



**RICHARD HUISH TRUST  
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**14th October 2025 at 5:00pm**

**Rowan House Committee Room/MS Teams**

- Present:** Catherine Christie (Chair)  
Andrea Marshall  
Tina Wilkes
- In Attendance:** Paul Lonsdale (CFO)  
John Abbott (CEO)  
Richard Anderson (IT & Facilities Director)  
Jessica Doyle (Finance Manager)
- Clerk:** Helen Wells (Governance Specialist)

**MINUTES**

**Action**

**1. MEETING FORMALITIES**

- FGP 25/01** **1.1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
The chair welcomed attendees, there were apologies from Dominic Lynch (Chair of the committee), Catherine Christie (Vice Chair) agreed to chair in his place. The meeting was quorate.
- FGP 25/02** **1.2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
There were no declarations of interest for the meeting.
- FGP 25/03** **1.3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**  
The minutes from the last meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025 were approved and the Chair consented for her electronic signature to be used in signing them off.
- FGP 25/04** **1.4. MATTERS ARISING**  
All matters arising were discussed and were agreed as being complete or will be brought forward as agenda items to the next meeting.

**2. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

- FGP 25/05** **2.1. Oversight Report including Management Accounts – July 2025**  
The Finance Manager gave an overview of the changes since the last report. Key points included:
  - All schools are showing a higher surplus for the schools than forecast in July, about 25% of that is due to an accounting adjustment for Pyrland School’s Pupil Premium funding.
 Tina Wilkes joined the meeting.
- FGP 25/06**
  - SCC Early Years Grant forecasting was lower than it should have been resulting in a change in processes on the Family system to address abnormalities in accounting for the future.
  - SEN remains challenging to account for with backdated payments still coming through. Directors discussed this being an ongoing challenge.
- FGP 25/07**
  - Pyrland have made some savings in non-pay.

**Signed:**...Catherine Christie..... **Date:**.....12<sup>th</sup> March 2026.....

FGP  
25/08

- The year-end outturn is better than forecast in the July outturn report.
- The college had a 16-19 funding audit in September; the report has not highlighted any errors that would result in a funding clawback, this is a notable achievement.
- The cumulative reserves to income position is above the 5% threshold set by the DfE. Directors noted this was a positive position that reflected significant work behind the scenes.

FGP  
25/09

## 2.2. Emerging budget challenges and latest pupil numbers

The CFO noted the related paper showing the October census numbers which highlighted where the challenges are in terms of the expected demographic downturn and the impact on early years/reception age enrolments. For some of the primary schools there will be discussions taking place about how the forecasts impact on the funding they can expect for 2026-2027 and beyond.

FGP  
25/10

Directors recalled and reflected on the discussion from the recent board meeting in relation to being more proactive in advertising the availability of primary places in light of the falling demography. They considered the shift in position for schools as they all seek to fill their PANs. Directors agreed that it was critical to move swiftly on this front with the current admissions window in mind and to draw on expertise and experience in marketing and promotion of school places already available within the trust.

FGP  
25/11

## When will there be financial modelling on the worst-case scenario if the reduction in the numbers play out compared to the forecasting?

The IMP platform makes it very easy to perform financial modelling exercises. The Finance Team will be using this modelling to work with schools on strategic planning approaches to mitigate the impact of reducing pupil recruitment and the falling demography. They will be supported to help consider this in a more holistic way over time; to consider class sizes and the way in-class support is structured.

FGP  
25/12

## 2.3. Audit planning

Directors noted the audit plans and progress with the current external audit. The internal audit plan included some additional recommendations from the Audit & Risk Committee which will be followed up; this is to try and reduce the duplication in assurance activities between the external and internal audit processes.

FGP  
25/13

Directors noted the recent focus of the audits on nurseries and considered the challenge in the cost of operating nursery places based on the hope that those children will stay on as pupils at the school; representing a longer-term investment. Directors agreed that the Director of Nurseries is helping to drive forward this agenda and look at ensuring the provision is operating as efficiently as possible.

## 2.4 Progress against Strategic Driver 3

FGP  
25/14

Directors discussed the merit in receiving progress updates against specific strategic drivers as the progress measures are built into every report the board receives. They agreed that it might be more useful to receive an annual update to the board in terms of overall progress, noting that being able to see the impact explicitly would be ideal.

**ACTION: Consider the approach to keeping directors up to date on the progress and impact against the strategic plan.**

CEO

## 2.5 Report any novel contentious or repercussive transactions and consider risk

There were no such transactions to report.

Signed:.....Catherine Christie..... Date:.....12<sup>th</sup> March 2026.....

### 3. TRUST INFRASTRUCTURE

FGP  
25/15

#### 3.1. School Condition Allocation (SCA) and capital projects

The Director of IT and Facilities gave an overview of the SCA grant with projects that had formally completed with the DfE since the first round of funding was received in 2023/2024. The 2024/2025 funding for projects will be complete in June 2026. This academic year there was the largest allocation available so far. There are a variety of projects in the pipeline which dovetail into the Estates Strategy. This enables planning for larger projects to maximise the opportunities to make the most of the SCA over time. The team are conscious about obtaining value for money and gave examples of how they go about this, including in-house building expertise.

FGP  
25/16

Directors were assured that preparations were in place for removing Pyrland School from the IT network in due course.

FGP  
25/17

#### Why do the condition bandings change for schools?

Originally the government assessed bandings through site visits (CDC phase 1) and categorised key aspects of the estates into funding bands (these did not always match with what the trust would have anticipated as being priorities). The second round of condition reviews undertaken by the DfE, CDC 2, has now been completed and has resulted in some of our academies moving condition bands. The DfE have, at the same time, applied updated factors to academies that have a completed CDC 2 report.

FGP  
25/18

#### How is the leasing of School House at West Buckland Primary School managed?

This is an inherited lifetime tenancy awarded by the previous owner of the estate (SCC). This is managed and strategically overseen by the trust directly.

FGP  
25/19

#### 3.2 Estates Strategy 2025-2030

The CFO highlighted that the proposed estates strategy for 2025-2030 builds on the current plan that will complete this year. It is based on looking at how larger scale projects can be planned for and funded over time. The strategy seeks to improve the education environments as well as meeting compliance requirements. Directors noted that there needs to be explicit consistency across the strategic drivers, individual plans and strategies and other Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs). Headteachers have been consulted regarding ambitions for their estates. Directors agreed that the plan should be shared with Local Governing Boards (LGBs) to ensure they are sighted on it.

FGP  
25/20

Directors discussed the challenge and importance of schools planning and budgeting for routine maintenance. The CFO outlined that moving towards a central estates operating model will help with internal oversight.

**APPROVED: Directors approved the Estates Strategy 2025-2030.**

**ACTION: Ensure that the Estates Strategy 2025-2030 is shared with LGBs.**

**Clerk**

### 4. POLICIES AND KEY DOCUMENTS

FGP  
25/21

#### 4.1. Investment Policy

The CFO noted the only substantive change was the addition of the sweep account with Lloyds to manage investment finances more effectively. This is being monitored closely to ensure it is maximised.

**RECOMMENDATION: Directors recommended the Investment Policy for approval by the board.**

Signed:.....Catherine Christie..... Date:.....12<sup>th</sup> March 2026.....

FGP  
25/22

#### 4.2 Committee annual report for 2024/2025

Directors noted the draft annual report and reflected that it is a useful and informative document. They agreed it was accurate in content, subject to some details being checked. Once finalised they agreed it should be shared with the board and with newer directors specifically, along with the other committee reports for their information.

### 5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

FGP  
25/23

#### 5.1. Any other business

Directors discussed the option of consolidating the F&GP and A&R committees due to an unexpected number of directors resigning recently ahead of their terms of office coming to a conclusion. A supporting paper detailed the compliance requirements from the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH), contextual information and other considerations. Directors noted that the trust was well under the main compliance requirement of having separate committees in relation to annual revenue being substantially less than the £50million threshold, even with potential growth of the trust. On balance directors agreed that it would be pragmatic, at least for this year or until there was a sufficiently sized pool of appropriately skilled directors to draw from, that the committees would benefit from being combined. The ideal position would be to separate the committees at the earliest possible opportunity.

FGP  
25/24

Directors agreed that members of the other committee must be consulted with and the Governance Specialist would organise how this was administered. The full board would then need to approve the proposal and the terms of reference and scheme of delegation would need to be amended to reflect the change.

**RECOMMENDATION: Directors recommended to the board that, subject to consultation with members of the Audit & Risk Committee, the F&GP and A&R committees should be combined until such time as there is a sufficiently skilled pool of directors to enable separation of the committees.**

FGP  
25/25

#### 5.2. Agenda for next meeting

Directors noted the agendas for the next meetings, noting that this would be subject to change if they were combined with the A&R committee.

FGP  
25/26

#### 5.3. Confidential items

There were no confidential items for the minutes, any papers marked as confidential would remain as such.

FGP  
25/27

#### 5.4. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025 and would be the annual joint meeting between the A&R Committee and the auditors to hear the outcome of the annual report.

The meeting closed at 6.32pm

Signed:.....*Catherine Christie*..... Date:.....12<sup>th</sup> March 2026.....