown.'* and *'I believe that all of your students Nina are benefited by your support and encouragement in ways that if for no other reason, is important to mental health.'*

**Inspire Music** continued to teach music to individual pupils and whole classes in 74% of its schools. Feedback from schools has been appreciative of the continued agile approach of the service to teach music. Comments included, *'We used it with over two hundred children in school - they were singing ..all day long !' ' .. went to sleep tonight saying she was dreaming about playing the violin in an orchestra'*

The annual Christmas concert at The Royal Concert Hall moved online and had 1330 viewings on the evening, which would indicate an audience of over 3,000 people on the night.

**Education Library Services** offered a project loan and showroom visits (when permitted) throughout the year, offering schools valued access to resources. Demand during the pandemic saw a significant increase. The service also launched a new book award InspiREAD2020 which promoted reading to pupil via an online format. Feedback from teachers has been consistently positive about the quality of the service and the range of books available. One teacher wrote *'our children have had access to books, which they would never have had if it wasn't for your service.'*

## Inspire Online

During the year, significant development of an online cultural, heritage, learning and reading offer was undertaken. Inspire Online ([inspireculture.org.uk/online](http://inspireculture.org.uk/online)) brings together a significant range of original and third-party resources and content for customers and learners. The Inspire web site was re-engineered within weeks of lock down in March 2020 and has grown during the following months. From story times, family craft activities, ancestry to adapted audio podcasts, courses, online book clubs and live events, the online offer has become a key aspect of service delivery during 2020.

An evening with poet Laurette Simon Armitage in September 2020 was well received by over 150 people and received positive feedback including *“A wonderful opportunity to hear a poet reading their own poetry & answering questions. We have been starved of these experiences 'in the flesh' due to Covid so this was a great way of trying to allow people to engage with poets 'live' again.*

Investment

**ASK Inspire** – is the central information and helpline which operated throughout the whole year. The team supported customers and learners in accessing online resources, answering questions, signposting to help and being a kind voice in a difficult time. Feedback has been universally positive, including many comments like *‘ Ask Inspire and the milkman have been vital during lockdown. You lot are top notch! I'm really glad to have you in lockdown! and ‘Thank you so much for all the information. What a brilliant service.’*

## Investment

The County Council approved funding to upgrade the public computer and network facilities which will be completed during 2021. The importance of providing digital access has been highlighted during the last year, with covid guidance allowing libraries to provide essential access.

During 2020 Retford library was completely refurbished creating a modern library sympathetic to the historic nature of the original buildings. In addition, Ladybrook library was refurbished and Worksop library restored following devastating flooding in November 2019. Inspire also invested in refreshing Eastbourne House reception, teaching rooms and offices and undertook the redecoration of 20 libraries whilst closed.

## Customer and Learner satisfaction

19. 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.

## Staff Feedback

20. During the transition process staff were highly engaged in developing the new organisation and its values.

A staff well being and 'ways of working' survey was undertaken in July 2020 and with a follow up survey in January 2021 to gauge the position of staff during the Covid period and to review working methods and accommodation needs.

### **Covid 19 – recovery**

21. Inspire will focus its service offer on economic and community recovery.
22. In supporting the economy Inspire will be working with the County Council and other partners to support business and job seekers. This will include the Way2Work programme, creation of job clubs, re focus of learning courses on business skills. A new business patents, innovation and information service with support from the British Library will be established in 2021. This is in addition to the current provision of ICT, Wifi, printing, desk and meeting spaces used by small or new business start-ups.
23. Inspire as an employer is participating in the governments kick start employment support scheme which will offer 6 months of paid work experience for 18-25-year olds. Inspire is currently aiming to offer 32 places. Also acting as a gateway provider working with partners an additional 35 placements have been identified.
24. Inspire will launch its membership volunteering and engagement programme 'Community Makers' during 2021 in order 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 will be prioritised across Inspire in the coming period. 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**

25. 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.
26. 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. A separate report will be presented outlining an action plan to a future committee.
- 27.. An agreed communications protocol between the Council and Inspire was approved by the former Culture Committee and is working well.
28. Other funders, Arts Council England, Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency, continue to engage in a positive way with Inspire.
29. 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, BBC Radio Nottingham, Business in the

Community, Fun Palaces, York Explore, LibrariesUnlimited and Suffolk Libraries, Nottingham City libraires, ABL Health and REACH.

### **Other Options Considered**

30. No other options were considered.

### **Reason for Recommendation**

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

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

32. 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**

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

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1) To inform Members of the development of Inspire in the delivery of cultural, learning and library services across Nottinghamshire and its achievements in the fifth year of operation.

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### **Constitutional Comments (CEH 30/04/2021)**

34. Communities Committee have delegated responsibility for libraries and archives, adult learning, development of the arts and heritage activities. The report is to update Members, and they should consider whether they have any questions or require any further information about anything contained in the report.

### **Financial Comments (SES 28/04/2021)**

35. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this 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
- Culture, Learning and Libraries – Inspire development update and first year review – report to Communities and Place Committee 22 June 2017
- Inspire review and Forward Plan 2020 - October 2017  
[www.inspireculture.org.uk/uploads/documents/IAR\\_for\\_web.pdf](http://www.inspireculture.org.uk/uploads/documents/IAR_for_web.pdf)
- Culture, Learning and Libraries – Inspire development update and second year review – report to Communities and Place Committee 14 June 2018
- Culture, Learning and Libraries – Inspire development update and third year review – report to Communities and Place Committee 4 April 2019
- Inspire Inspiration and impact review of 2018/19 - October 2019  
<https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/about-us/annual-review/>
- Culture, Learning and Libraries – Inspire development update and fourth year review – report to Communities and Place Committee 3 September 2020
- Inspire Annual Review 2019/20 – October 2020 (digital only)  
<https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/about-us/annual-review-2019-20/>

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All.