

28 September 2020

Agenda Item: 6

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES**

### **INSPIRE - CULTURE, LEARNING AND LIBRARIES CONTRACT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval from Committee to extend the Inspire Contract to 31 March 2026.

#### **Information**

##### Background

2. Inspire – Culture, Learning and Libraries (“Inspire”) is the charitable community benefit society established on 1 April 2016, which is contracted by the County Council to deliver a range of services on behalf of the Council, including the public library service.
3. The contractual arrangements with Inspire are scheduled to run for 5 years, expiring 31 March 2021, unless extended in accordance with the contract.
4. The contract extension would run for a further period of 5 years from 1 April 2021 and Inspire must be served the necessary notice to confirm the extension by 30 September 2020.

##### Successes

5. Inspire has been very successful over its first 4 years of operation, achieving all of its original aspirations and more.
6. Inspire operating as an independent charitable body has allowed Inspire to seek out and foster a whole new range of relationships with public and private sector partners, and access funding streams previously unavailable to the Council.
7. These new relationships and funding opportunities have allowed Inspire to develop and deliver an exciting and extensive range of cultural, reading, heritage and learning activities across the whole county, whilst protecting and reinvigorating long standing services.
8. Inspire was also established to increase public engagement and volunteering both in governance and in local communities. The Society membership currently stands at 67,000 with over 450 individuals actively volunteering across services.
9. The library offer is better than ever with buildings refurbished and new mobile library vehicles purchased.

10. The Council's longstanding commitment to keep all its libraries open and vibrant centres of community life has been delivered.
11. In 2019 over 2.5 million people visited libraries in Nottinghamshire to access services in their local community, loans increased last year to over 2.6 million, 118,000 new books were added to stock and 380,000 hours of free public internet access were taken up.
12. Archives received the deposit of 250 new collections last year and staged several events and courses of regional and national significance.
13. Across the wider Inspire offer, 10,000 people took part in adult education, 19,000 learnt music or how to play an instrument, and 266,000 education library books were loaned to schools.

### **Other Options Considered**

14. To seek alternative provision for the services provided by Inspire or bring the service back in house would invariably increase service costs (if it ceased to operate as a charitable community benefit society) and would risk a number of external funding streams which have only become accessible since Inspire's "separation" from the Council.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

15. As noted in the Background of this report and the financial comments below the Inspire contract has both reduced costs whilst improving the quality and diversity of the public offer.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, 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, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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**

17. Inspire has operated at a net cost to the County Council of circa £9m per annum throughout the contract to date with no annual inflationary increases given, effectively absorbing circa 10% in cost increases over the last 5 years.
18. Whilst securing external funding has helped offset some of the costs increases, limiting the financial exposure to the County Council in this way has required significant staff restructuring within Inspire, resulting in a very lean structure which has left little if any management capacity to help deliver growth and development of the business.
19. County Council on 27 February 2020 approved an inflationary increase on the contract costs as part of the 2020/21 budget.

## **Human Resources Implications**

20. Staff within Inspire are employed on County Council or Inspire Terms and Conditions following TUPE transfer from the County Council in 2016. There are therefore no HR implications of extending the contract.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That Committee:

- 1) Approve the 5 year contract extension to allow the overall service arrangements with inspire to continue until 31 March 2026.
- 2) Authorise the Group Manager Legal, Democratic and Complaints to make the necessary arrangements to extend the contract.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director, Place and Communities**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Mick Allen, Group Manager, Place Commissioning, Tel: 0115 9774684

## **Constitutional Comments (EP 21/08/2020)**

21. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments (RWK 24/08/2020)**

22. The County Council's 2020/21 revenue budget includes a sum of £9.3 million to fund the contract for culture, learning and libraries which is currently awarded to Inspire. If the contract is extended similar sums will need to be included in the revenue budget in future years.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

- None

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

- All