

THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST

AGENDA:

Finance, HR, and Operations Committee meeting held on Thursday 5th December 2024
6-8pm

Venue: TCAT Professional Development Centre

Chair: Peter Winter

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

Committee Membership

Name	Category	Term Ends
Linda Boys	Trustee	31.08.2028
Andrew Moorcroft (AM)	CEO , Trustee	N/A
Anita Pailing (AP)	Committee Associate	N/A
Howard Platt (HP)	Trustee	01.07.2025
John Warren	Trustee	11.01.2028
Linda Waterson (LW)	Trustee	01.07.2025
Stephen Whatmore (SW)	Trustee	01.07.2025
Peter Winter (PW)	Chair	11.01.2028

Also in Attendance

Name	Role
Adrienne Laing (AL)	Operations Director
Ben Logan (BL)	Head of HR
Damian McGuire (DM)	Finance Director

Documents Shared Prior to the Meeting:

Item 6. HR, Finance and Operations meeting minutes 10.10.24
 Item 6b. HR, Finance and Operations meeting minutes 27.06.24
 Item 8. HR Report
 Item 9a. TCAT Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice 2024
 Item 9b. Playing Pitch Strategy (Warrington)
 Item 10a. Business and Operations Report December 2024
 Item 11. Estates Management Report December 2024
 Item 12. TCAT Deed of Covenant Final Form
 Item 13. Padgate Academy IT Refresh

Agenda Items				
1	Welcome and Introductions: The meeting started at 18:08. The Chair welcomed the Committee and asked for consent for the Clerk, MA voice to record the meeting. The Committee provided their consent for this meeting to be recorded.			
2	Absence / Apologies / Non-Attendance: SW shared apologies in advance with the Clerk and these were accepted by the Committee.			
3	Register of Interests: No register of interests were shared.			
4	Declaration of Pecuniary Interests: No declarations of interests in relation to agenda items were declared .			
5	Membership & Organisation: The Committee confirmed that there are no membership changes.			
6	Minutes of the Finance, HR and Operations meeting held on 10th October 2024: For Approval a) Acceptance of the minutes : The minutes recorded on 10th October 2024 were approved by the Committee. b) Matters arising : There were no matters arising. c) Review of Action Log : All items on the action log have been completed.			
	Minute Reference	Action to be taken	By Whom	Completion Date
	6.	Correct typo on minutes from 27 th June 2024.	MA	ASAP
	8.	Upload Health and Safety Trustee Report.	MA	ASAP
	12.	Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice to be carried forward to next meeting.	BL	05/12/2024
7	Finance Update: DM explained that usually the statutory finance accounts would be available to review. However, this is not possible due to the new Civica Finance System which has caused a delayed in processing transactions. DM confirmed that the system is now working, and issues have been resolved. DM shared that the final area under investigation is the VAT number as this is currently showing incorrectly on the system. DM provided the committee with a brief update relating to staff changes, and shared that Jayne Tallant, Finance Manager at The Sutton Academy has now officially joined the Central Team and will be supporting DM and the Finance Team on a regular basis. Jayne Tallant has completed an induction and has full access to all documents and platforms required to support her in her role.			

AM asked DM to share views on the resource and structure that has been put in place for the Finance Team and questioned if DM feels there is enough resource in this department.

DM confirmed that the addition of Jayne Tallant will have a positive impact on the Finance Team and allow DM to hand over specific work that will enable DM to focus on key tasks.

AM questioned if DM is confident the correct people are in post.

DM confirmed that the correct people are in post and that once the system issues are rectified the Finance Team will be able to complete their roles in a more efficient manner.

DM provided information relating to the Investment Policy document that was shared with Trustees and Committee Associate prior to the meeting.

DM confirmed that there would usually be an investment update included in the Finance Report, however, due to challenges faced with the Finance system, this report is in the process of being written and will be shared in due course. DM asked if anyone had any questions regarding the investment.

PW queried who decides what goes into bonds and investments.

DM confirmed that AM and DM discuss this with the guidance provided by Rathbones. DM confirmed that any actions taken go through the Finance, Audit and HR Committee.

A Trustee questioned if the bonds provided immediate equity.

DM confirmed that this is correct. DM shared that bonds were purchased at a point that was advantageous.

A Trustee asked the length of a fixed term deposit.

DM confirmed that the length of a fixed term deposit is twelve months.

AM shared that the Account Manager from Rathbones has offered to join a future meeting to provide further details relating to TCAT's Investment Policy. Trustees agreed that this would be beneficial, and all demonstrated interest in having the Account Manager join a future HR, Finance and Operations committee meeting.

AM referred back to the finance document and explained that due to challenges faced with the Finance System, Investment Policy will be covered when the report has been produced.

AM confirmed that there will be an Extra-Ordinary Audit and Risk Committee meeting added to the calendar WC 16/12/2024.

A Trustee challenged if any other Trusts use Civica as a finance system and if so, does this work effectively for them?

DM confirmed that other multi-academy trusts do use this platform and that this is an effective system for a multi-academy trust. DM added that once the technical issues have been resolved this will be an effective system long term.

	<p>PW asked if there is any key information that needs to be shared with the HR, Finance and Operations Committee following the Audit and Risk Committee meeting.</p> <p>LW explained that there was an extensive conversation during the Audit and Risk Committee meeting and provided a brief overview of the key areas discussed with the external auditor. LW highlighted the significance of the completion of the statutory Annual Financial Accounts and Report and ensuring future submissions meet the required deadlines. In addition, LW added that an analysis of the finance structure will be completed going forward to ensure that the staffing structures are correct and there is sufficient capacity within this department.</p>
8	<p>HR Report: BL (For information and discussion)</p> <p>BL referred to the HR Report that was shared prior to the committee meeting explained that the HR Report was a general update and provided a summary relating to the following key areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People Strategy: BL is in the process of developing a timeline of work and metrics to assess the effectiveness of the People Strategy. BL provided a summary in relation to flexible working in education and confirmed that a Working Group is in the process of being developed to support with the development of this strategy. BL added that it is essential there is consistency implemented across the Trust. - Pay Award: BL confirmed that the support staff Pay Award has been agreed and implemented. BL added that there is a part two pay update relating to Priestley College. - Civica and Payroll: BL explained that the Civica platform offers a range of high-quality payroll services and that steps are being taken to make full use of this platform. BL confirmed that any new implementations will be made gradually. - Business Support Meetings: Overall, the meetings have been largely positive and academies who require support have been identified through these meetings. BL added that the Business Compliance Reviews are scheduled to take place in January will also include an assessment of HR compliance within academies. - Recruitment: BL shared that TCAT have a good success rate in relation to recruitment. Where readvertisements have been made, these have been similar nationally. TCAT are developing brand awareness and implementing strategies to fill more difficult positions. TCAT are also working in collaboration with Partners to aid with employer brand awareness. - Staff Survey: BL confirmed that the annual staff survey has now closed, and an assessment of the data is in the process of being completed. BL added that there has been a dip in numbers which may be for a variety of

	<p>reasons. BL informed the committee that the staff survey free text has provided insightful detail, and a key analysis will be completed.</p> <p><i>PW questioned if the flexible working will be assessed in one segment of the Trust, such as in a primary academy or a secondary academy.</i></p> <p><i>BL confirmed that there is a clear direction of travel that the DfE has been promoting for the last couple of years. BL confirmed that flexible working will not be implemented in one segment within the Trust, and that no radical changes will be implemented without strategic thought.</i></p> <p><i>PW asked how long TCAT have led staff surveys.</i></p> <p><i>BL confirmed that this is the third year TCAT have led the annual staff survey. BL added that the dip in numbers may have been a direct result of the flood that has occurred at Meadowside Community Primary School. BL added that some academies continue to run their own staff survey.</i></p> <p><i>AM added that TCAT have implemented a variety of methods to capture staff voice and referred to the Staff Pulse that was previously distributed. AM stated that all Heads and Principals supported TCAT in leading the survey annually, and that the completion of the staff survey fluctuates for a variety of reasons. TCAT will continue to assess the most effective way to collect staff voice.</i></p> <p><i>A Trustee questioned if AM accepts that staff who do not complete the staff survey are happy.</i></p> <p><i>AM stated that he does not accept this and commented that TCAT are reflecting on how to collect staff voice.</i></p> <p><i>A Trustee commented that it is important for staff to feel feedback is being acknowledged.</i></p> <p><i>AM confirmed that the Trust demonstrate ways in which feedback is being assessed, such as responding to CPD needs, addressing staff voice in TCAT Voice and direct conversations with Heads and Principals during Business Support meetings.</i></p> <p><i>A Trustee questioned if TCAT agreed to support national pay rates. BL and AM confirmed that TCAT support the national pay rates.</i></p> <p>PW asked if there were any further questions relating to BL's HR Report. There were no further questions raised.</p>
9	<p>Policies: BL/ AL (For information and approval)</p> <p>Policy Approval:</p> <p>Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice:</p>

BL explained that this policy contains a central set of protocols that cover the legal frameworks and a set of processes that establish best practice. BL confirmed that this is not a step-by-step process and shared that TCAT will be providing further EDI training. BL shared that this is an evolving document and that this document might be discussed at a future meeting.

BL asked if there were any comments or question.

A Trustee referred to Beamont Collegiate Academy's recruitment processes and how previously, this academy advertised differently to other academies.

BL confirmed that there are frameworks contained within this policy to ensure consistency with advertisements across the Trust. BL confirmed that Beamont Collegiate Academy will now follow the process outlined in the policy.

A Trustee queried how many recruitments have been made during this academic year.

BL confirmed that there have been approximately 150 recruitments that have been made over the last eleven months that are both external and internal recruits.

HP commented that TCAT demonstrate best practice in ensuring that the right people are placed in post.

BL asked for approval for the Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice:

This policy was unanimously approved.

Playing Pitch Strategy:

PW challenged that the Playing Pitch Strategy was not fully clear.

AL explained Warrington must have a Statutory Playing Pitch Strategy and that this strategy has been in formulation for a number of years. AL stated the significance of developing this strategy is to ensure that responsibility is placed on the correct people within the Trust and academies who are affected.

AL explained that the key information required has been included within this documentation to simplify the complexity of the Playing Pitch Strategy and key recommendations. AL explained 'protect', 'enhance' and 'provide' and the key areas within the strategy. 'AL added that the action plan is the most significant part of this strategy. This action plan will be extracted and implemented into the five-year estates plan.

AL shared that there are two academies who will get significant funding. Priestley College have a 3G hockey pitch and The Football Foundation are exploring the prospect of building a football pitch. Penketh High School are also in communication with The Football Foundation.

JW asked what MIS stands for.

	<p><i>AL confirmed this is a calculation of space and place dependent on the number of teams and available pitches. AL confirmed that MIS refers to the measure of future capacity and need.</i></p> <p><i>JW asked if TCAT academies are included in the Warrington Strategy. AL confirmed that TCAT academies are included in the Warrington Strategy.</i></p> <p><i>A Trustee questioned if the HR, Finance and Operations Committee will be required to have conversations with the external agencies?</i></p> <p><i>AL confirmed that TCAT colleagues are working very closely with The Football Foundation to support with complex bids. Due to lack of certainty regarding TCAT financial contributions, AL confirmed that this final figures cannot be shared until further funding information is received. Once this information is received, this would then be shared with the HR, Finance and Operations Committee.</i></p> <p><i>HP asked AL if the Committee are being asked to approve £500K to fund the pitch developments.</i></p> <p><i>AL confirmed that this request will be made in a future committee meeting. AL confirmed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pitch development will be covered by funding.</i></p> <p><i>A Trustee queried how The Football Foundation will get back the money that they invest.</i></p> <p><i>AL confirmed that to receive funding from The Football Foundation, there is a detailed agreement and commitment that needs to be made by TCAT. AL referred to a 'Sinking Fund'. The Trust will be required to put a significant amount of money to show commitment to investment of replacement in 25 years.</i></p> <p><i>PW asked who covers operating costs for the grounds.</i></p> <p><i>AL confirmed that TCAT will be responsible for the upkeep of the grounds.</i></p> <p>AL asked for approval for The Pitch Strategy. This was approved by the Committee.</p>
10	<p>Building and Operations Report: AL (For information and discussion)</p> <p>AL provided a brief overview of the Building and Operations Report that was shared prior to the Committee meeting. AL referred to the presentation and the key elements discussed were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operational Procedures. AL explained that the operational procedures are being developed to set benchmarks across the Trust and referred to the timeline. The purpose of this is to improve processes across the Trust.

- Business Support Card: AL explained that the scorecard has been updated to demonstrate a clear RAG rating. For areas that are rated red or amber, a series of support will be provided.

LW challenged why governance may show as red on a Business Support Scorecard.

AL explained that this may be due to governors not updating declarations of confirmations. AL also added that GIAS is not always updated.

- IT: AL shared that Carlo Mullen has now joined the Trust at Trust IT Lead and has had a positive start in post. AL confirmed that the key priorities for the Trust relate to Cyber Essentials and Digital Strategy.
- Induction and training for new Headteachers and Principals who have joined the trust: AL confirmed that training matrices are in the process of being assessed to provide effective training and guidance, particularly for business support staff. AL confirmed that new Heads and Principals have found the induction training beneficial and has enabled the business support staff to engage in specific training.
- Accident Data: AL explained the significance of tracking accidents to ensure these are managed more effectively. AL highlighted the volume of accidents recorded at The Sutton Academy and confirmed that additional training will be provided to ensure consistency in the way in which types of incidents are recorded. AL reassured Trustees that conversations have been had to support academies who have recorded physical assaults. AL added that the majority of physical assaults have been made by students who have additional needs and CPD training has been provided to support colleagues.

AL confirmed that SARS and FOIs have been included in this report for Trustees information and added that all information is recorded on RiskMate. AL shared that RiskMate is frequently assessed, and incidents are tracked and monitored.

A Trustee asked a question relating to SARS and FOI and the data included in this report for South Wirral High School.

AL confirmed that this information has been included as they record on RiskMate and that this has been included for internal information.

- Catering: AL confirmed that Harrisons are providing catering across a number of TCAT academies and shared that feedback has been very positive.
- Compliance Education: AL confirmed that TCAT are working in collaboration with Education Compliance who are supporting the Trust with Health and Safety. AL confirmed that feedback has been very positive.
- Ty'n-Y-Felin: AL confirmed that TCAT are in the final stages of signing the lease for Ty'n-Y-Felin. AL confirmed that Compliance Education are supporting the Trust with the completion of risk assessments and that

	<p>TCAT are being supported by Active Hope. Joe Obiro is now in post as Centre Manager and has developing programmes in preparation for upcoming trips.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Halliwell Jones Stadium/ Alternative Provision: AL confirmed that the AP has now been moved centrally and that all updates on compliance will be added to RiskMate. <p><i>A Trustee queried if the Alternative Provision only covers students at Beamont Collegiate Academy.</i></p> <p><i>AL confirmed that students from other academies are attending this Alternative Provision.</i></p> <p><i>AM added that the Local Authority have quality assured the Alternative Provision and endorsed this with the prospect of purchasing places for students in 25-26.</i></p>
11	<p>Estate Management: AL (For information)</p> <p>AL referred to the Estate Management Report and provided Trustees with a brief overview of the key areas contained covered within this document. AL referred to the 2024-25 projects plan and the key notes to be considered.</p> <p><i>HP requested an update relating to the ground source heat pumps.</i></p> <p><i>AL confirmed that the ground source heat pumps project has been very successful. AL added that there have been some snagging issues at Padgate Academy, and this will be resolved by the provider on Friday 6th December.</i></p> <p><i>HP queried if the gas boilers have been removed from academies who have had new heating systems.</i></p> <p><i>AL confirmed that gas boilers have been removed.</i></p> <p>The Trust Board agreed that the ground source heat pump project has been a very successful scheme. AL shared that Salix are very impressed with the success of the project and have requested a visit in March 2025.</p> <p>AM shared details relating to the recent LED project and expressed how impressive this project has been managed. AL explained how each light is individually controlled by intelligent technology which will save a significant amount of money for the Trust. AL added that this project has been carefully managed to prioritise the largest academies to save money. AM confirmed that there has been no disruption throughout this project.</p> <p>AL provided a brief overview of Broomfield's Junior School's remodelling plan as a point of note for the Committee. AL referred to the design that has been developed by Wellspace Architects and explained that the budget costs are in the process of being developed.</p>

	<p>AL had provided the Committee with key details relating to the Playing Pitch Strategy in agenda item 9. AL briefly referred to the Priestley College and Penketh High School 3G pitches and asked the Trust Board for their approval support the application of the Pitch Strategy.</p> <p><i>PW challenged if firm proposals for the Pitch Strategies will be brought to the HR, Finance and Operations Committee.</i> <i>AL confirmed that the Trust Board has approved one million pound, but more detail will be shared with the Committee when the Trust are in the position to share more details.</i></p> <p>The Trust Board approved the application of the Pitch Strategy.</p>
12	<p>Deed of Covenant for Peel Hall: AL (For discussion and approval)</p> <p>AM confirmed that the PAN increase at Padgate Academy has been approved at Trust Board and support has been given for the Peel Hall project. AL explained that this will be a commitment from the Trust to move Padgate Academy's PAN from 150-180 by September 2026 and confirmed that Padgate Academy has room at the site but will require some modification to accommodate additional students. AL added that there £3,484,800 will be received to fund the remodelling and modifications of the academy.</p> <p><i>A Trustee queried the process of the timeline of funding.</i> <i>AL confirmed that there is a schedule of works and that the developer will cover the cost of project work.</i></p> <p>AL asked for the Committee to approve the signing of the Deed of Covenant for Peel Hall. The Committee agreed to the signing of the Deed of Covenant.</p> <p><i>PW asked what position TCAT would be in if the developers were to be dissolved.</i> <i>AL confirmed that Section 106 is government money and explained that this is protected money. AL added that Homes England are the guarantor and explained that they would be responsible for resolving any development issues.</i></p> <p>AM added that advice has been given by the DfE and solicitors at Stone King to ensure that the process is being thoroughly followed.</p>
13	<p>AOB:</p> <p>Padgate Academy IT Refresh:</p> <p>DM explained that Padgate Academy shared an IT Refresh project proposal to their Local Governing Board. DM shared that the IT room replacements will go beyond £50,000 and as a result, must be brought to the Trust Board for approval.</p>

	<p>DM confirmed that this money will be used from Padgate Academy's reserves and asked for the Trust Board's approval for the IT Refresh.</p> <p>Padgate Academy's IT Refresh was approved by the Trust Board.</p>
14	<p>Date and time of next meetings: (For information)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 13th March 6-8pm • Thursday 26th June 6-8pm
15	<p>Part Two: Confidential Items:</p> <p>Confidential items have been captured in a Part Two Confidential Items document.</p>

The chair thanked the committee for their time and this meeting was closed at 19:54.