



Full Trust Board Meeting

CIT Academies

Tuesday, April 29, 2025, at 1:00 PM

Warwick House, Long Bennington

Minutes of the meeting

1. Welcome and check in

Presenter: Chair

Points to note

Present

Stephen Hopkins – Chairman

Helen Drew-Bradley – Trustee

Pam Powell – Trustee

Julia Lindley-Baker – Trustee (via Teams)

Harpaul Dhindsa – Trustee (via Teams)

Nathan Jeremiah- Trustee

Paul Tallentire – Trustee

Alex Hole - Trustee

Peter Bell – CEO/AO

Daran Bland- Interim CFO

Jane Starbuck – Director of Growth/ Governance Lead (GL)

Ana Hendrickson – Company Secretary/ Clerk to the Trust Board (Minutes)

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

All were informed regarding Trustee Leah Miller's secondment to a school within her Trust which has restricted her commitments with CIT and has prevented her from attending Trust and Board Committee meetings.

Leah will resume her CIT Trustee commitments in September 2025.

2. Apologies for absence

Presenter: Clerk

Points to note

Kate Goodman – Trustee- Emergency at work

Leah Miller – Trustee- Work Commitments

Apologies accepted.

Quorum met.

3. Declarations of Interest

Presenter: Chair

Points to note

Nathan Jeremiah- Agenda item 10. He will not participate in deliberations.

4. Chair's opening remarks - Governance Priorities for 24/25 Documents provided

Documents provided

CIT Values and Principles

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

All were reminded regarding the CIT Values and encouraged to speak up should this meeting not abide to these.

Bingham Primary has achieved a grading of 'GOOD' after the recent Ofsted inspection.

A letter of congratulations has been sent by the TB Chair, to the Headteacher and their teams, on behalf of the Trust Board.

Separate individual congratulatory e-mails have also been sent by Trustees and Members.

5. Minutes of last meeting- FOR APPROVAL

Presenter: Chair

Documents provided

Draft Trust Board Minutes 28th January 2025

Resolutions

The Minutes of the 28th January 2025 *full* Trust Board meeting were approved as a true and accurate record.

Any votes against or abstentions with reasons

None

6. Action Tracker- FOR INFORMATION

Documents provided

2024-25 Trust Board Action Log- Archived- Updated January 2025.

2024-25 Trust Board Action Log- Outstanding Actions only to include those of the 28.01.25 2025 meeting- Update April 2025.

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

Nothing further to report at present.

7. Report from Board Committees - FOR INFORMATION/ ASSURANCE

Presenter: Chairs of: F&E Committee/ A&R Committee / PEOPLE Committee/ ES&SG Committee

Documents provided

Minutes of all Board Committee meetings are available for information and scrutiny.

Verbal update from Board Committee Chairs.

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

F&E Committee

Two meetings have taken place since December 2024.

Focus was given to the financial position of the Trust, pupil numbers, SEND funding (income) and its impact on finances currently and for the next three years, budget assumptions and level of Revenue Reserves.

Operations and Health & Safety in the Trust are *good*.

A further extraordinary committee meeting will be held to discuss the 2025-26 budget, the national announcement of unfunded staff pay increases and the impact this will have in the Trust's finances.

ES&SG Committee

Discussions were held regarding educational matters, policies, procedures, pupil progress tracking, pupil achievement monitoring, absences and possible enhancement/increase of staff pay scales.

Consideration was given to Well-being and training across the Trust ensuring that the safety of pupils and also the safety of staff is of utmost priority.

Also discussed was safeguarding, but in particular, the use of physical interventions.

Trustees were assured that when physical interventions are applied, they are being mindful and well monitored.

A&R Committee

The annual meeting with the ELT took place yesterday (28.04.25). Broad conversations were held around risk.

Focus was given to the LSB responses related to the *Four Questions* document.

In summary, risks were identified in several areas: *reputation, staffing, facilities, falling pupil rolls* and *safeguarding*.

Most risks are already covered within the Trust's Risk Register.

The risk of *falling pupil rolls* and the new *Finance System* will be expanded, each area will have its own section within the Risk Register.

Feedback will be provided to CIT LSBs. It was decided for this to be an annual exercise.

Assurance triangulation was carried out between the Trust's Risk Register and the CIT schools' Risk Assessments and Business Continuity Plans.

Board committee suggestions in relation to additional risks and matters for Internal Scrutiny were considered.

It was decided that no further additions to the Risk Register or the Internal Scrutiny plan are required at present.

People Committee

In the absence of the Committee Chair, the TB Chair chaired the meeting.

A very detailed and comprehensive HR and Wellbeing report was presented by the DoHR.

Assurances were sought in relation to the high number of staff absences at a particular CIT school. This was due to the inconsistent implementation of the Staff Absence Management policy and procedures.

Third party assurances were received in relation to the Recruitment process and procedures. All processes and procedures are efficient and fully compliant.

Next area for internal scrutiny is the Induction process for new staff.

Staff feedback was received; a strong testimony from IN's Headteacher regarding the school's recent Ofsted inspection, the quality of the Trust, the quality of the support provided by the Trust and its professional networking.

Strong assurances were received through the LSB in relation to staff morale at GANF.

The Gender Pay Report was approved.

Following the Performance Management of the CEO, an amendment to the job description was made to reflect that the CEO is the Lead Educational professional in the Trust. The ELT's job descriptions were scrutinised and mapped to expectations in terms of the TPS.

The committee resolved to approve the extension of the interim secondment of the CFO role until January 2026.

Policy work was carried out, two policies were approved at the meeting.

A Trustee training session was delivered by the DoHR in relation to Staff National Terms and Conditions.

Remuneration Committee

Committee members resolved for performance related pay progression be applied to the CEO.

8. Trustee visits to schools- FOR INFORMATION

Presenter: Chair

Documents provided

CIT Schools Trustee Visits Log 2024-25- Updated March 2025.

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

Trustees were reminded of the importance of annual visits to their special interest schools and connectivity with their respective LSBs.

Trustees provided an update around their latest visits to their special interest schools as follows

- TUL- The new building is very impressive and environmentally compliant. All works are on track.
- IN- School visited after the recent Ofsted inspection.
- POP- Visit postponed by the school. A new date is yet to be confirmed.
- WDL- The TB Chair will visit this school on behalf of the link Trustee.

Trustees linked to CSL and LIN, were encouraged to schedule their visit between now and the end of the summer term. Although BOW and FOX schools have been visited it would be beneficial for the link Trustee to meet with the LSB Chair.

Summary of: Management response

Handover of Tulip's new building is scheduled for 29.08.25.

As agreed with the local authority, pupils will be home educated during the first week of the Autumn term 2025-26 to allow for familiarisation etc.

9. LSB Reports- Autumn Term 1 2024-25- FOR ASSURANCE

Presenter: GL

Documents provided

LSB Consolidated Report Jan- March 2025 Spring Term.

LSB Consolidated Report Spring Term 2 (Jan-March) 2024-25- Main Report.

LSB Consolidated Report Spring Term 2 (Jan-March) 2024-25 - Areas for Trust Board Consideration.

LSB Consolidated Report Spring Term 2 (Jan-March) 2024-25- Summary. LSB Feedback to Trust Board-ELT Responses Spring 2024-25.

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

All concerns raised by CIT LSBs, in particular those raised by POP and TUL, and the respective ELT responses were discussed at length.

The TB Chair recognised the Trust's strength within the SEND area and advised that the governance of SEND will be strengthened based on the latest DfE guidance and expectations. Further details will be provided at this year's Governance Development Day.

Trustees were advised that Pam Powell will take over the role of SEND Trustee from September 2025.

Summary of management response

SEND funding and local authority support in terms of SEND are a national issue. A response from the L.A is yet to be received. The current SEND LA offer comprises of BOSS, Autism

The Trust is developing its own Trust approach, exploring internal SEND support through LEARN and the Inclusion Forum.

The Governance Lead agreed to liaise with the POP LSB Chair regarding this matter.

An advertisement has been published for the role of HT at Tulip. Recruitment for this role has been a challenge due to location and type of school.

The Deputy Director of Education SEND has taken over the role on an interim basis until Christmas 2025.

Actions

ACTION 1: For the Governance Lead to liaise with the POP LSB Chair regarding SEND funding in mainstream schools and the Trust's own approach for internal support.

10. Trust Growth – Nottinghamshire Free School/ Update on merger of RCT to CIT

FOR INFORMATION AND RESOLUTION

Presenter: CEO/ DoG

Documents provided

CIT Growth Approval Grid Fairham Pastures- April 2025.

Information for Trust Board- Operations Group- April 2025.

Resolutions Sheet Fairham Pastures- April 2025.

Draft Press Release February 2025.

Potential Media Questions 24.02.25.

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

Merger of RCT to CIT

Trustees emphasised that transparency is required in terms of pivotal members of staff from the merging Trust. The ELT must ensure that measures, expectations and outcomes are clear to role holders.

A suggestion was made for a trial period and a commitment at the end of the trial period to be set, for specific Directorship roles, as a solution which could benefit both parties.

Strategic staffing decisions are a governance piece which must be presented to the People Committee and communicated to the Board for oversight purposes.

There are three important strands Trustees must be mindful of: financial strategy, organisational design and pragmatic approach.

The following suggestions were made in relation to the draft press release document:

- Addition of a joint comment from both Trust Board Chairs as part of the opening statement of the merger announcement.
- For 'Nick Law Executive Head at RCT' to be amended to reflect 'Nick Law CEO at RCT'.
- Addition of a statement to clarify that RCT schools will remain single sex schools under their current names after the merger takes place.

Nottinghamshire Free School- Fairham Pastures

Current issues faced by the Trust in relation to falling pupil rolls, challenges around SEND funding and timing of applications for prospective schools were discussed and considered.

Trustees resolved to approve for the ELT to prepare a bid in readiness for submission within relevant deadlines, once these are released by the Nottinghamshire local authority.

Summary of: Management response

Merger of RCT to CIT

Due to the local elections, the results/outcome from the DfE Regional Director's Board meeting will be received on Friday 2nd May 2025. Relevant press releases are being prepared.

A meeting is yet to take place to discuss all legal requirements. It is hoped for RCT to be fully onboarded by September 1st, 2025. However, should matters be delayed a deadline date of March 31st, 2026, has been set.

A merger integration plan is in place.

Only one RCT Directorship role will be subject to a significant change as this particular role does not exist at that level within a Multi Academy Trust.

An informal draft job description for the role of Director of Commercial Activity has been presented to the relevant individual. The Director of Commercial Activity will be lined managed by the interim CFO.

It was agreed for the interim CFO to liaise with the DoHR regarding a possible trial period and a commitment at the end of the trial period to be set for the role of Director of Commercial Activity, as a solution which could benefit both parties.

Nottinghamshire Free School- Fairham Pastures

The ELT requested permission to develop a bid in preparation for submission within relevant deadlines, once these are released.

Points highlighted by the Board were acknowledged and noted by the ELT.

Actions

ACTION 2: For the interim CFO to liaise with the DoHR regarding a possible trial period and a commitment at the end of the trial period to be set for the role of Director of Commercial Activity, as a solution which could benefit both parties.

ACTION 3: For the following amendments to be made to the draft press release document:

- Addition of a joint comment from both Trust Board Chairs as part of the opening statement of the merger announcement.
- For 'Nick Law Executive Head at RCT' to be amended to reflect 'Nick Law CEO at RCT'.
- Addition of a statement to clarify that RCT schools will remain single sex schools under their current names after the merger takes place.

Resolutions

Trustees resolved to approve for the ELT to prepare a bid for the Nottinghamshire Free School Fairham Pastures in readiness for submission within relevant deadlines once these are released by the local authority.

Any votes against or abstentions with reasons

None

11. Proposal to amend the Scheme of Delegation -FOR RESOLUTION

Presenter: CEO

Documents provided

Resolutions Cover Sheet- Changes to SOD Restructures.

Workforce Change Policy- November 2023.

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

The TB Chair advised that the current Scheme of Delegation is not fit for purpose.

A proposal has been provided by the CEO with three options for Trustee consideration around the potential need to reduce staffing in CIT schools as a result of national budget pressures, so it is clear where the responsibilities lie in terms of decision making.

Trustees noted that any potential redundancies will have a big reputational impact for the Trust and suggested that these and their estimated financial value are scrutinised by the F&E Committee.

Recommendations from the F&E Committee are to be presented to the full Trust Board for approval/ ratification.

Trustees approved for the Scheme of Delegation to be amended as follows:

- For Options 1 and 2 within the *Resolutions Cover Sheet- Changes to SOD Restructures* document to be merged and incorporated (20 potential redundancies, over £100k, and percentage of costs).

They agreed that:

- The TB Chair will act as a conduit between the ELT and the TB should an approval in relation to redundancies be required outside of scheduled meetings.
- The People Committee will scrutinise and monitor the compliance process from the HR perspective.
- The ES&SG Committee will scrutinise and monitor any potential impact to pupils in the Trust.
- The F&E Committee will scrutinise and monitor the financial aspect.

Trustees noted that they are mindful of the impact that any potential redundancies will have on staff, their personal life, their career, their families; and emphasised that robust governance and full oversight will be maintained at all times.

The Trust Board and each Board Committee will play an important role to ensure strong oversight and compliance.

Summary of: Management response

Challenging and volatile times are being experienced across the sector.

The CEO's recommendation for the amendment of the Scheme of Delegation is Option 1 as detailed within the *Resolutions Cover Sheet- Changes to SOD Restructures* document.

The ES&SG and People Committees will be fully updated in terms of decisions made by the ELT, their impact, processes followed, and a business case will be presented if necessary.

It was suggested for a narrative to be prepared to reflect the current economic climate and risk within the Education sector, the impact that local authorities' decisions on funding are having on the sector combined with the decline in pupil rolls.

The ELT proposed to present this narrative at the next Trust Board meeting.

Actions

ACTION 4: For the Scheme of Delegation to be amended as follows:

- For Options 1 and 2 within the *Resolutions Cover Sheet- Changes to SOD Restructures* document to be merged and incorporated into the SOD (20 potential redundancies, over £100k, and percentage of costs).

ACTION 5: For a narrative to be prepared to reflect the current economic climate and risk within the Education sector, the impact that local authorities' decisions on funding are having on the sector combined with the decline in pupil rolls. This document must ensure consistency, transparency and availability to speak to staff is offered should further clarity be required.

For this document to be presented at the next Trust Board meeting.

Resolutions

Trustees resolved to approve the amendment of the Scheme of Delegation as follows:

- For Options 1 and 2 within the *Resolutions Cover Sheet- Changes to SOD Restructures* document to be merged and incorporated (20 potential redundancies, over £100k, and percentage of costs).

Trustees agreed that:

- The TB Chair will act a conduit between the ELT and the TB should an approval in relation to redundancies be required outside of scheduled meetings.
- The People Committee will scrutinise and monitor the compliance process from the HR perspective.
- The ES&SG Committee will scrutinise and monitor any potential impact to pupils in the Trust.
- The F&E Committee will scrutinise and monitor the financial aspect.

Any votes against or abstentions with reasons

None

12. Trust Self-Evaluation Report- Safeguarding and School Improvement Sections -FOR ASSURANCE

Presenter: CEO

Documents provided

CIT SEF April 2025

Equity, Diversion & Inclusion Policy- February 2025

Workplace Culture Survey Summary Report

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

Trustees requested for context provided within pages 1 to 17 of the CIT SEF document to be moved to the back of the document; and for colour keys and narratives to be added to this document to reflect the meaning for each strand (Repair, Improve, Sustain).

It was suggested for an update around the Safeguarding strand to be provided to the ES&SG Committee by the TDSL, via the Executive Director's report.

The School Improvement strand is a sustainable model which reflects some challenges and relevant *next steps*. It was requested for the Directors of Education to provide an update to the ES&SG Committee regarding these and their progress.

Summary of: Management response

Self-Evaluation focus has been given to *Safeguarding* and *School Improvement*.

Focus for the next Trust Board meeting will be given to *Workforce*.

Each strand will be presented at each Trust Board meetings going forward.

Actions

ACTION 6: For the context provided within pages 1 to 17 of the CIT SEF document to be moved to the back of the document; and for colour keys and narratives to be added to this document to reflect the meaning for each strand.

ACTION 7: For an update around the Safeguarding strand to be provided to the ES&SG Committee by the TDSL, via the Executive Director's report.

ACTION 8: For the Directors of Education to provide an update to the ES&SG Committee regarding current school improvement challenges, relevant *next steps* and their progress.

13. Trust Improvement Priorities-~~FOR~~ RESOLUTION

Presenter: CEO

Documents provided

Academies_benchmark_report_2025
Resolutions Sheet- Strat Focus 23.04.25
Schools Weekly Article – April 2025
Schools Weekly- GAG Pooling

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

As identified by the ELT one of the highest risks for the organisation is associated with the recruitment and retention of Headteachers.

Trustees suggested for targets to be measured/ quantified and to consider what success looks like (number of staff members in the pipeline, expected outcome (return on investment)).

Trustees resolved to approve for the CEO to adopt the additional areas of focus as detailed within the *Resolutions Sheet- Strat Focus 23.04.25*.

Summary of: Management response

It was proposed for a Strategic Plan progress update to be provided at each Trust Board meeting.

Two further proposals were presented for Trustee consideration and approval as detailed within the *Resolutions Sheet- Strat Focus 23.04.25*.

The proposed Leadership Coaching Programme for delivery across the schools in the Trust will be funded by the apprenticeship levy.

An action plan will be produced, progress information will be provided at each Board meeting.

Resolutions

Trustees resolved to approve for the CEO to adopt the additional areas of focus as detailed within the *Resolutions Sheet- Strat Focus 23.04.25*.

Any votes against or abstentions with reasons

None.

14. School Improvement Tracker -~~FOR~~ ASSURANCE

Presenter: CEO

Documents provided

School Improvement Tracker - April 2025

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

Trustees noted gaps/missing SEND data and the requirement for updates in terms of CIT Schools' Ofsted grading within the *School Improvement Tracker April 2025*.

Trustees praised the newly added *Excess Spaces* column and advised regarding the request from the A&R Committee for an additional column to be added to this document to rag rate and highlight the risk of falling rolls.

No further comments made.

Summary of: Management response

The ELT agreed for an additional column to be added to the School Improvement Tracker to rag rate and highlight the risk of falling rolls and to ensure the inclusion of all SEND data.

Actions

ACTION 9: For an additional column to be added to the School Improvement Tracker to rag rate and highlight the risk of falling rolls and to ensure the inclusion of all SEND data.

15. CEO/ Accounting Officer's financial update – Including Financial KPIs Report – FOR

ASSURANCE

Presenter: Chair

Documents provided

Board Level Financial KPI Report (SN 28.04.25)

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

Clarification was requested regarding which KPI area is to be targeted at 85%, Staffing costs as a percentage of income or Adjusted Staffing costs as a percentage of income, in order to avoid unnecessary operational pressure.

A query was raised regarding controls around LEARN and its current operating deficit.

It was noted that the value LEARN adds to the Trust (in terms of CPD, Reputation, Growth, Connectivity) must be reflected within the budget for clarity and transparency purposes.

It was emphasized that while this is a matter discussed by the F&E Committee, all documentation should be transparent and interpretable by the entire Trust Board.

A request was made for a brief narrative summary to accompany the financial data within the KPI Tracker to provide context and answer key questions clearly, particularly for non-financial stakeholders.

Trustees raised the importance of having greater visibility over central (non-school-based) staffing costs. Specifically, a request was made to include a KPI or indicator showing the percentage of total staffing costs that are central, not school based.

It was noted that this figure should be readily extractable from existing management accounts, as these already separate central and school-based costs. While this metric may not need to be updated monthly, the committee agreed it should be included in the KPI Tracker for ongoing visibility.

Summary of Management response

Mitigations have been put in place in relation to the SEN funding received (not the expected amount) to ensure a positive end of year budget position.

It was acknowledged that applying the same KPI across schools could appear unfair, especially between PFI (Private Finance Initiative) and non-PFI schools, due to differences in how staffing costs are reported.

PFI schools often have staffing costs embedded within their PFI contracts (e.g., caretakers, cleaning staff), and these do not show up in the raw data, unlike non-PFI schools where such costs are itemised.

This discrepancy affects the Staffing as a Percentage KPI, as PFI schools naturally appear to have lower staffing costs. To ensure fairness and consistency, an adjustment is being developed. A figure is added to PFI schools to reflect the estimated staffing costs that are included within the PFI block payment. This includes roles like caretakers, site managers, cleaning staff, etc. The adjusted figure is used to better reflect the *true staffing costs* for comparison purposes. This adjustment is internal but allows the management team to view staffing levels more accurately and fairly across all schools.

It was requested for a discussion to take place at the next F&E Committee meeting regarding the Trust's level of Revenue Reserves, the Reserves Policy and any amendments to this document that may be considered necessary.

Actions

ACTION 10: For the KPI Tracker to include a central staffing cost percentage figure.

And for a narrative summary to be added in order to improve clarity for all Trust Board members.

ACTION 11: For the Trust's level of Reserves, the Reserves Policy and any potential amendments to be an agenda item for discussion at the next F&E Committee meeting.

16. Management Accounts P4, P5 & P6 -FOR ASSURANCE

Presenter: F&E Committee Chair

Documents provided

CIT Management Accounts P4 (SN 24.01.25)

24-25 P5 Management Accounts (SN MB)

24-25 P6 Management Accounts (SN MB)

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

A surplus budget figure is reflected within the *24-25 P6 Management Accounts*.

The significant impact in terms of the SEN funding challenges is clearly reflected within the Trust's Management Accounts.

The F&E Chair indicated that he would liaise with the CFO regarding P7 Management Accounts particularly around the year to date and full budgetary forecast figures.

Summary of: Management response

All Management Accounts information has been shared with the F&E Committee Chair.

17. Clerking Matters – FOR INFORMATION

Presenter: Clerk

At this point in the meeting the CEO provided context regarding the change of name for Grantham Additional Needs Fellowship and the requirement for Trust Board approval.

The proposed name of Newton Bridge Academy was unanimously approved by the Board.

The Clerk reminded all regarding the upcoming Governance Development Day on May 16th. The relevant agenda is being finalised and will be shared in due course.

RESOLUTION

To approve the change of name from Grantham Additional Needs Fellowship to Newton Bridge Academy.

18. Chair's Closing remarks

Presenter: Chair

Summary of: questions raised / clarifications sought / challenges / points to note

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions to this meeting.

Meeting closed at 3:36pm.

