



**RICHARD HUISH TRUST
AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE MEETING**

30th June 2025 at 5:00pm

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members present: Dan Maycock (Chair)
Jade Renville
Pat Flaherty

In attendance: John Abbott (CEO)
Paul Lonsdale (CFO)
Richard Anderson (IT & Facilities Director)
Adam Glover (Director of Behaviour & Interventions)

Clerk: Helen Wells (Governance Specialist)

MINUTES

AUD 24/157	1. MEETING FORMALITIES <i>This followed item 2.1</i>	Action
	1.1 Welcome and apologies for absence The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, Apologies were received from Olivia Salaman. The meeting was quorate.	
AUD 24/158	1.2 Declaration of interests None of the committee members present had declarations to make in relation to items on the agenda.	
AUD 24/159	1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting Directors agreed the minutes of the previous meetings were accurate and the Chair consented for his electronic signature to be used to formally sign them off.	
AUD 24/160	1.4 Matters arising Directors discussed the matters arising report noting items as recorded in the related report.	
AUD 24/161	Directors noted the follow up catering report. The report demonstrated that identified concerns were addressed and that a good standard is being maintained across the service. Directors agreed this provides another layer of assurance. Directors noted that the approach to food waste and its impact remains an area to be explored. Directors agreed that this should be part of the next review round for this service area and that the outcomes of the next full review would come to the committee as part of the broader reporting of assurances.	
	ACTION: Provide opportunity for the consideration of food waste and its impact at a future meeting.	CFO via Clerk
	ACTION: Ensure the outcomes of the next full catering service review are reported to the committee.	CFO via Clerk

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2. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

AUD 24/162 2.1 Behaviour and Intervention risk profile

This was taken as the first item.

The Director of Behaviour & Interventions joined the meeting to lead on this item.

AUD 24/163 The Chair welcomed and introduced him asking for an overview of his work towards behaviour and the risk aspects of it may pose to Huish.

AUD 24/164 Negative behaviour is a challenge that will always be present, but Huish can place themselves to give the children in their care the best possible chances of success. It is important to establish and embed a whole school approach to behaviour, by putting in place the basics to achieve empathy with boundaries. This must be consistent across every interaction, approach, policy and procedure.

AUD 24/165 The risks to not addressing behaviour effectively were outlined:

- having a high number of suspensions and exclusions = reputational impact;
- unsettled classrooms that interrupt learning = impact on academic outcomes;
- parental complaints (may be due to a lack of understanding about approach and provision) = impact on time, staff wellbeing and reputation;
- staff are negatively affected = negative impact on wellbeing, their own behaviours and retention;
- normalising of current behaviour management where staff may not recognise approaches to addressing behaviour could be improved further = outcomes and chances of success for children are not maximised as a result.

Mitigation of risks:

AUD 24/166 The mitigation strategies for the risks were then outlined:

- creating a balance of support, boundaries and consistency for emotional safety where staff are more proactive than reactive = staff understand children who are struggling and know that there is something else going on for an individual child;
- significant training around interactions with children and the science that informs this and the need to revisit training to ensure that it is used;
- focus groups for support staff; 6 sessions across the year for 1.5hrs for a focus on specific children, approaches and impact. Challenge is releasing staff for this.

AUD 24/169 **How many staff have taken part in this?** This focus group is one member of support staff from each school, apart from West Buckland, who released all their support staff. Lyngford Park and Nerrols have had further input through staff meetings. The more that they can be released to take part the greater the impact will be.

AUD 24/170 Across the trust the schools are achieving these approaches at different paces, with Lyngford Park and Nerrols coming to the end of their first year. The key approaches from this will be rolled out to the other primary schools.

Jade Renville joined the meeting.

AUD 24/171

- Creation of consistent behavioural support steps in the classroom to address low level behaviour = giving the chance to correct behaviour without impacting the whole class.

AUD 24/172 **What level of buy-in is there from headteachers as this is not a traditional approach?** There is a mixed response, but the response has been generally positive; the proof of this will come when looking at the impact over time with the context of each school. There is a growing realisation that there needs to be a body of high-quality evidence to support the claims of schools that they handle behaviour well.

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- AUD 24/173**
- Improvement of how behaviour is logged as data on the system; it is important to record in detail and consistently the behaviour day to day so that the data can inform the approach to supporting each child. There is work on Bromcom and this will be linked to the behaviour steps and will be consistent to the trust to help be proactive, reactive and to evidence the behaviour journey. This can be a useful tool in supporting staff wellbeing to demonstrate the impact of their actions and positive changes for the child.
- AUD 24/174**
- Development of policies and procedures. This is particularly around the approaches to bullying to take forward and develop consistent understanding of what bullying is and then the approaches and responses to dealing with it.

AUD 24/175 **Next steps**

- Implementation and monitoring.

AUD 24/176 **Longer term challenges**

- Supporting parents.
- Demands of the DfE v supporting children who are struggling.
- Funding available to support children who are struggling

AUD 24/177 **How could Huish go about supporting parents whilst being aware of the wider context of their situations?**

There has been a shift change for children where the understanding that when a child is struggling there is an unmet need; there is an opportunity to have the same approach for parents. There is a potential to have a significant impact, but the way forward here is not yet clear as it falls outside of the remit of the schools directly.

AUD 24/178 **Is the emphasis still rightly on ensuring that teachers are of high quality and are able to inspire children?**

This is part of the vision; that all staff members are emotionally available to support children to the point that there is a high level of confidence that all staff are able to do this.

AUD 24/179

Directors agreed there is a wish to help and support parents but that it is wider than what Huish can offer alone. They reflected on how the risk around behaviour is captured on the risk register, acknowledging that while it is mentioned in this strategic document it represents profound challenges around social deprivation, personal struggles and unmet needs, leading it to be a significant and complex challenge.

AUD 24/180 **Having had some time to become familiar with the challenges around behaviour at Pyrland, is there any feedback on how this is developing now?**

Ideas have been considered at the school about how to address behaviour, but the approaches were not embedded consistently and not implemented as a result. The Director of Behaviour and Interventions is working in the off-site support facility. The learning he has taken from this is that it is important to be firm about the approach and the expert advice being imparted.

The Director of Behaviour & Intervention left the meeting.

2.2 Strategic Risk Register

This followed item 1.

AUD 24/181

Directors noted the updated risk register and discussed the assurance mapping and resulting recommendations from the internal auditor. Directors assessed the usefulness of having a broad range of assurance measures. They agreed that seeking assurance from a variety of sources is helpful and provides a greater insight into the layers of complexity around different areas of risk. They noted that the risk register has been developed over a period of time and presents a strategic overview but recognises the intricacy of each risk and the layers of governance underlying it. Directors agreed they were comfortable and felt assured by this, the

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approach to reporting on risk and felt confident with being able to ask for further assurance if needed.

AUD 24/182 The CFO noted that upon Pyrland School leaving Huish many of the risk levels and likely impact will change. Directors noted this and agreed that it must remain on the register for the duration of its membership at Huish. The register will then need to be revisited in this context. Directors noted the likely timeframe for the transfer and the key steps, with the aim for the transition to be completed Jan/Feb 2026.

AUD 24/183 Directors recognised the challenges in the transition occurring halfway through the academic year, particularly in relation to the timing of funding being released. Directors appreciated that assurance is multi-faceted and complex in this context, but that they feel well-sighted on the range of assurance given. They noted that there are a variety of ways in which assurance can be sought through external experts as needed. They discussed and reflected on the variety of assurances over the last few years to the committee and to other committees, reflecting responsibilities through the scheme of delegation.

AUD 24/184 They concurred they were content to be informed by the CFO on where additional assurance needs to be sought. Whilst the assurance mapping has been helpful, they agreed that it has not highlighted any significant areas where oversight is lacking.

AUD 24/185 Directors explored the merits of seeking input from newly appointed directors about the breadth and depth of audit approaches in the future.

ACTION: Update the matters arising regarding the action on further external assurance mapping, although this remains an option for the future. Clerk

AUD 24/186 **2.3 Insurance plans and risk**

The CFO summarised the insurance measures in place for the trust. Schools use the government's Risk Protection Arrangements (RPA) working on a rate per student, with the nature, size and composition of the schools any other provider does not give value for money. The RPA still represents the best cover option for schools. The cover is determined by the government.

AUD 24/187 RPA does not represent value for money for the college (a 16-19 academy). Some of the cover through commercial insurance is more extensive via this route, e.g. for cyber security. The standard areas of cover are included in the college's insurance. Directors discussed the other areas of coverage provided by this policy, agreeing that overall, it provides a good level of cover.

AUD 24/188 **2.4 Cases of fraud and whistleblowing**

There were no cases of fraud and whistleblowing reported.

3 AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

AUD 24/189 **3.2 Internal audit report**

Directors noted the draft report and that the most substantive area highlighted was covered in the earlier discussion about the strategic risk review. There were several outstanding previous recommendations that will be closed once that area of activity allows for it, and a good number where the actions have been closed successfully. Directors noted the number of positive updates. Directors agreed it was a useful report to understand the progress made.

AUD 24/190 **3.3 External audit plan**

Directors received the external audit plan for the year ahead, which referenced the key areas for testing and focus based on sector informed areas where further assurance will be sought.

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Directors noted the importance of ongoing assurance for the auditors and to remain sighted on ongoing concerns around significant strategic changes next year, including the going concern assessment next year.

AUD 24/191 **3.4 Audit tracking database**
Directors noted the database which was updated to reflect the latest internal audit update, pending a further update with the final report.

AUD 24/192 **What is the status of the carbon reporting?**
The carbon reporting methodology has changed from the previous way of recording from a calendar year to a financial year which means there is not a truly reflective of the financial statements period but will in time shift to follow the flow of the year.

4 POLICIES/KEY DOCUMENTS

AUD 24/193 **4.2 Risk Management Policy**
Directors noted there were minor amendments proposed to the policy only.

RECOMMENDATION: The Audit & Risk Committee recommended the Risk Management Policy for approval by the Board.

4.3 Critical Incident Management and Business Recovery/Continuity Plan

AUD 24/194 Directors agreed that the plan is in place. The testing of the plan will be reported back to the committee once completed as previously discussed. Directors noted how this related to the earlier discussion about the insurance coverage.

AUD 24/195 **RESOLVED: The Committee approved the plan subject to checking previous minutes below for any notes by directors on the detail of the plan previously.**

AUD 24/196 **ACTION: Update the committee outside of the meeting about any notes by directors made previously in relation to the Critical Incident Management and Business Recovery/Continuity Plan.** **Clerk**

AUD 24/197 **ACTION: Report back to the committee on the outcome and learning from the scenario-based trial of the plan.** **Clerk**

AUD 24/198 Directors discussed the merits of splitting the plan into two parts (emergency based and recovery based) and its actual use and application during a critical incident.

4.4 Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) 2025

AUD 24/199 Directors noted the updates in the very recently released ATH that will be implemented from 1st September 2025. They noted that changes will be picked up and explored by the executive team and further updates given if needed.

5 COMMITTEE MATTERS

AUD 24/200 **5.1 Terms of reference 2025-2026**
Directors noted there were minimal amendments planned but that a more substantive review would take place in tandem with the detailed review of the Scheme of Delegation planned for 2025/2026. Directors agreed that further changes may be necessary once the implications of the changes to the ATH were explored further.

RECOMMENDATION: The A&R Committee recommended the approval of the terms of reference for 2025/2026.

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5.2 Committee Chair 2025-2026

AUD 24/201 Dan Maycock noted that he is coming to the end of his term of office and unfortunately will not be seeking a second term. Directors thanked DM for his chairship of the committee and his diligence in leading it. Directors discussed the changes in the membership of the committee and chairing of the committee moving forwards.

RECOMMENDATION: The committee recommended Pat Flaherty as the chair for the A&R for 2025-2026.

Pat Flaherty left the meeting, the meeting remained quorate.

5.3 Vice Chair 2025-2026

AUD 24/202 Directors agreed to pause the appointment of the vice chair in light of the membership of the committee possibly changing with new directors joining.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Agenda for next meeting

AUD 24/203 Directors noted the agenda.

6.2 Academy representation 2025-2026

AUD 24/204 Directors agreed with the proposal for academy representation at the committee next year in relation to risk profiles.

6.3 Confidential items

AUD 24/205 Directors agreed there were no confidential items for the minutes.

6.4 Any other business

AUD 24/206 There was no further business.

6.5 Dates of future meetings

AUD 24/207 Directors noted the dates of the meetings for 2025-2026, noting that they had been circulated by calendar invite.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.20pm

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