



**RICHARD HUISH TRUST  
BOARD MEETING**

**9th December 2025 at 5.00pm**

**Redwood Suite, Richard Huish College**

**Directors Present:**

Jade Renville (Chair)  
Tim Duffen  
Pat Flaherty (via Teams)  
Tina Wilkes  
Stuart Hill  
Andrea Marshall (via Teams)

**In attendance:**

John Abbott (CEO & Trust Director)  
Paul Lonsdale (CFO)  
Richard Anderson (Director of IT & Facilities)  
Roz Abbott (MIS Manager)  
Adam Glover (Director of Behaviour and Interventions)  
Heidi Screech (Director of Nurseries)  
Matt Nolan (RHT Designated Safeguarding Lead)  
Dave Tomaney - Observer

**Clerk:**

Helen Wells (Governance Specialist)

**MINUTES**

		<b>Action</b>
<b>RHT 25/70</b>	<b>1. MEETING FORMALITIES</b> <b>1.1 Welcome and apologies for absence</b> The chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and introductions were made. There were apologies for absence from Dominic Lynch and Catherine Christie. The meeting was quorate.	
<b>RHT 25/71</b>	<b>1.2 Minutes of the last meeting</b> The minutes of the last meeting held on 10 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 were agreed as an accurate record. The Chair agreed to her electronic signature being used to sign them off.	
<b>RHT 25/72</b>	<b>1.3 Matters arising</b> Directors discussed the matters arising paper and agreed they were either all completed or were satisfied they were in progress and had been brought forward to this meeting or a relevant committee.	
<b>RHT 25/73</b>	<b>1.4 Declarations of interest</b> Directors confirmed that the summary declarations of interest for publication on the website were accurate. Tina Wilkes declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 2.3.	

Signed:...*Jade Renville*..... Date:...27/02/2026.....

## 2. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

RHT  
25/74

### 2.1 Strategic update

*This followed item 4.1*

The CEO gave a presentation, key points included:

- Reference to the Central Team restructure, updates and forthcoming changes and challenges outlined including the confirmed retirement of the CFO at the end of the academic year.
- Attendance of headteachers at a recent conference.
- Recent and anticipated changes of leadership roles within academies.
- Strategic growth update

Directors discussed the anticipated changes of leadership and strategic growth plans.

RHT  
25/75

#### **Is there a plan for how schools will move forward to join Huish?**

The plan is developing and focusing on Huish supporting the schools whilst the transfer of Pyrland School is finalised. Once the full detail of the impact of the transfer is understood and addressed as necessary, the detailed planning for working to achieve other primaries joining can commence in collaboration with the Regions Group. Formalised partnership working arrangements were confirmed as being in place; an approach supported by the DfE.

RHT  
25/76

#### **In relation to the partnership agreements with schools are the trust comfortable with what they bring to that partnership, and does Huish have the capacity to provide this support?**

Directors discussed the benefits of the partnership agreements and working relationships with the schools. It is an opportunity to learn about each of the schools and for them to understand what benefits being aligned with Huish can bring. Directors discussed the importance of understanding the schools' academic performance, financial position, future pupil numbers, estates, facilities and opportunities around their pre-school provision

RHT  
25/77

#### **Is the Local Authority (LA) aware of the intention of the schools to more closely align and ultimately join with Huish?**

The CEO confirmed that both schools have a minuted decision by their governing bodies that they wish to move forward with joining Huish.

Directors discussed the nature and approach of the support being provided by Huish.

RHT  
25/78

### 2.2 Strategic Development Plan 2026-2029

The Chair and CEO described the process of arriving at the point of approving the latest strategic development plan, including input from the academies through the Strategy Day in the summer and consultations through the committees. The Chair noted that the approach to operationalising the plan was being considered, building on the established ways of working.

**RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the Strategic Development Plan 2026-2029**

RHT  
25/79

### 2.3 Voluntary transfer of Pyrland School

The CEO noted the supporting paper giving the context, details and latest updates with regard to the transfer process. Directors noted they had been well cited on the details and the Chair highlighted the importance of the supporting paper in helping to provide detail for newer directors to make an informed decision.

**ACTION: Share the summary paper with Members and confirm to them the decision regarding the transfer.** Clerk

Signed:....Jade Renville..... Date:....27/02/2026.....

*Tina Wilkes did not vote on the resolution due to her conflict of interest in working for the Diocese and the school being a Church of England School.*

**RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the voluntary transfer of Pyrland School to Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership (MNSP)**

**RHT 25/80 3. FINANCIAL MATTERS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERNAL CONTROL**

**3.1 Oversight report including Management Accounts – September 2025**

The CFO noted key points from the September Management Accounts, referencing that they had been reviewed by the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee.

**RHT 25/81** The Chair thanked directors for the clarity of the report and noted that the October report was also available today, the CFO welcomed comments or feedback on the accounts between meetings if further clarification was needed.

**RHT 25/82 3.2 Members' Annual Report and financial summary**

The Chair noted that the members report had been scrutinised by a meeting of the Audit & Risk (A&R) with the F&GP Committee with the external auditors on 1<sup>st</sup> December where it had been recommended for approval by the board.

**RHT 25/83** The CFO highlighted there were no adjustments made by the auditor, a reflection of the hard work of the team and in the context of moving finance systems during the year. Auditors had reported that the process was smooth. As there were no adjustments in the members report it meant directors can draw confidence in the accuracy of the monthly management accounts. He noted that directors had seen the data in the final report during the management reporting cycle, and were the same in the final members report. He noted that the trust has now met the DfE determined 5% of reserves.

**RHT 25/84** The Chair noted the effort that has gone into the report and an opportunity to note successes and achievements over the year, as captured in the report. She particularly noted the achievement of Huish in meeting the Reserves Policy; ensuring schools are on a sustainable footing moving forwards.

**RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the Members' Annual Report and financial summary for 2024/2025.**

**RHT 25/85 3.3 Management Letter and Key Issues Document**

The CFO noted there were no significant recommendations in the management letter from the auditor to the DfE, but noted one point that was raised in the previous year and had been addressed. He expressed it was a positive outcome for Huish, which demonstrated the balance of internal control is being struck and should give confidence to the A&R Committee that expectations are being met.

**RHT 25/86 3.4 Internal Audit Plan 2025-2026**

The CFO presented the internal audit plan and described the process of developing it. The Chair of A&R commented the plan was pragmatic and seeks to add value to the external audit processes and other external reviews the trust is already subject to. Any further feedback was welcomed.

**RHT 25/87** Directors reflected that risks identified through audit are predominantly low and anything highlighted is diligently followed up on by the team and reported accurately for directors. They agreed this gives confidence that the team take the internal audit seriously and are committed to continuous improvement through it.

Signed:....*Jade Renville*..... Date:....27/02/2026.....

RHT 25/88 The plan had been recommended to the board for approval by the A&R Committee at their 1<sup>st</sup> December meeting.

**RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the Internal Audit Plan for 2025-2026**

RHT 25/89 **3.5 Appointment of Auditors**  
Directors discussed the performance of the Internal Auditor and External Auditor, noting that the A&R Committee had recommended the existing organisations to continue.

**RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the appointment of the Internal Auditor.**

**RESOLVED: Directors RECOMMENDED the appointment of the External Auditor.**

#### 4. GOVERNANCE & PEOPLE

RHT 25/90 **4.1 Safeguarding monitoring**  
*This followed item 1.4.*  
Matt Nolan introduced himself and gave an overview of his role within the trust as the safeguarding lead, to which he had recently been appointed. He confirmed he would be supporting the director who had the lead safeguarding role each year. He presented a summary of the latest safeguarding monitoring report for the trust, and highlighted some actions being worked on.

RHT 25/91 On the basis of the report summary he assured directors that all schools have qualified safeguarding teams in place, the SCR is in place and accurate and that safer recruitment takes place. He added that themes and trends from the monitoring report will in future be further developed as will other aspects of the report to help directors have greater insights and assurances. He welcomed any feedback on shaping the report, a director noted that benchmarking/comparison data would be helpful.

RHT 25/92 He highlighted that the local authority undertake a safeguarding audit every year which all schools have to respond to, normally generating some actions as a result. He has been attending the safeguarding forums with county on behalf of the schools, he noted that there is shared frustration about lack of feedback from the audit.

RHT 25/93 **The lead safeguarding direct queried whether it was accurate that there were no 'peer on peer' abuse incidents recorded in the data provided.**  
It was considered as to whether this was a systems issue or whether people are not reporting it fully. MN responded that whilst incidents of this nature occur they have been low level issues that don't hit the threshold for the 'abuse' category.

*Matt Nolan left the meeting*

**4.2 External Review of Governance (ERG)**  
*This followed item 3.5*

RHT 25/94 The Governance Specialist presented the proposal for the approach to an ERG taking place during 2026, noting the draft had been considered twice by the Governance & People Committee prior to them recommending it for approval to the board.  
Directors discussed the approach being taken for the ERG with a reciprocal arrangement with another trust. The board were assured that the Governance Professional undertaking the review is very experienced in conducting ERGs.

RHT 25/95 **Is the Regions Group aware of the approach to the ERG?**

Signed:...Jade Renville..... Date:..27/02/2026.....

There was no requirement from the RG to undertake an ERG but it may be a condition of any future schools joining the trust. Directors discussed it may be helpful to discuss the current ERG with this in mind.

RHT  
25/96

Directors noted their support for the ERG, citing that while they had confidence in the trust's governance it would be extremely helpful to have an in-depth peer review of Huish's approaches to give an honest assessment of how the trust is performing. Directors discussed their involvement in the ERG, and they were assured they would be involved.

**RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the proposal for the External Review of Governance.**

#### 4.3 Combining of committees

RHT  
25/97

The Governance Specialist outlined the context and process undertaken in consideration of the possibility, practicalities and compliance aspects of combining the existing Audit & Risk with the Finance & General Purposes Committee as a temporary measure to address unexpected director resignations and concerns about the viability of the committee membership as a result. The accompanying paper, circulated previously, provided further context.

RHT  
25/98

Directors had a robust discussion about the proposal and after some debate agreed that they were not comfortable with combining the committees into a single entity due to the potential for conflicts and the interest of good governance. They agreed however that the logistical format of the committees could be reconsidered to allow for joint meetings, but keeping each of the committees as independent entities in their current form. This would allow for more robust debate and consideration of some areas where their interests overlapped in a more efficient way. They did note however, that if director numbers did not increase and quoracy for each committee could not be met it may have to be revisited.

**RESOLVED: Directors agreed to a joint meeting structure for the Audit & Risk and Finance and General Purposes Committee to be piloted at the next opportunity, evaluated and kept under review by the board.**

RHT  
25/99

#### 4.4 Director updates

Directors noted the following updates:

- Stuart Hill had been appointed as the Vice Chair for the Audit & Risk Committee at their recent meeting.
- Catherine Christie's second term of office was due to expire at the end of February 2026. Directors agreed to the suggestion that, if willing, her term of office was extended until the end of the academic year in light of recent director resignations leaving a notable skills shortage for finance related activities of the board. The Governance Specialist confirmed that, for exceptional circumstances, it was possible to exceed two terms of office in the articles and internal governance procedures. The Governance Specialist noted that her appointment was via Members so, as the appointing body, they would need to approve proposal.

RHT  
25/100

**RECOMMENDATION: Directors agreed to propose to Members a new term of office for Catherine Christie, to conclude by prior agreement on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026.**

RHT  
25/101

#### 4.5 LGB Governor appointments and updates

Directors were supportive of the proposed governor appointments and noted updates in the accompanying paper.

Signed:....*Jade Renville*..... Date:....27/02/2026.....

**RESOLVED: Governor appointments/ratifications were approved by the board as detailed in the accompanying paper.**

## **5. MINUTES**

**RHT 25/102 5.1 Minutes from recent Trust Board Committees**  
Directors noted the recent minutes from the Trust Board Committees.

**RHT 25/103 5.2 Minutes from recent Local Governing Boards**  
Directors noted the minutes from recent LGB meetings.

## **6. POLICIES AND OTHER MATTERS OF NOTE**

**RHT 25/104 6.1 Information to note**  
Directors noted the following information, all of which had either been circulated previously or reviewed by the appropriate committee:

- RHT 25/105**
- a) Gender Pay Gap Report
  - b) Estates Strategy 2025-2030
  - c) Committee Annual Reports for 2024/2025
  - d) People Update
  - e) Ofsted Monitoring Report Letter for Pyrland School
  - f) Accounting Officer Checklist 2024/2025
  - g) Diversity Monitoring Report
  - h) Skills Audit Analysis 2025/2026
- RHT 25/106**

**RHT 25/107 6.2 Review and approval:**

- a) **RHT Admissions Policy Statement 2027/2028**  
Directors noted proposed updates and that it had been benchmarked against other similar statements.

**RESOLVED: Directors approved the RHT Admissions Policy Statement 2027/2028**

**RHT 25/108 b) Freedom of Information – Publication Scheme**  
Directors noted the minor updates as guided by the Data Protection Officer (DPO).

**RESOLVED: Directors approved the Freedom of Information – Publication Scheme**

**RHT 25/109 6.3 Recommended for approval**

- a) **Academy Admissions Policies 2027/2028**  
Directors noted the recommendations for approval by LGBs of North Curry Primary School and Lyngford Park Primary School.

**RESOLVED: Directors approved the Admissions Policies for 2027/2028 for North Curry and Lyngford Park Primary Schools.**

**RHT 25/110 b) Investment Policy**  
Directors noted the Investment Policy had been reviewed and recommended for approval by the F&GP Committee at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

**RESOLVED: Directors approved the Investment Policy.**

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**RHT 25/111 7.1 Any other business**  
There was no other business.

Signed:...*Jade Renville*..... Date:...27/02/2026.....

**RHT**                    **7.2 Consideration of confidential content of the minutes**  
**25/112**                Directors agreed item 8 was confidential and any papers marked as confidential should remain as such.

**RHT**                    **7.3 Agenda for next meeting**  
**25/113**                Directors noted the agenda.

**7.4 Next meeting dates**  
Directors noted the next meeting dates:

*Attendees left the meeting; the directors, clerk, CEO and, at the request of directors, observer Dave Tomaney remained.*

**RHT**                    **8. Pay Awards – CONFIDENTIAL**  
**25/114**  
**- 127**                This was agreed as a confidential minute.

*There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.18pm*

Signed:....*Jade Renville*..... Date:....27/02/2026.....