



THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST

Minutes of the Meeting of the Trust Board

Thursday 9th December 2021

Time: 4:00pm

Venue: TCAT Personal Development Centre, Bridgewater High School

A remote Zoom link was also available

Trustees	
Howard Platt	Chair
John Monaghan	Trustee
Lacy Muir	Trustee
Linda Waterson	Trustee
Sheila Yates	Trustee
Stephen Whatmore	Trustee
Susan Richardson	Trustee
John Cartwright	Trustee
Susila Davis	Trustee
Phil McEwan	Trustee
Andy Moorcroft	CEO
In attendance	
Tim Long	Executive Principal Secondary and Sixth Form
Vicky Briggs	Executive Principal - Primary
Damian McGuire	Finance Director
Adrienne Lang	Operations Director
Ben Logan	Head of Human Resources
Andy Cook	Clerk

The meeting opened at 4:00pm

1.	Welcome The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance.
2.	Absence/Apologies/Non-Attendance Apologies were received from: Jane Griffiths and Stuart Titchard Phil McEwan joined the meeting at 4:35PM Resolved: Trustees consented to the absences.
3.	Register of Interests Resolved: That the Register of Interests is now updated, Trustees are to advise of any relevant changes.
4.	Declaration of personal interests There were no declarations of personal interest in any item on this agenda.
5.	Membership and Organisation The Chair noted that the Trust Board was full, with 13 Trustees, including 2 Trustees from the Church Education Board. It was agreed that there was no plan to increase the number of Trustees on the Board.



	<p>It was also noted that among the Members of the Board, Peter Claus had a poor attendance record. He has been invited to the next Members Board meeting and the intention is that he will be asked to step down if he fails to attend. This would potentially create a vacancy as a Member and Trustees were asked to consider if they would prefer to migrate to that position, which is less onerous than being a Trustee.</p> <p>ACTION – Trustees to consider becoming Members if a vacancy arises.</p>
6.	<p>Minutes of the Trust Board Meeting held 30/09/21</p> <p>Trustees were reminded that the Minutes, once approved, were a matter of public record and posted on the website and language used in sensitive discussions needed to be circumspect.</p> <p>Minute Ref. 5d: a query was raised regarding the composition of the Safeguarding Committee. Membership was clarified and it was noted that the Safeguarding meeting has been rescheduled for week commencing 13/12/21.</p> <p>Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held 30/09/21 be approved.</p> <p>Actions Update</p> <p>3. Register of Interests: Complete</p> <p>9. Chairs of Governors have been invited to sit in on Trust committee meetings, they have attended some Headteacher meetings, but no committee meetings to date.</p> <p>13. The 21 Questions were discussed and reviewed at TCAT level and with other MAT Chairs. Action complete.</p>
7.	<p>CEO Report</p> <p>The CEO Report had been made available to Trustees prior to the meeting.</p> <p>AM asked Trustees to note the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid 19 continues to have a major impact on the schools. This is affecting some schools more than others but the overall infection rates in the Warrington area are high. Attendance is around 5% down but remains in line with the national average. A recent Ofsted report highlights that issues are going to remain for the long-term. A meeting was held with Public Health and the Trust were advised to prepare the old risk assessments for post-Christmas. Testing may be re-introduced, but guidance has not yet been issued. • Two Ofsted inspections have recently taken place, at Great Sankey which retained it's 'Good' rating and also at Sir Thomas Boteler which was also judged 'Good' for the first time in its history. This is a testament to the school and the impact that the Trust has had. • The Trust School Improvement Offer is supporting 6 schools outside of the Trust with 30 staff from across TCAT deployed. This is a great development opportunity for the staff and the revenue received for this support will be re-invested back into the Trust. • The TCAT Professional Growth Model has been launched which will support professional development of colleagues across the Trust. • Safeguarding reviews have been introduced. These are a real asset and include all aspects of safe practice within schools, including Health & Safety and GDPR. • The Sheriff's award has been presented for the contribution to the Laptops for Kids project with the LA. • The Oxplore project has continued and has been mentioned in a report from the Office for Students.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Gannon has joined the central TCAT team, focussing on common procurement across the Trust within Estates Management. • Primary school catering is to be brought in-house. Once evaluated, this could potentially be expanded across the Trust. • A really strong audit report has been received, recognising the improvements made over the last few years in terms of processes within finance. The Trust is in a good financial position. <p>HP thanked AM for the report and noted that Trustees would like to arrange visits to the schools, mindful that this would tie up resource at the school during the visit. It was suggested that Trustees should make group visits, rather than several individual visits and also involve students in discussions.</p> <p>ACTION – Group visits of Trustees to schools to be arranged.</p>
8.	<p>Strategic Action Plan</p> <p>The Strategic Action Plan had been made available to Trustees prior to the meeting. AM provided Trustees with an update on the Strategic Action Plan, noting that progress had been made in many areas, but there were target areas where further progress was required. For example, SEND had been affected by a lack of capacity to look at this strategically and a review on the impact of Catch-up funding had not yet been addressed.</p> <p>Other areas of concern include the teaching of Maths, Transition, Business Support, Equality and Diversity and the HR system.</p> <p>HP noted that although there was still work to be done, the Board could clearly see the issues and the risks had been identified.</p> <p>The issues with the HR system were discussed. The underlying problem is the difficulty in achieving connectivity between 9 different SIMS systems. The main Civica system is up and working but needs to be integrated across all sites.</p>
9.	<p>Risk Management Plan</p> <p>The Risk Management Plan had been made available to Trustees prior to the meeting. HP commented that it was important for Trustees to be aware of the identified risks and to assess and manage the risks accordingly.</p> <p>AM provided updates on the following areas where risks had changed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid 19 was still a significant risk and had led to unprecedented situations, e.g., having 4 senior leaders missing from a school for 10 days. It was also noted that there were difficulties in obtaining supply staff, especially at SLT level. • Financial subsidies may be available for support with increased costs associated with supply issues, although the Trust's healthy financial position may mean they do not qualify for them. • The communication strategy within Leadership & Governance has improved but is still a work in progress. • A number of academies have substantial increases in student numbers, but the funding to support them has not yet been received. This will potentially put pressure on the budget. • The attendance hub is focussed on missing students as part of the Safeguarding role of the Trust. • The RPA (Risk Protection Arrangement) offered free risk management reviews; these are underway with the final report expected by January. These have proved valuable in assessing progress and some actions have been identified. • Academies are to check winter preparations to support business continuity. It was noted that there had been complaints from parents regarding the need to leave windows open



	<p>during the recent cold weather. This is a requirement to reduce the risk of Covid, but the Board is aware that there may be potential claims made in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber Essentials accreditation is to be achieved during this academic year. • The Meadowside site is prone to flooding and RPA repairs are currently in progress. RPA are also looking at potential flood defence measures. The concrete pad of the building has been damaged in places and these will need to be repaired. All of the work is covered by insurance. <p>The Chair left the meeting at 4:55PM, SW chaired the remainder of the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priestly College have been working on capital bids, these were unsuccessful and consideration is being given on whether to bid on the next round of funding.
10.	<p>Sub Committee Reports</p> <p>Quality & Standards: SY advised that the committee had received reports from Modern Languages and English which were peer-to-peer reviews across the Trust. These were welcomed as a great help for Trustees in helping to understand the issues facing the Trust. The reports also included good quality research from practitioners. It was noted that it was difficult to assess performance across the Trust at the moment, but the reports help Trustees to understand the curriculum.</p> <p>Audit & Risk: LW reported on the good progress that had been made against outstanding actions included in the Internal Auditor's follow-up report.</p> <p>Internal Audit had given a presentation on the recent Payroll Audit report, again this was a pleasing outcome with a 'Strong' audit opinion and 3 low priority recommendations. This highlighted the excellent communication prior to transition to a new provider, evidence of strong internal controls and a cost saving of £10K per year.</p> <p>Future internal audits will look at Business Continuity and Due Diligence.</p> <p>External audit had presented a paper on the Teacher's Pension audit report, which was signed off. The finance team were thanked for the level of detail in the TCAT annual report.</p> <p>The external auditors Highlight Report was also discussed. This showed no significant risks for the Trust and noted a very strong financial position which had improved over the last 3 years. Liquidity has improved significantly with an increased cash holding.</p> <p>LW thanked the finance team for their hard work and efficient preparation of information.</p> <p>Finance: the committee had discussed the audit and annual report. They also considered the issue of increased student numbers and lag in funding and the education recovery premium. The Period 2 management accounts were also reviewed.</p>
11.	<p>Financial Accounts for 2020 – 21</p> <p>SW congratulated DMcG and the finance team on the successful audit reports and also producing the accounts before the end of December.</p> <p>DMcG described his approach to the preparation of the accounts and providing a background to how the Trust operates. It was noted that Government grants had helped the financial position through the year and the Trust would continue to seek support wherever available. The Academies have remained within their budgets which has also helped with the results that were achieved. The Trustees were advised that the final update to the accounts were already with the auditors for checking.</p> <p>There were no questions or concerns raised in respect of the accounts.</p> <p>Resolved – that the Trust Board approve the accounts as presented.</p> <p>Resolved – that the Letter of Representation is approved and it is recommended that the Chair signs accordingly.</p> <p>Resolved – that the Accounting Policies are approved.</p> <p>SW noted that it was a magnificent performance to get the accounts produced and the detail contained within them gives an excellent picture of what the Trust is all about, how it is structured, how it works and how well the Trust has done this year.</p>



12.	<p>Budget Approval</p> <p>Trustees were asked to note that the Management Accounts are now posted monthly onto GovernorHub. Two Academies show a deficit for the latest period, this is due to timing issues where costs (e.g., exam registrations) have been incurred in full but funding is spread out over the year. There are no real concerns, other than supply.</p>
13.	<p>21 questions for MAT Board</p> <p>This had been discussed earlier in the meeting. The MAT Board had met to discuss the questions and AM took away 6 questions for further study and to return with further recommendations. The meeting had concluded that there was room for improvement in certain areas, e.g., consistency in the process for recruitment and induction of new Governors / Trustees. Another area for improvement involves engagement and how the Trust Board listens to, understands and responds to pupils, staff, parents and local communities. This has traditionally been achieved through Local Governing Bodies, but the Board wants to consider other ideas to develop and enhance this.</p> <p>ACTION – Recommendations on a number of questions to be produced.</p>
14.	<p>Policies for Review / Approval</p> <p>Admissions Policies 2023-2024</p> <p>Trustees were informed that the Admissions Policy had been updated with changes proposed for Primary schools with Nurseries. The changes are out for consultation; this is due to be completed by the end of January 2022. The Admissions Policy for Secondary schools is unchanged.</p> <p>Resolved – that the Admissions Policies be approved, noting that consultation is still ongoing with regard to Primary schools</p> <p>The Health & Safety Policy and Staff Code of Conduct have been approved at the sub-committees and were duly noted by the Trustee Board.</p>
15.	<p>AOB</p> <p>LM questioned why some school leaders were known as Principals and others as Headteachers. In response, Trustees were advised that these terms were inherited as schools were added to the Trust. In general, Principals are not necessarily a teacher, hence some schools could have a Principal and a Headteacher.</p> <p>Trustees were also asked to note that the Nest event for Equality & Diversity had been a superb event and proved to be very useful and thought-provoking.</p>

The meeting ended at 5:25pm

ACTION LOG

Minute Ref.	Action	Owner	Due Date
5.	Consideration to be given on becoming a Member rather than a Trustee, if a vacancy arises.	All Trustees	Following next Members Meeting
7.	Group visits of Trustees to schools to be arranged	HP / AM	Spring Term
13.	AM to further consider a number of the 21 Questions for MAT Board	AM	Spring Term