Trust Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday 11th December 2025

Venue: TCAT Professional Development Centre

Chair: Howard Platt

Clerk: Melissa St. Clair m.alexander@tcat.uk.com

Trustee Board Members			**End of Term**	**Present**
Linda Boys	LB	Trustee (Foundation - Diocese of Chester)	31/08/2028	✓
John Cartwright	JC	Trustee (Member appointed)	23/06/2029	✓
Matthew Grant	MG	Trustee (Member appointed)	20/06/2028	✓
Phil McEwan	PM	Trustee (Member appointed) (Chair, GSP)	14/07/2029	✓
Andy Moorcroft	AM	**CEO**, Trustee		✓
Howard Platt	HP	**Chair**, Trustee (Member appointed)	01/07/2029	✓
John Warren	JW	Trustee (Member appointed)	11/01/2028	✓
Stephen Whatmore	SW	**Vice Chair**, Trustee (Member appointed) (Chair, BCA)	01/07/2029	✓
Peter Winter	PW	Trustee (Member appointed)	11/01/2028	✓
Sheila Yates	SY	Trustee (Chair, PRI)	01/03/2028	✓
Also Invited to Attend				
Richard Barker	RB	Chair of Governors, South Wirral High School		
Moira Bryan	MB	Chair of Governors, Penketh High School		
Phil Calrow	PC	Chair of Governors, Meadowside Primary		
Carole Owen	CO	Chair of Governors, Padgate Academy		

Fergus Laing	FL	Chair of Governors, Broomfields Junior School			
Ashlea O'Rourke	AO	Chair of Governors, Dallam Community Primary School			
Paul Otter	PO	Chair of Governors, Appleton Thorn Primary			
Anita Pailing	AP	Chair of Governors, Bridgewater High School			
Gordon Pennington	GP	Chair of Governors, The Sutton Academy			
Carolyn Williams	CW	Chair of Governors, Penketh South Community Primary			
Geraint Williams	GW	Chair of Governors, Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England Community High School			
Vicky Briggs	VB	Director of Education, TCAT		✓	
Adrienne Laing	AL	Operations Director, TCAT		✓	
Ben Logan	BL	Head of HR, TCAT		✓	
Tim Long	TL	School Improvement Lead, TCAT		✓	
David Halsall	DH	CFO, TCAT		✓	
Dr Haili Hughes	HH	Director of Professional Development, All Saints Multi Academy Trust (Observer)			

Documents Shared Prior to the Trust Board Meeting:

Item 5. Dr Haili Hughes CV Item 6. Draft minutes from the previous meeting 11/09/2025 Item 7. CEO Report December 2025 Item 8. Forum Strategy Case Study Item 9. Strategic Action Plan December 2025 Item 10. TCAT Vision 2040 Item 11a. TCAT Annual Report Update and Overview 2425 Item 11b. T193 FY25 Financial Statements 05/12/25 Item 11c. TCAT Audit Completion Report FY25 Item 11d. TCAT Educational Outdoor Services Limited FY2 Item 11e. TCAT Academy Trust Letter of Rep 2425 Item 11f. TCAT Funding Strategy Item 12c. Quality & Standards Committee Minutes 06/11/2025 Item 12d. Safeguarding Panel Minutes 04/11/2025 Item 13. Item Admission Policy Note Item 14a. TCAT Policy Schedule Trust-Wide Item 14b. TCAT Academies Policy Schedule Item 14c. Draft Admissions Policy Item 14d. Admission Arrangements Policy South Wirral High School 2026-27 – Current Item 14e. TSA Admissions Consultation Item 14f. TSA Admissions Policy 2027-2028 Draft

	Agenda Item	
1.	**Welcome** MS welcomed all attendees to the second Trust Board meeting of the academic year.	**MS**
2.	**Absence / Apologies / Non-Attendance** HH was invited as an observer. HH shared apologies in advance of the meeting and these were accepted.	**MS**
3.	**Register of Interests** There were no registers of interests noted.	**MS**
4.	**Declaration of pecuniary interests in relation to agenda items** There were no declarations of pecuniary interests in relation to the agenda items declared.	**MS**
5.	**Membership and Organisation** MS shared that three vacancies remained within the Trust Board. MS shared that the Dioceses of Liverpool have presented a candidate named Dr Haili Hughes, Director of Professional Development, All Saints Multi Academy Trust. MS confirmed that Dr Haili's CV was added to GovernorHub for Trustees to view. The CEO shared that he had a useful meeting with Dr Haili Hughes and confirmed that an invite has been shared with HH to attend all upcoming meetings as an observer.	**MS**

6.	**Minutes of the Trust Board meeting held on Thursday 11th September 2025** a) Approval of the Minutes: The minutes from the previous meeting were approved. The Trust Board agreed that the minutes were an accurate depiction of the meeting, b) Matters arising: **Chair's Action – The Sutton Academy's catering contract renewal Jan 2026. Formal approval of new caterers following tender process and approval from HP, Chair of Trustees.** c) Action log: All actions from the previous meeting were reviewed. AL explained that the academies policy schedule was reviewed and explained that a column to cover specific phases has been added. AL explained that all DfE statutory policies have been included and the academies policy schedule has also been shared with the Sixth Form College Association (SFCA) for quality assurance who made no further recommendations.	**HP** **DH** **HP**

Action Log:

Minute Ref.	Action to be taken	By Whom	Completion date
5	Update Register of Interests on GovernorHub.	All	ASAP
9	Share detailed analysis of headline data with trustees.	VB	ASAP
11	AL, MS and VB to review the Academy Policy Schedule to ensure Post 16 statutory policies are accurate	AL, MS and VB	ASAP
12	Complete the compulsory identity verification checks for directorships by November and provide the reference number as required	All Trustees	W/C 03/11
14	Invite Christine Rule to become an Associate Director of Ty'n-Y-Felin Outdoor Education Centre.	MS	12/09/2025
15	Make required amendments to the Succession Policy and send to LB.	MS	ASAP

7.	**CEO Report:** (for information) The CEO provided a comprehensive update covering the following:	**CEO 15 mins**

	• Academic Results: The CEO shared that the Trust achieved a strong set of academic results across all phases, and a thorough analysis has been completed to drive key Trust priorities. • Financial Management: The CEO reported that DH has implemented a range of new financial strategies to enhance transparency. The CEO confirmed that the annual accounts are ready for signing, with the Trust maintaining a healthy financial position. • Headteacher Performance & Business Support Meetings: The CEO outlined the Headteacher Performance review process and confirmed that business support meetings are aligned to ensure effective monitoring of scorecards and actions. • Leadership Appointment: The CEO shared that the Trust made a strong appointment for the new Principal of Beamont Collegiate Academy, Paul Greenhalgh who has had a strong start to the academic year. • Centralisation: Phase one of the centralisation review has been completed, including a thorough IT review to support implementation. The CEO assured that no staff reductions will occur and that changes will enhance services across the Trust. • Procurement: Procurement was highlighted as an outstanding internal audit action, and the Trust are undertaking work such as the development of a contract register to strengthen trust-wide procurement processes. • Alternative Provision: The CEO shared the performance in Alternative Provision has been strong over the past 12 months, with student attendance exceeding national benchmarks. The CEO confirmed an application for Alternative Provision to become an independent school is going to be submitted in January 2026. • Ofsted: The CEO noted significant changes under the new Ofsted framework. The CEO shared learning from Great Sankey Primary School's recent inspection which involved five HMI inspectors and resulted in 'Strong' ratings across all strands. The CEO explained that all TCAT academies remain graded 'Good' or better but moving forward reference to grades will not be used. The CEO shared concerns regarding inspector conduct were challenged due to the intense nature of the Ofsted inspection on the first day. The CEO acknowledged that some upcoming inspections may be challenging and described the process of Great Sankey Primary School's inspection as a valuable learning experience. ***A Trustee asked*** if Ofsted Inspectors were receptive to the concerns raised by the CEO. The CEO shared that feedback was listened to and VB added that themes are emerging relating to increased pressures on leaders and staff. ***A Trustee asked*** if five HMI inspectors is standard for all future inspections moving forward. The CEO confirmed that this number has not been finalised. VB added that there will be a higher number of inspectors involved in inspections moving forward under the new framework.	

	• Termination of Niche: The CEO explained an Expert Witness has reviewed the work of Niche and have made a report based on liability of Niche. The CEO shared that the risk is being managed with legal support with the Trust expecting full recompense. • Strategic Action Plan (SAP): The CEO explained that the Central Team entered the delivery phase of the SAP, implementing initiatives and strategies after a period of planning and exploration, with regular progress reviews. The CEO referred to the implementation of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) implementation strategy and shared that there is good momentum from colleagues whereby progress against strategic targets are being made. • Internal audit: Audits begin in the new year with key areas developed in collaboration with WGB. ***A Trustee asked*** if Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence 'RISE' projects would support the Trust with income generation. The CEO explained that RISE contracts are worth £500,000 and cover a two-year period. The CEO explained that funding goes back into the individual schools that are being supported by TCAT, and therefore, income generation is not as significant as it may appear. The CEO highlighted that additional RISE projects would require substantial capacity expansion, which may not be sustainable if further contracts do not follow. Consequently, the Trust has adopted a cautious approach to capacity growth in this area. The Chair of Trustees thanked the CEO for the detailed report, noting that the report was concise and condenses.	
8.	**Forum SIAS Case Study** (for discussion) The CEO introduced Trustees to Forum Strategy and explained that Forum Strategy serves as a national network which provides professional development and growth for educational executive leaders. The CEO added that himself and Director of Education, VB, have Forum Strategy memberships and described this as beneficial. The CEO shared that he was approached by Forum Strategy to engage with a case study to explore the work of the Trust, with key areas of exploration such as Trust visions, operations and collaboration. The CEO shared that Forum Strategy will make a return visit in March, whereby a number of different Trusts will visit TCAT Professional Development Centre (PDC) to engage in a research project. ***A Trustee asked*** if the Forum Strategy case study report would be widely circulated across the education sector. The CEO confirmed the case study has been added to the Forum Strategy website which can be accessed by members who are education leaders. ***The Chair recommended*** wider distribution of the case study to showcase TCAT. The CEO explained that the report would be added to the TCAT website as well as shared with prospective stakeholders. The CEO added that the Central Team are engaging in marketing training to support with the	**CEO** **10 mins**

	identification of the Trust's unique selling points to support with improved brand awareness. The CEO stated that the case study had been shared with a marketing specialist who will lead on training for TCAT Central staff to enhance the way in which TCAT is showcased to different stakeholders. Trustees agreed that wider circulation of the case study would be beneficial. ***A Trustee asked*** if Forum Strategy will further promote the case study. The CEO confirmed that the case study will be circulated as part of the regular bulletins that are shared with members and explained that the case study will permeate the sector. The CEO added that during a recent visit to an external school, the Director of Education shared that they had read the report and were scheduled to attend the research project at TCAT PDC in March 2026, thus demonstrating that the case study has been read by external organisations.	
9.	**Strategic Action Plan:** (for discussion) The CEO explained that the Strategic Action Plan was based on the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) implementation methodology which encourages a disciplined approach to strategic development. The CEO explained that this methodology has provided the Central Team with the opportunity to engage with a meaningful 'Explore Phase' over the last twelve months. The CEO explained that the implementation of key platforms and development of new strategies are underway and highlighted the significance of staff having the opportunity to use the 'explore'. The CEO shared that the Central Team are working through the 'delivery' stage of the key priorities and highlighted the following key areas within the Strategic Action Plan: • The Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Policies have been developed in a collaborative manner. The CEO raised that digital literacy has been raised as a key priority by Heads and Principals and feeds into the work of TL who is leading on the Trust's Digital Strategy. • The CEO added that Special Educational Needs (SEND) is a key strategy whereby good progress is being made with ongoing training and continuous professional development. • The CEO explained that automation of workflows is a key priority for the Trust to drive consistency, transparency and where possible, reduce workload. The CEO provided the example of teacher recruitment, and the implementation of an automated application tracking system that will ultimately save significant administrative time. • The CEO referred to the Operational Handbook that has been developed which includes a wide range of operational support to guide colleagues across the Trust and increase consistency in operational approaches.	**CEO/ VB/ TL 25 mins**

	A Trustee raised concern regarding governance and highlighted that there are recruitment needs for the Local Governing Challenge Boards at Beamont Collegiate Academy and Bridgewater High School. The CEO explained that the Trust is working hard to support academies with governor recruitment, and Stacey Snagg, Stakeholder and Engagement Lead, is working hard to contact key stakeholders. The CEO added that the attraction of governance is being reviewed and revised and has formed part of the governance strategy that is being developed by MS to enhance the appetite and support with recruitment and succession planning. ***A Trustee asked*** if Local Governing Challenge Boards are presented with opportunities to collaborate with Trustees. I can confirm this question was raised. The CEO shared that informal opportunities to collaborate are presented through Governor Seminars. The CEO highlighted that a range of different strategies have been trialled to increase enhancement and that this is a particular area of challenge faced by the Trust. The CEO added that Governance Expert, Dr Ron Hill made a return visit following the autumn seminar and recommended the addition of more informal opportunities for governors and trustees to network and collaborate outside of the formal meeting setting. The CEO added that the Central Team are in the process of developing a potential structure to provide additional opportunities for governors and Trustees to play an important role in shaping policies and strategies.	
10.	**TCAT Vision 2040** (for adoption) The CEO referred to the Trustee Visioning Day which took place in July 2025 and explained that a consultation process had been implemented with Heads, Principals and a number of Governors and Trustees to develop the strategic objectives and future growth of the Trust. The CEO emphasised that the vision had been developed through extensive consultation, outlining strategic objectives for people, pupils, staff, and operational growth. The CEO confirmed the following six key strategic objectives outlined in the document: 1) Ensure all children and young people succeed and thrive 2) Prepare a 'future-ready' workforce 3) Deliver meaningful, strategic civil influence across our communities, the region and beyond 4) Become a highly effective organisation delivering educational and operational excellence 5) Become a world-class employer 6) Achieve financial and environmental sustainability & self-sufficiency The CEO explained that questions regarding TCAT's growth have been frequently raised and stated that a growth identification document has been developed to provide greater clarity for the future of TCAT's growth. The	**CEO 20**

	CEO confirmed that the TCAT 2040 Vision document would be kept live and updated regularly to reflect progress and future plans. The Chair of Trustees commented that the TCAT 2040 Vision articulates the discussions that took place during the Trustee Visioning Day in July 2025. ***A Trustee asked*** where the document sits moving forward with the movement of TCAT and the Strategic Action Plan. The CEO explained that the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) is a two-year document and some of the key objectives within the TCAT Vision 2040 are covered within the SAP. The CEO added that the TCAT Vision 2040 will further force the Trust to carefully assess and work towards the six core objectives. ***A Trustee highlighted*** that as the Trust grows and centralisation evolves, winning the hearts and minds is a priority at every stage. The same Trustee emphasised the importance of clear communications with all individuals who will be impacted by changes that are implemented by the Trust, not just Heads and Principals. The CEO explained that the Trust deliberately relies on Heads and Principals to share key messages with staff to win hearts and minds but acknowledged that key information is not always effectively shared and agreed that hearts and minds are extremely important. The CEO added that the Trust implement opportunities for colleagues to have open dialogue regarding key changes/ strategies to ensure collaborative approaches are implemented. ***A Trustee challenged*** that the TCAT Vision 2040 should be delivered to staff across all academies by TCAT Central staff/ the CEO. ***The CEO confirmed*** that the Vision 2040 Vision document was delivered in the first Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting of the academic year and explained that the document has been developed in collaboration with Senior Leaders across the Trust. The CEO highlighted that Headteacher contact with staff is limited and therefore, careful considerations have to be made regarding the delivery of Trust updates. VB added that key communications will also be shared via the hub networks which play a crucial role in the development of Trust policies and strategies. ***A Trustee challenged*** that the growth of the Trust should be presented in some form to students and parents/ guardians. The same Trustee stated that the growth of TCAT is a great opportunity to engage with stakeholders and presents governance opportunities. The CEO confirmed that growth plans with be shared over time and considerations will be made to determine how/ when growth plans are showcased. The CEO acknowledged that opportunities such as TCAT Performances/ TCAT events provide opportunities to showcase the growth of the Trust and would support with strategic marketing. ***A Trustee challenged*** *the phrasing of 'future-ready workforce'* in the 2040 document and questioned if the Trust are supporting young people in	

	becoming active citizens. The same Trustee stated that they support the current priorities but highlighted that more emphasis should be placed on students contributing to their community and society rather than workforce. The CEO responded by sharing that similar feedback was received following the SLT Seminar which resulted in the addition of the key objective 'children and young people succeed and thrive' to ensure student's achievements go beyond academic results. A Trustee shared that two sixth form students present at the Local Governing Challenge Board meetings at Priestley College and highlighted the significance of their input. The students were complimented for their contributions, and it was suggested that students are invited to present to Trustees in the future. The CEO shared that the TCAT Parliament could be invited to present to trustees and Trustees expressed interest in having students present at a future meeting. The CEO also shared The Challenge Award is an example of students celebrating their work within the community and how the initiative has been a huge encourager for students across all TCAT academies. ***AM requested Trustee approval to adopt the TCAT 2040 Vision. The Board unanimously approved the adoption of the TCAT 2040 Vision.***	
11.	**Finance Update** (approval of recommendations in Finance Strategy) <u>Annual Accounts:</u> DH shared that TCAT's accounts for 2024/2025 have been audited by Murray Smith who concluded the Trust had a clean audit report. DH presented headline data which consisted of the following: - Underlying surplus for Trust accounts was £211k - A £58k deficit for Ty'n-Y-Felin Outdoor Education Centre – an expected position given its was our first year, with set up etc - Transfers in reserves from The Sutton Academy and South Wirral High Schools £1.1 million. - Operating reserves from £4.2 million from August 2024 to £5.5 million. DH confirmed that the accounts were presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on 04/12/2025 and explained that formal approval of the accounts is required by the Trust Board. DH added that the accounts are ready for submission and the Trust are in a strong financial position, which forms a good basis to move forward with the finance strategy. ***DH shared that he is seeking formal approval of the accounts. The Trust Board formally approved the financial accounts.*** DH confirmed that Murray Smith will be informed of the approval on 12/12/2025 whereby a digital copy of the TCAT Academy Trust Letter of Representation would be received and signed on behalf of the Trust Board. The Chair complimented DH for his efforts and the outcomes of the clean audit, and the condensed report developed by DH.	**DH 20 mins**

Finance Strategy:
DH underscored the importance of aligning strategies with the Trust's overarching vision and goals to ensure sustainable progress. DH cautioned that the Trust should not allow persistent inequalities to dictate inequalities in opportunity, and equally, as we are only as strong as our weakest link, we can't allow individual reserves positions to put the Trust at risk.

Another concern raised was that the current financial strategy model is restrictive, limiting opportunities for growth and hindering the achievement of strategic objectives. DH emphasised that, moving forward, financial planning and resource allocation must be carefully evaluated and aligned with the Trust's priorities, enabling innovation while safeguarding long-term sustainability.

DH provided Trustees with a brief verbal summary for the following finance updates noting that further details would be provided during the meeting:

- Resources and a consistent approach to resource modelling with the implementation of more robust ICFP benchmarking
- Procurement
- Review of central functions and services
- Central Team growth
- Funding of teacher iPads
- TCAT legacy deficit
- Delivery of IT and Estate Management

DH explained that if no measures are implemented the drive for equity of provision cannot be achieved. DH highlighted that the Trust are not working towards removing individual academy reserves and noted the importance of Headteachers continuing to have financial accountability in the management of individual budgets.

Sector Insights:
DH highlighted that almost 80% of Multi-Academy Trusts have opted not to implement GAG pooling, but over half actively pooling reserves. DH noted that most Trusts are moving towards centralising processes and services, reflecting a sector-wide trend towards efficiency and standardisation.

Additionally, DH observed that most of the academies in TCAT have received School Condition Allocation (SCA) funding in amounts exceeding their current reserves, which would otherwise have depleted the reserves but for the pooling of SCA. DH clarified that the Trust is not proposing GAG pooling and stressed the importance of academies maintaining strong accountability and commitment to effective budget management as part of the Trust's financial governance approach.

	Recommendations: <u>ICFP</u> DH presented a range of recommendations to Trustees, the first of which was a management process titled 'Integrated Curriculum and Financial Planning' (ICFP). DH explained the process supports schools plan curriculum for students with available funding and stated that this would enhance governance of funding and push equity of provision. ***A Trustee asked*** if the ICFP management process is the same for colleges. AL confirmed that management process covers all phases and is based on context which allows queries and targets to make most effective use of resources. **A Trustee challenged** that the TCAT Funding Strategy refers to schools not academies and stated ICFP model poses danger as this would need to be clearly understood for the different phases. The Trustee highlighted that the document needs to be clearer regarding funding streams for post-16. The CEO explained that the ICFP benchmarks have been implemented by the Trust previously and added the intent would be to use the benchmarks more robustly. The CEO shared that the position to date has been Heads balance budgets and have had freedom, highlighting that things like IT have been neglected. The CEO highlighted that the Trust have saved academies significant money over the last several years and highlighted that these savings have never really been clearly captured. ***A Trustee raised*** that the ICFP instruction needs to be accompanied with contextual support to accurately represent academies. ***A Trustee asked*** if there has been any work done to quantify the savings as a result of Central Services. The CEO confirmed that the quantification of savings has never been formally captured. ***A Trustee asked*** if the Central Levy should be different for individual academies, highlighting more sophistication is required. The CEO explained that it is difficult to measure equality of benefits. The CEO added that it is hard to quantify everything, whereby specific academies have different needs. The CEO stated that some things can be quantified but not all. The CEO provided the example of Dallam Community Primary School who joined the Trust in a surplus position with a staffing structure that is unsustainable. The CEO assured Trustees the quantification model has been considered. The CEO presented Trustees with a live update of the solar panel implementation which will save Priestley College £300k alone.	

	A Trustee commented that all academies have received more in services than what the levy costs. ***A Trustee asked*** if this statement was true. A Trustee replied that they believed so in principle. The CEO reported that the removal of the growth grant, combined with legal costs, presents a significant challenge to funding future expansion. The CEO emphasised that without careful financial planning, both Central Team growth and wider Trust growth would be challenging. ***A Trustee asked*** if the ICFP consultation has been carried out with Heads and Principals. DH confirmed that a consultation process has been completed. AL confirmed that ICFP benchmarks are part of the Business Support meetings and has been adopted by the Trust for some time. ***The Chair asked*** for clarification from DH to confirm if the CFO was asking for Trust Board's formal adoption of the ICFP model. DH confirmed that this was correct. ***The Chair raised a vote.*** **The Trust Board approved adoption of the ICFP model with the exception of caveats that may arise at an academy level which will be carefully assessed and supported by the Central Team.** <u>Sinking Funds / Levies</u> DH proposed the establishment of a sinking fund whereby TCAT academies put monies away, equating to 0.3% of the levy, on an annual basis to contribute towards the iPad repurchases in three years. DH explained that this may lead to an increase in the Central Levy but overall will save academies money in the long term and enable the Trust to build savings to use for future investments in iPads. A Trustee commented that the increase of the Central Levy would overall, save academies money as a result of improved value for money for the centralised services. ***A Trustee stated*** that Heads and Principals are aware of the money saved via the Central Levy versus central services. DH confirmed that transparency is crucial to ensure Heads and Principals appreciate the wealth of services provided. ***A Trustee took the example of estates and asked*** if individual salaries would be covered centrally, rather than by the academy, if a centralised estates service was implemented. DH confirmed that would be a possibility if this was the best, most cost-effective measure. The CEO provided the example of IT and the success of centralised IT with a cost saving of £100k.	

	The CEO confirmed that all options need to be carefully considered to identify the best solution. ***A Trustee asked*** how academies are guaranteed principle of response. AL shared that a huge amount of modelling would be required and on-site support would be provided with effective deployment. AL explained that IT is working effectively as most academies have implemented centralised processes that can be managed from any site. AL added that the Finance Team would also save significant time if recharging was not required. ***A Trustee raised concern*** that the centralisation of estates should be handled with caution. The Executive Team confirmed that centralisation of Estates would be carefully assessed and managed. The DH highlighted that the centralisation of services would be developed with logic. ***A Trustee asked*** how the Finance paper would be shared with the Local Governing Challenge Boards and reiterated the importance of hearts and minds. The CEO responded that the decision-making group are the Trust Board and that not all matters cannot be consulted. The CEO acknowledged that distribution of information will always be handled with sensitivity. Another Trustee commented that the Scheme of Delegation providers clarity for the role of governors. A Trustee added that the focus of the Headteacher should be controlling the education of the children and commented that centralised service deliveries are advantageous. The CEO emphasised that Heads and Principals are appreciative of the operational support provided by the Trust. The CEO referred to the Scheme of Delegation, and the shift in the governor's role, highlighting the Local Governing Challenge Board's should be focused on the community and stakeholder voice not operational matters. **DH sought approval** for the establishment of sinking funds that are taken from 0.3% levy on an annual basis. **All Trustees approved the implementation of establishment of sinking funds.** <u>Centralisation of Reserves:</u> DH shared a key priority is to take TCAT central out of deficit and implement funding for growth of the Central Team. DH proposed that 30% of academy reserves, equating to £2million are utilised to remove Central Trust deficit, fund initial purchase of teacher iPads and fund TCAT growth. DH provided Trustees with the methodology behind the centralisation of reserves and explained the significance of moving the Central Trust out of a deficit position.	

	A Trustee challenged that some academies will be disappointed that the reserves they had when joining the Trust are not being protected. DH explained that as a collective the greater needs of academies will be prioritised. DH added that all academy reserves ultimately belong to the Trust and the collective would have access to reserves if and when required. ***A Trustee asked*** why the £1.150k TCAT Central deficit needs to be removed and referred to this as a 'paper exercise'. DH explained that TCAT cannot have negative reserves as a Trust. The CEO commented that part of the reason there is a deficit is due to the Trust not taking enough from academies and the absorbed costings that have been taken on over time. DH explained that the key recommendation from the auditors was to clear the TCAT deficit. The CEO reiterated this point. ***A Trustee challenged*** that the Local Governing Challenge Boards have not been provided with clear messages regarding academy's losing 30% of reserves, add stated that this would come as a surprise to Local Governing Challenge Boards. The CEO explained that the TCAT Funding Strategy had been discussed at length in the HR, Finance and Operations Committee, and that the strategy has been taken to the Trust Board for formal approval. The CEO acknowledged the Trustee's point to manage stakeholders and highlighted that the Trust's decision would be clearly articulated. The CEO added that the savings made have directly benefitted academy financial and therefore reserves. The CEO stated that TCAT is one legal entity and highlighted the significance working on a path for the greater good. The CEO requested that Trustees reflect and move forward to look at the organisation as one. ***A Trustee raised*** that funding for post-16 is different and for certain projects 'matched funding' has been requested. The CEO explained that the law has changed and 106 money can be explored for specific projects. AL provided the example of the approved funding of the 3G pitch from the SCA which did not come from Priestley College's reserves. ***A Trustee asked*** for clarification from DH regarding the recommended proposal. DH confirmed that the request was for TCAT to use 30% of individual academy reserves to build a sum of £2million with 70% of reserves retained by academies. **The Chair asked for a vote on the proposal to take 30% reserves to generate £2million.** **The Trust Board voted and the majority of Trustees approved.**	

	<u>Reviewing the level of Centralisation:</u> DH referred to the TCAT Funding Strategy and the recommendations to review the level of centralisation to optimise operating models for central areas, specifically IT and facilities management. DH also highlighted the need for TCAT to review the wider cost base to explore further opportunities to create value through Trust wide procurement. **The Trust Board took a vote, and a majority of the Trust Board approved the proposal to move towards centralisation of services.**	
12.	**Sub-committee minutes and updates:** (for information and discussion) Audit & Risk Committee, 04/12/2025: • The Interim Chair kept the Audit and Risk update brief due to many of the items being covered in the previous agenda item during e finance update. The Board made the decision that it was not value added to repeat the same information that had been covered by DH in a previous item. Finance, HR & Operations Committee, 04/12/2025: • PW confirmed shared that all Trust operations are going well. ***A Trustee asked*** if Niche were insured prior to starting the ground source heat pump works for the Trust. AL confirmed that insurance checks were completed as part of the due-diligence process. • PW concluded by sharing that series of projects taking place across HR, specifically relating to the TCAT Staff Offer and the launch of the Support Staff professional development offer. Quality & Standards Committee, 06/11/2025 • SY reported that the first Quality and Standards Committee meeting focused on assessment headlines and commended VB for her thorough update. • SY highlighted the national challenges faced by the most disadvantaged students. • The Digital Strategy was presented in detail by TL which provided a comprehensive overview. • SY concluded that the meeting covered a wide range of important areas and included robust challenge and discussion. Safeguarding Panel, 04/11/2025: • PM confirmed that the recent meeting was well attended, during which the Panel reviewed a number of key policies. • PM referenced the vetting systems in place for TCAT students attending Alternative Provision and reported that strong safeguarding reviews were conducted throughout the first half term.	**Chairs 15mins**

	• PM concluded by noting that a Trust Dashboard is currently under development and highlighted the upcoming Safeguarding Link Conference.	
13.	**Policies (AL)** (for information and approval) **Admissions:** AL explained that the Trust Board are the responsible body for approving admissions for the Trust. AL provided key updates as follows: Warrington Admissions Policy: ***The Trust Board unanimously approved this policy.*** AL explained that the Trust are awaiting a response from the DfE following the consultations for the closure of South Wirral High School and The Sutton Academy. ***Conditional approval was granted for admissions arrangements at South Wirral High School and The Sutton Academy, pending DfE approval of sixth form closures and completion of the required consultation process.*** AL reminded Trustees that the Policy Schedule Trust Wide is available on GovernorHub. AL referred to agenda item 5 and the completed action which consisted of an updated Policy Schedule Academy Level.	**AL/ VB 15 mins**
14.	**AOB:** There was no other business raised during this meeting.	
15.	**Date and time of next meeting** Thursday 26th March 2026	
16.	**Part Two – Confidential** There were no part two items discussed during this meeting.	

This meeting was closed by the Chair at 18:16 who thanked all attendees for their ongoing support. The Chair wished colleagues a pleasant Christmas break.

Actions:

Minute Ref.	**Action to be taken**	**By Whom**	**Completion date**
6.	Review all verification check details on GovernorHub.	MS	ASAP
13.	Circulate Admissions Arrangements via GovernorHub for Trust Board approval.	AL	February 2026