



THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST

Minutes of the Members meeting

Date: Thursday 13th January 2022

Time: 4:01pm – 4:53pm

Venue: By Zoom

Members	
Peter Claus <i>joined at 4:44pm</i>	Member
Maureen Mellor	Member
David Mowatt	Member
Chris Penn <i>joined at 4:05pm</i>	Member
In attendance	
Andy Moorcroft	CEO
Howard Platt	Chair of the Trust Board
Damian McGuire	Finance Director
Adrienne Lang	Operations Director
Claire Howarth-Platt	Clerk

Documents Circulated in Advance of the meeting
Trust Register of Interests 2021-22 Trust Board and LGB Terms of Reference Trust Structure Minutes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members Board 24th June 2021 Trust Board 30th September 2021 Trust Board 9th December 2021 CEO Report to the Board December 2021 Annual Report TCAT 2021 Articles of Association

The meeting was quorate	
The meeting opened at 4:01pm	
1.	Welcome HP opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. HP led the meeting for the items 1 to 4.
2.	Absence/Apologies/Non Attendance Steven Broomhead was absent without apologies. Chris Penn and Peter Claus joined during the meeting.
3.	Register of Interests The Register of Interests for both Members and Trustees had been circulated in advance of the meeting.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maureen Mellor advised that she was no longer a Trustee at Stephenson Academy and was now a member. David Mowat confirmed that his declarations were up to date and accurate. <p>Action: Absent members to check and confirm the accuracy of their information on the register of interests.</p>
4.	<p>Declaration of personal interests</p> <p>There were no personal interests to declare.</p>
5.	<p>Membership and Organisation</p> <p>a) Appointment of Chairperson</p> <p>Members agreed that David Mowat would act as Chairperson for this meeting and led the agenda from this point.</p> <p>b) Review of membership Trust board / member appointments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no vacancies on the Trust Board. There were no Member vacancies. Two Trustees had been appointed at the last meeting of the Members Board: John Cartwright and Susila Davis. Peter Claus had not yet attended a Members meeting; however, he had not received communications due to an error in his recorded email address. <p><i>Chris Penn joined the meeting at 4:05pm.</i></p> <p>c) Terms of Reference</p> <p>The Terms of Reference were circulated in advance of the meeting. There had been no updates to the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Resolved: Members reviewed and accepted the Terms of Reference.</p>
6.	<p>Minutes</p> <p>a) Member's meeting held 24th June 2021</p> <p>Members present at this meeting were not present at the 24th June meeting and could not confirm the accuracy of the minutes.</p> <p><i>i. Matters arising</i></p> <p>The meeting held on the 24th June 2021 had not been quorate and the approval of Trustees had been managed by email.</p> <p><i>ii. Action log</i></p> <p>There were no actions to address.</p> <p>b) Trust Board Meeting held 30th September 2021</p> <p>c) Trust Board Meeting held 9th December 2021</p> <p>Minutes of the Trust Board meetings were circulated in advance of the meeting for information.</p>
7.	<p>CEO Report</p> <p>The CEO report had been circulated prior to the meeting. AM provided a brief overview of the contents. <i>COVID-19</i></p>



- COVID-19 continued to impact on the Trust and schools.
- Staff attendance was approximately 97% during the 2020-2021 year.
- COVID-19 continued to have an impact on student attendance particularly at Priestley Sixth Form College.
- The Trust had coped with and adapted to the situation well; it was hoped that typical levels of attendance would return.

Ofsted

- There had been two Ofsted inspections within the Trust.
- Great Sankey Primary School had received a section 8 inspection and retained their Good rating.
- Sir Thomas Boteler had been in special measures for 7 years and therefore received a section 5 inspection and were judged to be Good.
- With the exception of Padgate Academy, which is yet to be inspected, all schools within the Trust were graded Good or better.
- The reputation of the Trust within the region had consequently improved significantly, particularly with the Department for Education (DfE).
- The Trust had been approached by the DfE as part of the School Improvement offer to support 7 schools in challenging circumstances.
- This would offer good development opportunities for TCAT staff and demonstrated the acclaim in which TCAT is held by the DfE.

Buildings

- Capital investment continued.
- The Trust were due to spend £1.7million during this academic year in addition to the investment being made at Meadowside Primary School which would be financed by the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA).
- There was ongoing significant investment in all TCAT schools.

Recognition

- TCAT had received a High Sheriff's Award for their contribution to an initiative to provide laptops to disadvantaged children and young people across Warrington during the pandemic.
- The Office for Students had recognised the work being undertaken with The University of Oxford to support disadvantaged students into higher education.

Sustainability

Sustainability was a key focus for the Trust.

- Decarbonisation plans had been commissioned for 6 of the 10 academies.
- Priestley Sixth Form College and Bridgwater High School would have decarbonisation plans funded by the RPA.
- The remaining two schools are new buildings.
- The plans would inform the strategic plan for estates over the next few years.

A member sought to clarify how they could find the information to confirm whether Priestley College is in a better position academically than 10 years prior. Querying whether TCAT would hold that information or whether the CEO could answer the question.

AM confirmed that achievement data for last two years had increased but cautioned that external exams had not taken place during that time.



Members pressed for further clarification on how in the absence of externally assured data improvement could be measured. Querying how many students had gone on to Russell Group Universities compared with previous years.

AM the data for Priestley students is positive but is flawed by the lack of external validation. Ofsted are clear that data does not offer a full picture and the quality of education in the classroom is now the key focus.

The progression and destination data in relation to Oxbridge entries would show a decline for last year but a significant increase in applications this year.

Member commented that it was important to understand how many students were moving on to Russell Group universities and they were seeking routine reporting on this information.

AM advised that governors should have sight of the scorecard as that is the mechanism for reporting data and results, but to note that data was not a primary focus for Ofsted.

Action: AM to provide the destination data to members.

Members added that whilst destination data may be available consideration should be given to how the information is presented to enable governors to understand it.

Members identified that under Health and Safety it was reported that accidents were being reported differently across the academies and that the Trust was trying to introduce consistency in this area and requested information on the progress.

AL advised that Lisa Gannon was working to bring consistency to the area. Following the business compliance reviews LG would work with academies on particular issues including the matter of accident reporting.

Academies that are reporting a large number of accidents are generally reporting low level incidents such as sickness which is not appropriate; LG will work with those schools to ensure that minor accidents and sickness are recorded locally but not escalated to TCAT.

Members reiterated that their concern was that the information was not useful at the moment: highlighting that accidents can have safeguarding implications and awareness of the seriousness of the accidents reported was necessary.

AL confirmed that the Trust was working on the issue in order to reach a point where reasonable comparisons could be made.

- Members extended their congratulations to AM and the central Trust team along with school leaders working in challenging circumstances.
- Members highlighted the journey that Sir Thomas Boteler had been through and sought to recognise the support of the Trust and the contribution of the leadership at the school.

Members commented that COVID-19 had presented challenges nationally particularly with staffing and queried whether there had been observable challenges across the Trust, particularly with recruitment where a negative impact had been seen elsewhere.

AM advised that there had been ongoing disruption over the last two years, although COVID-19 related absence is generally short, there had been a small number of staff who had experienced longer impact related to COVID-19.

The wider concern was student attendance. The national average was 90% or below, Trust schools would usually aim for 96% or better; however, 90% was becoming the new norm it was



	<p>anticipated that the student attendance would be more challenging to return to pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>AL shared screen to show summary data on pupil attendance by week over this academic year. There had been a gradual increase in teacher absence, which was evenly spread across the Trust. Compared to the national average the position on staff absence was better.</p> <p>The Trust had not experienced difficulty with recruitment; and were able to draw on Initial Teacher Trainees that had been hosted within Trust schools when recruiting.</p> <p>Members clarified that a trend that had been observed nationally was that certain roles within schools, for instance administrative positions, had been more challenging to fill. This was possibly related to homeworking, and increased flexibility in other sectors reducing the number of candidates seeking these roles in schools. Members therefore suggested that it may be appropriate for the Trust to review flexible working policies.</p> <p>AM confirmed that recruitment to business support roles had been more challenging and flexibility was a key consideration for these roles.</p>
8.	<p>Finance</p> <p>a) Receive Accounts</p> <p>DM presented to the Board.</p> <p>The finance report had been approved by the Trust Board in December and was provided to Members for information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trust were trying to control spend as much as possible. • A £1.4million surplus had been achieved. • Some of the surplus was carry forward reserve related to the COVID-19 catch up fund, which would be available to those academies to spend this year. • After deducting the Catch-up carry forward the total surplus was £1.2million. • Income from lettings and catering was reduced. • There were savings in relation to purchasing. • The lockdown resulted in some savings for instance on heating and printing. • COVID-19 related restrictions meant there were no trips through the year which also resulted in a saving. • Changes to the delivery of some contracts were also necessary and, in some cases, resulted in savings. <p>Members questioned what the planned surplus for the next year would be along with total carried forward.</p> <p>£500,000 with a £3.4million carry forward.</p> <p>Members questioned whether there was likely to be any clawback on COVID-19 grants.</p> <p>There was not. The grants had been utilised in a cost-effective manner.</p> <p>The reserves that the Trust hold were less than those held by some Multi Academy Trusts (MATs); with some carrying over 25% of their annual income.</p> <p>There is no government policy to identify acceptable levels of reserves, but TCAT were below the level that the DfE are happy with and this is therefore being built up.</p> <p>Members sought to clarify the plan with relation to reserves questioning whether the aim was to build the reserves further.</p> <p>The assets were equivalent to one month of payroll. One to two months would be required, but a figure had not been set.</p>



	<p>Reserves can be available to manage adverse situations but can also be converted into capital meaning there will never be too much.</p> <p><i>Peter Claus joined the meeting 4:44pm</i></p> <p>DM continued his update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the start of the last academic year 3 academies were in deficit. One is now out of deficit and progress had been made with the other two academies. The two academies that are still in deficit have had successful recruitment of pupils.
9.	<p>Articles of Association</p> <p>The Articles of Association were received by the Members.</p> <p>Members commented that the current Articles were based on the Model Articles of Association agreed between the Church of England and the DfE from 2013; whilst there is an updated version from 2019 in circulation it would be counterproductive to change them and incorporate the amendments as the current articles remain compliant.</p>
15.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>External Auditors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Trust would need to go out to tender this year for External Auditors. Consequently, the Members meeting would need to be brought forward to approve the appointment of the auditors. <p>Members briefly discussed the appointment of external auditors to clarify the process of going out to tender.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing auditors would be eligible to rebid but would be at no advantage. The tender process was planned for the summer in order to recommend to the Board in December. Auditors needed to be in place at all times and as such the annual Members meeting would need to a month earlier than planned in order to appoint the auditors. <p>Resolved: Members agreed to hold the annual meeting in December with an agenda item to appoint the External Auditors.</p> <p><i>Acknowledgements</i></p> <p>Members gave thanks to the senior team at the Trust for their work in preparing reports and providing the information to enable the Board to effectively undertake their role.</p>
16.	<p>Confirm Date and Time of the Next Meeting</p> <p>The date and time of the next meeting was agreed as the 23rd June 2022 at 4pm</p> <p>The meeting closed at 4:53pm</p>

Action Log



Agenda Item	Action	Owner
3	Absent members to check and confirm the accuracy of their information on the register of interests.	PC, SB and CP
7	AM to provide the destination data to members.	AM
15	Agree a December meeting date for the Annual members meeting	