

## THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST

### AGENDA:

**Finance, HR, and Operations Committee meeting to be held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at 16:30**

**Venue:** TCAT Professional Development Centre

**Chair:** To be elected

**Clerk:** Melissa Alexander

### Committee Membership

Name	Category	Term Ends
Linda Boys	Trustee	31.08.2028
Andrew Moorcroft (AM)	<b>CEO</b> , 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)	Trustee	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 ahead of meeting

Agenda Items	
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b> The meeting began at 16:03 and MA welcomed the committee for the first Finance, HR and Operations committee meeting for the academic year. MA introduced LB as a TCAT Trustee and confirmed that LB has joined the Finance, HR and Operations Committee.

2	<b>Absence / Apologies / Non-Attendance</b> There were no apologies received.												
3	<b>Register of Interests</b> There were no declarations of interest in relation to items on the agenda.												
4	<b>Declaration of Pecuniary Interests</b> There were no declarations of interest in relation to items on the agenda.												
5	<b>Membership &amp; Organisation: For Approval</b> Self-nominations and nominations to be submitted to the Clerk in advance of the meeting. PW emailed MA prior to the committee meeting to confirm that he would be volunteering to be the chair of this committee. A vote was cast the committee elected PW as the Chair of this committee.												
6	<b>Minutes of the Finance, HR and Operations meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024: For Approval</b>  a) <b>Acceptance of the minutes:</b>  PW asked the committee for approval for the previous minutes. <b>A Trustee queried agenda item number 5 relating to the retirement of SW and highlighted that this was a typo. The initial should have read ST. It was agreed that this typo would need to be amended.</b>  <b>Resolved:</b> Trustees accepted the minutes from 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 as a true and accurate record of the meeting. They would be duly signed and made available to the public through the Trust website.  b) <b>Matters Arising:</b> There were no matters arising.  c) Review of Action Log : <table><tr><th>Minute Reference</th><th>Action to be taken</th><th>By Whom</th><th>Completion Date</th></tr><tr><td>7.</td><td>SRMA Report was deferred to a future meeting.</td><td>AL</td><td>October 2024</td></tr><tr><td>10.</td><td>Health and safety tender to be deferred to the Trust Board.</td><td>AL</td><td>July 2024</td></tr></table>	Minute Reference	Action to be taken	By Whom	Completion Date	7.	SRMA Report was deferred to a future meeting.	AL	October 2024	10.	Health and safety tender to be deferred to the Trust Board.	AL	July 2024
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7	<b>Finance Report: For discussion</b>  DM referred to the revision of the budget for 2024-25 due to the government’s approval for the 5.5% pay award for teachers. DM provided the committee with an update relating to Priestley College and the level of funding that they would be receiving. DM referred to the revised budget presented to Trust Board in September 2024 and confirmed that there is potentially a clawback of approximately £339,000 relating to T-Level funding and the additional salary funding allocation that has been announced.												

DM shared with the committee that there had been a meeting at Priestley College relating to T-Levels. An assessment of the September 2024 numbers has been made relating to the total number of students who will be doing T-Levels. This academic year there is a distinction between the number of existing students completing T-Levels and new students who have enrolled onto this programme. DM shared that nationally, the figures for numbers who are enrolling on to this course is low. DM referred to Item 7 and how the T Level funding is not funded under the lagged methodology but based upon estimated student numbers. DM added that Priestley College will not know the final clawback figure until February 2025, and that this estimate is based upon the worst-case scenario.

#### Finance Report:

DM shared that there is a national challenge regarding support staff pay award and confirmed that this is still an ongoing situation. Unison will close their ballot WC 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024, and this may provide further clarity regarding staff pay changes. Any final agreement on support staff pay may affect the budget if different from what has been provided within the original budget.

In the sixth form sector, the Teachers Pay award for the 5.5% increase does not apply as they can set their own pay. The Sixth Form College Association have asked for pay awards in 16-19 academies to be paused until the national negotiation has been agreed. 16-19 academies are being funded for the increase but those Sixth Form Colleges still in the College sector are not being funded. Potential industrial action might occur if there is a delay in reaching a settlement. DM highlighted that there is still some uncertainty relating to this matter.

#### ***A Trustee asked how Jayne Tallant will support with the TCAT Finance Team.***

DM explained that Jayne Tallant is scheduled to support the Central Team as of November 2024. Jayne Tallant will still be based at The Sutton Academy; however, Jayne will also use TCAT Professional Development Centre as a base and will work alongside the Finance Team.

PW asked if there were any further questions relating to the Finance Report. There were no further questions asked by Committee.

#### Investment Strategy:

DM explained that TCAT invested £2,024,336.89 over the last twelve months in various banks via Flagstone. DM added that a number of accounts have now matured and the deposits from these accounts have been returned to the Trust as the money was the School Condition Allocation funding which had been protected for the Decarbonisation Project. The interest that has accrued will contribute towards the redevelopment of Tyn-Y-Felin, TCAT's Outdoor Education Centre.

***A Trustee asked which banks have invested.***

DM provided names of some of the banks who have invested such as HSBC, Standard Chartered, Charter Saving Bank, Shawcreek, Marazy-TH Bank, JM Bank UK, SCM Bank UK, Bank of London and Investec.

***A Trustee asked for contextual background regarding to the £85,000 cap.***

***HP confirmed the reasoning for this was based upon the ,Financial Services Compensation Scheme guaranteed protection up £85,000, and PW added that this reduced the risks.***

Civica:

DM shared further details relating to the new finance system that has been implemented across the Trust. DM shared that there are some final amendments and training to be completed to ensure that Civica is fully implemented across the Trust. DM expressed that the Finance Team have experienced the benefits of the reporting system that has been utilised and is optimistic that in time, once colleagues have more confidence on how to use this platform it will be a much better financial platform.

***A Trustee asked if the electronic ordering system has been implemented.***

DM confirmed that the launch of the ordering system can not be implemented until the existing files have been transferred across into the new system.

***A Trustee asked if there have been implications of not launching the ordering system.***

DM confirmed that there have been no implications and that the approach used for the previous system is still being used in an effective manner.

***A Trustee commented that the new finance system is having a positive impact from a central perspective and asked if the new system is having a positive impact across the individual academies.***

DM confirmed that there have been several training sessions held at TCAT Professional Development Centre to ensure colleagues have completed the appropriate training. DM added that there are still some areas of development to support colleagues with their confidence with the new system to ensure this is being utilised in the most effective way.

***PW asked if there were any further questions. A Trustee questioned if everything is on track for year end.***

DM confirmed that everything is on track for year end and confirmed that a meeting has been scheduled to discuss this in further detail.

BL provided a verbal update for the Trust Board and shared details relating to the People Strategy and referred to the key objectives which are:

- Recruit and Retain
- Grow and Develop
- Reward, Recognition and Benefits
- Inclusivity and Wellbeing.

BL referred to the Strategic Action Plan, and how the People Strategy aligns with the long-term vision for the Trust.

BL referred to HR Report and details relating to the Government's acceptance of the 5.5% teacher pay increase and the implications this may have. BL added that Sixth Form teacher pay is subject to formal negotiation between employer and staff representatives through the SFCA NJC. A pay offer of 2% on all pay points has been put to staff representatives. BL confirmed that staff have noted the offer but that this has not been accepted due to the offer being low and explained that this may cause potential challenge and strain to Sixth Form colleges due to budgets.

BL shared that there was a new Employments Rights Paper published on 10/10/2024 and has shared that this may impact TCAT's current processes. BL confirmed that changes to the Employment Rights Bill will be assessed and monitored very closely. Changes will be implemented where appropriate and required.

BL asked if there was anything that anybody would like to explore in further detail.

***PW asked for further details relating to the Employment Rights Paper and questioned if there were any changes that would be made within our own processes and policies.*** BL confirmed that all TCAT actions follow the correct procures and that the content of this new paper will be considered and implemented.

HP added that there are some possible implications to the new Employments Rights Paper and used the example of an exam's invigilator.

DM added that the reasoning for the new Employments Rights Paper is to tighten up with specific areas relating to zero hours contracts.

HP commented that the Employment Rights Paper's purpose is to ensure that the correct procedures are being implemented. BL agreed with this comment.

BL shared that Chris Jones, who oversees payroll at The Sutton Academy, has been on site at TCAT Professional Development Centre over the last two weeks to support the HR team. BL shared that Chris's support has had a positive impact. DM shared that the payroll deadline was met in advance and expressed that this is a direct impact of the changes made with the implementation of Civica and the additional capacity that has been implemented within the Central Team.

9	<p><b>Operations Report: For discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operations report: AL provided a brief overview of the Operations Report. The key areas covered were:</li> <li>- A summary of Compliance Reviews</li> <li>- Accident data</li> <li>- Data protection reporting</li> <li>- Overview of estates projects</li> </ul> <p>AL ensured this was a summary due to covering the key elements throughout the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- H&amp;S Trustee Report 2023-24: AL uploaded this report during the meeting.</li> <li>- AL shared a brief verbal update and stated that the audit process was very positive and demonstrated that consistent processes had been implemented within all academies.</li> <li>- The overall risk rating for academy demonstrated that every school had improved on their safety systems compared to the previous year.</li> <li>- AL added that Lisa Gannon and Laura Fletcher are involved with the investigation of academy accidents and expressed how their support had been hugely valuable.</li> </ul>
10	<p><b>Estate Management: For Information</b></p> <p>AL shared a verbal overview of the Business and Operations Report presentation that was shared with committee prior to the meeting. AL shared details relating to Operational Excellence taken from the business sector and the way in which this is going to be adopted to support and improve operations across the Trust. AL referred to the updated business support cards that have been evolved to support business support meetings with Heads and Principals, as well as provided guidance on how the business support cards will be used.</p> <p>AL referred to the KPIs that were shared with Committee prior to the committee meeting. AL made reference to the accident data and the improvement of reporting that has been noticeable in recent years. AL raised that Padgate Academy have a high number of accident reports and Penketh High School have very few. Further guidance and CPD is being provided to support both academies to ensure accidents are being recorded accurately. AL added that Education Compliance have visited all academies to support with accident reporting. AL shared that most accidents in primary school happen during breaktime and lunchtime and that most accidents in secondary academies often occur during PE lessons. Other cause of accidents can also be due to accidents that occur in science.</p> <p><b><i>A Trustee challenged that the number of near misses seems very low.</i></b></p> <p>AL confirmed that near misses reporting is not accurate and agreed with PW that there are not enough near misses reported. AL confirmed that further</p>

training is required to ensure colleagues are reporting near misses more accurately.

***A Trustee questioned why there were 85 unresolved accidents were from 23-24.***

AL shared that these incidents may have been resolved but have not been updated on the system. AL shared that LG has assessed the unresolved actions to ensure these are resolved and updates will be made to reflect this. This has identified a training need for colleagues across the Trust, and this will be a key item on the agenda for the next operations hub meeting which is scheduled to take place in December.

**A Trustee asked about the 400% increase of physical assaults.**

AL shared that a high number of the physical assaults have involved students with SEND needs. AL added that Broomfields in particular, have a small number of challenging children who have been involved with physical incidents. AL emphasised the significance of reporting all incidents and shared that the relevant training has been provided to support staff and students.

AM added that as a Trust, exclusions are avoided at all costs and support and training has been provided to support with students who have been involved with physical assaults.

AL provided further information relating to Freedom of Information Requests and SARS and shared that the implementation of RiskMate has supported in the management of these requested.

Estates Management:

AL verbally referred to the estates update and IT update that was shared with the committee prior to the meeting. AL shared that Carlos Mullen is joining TCAT as IT Technical Lead on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October.

***A Trustee asked what Paul Sinnott's role will be in supporting Carlos Mullen.***

AL confirmed that Paul will oversee IT, but Carlos Mullen will manage everything from a technical perspective.

AM shared that TCAT are going to be launching the Digital Strategy, and this is in the process of being developed and finalised. AL referred to the five-year plan and network infrastructure and confirmed that there will be a Steering Group who will work in collaboration to manage and oversee the Digital Strategy.

Operations:

AL referred to the operation work that is taking place, which covers catering, operational excellence, project management, inductions for new academics and Tyn-Y-Felin.

***A Trustee asked if the new catering providers have been a success.***

AL and HP confirmed that Harrisons have provided high quality food and that the catering providers have made an impressive start.

AM and AL shared that Meadowside Community Primary and Nursery School have experienced a flood with over 300,000 litres of water because of a leak inside the school. AL shared that there had been no clear indication of a major leak prior to this, and water pumps are being put in place on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October to remove excess water. AM added that welfare checks have been made to students and meals have been provided to all students who are free-school-meal.

***PW asked if there is a copy of the Health and Safety Trustee Report 2023-24 that is available for Trustees.***

AL confirmed that the copy of this report should have been added to GovernorHub and that this will be circulated following the committee meeting.

PW asked that the Health and Safety Trustee Report 2023-24 is carried over to the next agenda. MA confirmed that this item will also be carried over to the agenda for the next committee meeting on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December.

AL provided further details relating to the project management of new boilers that are going into academies across the Trust.

AM shared details relating to the new LED light project and the significant amount of money that will be saved across the Trust. AM shared that at Priestley College alone, the new LED light system will save £60,000 per year. AL added that over the course of ten years, millions of pounds will be saved across the Trust.

***A Trustee asked if academies who have LED lights can still have the new LED light system implemented into their academy.***

AL confirmed that this is under review and will be further discussed with individual academies.

***A Trustee asked if there is sufficient resource to support the demand of the growth of the Trust.***

AL confirmed that there is sufficient resource.

AM added a comment relating to capacity of the Central Team and provided the example of an AI tool titled 'Robin' that has been purchased to complete website audits. AM shared that this tool costs £200 per academy and will heavily reduce Dawn Golden's workload to allow for more capacity to support the Trust.



	<p><b><i>PW asked for context regarding decision making on capital and projects and asked if projects were a decision made just by the Operations Team.</i></b></p> <p>AL shared that the committee will be provided with the Estates Capital Strategy Plan which is driven by condition surveys. AL shared that short listing for project management is discussed at OPCAT and taken to Trust Board for approval. AL added that Capital Funding takes place between April-March and all approved projects stay on the list for work to commence unless requests are made by individual academy.</p> <p><b><i>A Trustee challenged the ranking system that is used to decide how and when projects run.</i></b></p> <p>AL confirmed that this information can be found in the Estate Management Strategy. AL also referred to funding information that is shared and the impact this has on the the timescales implemented for projects.</p> <p><u>Business Support Cards:</u></p> <p>AL referred to the amendments made to business support cards to ensure data is showcased in a more sophisticated manner with the implementation of a new RAG rating. Business support meetings will take place across the autumn term with Heads and Principals and explicit information is shared to showcase the investments that have been made within individual academies and actions going forward.</p> <p><b>Steve Whatmore left the meeting at 17:36</b></p>
<b>11</b>	<p><b>DfE Reviews: For discussion</b></p> <p><u>SRMA Report:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AL verbally shared details relating to the report and referred to some of the the recommendations that had been made as well as actions that had been completed by TCAT.</li> <li>• AM shared that the SRMA Review was a condition to allow The Sutton Academy to join the Trust.</li> <li>• AM added that the ICEM future planning has started and budget planning for 25-26 has begun.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>AM asked the committee if there are any challenges in the SRMA Report that need to be discussed?</i></b></p> <p>Full Committee approved the SRMA Report</p> <p><u>ESFA Financial Management and Governance Review:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AL shared details relating to the ESFA Financial and Governance Review. AL confirmed that there has been no further information received following this review and updates will be provided in due course.</li> </ul> <p><u>Internal Audit: Priestley Funding Review: (verbal)</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DM explained that the internal audit at Priestley College started in summer and is scheduled to finish in October 2024. DM shared that he has spoken to the MIS Manager and there are very few queries that are coming for 16-19 age bracket, however, there is a significant number of queries relating to adult funding. DM shared that Adult Tutors have not kept a detailed record of progress made by students enrolled on the adult education programmes. DM added that the auditors have sampled over one hundred students from adult education.</li> </ul> <p>AL shared that there will be an ICM audit of the Trust in May 2025.</p>
<b>12</b>	<p><b>Policies: For Approval</b></p> <p><b><i>A Trustee questioned if there is a sub committee who has reviewed each policy.</i></b></p> <p>DM confirmed that for Financial Regulations, these have not significantly changed, but all amendments for the regulations have been updated. There have been two minor changes.</p> <p><b><i>A Trustee requested if it is possible to highlight the slight amendments for transparency on what as changed.</i></b></p> <p>AL confirmed that this process is usually implemented, however, a new template was used for the Financial Regulations which changed the format of this document.</p> <p>The Chair asked for the approval for the Financial Regulations Policy. This was approved by the Committee.</p> <p>BL shared that the Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice is in the process of being reviewed by Stone King and asked for consent to defer this policy to the next meeting. PW agreed this.</p> <p>TCAT Safeguarding Policy Statement: The TCAT Safeguarding Policy Statement was approved during this meeting.</p> <p>AL provided a verbal update relating to the Policy Schedule. AL provided the reasoning for the policy schedule and shared that all policies can be found on IAmCompliant. AL shared that the AI strategy will need to be added into the Policy Schedule.</p> <p><b><i>A Trustee challenged that some of the Trust policies have 2023 review dates and questioned why these have not been updated on the Policy Schedule.</i></b></p> <p>BL shared that policies are reviewed in JCNC and that these are scheduled to be reviewed in due course.</p>
<b>14</b>	<b>AOB</b>

	<p><b><i>A Trustee asked for an update on Tyn-Y-Felin</i></b></p> <p>AM provided an update regarding Tyn-Y-Felin. A small group are going to be visiting on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October for the weekend and there is a large team who will be attending this visit to support. Paul Sinnott has been on site and shared that building works are in the process of being finalised.</p> <p>AM shared that the lease that has been shared for signing does not reflect the Head of Terms. HP has liaised with the Chair of the Board to resolve the queries raised in the lease. Overall, there has been positive progress made with Tyn-Y-Felin.</p> <p>AM confirmed that all catering needs have been resolved and the Centre Manager has been recruitment. Joe Obiro is scheduled to officially start the role on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November and has enrolled onto a number of courses to ensure full training is completed to support Joe in this new role.</p>
<b>15</b>	<p><b>Date and time of next meetings: For Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 6-8pm</li> <li>• Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 6-8pm</li> <li>• Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June 6-8pm</li> </ul>
<b>16</b>	<p><b>Confidential Items</b></p> <p>There were no confidential items recorded during this meeting.</p>

**The Chair thanked attendees for their time and contributions and closed the meeting closed at 18:15.**