



## THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST

### MINUTES of The Trust Board Meeting

Held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at 4pm, TCAT Personal Development Centre

**Chair:** Howard Platt

	Trustees	
AMC	Andy Moorcroft	<b>CEO</b>
LM	Lacy Muir	Trustee
HP	Howard Platt	Trustee, <b>Chair</b>
SR	Susan Richardson	Trustee
ST	Stuart Titchard	Trustee
SW	Stephen Whatmore	Trustee
SY	Sheila Yates	Trustee
	In attendance	
VB	Vicky Briggs	Executive Principal - Primary
AL	Adrienne Laing	Operations Director
BL	Ben Logan	Head of Human Resources
TL	Tim Long	Executive Principal Secondary and Sixth Form
DMG	Damian McGuire	Finance Director
AOR	Ashlea O'Rourke	Chair of Dallam Primary Governing Body
JW	John Warren	Chair of Appleton Thorn Governing Body

Documents Circulated prior to the meeting	
TCAT Trust Board Agenda TCAT Governance Structure September 2021 TCAT Trustee Skill Audit 2022 Trust Meeting Schedule 2022-2023 FINAL Trust Board minutes 24.03.2022 CEO Report to the Trust Board July 2022 TCAT Strategic Plan 21-23 updated July 2022 TCAT Risk Management Action Plan 2021-22 Draft Minutes Audit and risk 30.06.2022 Draft Minutes Finance, HR and Operations 30.06.2022 Draft Minutes Quality and Standards 16.06.2022 Budget 2022-23 Finance Report June 2022 TCAT Growth – Phase 2 Due Diligence Project Plan Appleton Thorn TCAT Academy Transfer and Due Diligence Project Plan Appleton Thorn TCAT Estate Management Plan 2022-2023 Funding Agreement TCAT v1 Trust Policy Schedule Academy Policy Schedule Staff Code of Conduct Financial Regulations TCAT Primary Outcomes 2022	

Details	Actions
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1.	<b>Welcome</b> HP welcomed colleagues to the meeting particularly JW and AOR attending as observers.	
2.	<b>Absence/Apologies/Non-Attendance</b> Apologies were received and accepted from Graham Bratley, Phil Carlow, John Cartwright, Susie Davis, Jane Griffiths and Linda Waterson.	
3.	<b>Declaration of personal interests</b> No declarations of interest were noted.	
4.	<b>Organisation and Membership</b> HP asked if colleagues had seen the documentation, it was noted that AOR and JW had not received papers; HP will ensure this is rectified before the next meeting.  No changes to the organisation were noted. The skills audit had been uploaded to GovernorHub; three colleagues had not returned their information; HP stated that the majority of areas within the audit were covered by those who had completed the matrix - this will be sent again to colleagues who still need to complete it.	AL  AL
5.	<b>Minutes of the previous Trust Board meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022</b> A review of the notes was undertaken and the following points were noted:  Skills audit – complete with the exception of three colleagues.  HP said that all LGB governors are welcome to volunteer to join Trust Board committees as associate members. Invitations will be sent to all LGBs  Gender Pay Gap working group – it was reported that meetings had taken place; the issues identified included lack of ambition or confidence of female Assistant Head Teachers to apply for Head posts and the group will work on a programme for women in teaching to address this. Issues of progression through pay scales were discussed, and it was agreed that there was room for improvement. The information will be presented to Trust Board in Autumn.  The final schedule of Trust board meetings has been agreed and is included in these board papers.  The appointment process for the new Head of IT and Head of Facilities Management has been concluded. Thanks were given to JC whose participation in the process for the Head of IT was invaluable.	HP
6.	<b>CEO Report</b> The CEO presented his written report, it was noted that the document was circulated prior to the meeting on GovernorHub. The Warrington Rowing Project was discussed. The project focuses on giving young people from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to get involved in the sport of rowing. The young people participate in training and coaching on a weekly	



	<p>basis over the last 3 years. It was noted that one student rowed this year in the Henley Regatta; she is now hopeful of a place in the Olympic team and has also been awarded a scholarship to attend Tulsa University in the US. A film showing the young student was shown to the board detailing the achievements of the project and the individual impact on the student.</p> <p><b>A trustee asked about the scope of the grant awarded for Tulsa university</b> – it was noted that the grant funds covered all expenses.</p> <p><b>It was also asked if she provide a short update for the board</b> on her progress in the US and it was agreed this could be arranged.</p> <p>.</p> <p>Highlights of the report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Exam results</u> – overall good progress had been made at KS1, in phonics in particular. To note excellent results had been gained at Meadowside and Great Sankey. It was noted that results had been lower than expected in writing. KS2 attainment was lower than predicted although national average results have also decreased compared to 2019 in maths, writing and data. <b>Trustees were asked to raise any questions and no questions</b> were raised.</li> <li>• <u>Growth</u> – it was reported that one local primary school, Appleton Thorn ia currently applying to join the Trust and both Dallam Primary School and South Wirral High School would be joining the Trust as Associate members for a period of 12 months starting in September 2022. Sutton Academy had just achieved good for OfSTED and they were currently considering three multi-academy trusts.</li> </ul> <p><b>A Trustee asked what is an Associate member?</b> This was explained as an opportunity to work with the Trust for a fixed period before officially joining. Information was shared regarding the schools in the process of joining the Trust and the various methods and structures.</p> <p>It was noted that there had been a number of meetings with Fowler Education Football Academy over the last 12 months, it was stated that the organisation is a sports-based Sixth Form provision currently affiliated to Rainhill High School. Details of the options available were shared. The organisation would like to join TCAT as a 16-19 Free School. It was noted that discussions would be taking place to determine if this is viable for the Trust. A growth committee would agree if it would be worthy of bringing to the Board.</p> <p><b>A trustee raised a concern about the ability of the organisation to prepare in time.</b> Discussion took place. AM said that he felt that the organisation would be a good fit for the Trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OfSTED – it was noted that a section 8 visit of BCA lasting 2 days had taken place; Details were shared, it was felt that the overall outcome was positive. Some concerns were raised regarding the</li> </ul>	
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	<p>structure of the visit and a member of the inspectorate team's attitude to the academy. It was noted that overall, this had been a very positive outcome for the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>External Support</u>– it was noted that external works undertaken has generated £50k of income for the Trust, involving staff working across the Trust supporting colleagues.</li> <li>• <u>Leadership Changes</u> – it was reported that TML would be retiring from his current post as Principal of Bridgewater High School. However, he would be working at the Trust on a part time basis, the Board thanked him for his work. Kieron Powell has been appointed as Principal at Bridgewater High School. It was reported that VB has been appointed as full time Director of Education for the Trust leaving her role as Headteacher at Great Sankey Primary School. Lisa Wilding has been appointed as Head Teacher and Tom Gawne has been appointed to Assistant Head Teacher at Great Sankey. It was also noted that Fiona Allen, Safeguarding Lead at Bridgewater and for the Trust is leaving in August 2022,</li> </ul> <p><b>A trustee asked what the arrangements would be to replace Fiona Allen?</b> – it was noted that in the short-term VB and Tracey Hatton would take this over, with the details of arrangements to be confirmed. The potential to appoint a full time Safeguarding lead was shared.</p> <p><u>Key risks/challenges</u> – it was stated that there is a downward trajectory of primary pupil numbers in the area. A presentation on the Warrington Growth plans had been given by the Director of Growth for Warrington to the CET. A meeting had been attended with the council regarding pupil placement planning, AM stated that he is fully involved in these discussions with the Local Authority. Pupil place planning is very difficult and LA predictions do not include the impact of migration including from Hong Kong and Ukraine. It was apparent that there was some misunderstanding between LA colleagues and schools regarding the impact of fluctuating predicted pupil numbers on the planning of the workforce and finances.</p> <p><b>A trustee asked what the effect of staff changes on the Admissions department at the LA has been.</b> It was reported that the vacant position has been filled and the LA is working on their strategy. In the longer term, the plan is for primary children to be able to walk to their local primary school although this is complicated by the issue of parental choice of school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penketh High school – it was reported that the school has been approved to be included in the School Rebuilding Programme. The first meeting is due to be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July with the DfE. This is excellent news for the school. Discussion took place regarding funding; it was noted that the original £1.6m of TCAT funds dedicated to the refurbishment of the Ennis building may no longer be needed.</li> </ul>	
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	<p><b>A trustee asked how the build project would impact on the school workforce?</b> The DfE will manage the process with the school. In general, such projects aim to minimise the effect on pupils and staff.</p> <p><b>A trustees asked - Are we sure the project will go ahead due to the issues in government and ministerial changes?</b> It was noted that the funding has been secured and has been announced on the Department for Education (DfE) website. Colleagues expressed their pleasure in securing the funding and reference was made to the positive impact this would have on the school and the local area.</p> <p>The Bridgewater scheme was noted as being delivered by September on budget.</p> <p>The catering service has now been taken in-house and it was noted that it was going well. AL said that there had been some issues with the transition, but the service has now settled.</p> <p>It was reported that this would be the first year that every school in the Trust would end with a surplus of funds, in total this would be a cumulative surplus of £4m across the Trust.</p> <p>Staff well-being – staff are starting to use TCAT plus which is providing discounts at various suppliers; these had been well received by the staff. No further questions were raised.</p> <p>Generally, it was felt to be a positive report with good news and trustees were pleased with the progress made.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Strategic Action Plan</b></p> <p>It was reported that the action plan was a two-year plan which would be updated and modified next year. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) were noted as mainly green. The funding surplus of 3-5% was noted. , Overall the Trust felt it was in a good position.</p> <p>Trustees commented that the document provides good information and a clear process; ensuring a focus and ability to self-assess.</p> <p><b>A trustee asked if this document is shared with Principals and Head Teachers?</b> AM confirmed that it was. No further questions were raised.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Risk Management Plan</b></p> <p>It was noted that the plan is a working document and had been previously shared with colleagues. Increasing costs of 8% was highlighted as a risk.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that the information is useful to the Board to identify risks and inter dependencies.</p>	



	<p>A tendering risk was noted – being an inability to obtain sufficient quotations for works to ensure that value for money is demonstrated. DMC confirmed that colleagues across the Trust are taking action to ensure that projects being tendered demonstrate a value for money approach.</p>	
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>Sub Committees - Verbal reports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality &amp; Standards – the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022 –g. Particular areas discussed included safeguarding and pupil attendance which is lower than pre pandemic levels but above national average. system will be presented to Head Teachers in due course. It was noted that a Special Educational Needs (SEND) review is due to take place. Issues regarding clerking of meetings was discussed; noted that a meeting with Entrust had taken place and it was confirmed that a permanent clerk has been appointed from September, the individual has not been a clerk before but had been a Governor. It was confirmed that Entrust have had all of the meeting dates. A discussion took place regarding the service received from Entrust which has not been consistent and the importance of a quality service.</li> <li>Finance, HR &amp; Operations – the meeting was held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 – the issue of Governor representation was discussed; it was noted that the meeting had been positive and that year end projections would be updated shortly. Energy and salary costs were identified as potential risks to the budget. Absence rates were down to pre pandemic levels and staff benefits was discussed. Health &amp; safety, data protection and compliance had been discussed and all areas had seen consistent improvement across all Academies. It was noted that some had previously lagged with documentation but are now focused on catching up. The issue of collaborative working had also been highlighted as helpful. The Estate Management plan had been discussed and it was noted that the news regarding Penketh High School had resulted in changes being made to the plan for final approval.</li> </ul> <p><b>No questions were posed.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit &amp; Risk – meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 – it was noted that there had been two main items. A meeting with External Auditors had taken place; there was a reminder that the tender for external auditors would start in the autumn term to be completed by January.</li> <li>Internal audit – three topics had been agreed for next year – Estate Management, Cyber Security and Catering; it was agreed that it was good timing for all three areas; the team are happy with the service being provided and value for money.</li> </ul> <p><b>No questions were posed.</b></p>	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Finance - Budget 2022-23 and Finance Report</b>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Budget 2022/23 and June 2022 Finance Report documents were presented to the Trust Board. These had previously been presented to the Finance, HR &amp; Operations Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.</li> <li>• It was noted that the overall budget was showing a surplus of £470,000 for the year. The assumptions underpinning the budget were presented and it was noted that the Department for Education had received a three-year settlement with an overall 7% increase in funding. Approximately 4% of the 7% has been seen in funding for 2022/23. The sensitivity analysis highlighted some key areas of concern – pay awards, utility costs and the general cost of living crisis and its impact on costs.</li> <li>• Discussion took place regarding salary pay awards and the Government proposals were noted. It was noted that the academies would be unable to afford any increase above the STRB recommendation in isolation. The Trust, as a whole, could afford a 1% increase above that included within the budget but that any higher would lead to deficits. Some individual academies would find even 1% above the STRB recommendations unaffordable. It was felt that this would be a national trend and it would require funding, for which there was a track record.</li> <li>• By September, all of the academies will have their utility contracts through the Crown Commercial Service. This will allow the Trust to look at possible switching if it could provide savings. The rate used to estimate the utility costs came from the Crown Commercial Service monthly reports for March 22 and May 22 where they indicated an appropriate rate to use for budgeting purposes.</li> <li>• All other costs had been increased between 5 – 10%. A number of examples were given. The cost of living crisis is leading to a general trend in increasing costs even though it is sometimes hard to see where the increase arises e.g. software licence renewal.</li> <li>• An overall surplus is expected to be achieved if the assumptions hold. The three year forecast highlighted the potential issues of a three year settlement within the background of higher pay awards and increasing costs at a level much greater than the level of funding increases.</li> <li>• <b>Question – will savings on carbon reflect within the budgets?</b> Discussion took place – noted that other ideas had been suggested.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion took place regarding budget setting and forecasting, agreed is difficult to predict.</p> <p><b>No further questions were raised and the budget was unanimously approved by the Board.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Finance Report was presented to the Trust Board. The current financial year is still on track to meet the revised budget forecast for the Trust.</li> </ul>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report also reported on recent procurement tenders that had been undertaken. There was a discussion regarding the bus tender for Priestley College and the impact that the increasing in fuel costs had. It was noted that the tender had to take place this year due to the previous tender expiring this summer.</li> <li>The report also covered changes to some funding streams and information regarding 2023/24 and beyond relating to announced funding.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Board noted the contents of the document.</b></p>	
11.	<p><b>Growth - Appleton Thorn Application to join the Trust and Due Diligence Report</b></p> <p>The document had been made available to the Board members prior to the meeting. Trustees noted that the document thorough and logical. It was noted that the approach had been regarded as being a quality approach by the internal auditors and this gave assurance to the Board. It was noted that this is a living document. It is a way to give information and to have queries answered. The document summarises what has been done and if there were any further steps or actions to take. No flags were apparent currently; amber issues relate to information still being reviewed or additional work needed during the next term. It was noted that the original plan was for the school to join the Trust in November. However, this may not be met as the application has only just been submitted and therefore the plan dates may need to change.</p> <p><b>A trustee asked if we have shared a scheme of delegation?</b> This was confirmed.</p> <p><b>A trustees asked if the Local Governing Board (LGB) has expressed a wish to continue with the application?</b> It was confirmed that the LGB have agreed that the school should continue with the application to join TCAT. It was also reported that the application has been submitted to the RSC. Discussion took place regarding attracting more Governors and involvement in TCAT.</p> <p><b>A trustee asked a question regarding pupil numbers and what steps are being taken to address this and the impact on finances?</b></p> <p>It was noted both Appleton Thorn and Broomfields Junior School are not full. The main problem is the declining pupil numbers in the area and the expansion of Grappenhall Heys Primary School as a result of previous growth plans in the LA which have not come to fruition. A discussion took place about the impacts on finances of the reduced pupils on roll numbers. <b>No further questions were posed.</b></p>	
12.	<p><b>Estate Management Plan</b></p> <p>The Finance, HR and Operations Committee had previously approved the Estate Management Plan. However, the approval of a new build for Penketh high School had led to some changes being made. some Trustees' attention was drawn to key areas which have changed within the plan (page 12 onwards). Including</p>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed list of projects for academies across the Trust</li> <li>• The change in the requirements of the contributory funding for the replacement of the Orchard centre with £2.4million being funded from the LA with a contributory cost of £24k from the Trust's SCA</li> <li>• The Decarbonisation programme which aims to submit grant funding bids to fund decarbonisation schemes across the Trust. Current estimates indicate the £500k of matched funding will be required</li> </ul> <p>It was noted that some academy bids had been received after this budget was done so there was a possibility for those schemes to be approved once the final available funding, after all listed projects are confirmed, is known</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding signing the document with Warrington Council and a trustee asked if the Trust had sufficient resource to manage the estate management plan. The comment was made - <b>This is the largest amount of discretionary spend – do we have enough resource?</b> In response it was stated that the Trust had greater internal resources than it had previously with the appointment of the Head of Facilities Management and the Operations Manager and that it had a proven partnership with E3Cube which enabled the complex and large projects to be managed effectively.</p> <p><b>Both the Estate Management Plan and the funding agreement with Warrington Council to fund the replacement of the Orchard Centre at a cost of £2.4million were approved by Trustees.</b></p>	
13.	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust and Academy policy register</li> </ul> <p><b>The following policies were noted:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Financial Regulations</li> </ul> <p>Trustees were asked to share the list of policies within individual academies to enable familiarisation – in addition it was noted that the policies are a standing agenda for this board.</p>	
14.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b> (<i>To be declared to the Chair prior to the meeting</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primary Outcomes</li> </ul> <p>Covered in the CEO's report.</p>	
15.	<p><b>Date and Time of the Next Meeting</b></p> <p>Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 4pm – 6pm, TCAT Centre, Bridgewater High School.</p>	