

Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Agenda

Thursday 5th December 2024

4:30-6pm

Venue: TCAT Professional Development Centre

Chair: Linda Waterson

Clerk: Melissa Alexander m.alexander@tcat.uk.com

Committee Members		Term Ends
John Cartwright (JC)	Trustee	23/06/2025
Andrew Moorcroft (AM)	CEO , Trustee	N/A
Howard Platt (HP)	Trustee	11.01.2028
John Warren	Trustee	11.01.2028
Linda Waterson (LW)	Chair , Trustee	01.07.2025
Stephen Whatmore (SW)	Trustee	01.07.2025
Peter Winter	Trustee	11.01.2028
In Attendance		
Mike Benson (MB)	External Auditor	
Neil Clark (NC)	Internal Auditor	
Phillip Dyke (PD)	Associate	
Adrienne Laing (AL)	Operations Director	
Damian McGuire (DM)	Director of Finance	
Melissa Alexander (MA)	TCAT Clerk	

Documents Shared Prior to the Meeting:

Item 6. Final Minutes Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes 27.06.2024
 Item 8. TCAT Internal Audit Plan 2024-2025
 Item 9. Final Report: FMG Report The Challenge Academy Trust
 Item 11. Risk Management Report December 2024
 Item 12. Policies and Returns

This meeting started at 16:36.

	Agenda Item
1.	Welcome:

	<p>MA welcomed the committee to the first Audit and Risk Committee meeting of the academic year.</p> <p>MA requested the consent of the Committee to record the Teams meeting to improve accuracy of minutes. The Committee provided their consent to record this meeting.</p>
2.	<p>Absence / Apologies / Non-Attendance:</p> <p>SW shared apologies in advance with the Clerk and apologies were accepted by the committee.</p> <p>PW shared apologies in advance with the Clerk and apologies were accepted by the committee.</p>
3.	<p>Register of Interests:</p> <p>There were no Register of Interests recorded.</p>
4.	<p>Declaration of pecuniary interests in relation to agenda items:</p> <p>There were no declarations of pecuniary interests in relation to agenda items.</p>
5.	<p>Membership and Organisation: The Clerk, MA shared that a self-nomination for Chair was received by LW prior to the meeting. MA asked the committee if there were any further expressions of interests to become the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. There were no further self-nominations.</p> <p>Election of the Chair: MA asked the committee to vote, and LW was voted to remain as Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. This was a unanimous decision</p>
6.	<p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting which took place on Thursday 27th June 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approval of the Minutes: The committee accepted the minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting that took place on Thursday 27th June 2024. b) Matters arising: There were no matters arising noted during this meeting. c) Action log: LW asked NC for an update regarding the actions recorded from the last meeting which took place on 27/06/24. NC explained that the benchmarking comes from external companies and clarified that the benchmarking data comes from similar audits within the education organisations in their audit database. <p>The Chair asked if everyone was happy with the response made by NC in relation to the action log and the committee confirmed that they were happy with the information provided and the minutes were approved by the Committee.</p>

	Action Log:			
	Minute Reference	Action to be taken	By Whom	Completion Date
	7	Confirm how benchmarking data is formulated.	AC	Next meeting
	7	Audit planning - a list of focus areas to be forwarded to Neil Clark.	AC	As soon as agreed by Trust.
7.	Financial Accounts Update: <p>DM explained that there has been extensive audit work undertaken and shared that the final accounts are not yet available to be distributed. DM explained to the committee that the delay has been due to the change of the financial system, which has delayed the draft of the accounts.</p> <p>MB agreed with DM that there has been a delay due to a transfer of systems.</p> <p>There was an extensive discussion regarding the structure of the finance team and the workflow processes in place.</p> <p>MB expressed his concern that there may be an underlying problem of resources. MB shared with the Committee that there would be a benefit of an additional colleague to support DM with the production of financial reporting processes. A discussion took place relating to capacity within the Finance Team.</p> <p>AM stated that he was happy to take MB comments on board but asked if his reference to TCAT being under resourced was explicitly recorded in the previous meetings minutes. MB confirmed that his view on TCAT being under resources has never been formally noted but stated that his concerns had been informally raised at a previous Audit and Risk Committee meeting. It was confirmed that MB's comment relating to the Finance Team being under resourced had never been noted in previous Audit and Risk Committee meeting minutes.</p> <p>AM said that the Finance Team resources have been kept under review and that recommendations given by DM have been supported by the Trust.</p> <p><i>A Trustee posed two questions and asked if the Trust is under resourced, or if new colleagues have not joined in sufficient time to support with Trust needs.</i></p> <p><i>A Trustee asked for confirmation if the new appointment, Jayne Tallant has officially joined to support the Finance Team and can now begin to support with the financial accounts.</i></p> <p><i>DM confirmed that Jayne Tallant has now joined the Central Team, whilst still fulfilling her role at The Sutton Academy. DM confirmed that Jayne Tallant's start date to join the Finance Team was stalled</i></p>			

due to factors beyond TCAT's control.

A Trustee commented that there has been reassurance regarding the turn around and deadlines from previous meetings. A discussion took place regarding quality and quantity, and it was agreed that it is imperative the correct people are completing work that compliments their skillset. The Committee engaged in discussion relating to specific colleagues and their roles.

A Trustee questioned DM and asked if going forward, from this point, will TCAT be in a better position and will the return be completed by 31.12.24. LW also asked for confirmation on how this can be assured for Trustees.

AM said ed that at the HR, Finance and Operations Committee, there was an agreement made to employ somebody to support the Finance Team, following the recommendation made by TCAT's Director of Finance. AM shared that the request from the Director of Finance was taken on board, and confirmed that an appointment has been made to support DM.

AM asked MB to provide details on what he thinks TCAT requires in terms of additional support. MB stated that a qualified, experienced accountant is required to effectively support a multi academy trust. HP posed a question to MB regarding the external auditors completing the finance accounts and MB confirmed that this can be completed by external auditors. HP added that it is the first time he has heard that an external organisation can complete this for the Trust and proceeded to comment that the key focus is ensuring the Statutory Accounts are completed and that the correct measures are in place to enable DM to complete this. HP asked DM if TCAT will meet the Financial Year end deadline and DM confirmed that this deadline will be met.

LW commented that the structure of the Finance Team needed to be assessed, and HP added that quality assurance checks on the new finance system are required. HP asked MB if he could provide TCAT with guidance on the structure. MB stated that he does not think he is the right person to advise and explained that effective recruitment of the right person is what supports an effective structure. MB emphasised that there needs to be an individual under DM.

HP questioned DM and asked if the Statutory Accounts will be ready for the upcoming Trust Board meeting which is scheduled to take place on 12/12/24.

DM confirmed that a draft version will be ready.

HP added that Trustees are committed to being flexible and supportive. MB confirmed that the external auditors require two days from receiving the Statutory Accounts. DM confirmed that the draft version will be ready to be shared with the external auditors.

	<p>LW confirmed that it is essential that an analysis of the finance structure will be completed as a matter of priority. LW added that the finance system will continue to be implemented, and the guidance of MB is hugely valued. LW confirmed that all feedback being taken into consideration.</p> <p>HP added that TCAT appreciate MB and his team's efforts for going above and beyond to support the Finance Team in ensuring this deadline is met.</p>
8.	<p>Internal Audit Plan 24-25: (For information)</p> <p>NC joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams, and LW welcomed NC to provide the committee with details relating to agenda item 8. NC referred to the Internal Audit Plan for 24-25. NC referred to the paper that was shared prior to the meeting and highlighted key areas within the audit documentation and the key topics included. NC confirmed that the Cyber Security reviews will be completed by members of the Wylie Bisset team. NC highlighted that the finance review is in the process of being confirmed due to the challenges faced by the Finance Team with the new Civica finance system.</p> <p>NC shared the proposed dates for the audit reviews which will take place in the New Year. NC referred to page 12 and 13 which provide an overview of the internal audit coverage over the last seven years. NC confirmed that this is the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 24-25 and offered to take any questions relating this documentation.</p> <p><i>LW questioned if a SEND Review added would be added to the proposal.</i> <i>AM confirmed that this will be included in next year's audit plan.</i></p> <p>LW asked the committee if they had any further questions or comments relating to the Internal Audit Plan. HP commented that he was impressed with the coverage particularly, the Cyber Security and the level of detail in the audit plan.</p> <p>AL highlighted that the safeguarding review scheduled to take place on 07/04/2025 would need to be rescheduled due to this date falling over the Easter break for TCAT academies. NC confirmed that a touch base meeting will need to take place to discuss alternative dates and confirmed that this would be no problem.</p> <p><i>LW asked the committee for their approval for the Internal Audit Plan.</i> <i>This was unanimously approved by the committee.</i></p>
9.	<p>Finance & Governance Review DfE: (For information)</p> <p>AM provided details regarding the Finance and Governance Review that was undertaken by the DfE in September. AM referred to key details contained</p>

	<p>within the report and shared that the outcome was very positive. AM added that there were no recommendations made following this review.</p> <p><i>A Trustee challenged page 2 of the report relating to finance. DM responded by sharing that the minutes were available on GovernorHub.</i></p> <p>LW thanked the TCAT Team for their time and support with this review. LW highlighted that it is important that this report is shared with this particular committee due to the financial review that is completed as part of this Finance and Governance Review.</p>
10.	<p>Update on Priestley College Funding Audit: (For information)</p> <p>DM confirmed that TCAT are awaiting the final sign off. DM confirmed that there is a total of £5000 worth of errors for the funding and that TCAT are still waiting for confirmation regarding clawback.</p> <p>DM confirmed that there were several procedural issues which have been detailed in the outcome letter. DM confirmed that recommendations have been made and shared that some of these recommendations have been immediately applied by to ensure improved attention to administrative detail. DM shared that overall, this was a relatively good Funding Audit and that the feedback is being applied to improve practice.</p> <p>LW raised that the Priestley College Funding Audit was addressed in the previous Audit and Risk Committee meeting and that there are lessons to be learned in the processes.</p> <p>DM expressed that processes have already been amended to improve practices to prevent future challenges. DM provided the example of adult education courses, explained that colleagues are now following a clear procedure to ensure sufficient evidence is being recorded to demonstrate learner's progress from level one to level two.</p>
11.	<p>Risk Register: (For information and discussion)</p> <p>Due to time constraints, it was agreed that that this agenda item would need to be carried over into the next meeting to ensure this can be explored in enough detail. All attendees agreed with this decision and the Clerk noted that the Risk Register would be added as an agenda item for the next meeting for Trustees to review.</p>
12.	<p>Policy Review: (For information)</p> <p>AL confirmed that the Policy Schedule has been updated for information and explained that this document is a good point of reference for Governors and Trustees to review Trust-wide policies.</p> <p><i>LW challenged AL and raised that three HR policies were not up to date.</i></p>

	<i>AL confirmed that the Trust have endeavoured to work with JCNC to get the policies approved and updated. AL added that the discussion and consultation process can sometimes slow down policy reviews and explained that BL is working closely with JCNC to ensure correct procedures are being followed to have amended policies approved.</i>
13.	<p>AOB:</p> <p>HP recommended that Trustees attended an additional meeting to approve the Finance Update. It was agreed during this meeting that an 'Extra-Ordinary Trust Board' meeting would be scheduled to take place to approve the Finance Accounts.</p> <p>AM proposed that the Risk Register is carried forward to the agenda at the 'Extra-Ordinary Trust Board' meeting. This decision was supported by all attendees.</p>
14.	<p>Date and time of next meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 13th March 2025 at 4.30-6pm • Thursday 26th June 2025 at 4.30-6pm
15.	<p>Part Two – Confidential</p> <p>Confidential items have been captured in a Part Two Confidential Items document.</p>

LW thanked the committee for their time and this meeting was closed by the Chair at 17:58.

Action Log

Minute Reference	Action to be taken	By Whom	Completion Date
7.	Assessment of the Finance Team to be completed.	AM/ DM/ LW	January 2025
8.	AL and NC to discuss alternative audit date for Safeguarding review.	AL/ NC	January 2025
11.	Carry Agenda Item 11. Across to the Extra Ordinary Trust Board meeting to ensure sufficient time can be spent to cover the Risk Register.	MA	ASAP
13.	MA to support with the organisation of an additional meeting with Trustees.	MA	ASAP