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Minutes of the Omnia Learning Trust Board of Directors

Held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 14th July 2026, 10:00–12:00

Invitees and Attendance

Name	Position	Attendance
Russell Massie	Director / Chair	Present
Jason Murphy	Director / Vice Chair	Present
Jodie Croft	CEO / Director	Present
Alison Hill	Director	Present – joined shortly after the meeting commenced
Duncan Millard	Director	Present
Nicola Poole	Director	Present
Jenelle Ross-McIntyre	Director	Present – temporarily disconnected and later rejoined
Leah Basilone	Deputy CEO	Present
Sarah Bellingham	Head of Operations	Present
Hana Hamilton	Governance & Communications Officer (Clerk)	Present
Carina Cuddington	Chief Financial Officer – EduFin	Present remotely for Items 13 and 20; joined at approximately 11:07 and left at approximately 11:31
Sam Reilly	EduFin Accountant	Present remotely for Items 13 and 20; joined at approximately 11:07 and left at approximately 11:31
Tyler Jeffs	Director / Operations Committee Chair	Apologies

Disclaimer – Microsoft Teams Meeting Transcript
*This meeting was held via Microsoft Teams. The automatic transcription function was enabled solely to assist in the accurate production of draft minutes. The transcript is **not** the formal record of proceedings. Approved minutes, once confirmed by the Board, constitute the only official record. Transcripts are stored securely and deleted following formal approval of the minutes. By attending, participants acknowledged and consented to the use of transcription for governance purposes.*

1. Approval of Teams Transcript, Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Introduced by: Chair
The Chair welcomed attendees and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
The Board congratulated the Chair on being awarded the King's Police Medal in the King's Birthday Honours. The Chair explained that he had temporarily moved from Thames Valley

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Police to the Ministry of Justice for a two-year national role concerning children with a parent in prison.

The Chair advised that his professional email address would change and undertook to provide the Clerk with updated contact details.
It was noted that Alison Hill joined shortly after the meeting began and had not missed any substantive decisions.

The Clerk confirmed that Microsoft Teams transcription had been activated to support the preparation of the minutes.

✅ **APPROVED:** Use of Microsoft Teams transcription for the meeting.
☐ **ACTION:** Chair to provide the Clerk with his updated professional email address.

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2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest, Pecuniary or Business Interests and Hospitality

Introduced by: Chair

The Chair invited Directors to declare any conflicts relating to the agenda, pecuniary or business interests, or hospitality received since the previous meeting.

The Chair's change of employer to Ministry of Justice appointment were noted for transparency but were not considered to create a conflict of interest in relation to any agenda item.

No other conflicts of interest were declared.

The Chair observed that several Director biographies on the Trust website appeared outdated and invited all Directors to review their published information for accuracy.

✅ **APPROVED:** Conflicts position noted. No Director was required to withdraw from any item.
☐ **ACTION:** Directors to review their biographies on the Trust website and provide any amendments to the Clerk.

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3. Identify AOB and/or Confidential AOB

Introduced by: Chair

The CEO requested that Item 20, approval of annual budgets, be brought forward and considered alongside the management accounts while the Chief Financial Officer and EduFin Accountant were in attendance.

The Board agreed to vary the order of business accordingly.

No further AOB was declared at this stage.

✅ **APPROVED:** Item 20 to be considered immediately following Item 13.

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4. Review of Trust Board Membership and DBS / Section 128 Checks

Introduced by: Chair

The Chair requested confirmation that all Director DBS and Section 128 checks were complete.

The Clerk confirmed that all Directors remained compliant. One outstanding matter shown on the single central record related to a member rather than a Director and did not affect Board compliance.

The Board received assurance that:

- Director DBS checks were current;
- Section 128 checks were complete;
- safeguarding governance records were maintained;
- no Director compliance concerns required escalation.

✅ **APPROVED:** Director DBS and Section 128 compliance position confirmed.

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5. Review Directors' Training Requirements for 2025–2026

Introduced by: Chair

The Clerk reported that a small number of Directors had outstanding continuing professional development requirements. Those Directors had been contacted directly and were asked to complete the remaining modules before the end of the academic year so that the new annual training cycle could commence cleanly.

The Clerk advised that two additional mandatory requirements would apply to all Directors:

- GDPR training; and
- equality, diversity and non-bias training.

The equality, diversity and non-bias module was available through the National Governance Association platform. The Clerk was identifying a suitable platform for GDPR training because the required module was not available through the NGA in the appropriate format.

Director Question / Challenge:
The Chair sought confirmation that both new modules applied to every Director and asked whether direct links could be circulated by email.

Response / Assurance Provided:
The Clerk confirmed that both modules would be mandatory for the full Board. The equality, diversity and non-bias link would be circulated immediately, while the GDPR link would follow once an appropriate provider and enrolment method had been secured.
The CEO requested that the equality, diversity and non-bias link be sent directly by email, notwithstanding that it was already included within the training matrix on GovernorHub.

✅ **APPROVED:** Updated Director training requirements received and noted.

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☐ **ACTION:** Directors with outstanding 2025/26 CPD to complete it by the end of the academic year.
☐ **ACTION:** Clerk to circulate the equality, diversity and non-bias training link by email.
☐ **ACTION:** Clerk to source and circulate an appropriate GDPR training module for completion by September 2026.

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6. Review Minutes of May Board Meeting and Address Action Points

Report introduced by: Chair

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 May 2026 were presented for approval.
The Chair described the May meeting and strategy session as productive and invited Directors to identify any inaccuracies or omissions.
No amendments were requested.
The Board confirmed that it had reviewed the minutes in advance and approved them as an accurate record.

✅ **APPROVED:** Minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 May 2026 approved as an accurate record.
☐ **ACTION:** Clerk to upload the approved minutes to the OLT website and GovernorHub and arrange the Chair's electronic signature.

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7. Receipt of July QES Chairs' Update

Report introduced by: QES Committee Co-Chairs

The Board received verbal updates from the two QES Committee Co-Chairs following the July school-level meetings.

The first Co-Chair reported that the Committee had reviewed Twickenham Primary Academy and Wantage Primary Academy.

At Twickenham, attendance had improved and safeguarding checks were satisfactory. The Committee had discussed how staff could more easily identify and communicate their training, professional development and career-progression needs. It was noted that the Trust would consider broader methods for capturing this information.
At Wantage, the SEND register and the complexity of pupil need continued to increase. Persistent absence and legacy attendance cases remained under scrutiny. The Committee had reviewed safeguarding arrangements and discussed the limited availability of suitable alternative provision for pupils with higher levels of need. Leaders were continuing to use CPOMS and associated tracking systems to record behaviour, attendance and safeguarding information more comprehensively.
The Board was also informed that a Staff Governor was leaving Wantage and that the Committee had formally recognised her contribution. The proposed future QES and stakeholder-engagement arrangements would address how Staff and Parent Governor roles might operate from the new academic year.

The second Co-Chair reported that no urgent matters had arisen from the Didcot and Sires Hill meetings. The main limitation had been the national delay in the release of Key Stage 2

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SATs results, which prevented the Committee from reviewing the full end-of-year attainment picture.
The Board was advised that the available outcomes, including phonics and Good Level of Development data, were very strong at Didcot and Sires Hill. The Deputy CEO confirmed that Key Stage 2 outcomes were expected later that week, subject to any further local authority delay, and that the Board would receive the results once available.

✅ **APPROVED:** July QES Chairs' update received and noted.
☐ **ACTION:** Deputy CEO to circulate the delayed Key Stage 2 SATs outcomes to Directors once available.

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8. Receipt of External Biennial Safeguarding Audit Reports

Report introduced by: Chair

The Chair confirmed that there were no external safeguarding audit reports due for receipt at this meeting.

No discussion or action was required.

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9. Confirmation that Health and Safety Risk Assessments Have Been Carried Out at Each School

Report introduced by: Head of Operations
The Head of Operations confirmed that the required external health and safety assessments had been completed across the Trust, including:

- general health and safety assessments;
- fire risk assessments; and
- water risk assessments.

The Head of Operations advised that the position was also reflected within the Trust Compliance Report.

✅ **APPROVED:** Confirmation received that the required health and safety risk assessments had been carried out.

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10. Receipt of June Operations Committee Minutes with Chair's Verbal Update

Report introduced by: CEO on behalf of the Operations Committee Chair

The Operations Committee Chair had submitted apologies to the Board meeting.
The Board received the June Operations Committee minutes. The CEO advised that relevant matters arising were incorporated within her report and the financial and compliance items later on the agenda.

No separate concern was raised for escalation.
✅ **APPROVED:** June Operations Committee minutes received and noted.

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11. Receive OLT Compliance Report

Report introduced by: Head of Operations

The Head of Operations presented the June Compliance Report, which had previously been considered by the Operations Committee.
The Board was advised that the report was primarily for assurance and receipt. It confirmed that the Trust's scheduled external audits had been carried out.
The compliance report covered:

- GDPR;
- financial controls and audit;
- HR;
- health and safety;
- water and fire risk assessments;
- internal scrutiny;
- staff absence;
- premises;
- safeguarding compliance, including SCR and LADO audit arrangements; and
- policy review.

✅ **APPROVED:** June OLT Compliance Report received and noted.

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12. Receive CEO and DCEO Reports

Report introduced by: CEO and Deputy CEO

12.1 Trust Risk Register and Pay Awards

The CEO identified the principal current risks as:

- the financial position at Sires Hill;
- the increasing level and complexity of SEND across all schools;
- affordability of staffing;
- implementation of national pay awards;
- Trust growth and the Valley Park opening;
- uncertainty regarding the Valley Park funding agreement;
- pupil-number projections; and
- leadership capacity.

The CEO reported that the previously unviable Sires Hill budget had been revised and was now viable following changes to the proposed leadership structure.
The Board was informed that teachers had received a pay award and support staff were expected to receive a separate increase. Budgets had been updated using the latest assumptions regarding the contribution expected from school budgets and the additional government grant.

Director Question / Challenge:
The Chair asked whether the pay awards represented a material adverse surprise or whether they were broadly consistent with the assumptions already built into the Trust's budgets.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO and Deputy CEO explained that the Trust had already allowed for a school-funded contribution. The government funding announcement meant that the position was broadly

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manageable and slightly more favourable than initially feared, although uncertainty remained regarding the timing, allocation and duration of the grants.

Director Question / Challenge:
The Chair queried whether the planned reduction in employer pension contribution rates could affect staff pension benefits or create a staff-retention issue.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO confirmed that staff benefits under the Teachers' Pension Scheme would not change. The change concerned the employer's actuarial contribution and associated government grant arrangements rather than any reduction to employees' pension entitlement.

12.2 Trust Growth and Valley Park Academy
The CEO reported that progress towards opening Valley Park Academy remained positive. Applications continued to be received. Reception interest had increased, while the apparent Year 1 and Year 2 interest included duplicate expressions from some families and therefore required further validation.
The Trust would not decide whether to open Year 1 and Year 2 classes until the autumn.
The CEO stressed that opening additional classes could support the school's growth, but the Trust would not commit to classes that could not sustain the cost of a teacher in the longer term.
An ICT tender had been undertaken and bids were being evaluated. The tender was expected to conclude before the end of term.
Internal leadership opportunities were being considered before external recruitment so that existing staff could apply for roles linked to the new school.
The CEO identified a new risk requiring inclusion on the Risk Register: the Department for Education had not engaged consistently with the project meetings and retained responsibility for approving the funding agreement. The Trust and local authority had completed the required preparatory work, but the DfE's position was not yet clear. This could affect the eventual opening date.
The Board was assured that new or expanded leadership roles linked to Valley Park were temporary until the funding agreement was secured, protecting the Trust from unaffordable long-term commitments.
The CEO also reported:

- remaining building work at Sires Hill was expected to be substantially completed during the summer;
- the full Didcot lease had not yet been signed and solicitors continued to be pursued;
- an additional Governance and Administration Officer was expected to join the central team in September;
- the new role would assume governance administration;
- the current Clerk's Trust days and Trust-wide business-management responsibilities would increase; and
- the additional administrative capacity was intended to reduce pressure across the small central team.

Director Question / Challenge:
Directors sought assurance that the Trust would not incur permanent staffing liabilities before the Valley Park funding agreement had been confirmed.
Response / Assurance Provided:

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The CEO confirmed that all appointments and expanded responsibilities linked directly to Valley Park had been structured on a temporary basis until the funding agreement was secured.

☐ **ACTION**: CEO to add the Valley Park funding-agreement risk to the Trust Risk Register.
☐ **ACTION**: CEO to review Reception and potential Year 1 and Year 2 demand in the autumn before determining the opening-year class structure.
☐ **ACTION**: CEO to conclude the Valley Park ICT tender.
The growth update included pupil interest, affordability of additional classes, the ICT tender, staffing capacity and the funding-agreement risk.

12.3 Sires Hill Ofsted Position

Confidential: recorded in confidential annex.

12.4 Proposed Stakeholder-Engagement and QES Model

The CEO presented an emerging proposal to reshape the Trust's stakeholder-engagement and QES arrangements.
The review had been prompted by:

- feedback from the external governance review;
- increasing QES workload as the Trust grew;
- concern that Parent and Staff Governor monitoring activity sometimes duplicated assurance already provided by executive leaders or external experts;
- a desire to make better use of Parent and Staff Governors as representatives of stakeholder voice;
- the need to engage more frequently with parents, staff and pupils;
- the increasing number of schools due to join the QES cycle; and
- the wish to reduce the administrative burden on Principals.

Under the emerging model:

- Staff and Parent Governors would remain within the governance structure;
- stakeholder engagement would be conducted through different methods for parents, staff and pupils rather than through one large meeting;
- pupil council representatives could be brought together Trust-wide;
- staff feedback could be gathered through direct forums;
- Parent Governors could attend parent events and gather feedback;
- a dedicated feedback route could allow themes to be recorded throughout the year;
- feedback could be analysed and reported to the Board more quickly;
- the Deputy CEO would become the principal accountable officer at QES for educational and safeguarding performance across all schools;
- school information could be presented comparatively through a single visual dashboard;
- Principals would not necessarily attend every QES meeting;
- Principals could still be invited to present on specific areas requiring direct school-level discussion; and
- the first annual QES "showcase" meeting could potentially retain more direct Principal involvement.

The CEO stressed that the proposal remained under development.

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Director Question / Challenge:
The Chair welcomed the more targeted engagement with stakeholder groups, including pupils, but questioned how Directors would continue to triangulate the information provided by the executive team. The Chair asked whether Directors could attend selected school events, stakeholder sessions or curriculum and SEND activities to retain direct contact with the school community.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO agreed that a Director could be invited to relevant stakeholder events. She acknowledged the need to distinguish between engagement and formal governance and accepted that the Board needed to see, hear and test the stakeholder evidence presented to it.
The CEO also cautioned against creating multiple additional formal committees, which would significantly increase the time burden on Directors. Technology and structured reporting could allow stakeholder views to be captured more frequently without creating an excessive meeting structure.

Director Question / Challenge:
A Director expressed concern that removing Parent Governors, Staff Governors and Principals from QES could create a contextual gap. Direct interaction with school leaders and local representatives brought the data to life and enabled Directors to understand the human context behind the reports.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO clarified that Parent and Staff Governors were currently asked primarily to triangulate particular operational areas rather than present the wider views of stakeholders. Much of that assurance was already being obtained through the Deputy CEO or external specialists. The proposed model would instead ask governors to gather and communicate stakeholder voice more systematically.
The CEO accepted that the local connection between Directors, Principals and stakeholders must not be lost and agreed that this required further development.

Director Question / Challenge:
A Director questioned whether it would be realistic to expect Parent Governors to operate solely as listeners when parents raised concerns. It could be frustrating for governors to receive concerns without being able to provide context or reassurance. There was also a risk that Parent Governors might feel that their role had been diminished.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO acknowledged the difficulty. Parent Governors had historically been approached at the school gate, involved in informal surveys or expected to act as Trust spokespeople, all of which created risk and inconsistency. The Trust needed a structured mechanism through which concerns could be gathered and a clear “you said, we did” response provided by the school or Trust.
The CEO confirmed that the annual parent survey would continue and that the new model was intended to add more frequent opportunities for engagement, not remove the formal survey.

Director Question / Challenge:
A Director argued that the Board benefited from hearing directly and, to some extent, “unedited” from Principals. The Director asked whether Principals had been consulted and whether they genuinely preferred not to attend.
Response / Assurance Provided:

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The CEO advised that Principals had initially welcomed the proposal because it would reduce meeting attendance and duplication. She nevertheless agreed that the Board gained value from hearing directly from school leaders and suggested retaining a showcase meeting or inviting Principals for specific areas of concern, change or strategic development.

Director Question / Challenge:
A Director supported a more strategic QES model and observed that some existing monitoring activity could resemble staff "marking their own homework". The Director considered that the quality of local governor triangulation had been variable and that clearer terms of reference were essential.
The Director questioned whether the proposed stakeholder-engagement body needed to be presented as a Board subcommittee and asked how it would fit within the Trust's unusual governance structure.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO confirmed that the Trust's Articles required Parent Governors within its governance arrangements. The stakeholder-engagement structure would be constituted as the local governing body for that purpose, while the way Parent and Staff Governors engaged and reported would change.
The Head of Operations advised that the Articles should be checked carefully because, without two Parent Governors on a designated local governing body, the Trust might need to adjust the composition of the Trust Board.
The CEO confirmed that the intention was to retain Parent and Staff Governors locally while using technology to bring stakeholder groups together across the Trust where appropriate.

Director Question / Challenge:
A Director suggested that Principals should still be invited to QES or Operations when a specific school matter required direct explanation, such as a significant improvement-plan change, a major capital proposal or a staffing restructure.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO agreed. The aim was to reduce routine bureaucracy, not prevent the Board or its committees from hearing directly from Principals when their contribution was necessary.

Director Question / Challenge:
A Director proposed a continuous "school barometer" through which parent, pupil, staff and governor feedback could be submitted and categorised throughout the year. Structured themes, drop-down categories and free-text options could allow the Trust to identify trends and commission more focused reviews.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO supported the proposal and stated that it reflected the intended "finger on the pulse" approach. A dedicated feedback address or digital system could allow information to be received at any time, categorised, RAG-rated and analysed using technology.
The Board agreed that a continuous model would provide richer information than relying solely on annual surveys.

Director Question / Challenge:
The Chair asked for clarity on the next steps and whether the proposal would be tested with the external governance adviser, developed over the summer and returned to the Board.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO confirmed that she would discuss the model with the external adviser, refine it over the summer and return to the Board. The first QES meeting on 6 October 2026 would proceed under the current structure, with changes introduced thereafter if approved.

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✅ **APPROVED:** Board supported further development of the stakeholder-engagement and revised QES model in principle, subject to further detail and assurance regarding the Articles, triangulation and direct access to school leaders.
☐ **ACTION**: CEO to obtain advice on the proposed model from the external governance adviser.
☐ **ACTION**: CEO and Head of Operations to confirm that the proposed local-governance arrangements comply with the Articles of Association.
☐ **ACTION**: CEO to refine the model, including Director triangulation, Principal involvement and continuous stakeholder feedback, and return it to the Board.
☐ **ACTION**: First QES meeting on 6 October 2026 to proceed under the existing structure.

12.5 Deputy CEO RAG Report
The Deputy CEO presented the Trust-wide RAG report.
Pupil numbers remained broadly stable or had increased slightly. Staffing vacancies had been filled. Safeguarding arrangements remained in line with expectations, including external assurance received through the Sires Hill inspection.

Curriculum and Outcomes
Curriculum provision remained strong across the Trust.
The national curriculum review had been delayed. Key Stage 2 results were also delayed, so the RAG judgement was based on the available Good Level of Development, multiplication and phonics outcomes.
Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupil progress would be reviewed further when the delayed Key Stage 2 information became available.

Pastoral Support and Enrichment
Sires Hill was planning additional provision for pupils with complex needs moving into Year 1.
Wantage had undertaken reviews of SEND provision, including work with an external SEND specialist on how EHCP outcomes should translate into classroom provision.
The Deputy CEO was collating a fuller Trust-wide account of enrichment for the October QES meeting. This would include wider community engagement rather than only clubs and extracurricular provision.

12.6 CEO RAG Report and Stakeholder Feedback
The CEO reported no further material concerns in the remaining RAG areas.
The Trust Development Plan would include further work on:

- equality, diversity and inclusion;
- staff feedback;
- communication between staff and the Trust;
- stakeholder engagement; and
- capital strategy.

The CEO highlighted that stakeholder feedback had fallen across much of the Trust during the year. The pupil survey had achieved a higher response rate but showed a decline against the previous year in several measures. The Trust had not yet received full contextual feedback from each Principal.
The CEO advised that the lower scores reinforced the case for more regular stakeholder engagement.

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Capital plans would be discussed alongside the annual budgets. Air-conditioning requirements had been included within some budget assumptions following the recent period of exceptional heat.

✅ **APPROVED:** CEO and DCEO reports and RAG assessments received and noted.

12.7 Headline Attainment Information

The Deputy CEO presented the available end-of-year attainment information visually against national benchmarks.

The presentation included:

- multiplication-table check outcomes;
- Year 1 phonics;
- Year 2 phonics checks;
- Good Level of Development at the end of Reception; and
- end-of-Key-Stage-1 combined reading, writing and mathematics.

Sires Hill did not yet have pupils in Year 4 and therefore had no multiplication-table check result.

The available results were strong across the Trust, with particularly high phonics outcomes and strong percentile positions.

Director Question / Challenge:

A Director asked for confirmation that the Key Stage 2 results would be shared before the October meeting rather than Directors having to wait until the next formal Board discussion.

Response / Assurance Provided:

The Deputy CEO confirmed that the results would be compiled and circulated as soon as available, with a fuller presentation following in October.

☐ **ACTION:** Deputy CEO and Clerk to circulate Key Stage 2 outcomes once released.

The headline data presentation and request to circulate the delayed SATs results are recorded in the transcript.

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13. Receive Management Accounts and Budgets*

Report introduced by: EduFin Accountant and Chief Financial Officer

The Chair welcomed the Chief Financial Officer and EduFin Accountant to the meeting at approximately 11:07.

The Chief Financial Officer introduced the item and invited the EduFin Accountant to present the detailed management-account position.

Summary:

The Board received and reviewed the latest management accounts and the updated Trust-wide financial forecast.

The overall in-year position remained broadly in line with the previous forecast, with only minor movement reported. Directors noted that individual academy forecasts had been updated to reflect changes in grant income, SEND funding, staffing and other routine funding adjustments.

The Board was assured that the Trust continued to maintain a stable financial position and that academy-level variances were being monitored through the Trust's established financial oversight arrangements.

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The Chair invited questions. No specific challenge was raised in relation to the management accounts.

✅ **APPROVED:** April and May 2026 management accounts received and noted.

The information presented at Trust level included forecasted reserves, cash balances, returns on invested income, staffing costs and a variance to the forecasted surplus position. At academy level this included variances to forecasted surplus or deficit positions and a description of the reasons for these.

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20. Approve Annual Budgets for OLT and Each School

Report introduced by: CEO, Deputy CEO and Chief Financial Officer

Item 20 was brought forward and considered while the finance team remained present.

20.1 OLT Central Trust Budget
The CEO presented the proposed 2026/27 central Trust budget.
The budget included:

- Valley Park pre-opening funding and expenditure;
- the new Governance and Administration Officer post;
- increased Trust days for the Clerk and Trust Business Manager function;
- continuation of the existing top-slice rate; and
- revised pay-award assumptions.

The budget maintained a healthy reserve position. The Trust would draw on reserves over the following two years before returning to an in-year sustainable position.
The CEO explained that, if Valley Park did not open as planned, the expected top-slice income would need to be removed. Staffing arrangements linked to the new school remained sufficiently flexible to allow a corresponding adjustment.
The Chief Financial Officer considered the central budget to be healthy and noted positively that the Trust could maintain the existing top-slice while funding additional central capacity.
✅ **APPROVED:** OLT central budget for 2026/27.

20.2 Wantage Primary Academy Budget
The CEO explained that Wantage had previously been forecast to retain a comparatively high surplus. The revised budget therefore included greater revenue contributions to capital, including:

- playground investment;
- potential air-conditioning expenditure; and
- an additional building or space to support inclusion.

The budget assumed the school was fully staffed and continuing to grow towards two forms of entry in most year groups.

Recent exceptional heat had resulted in several half-day closures. The Trust had received adverse media coverage following a parent complaint, despite the wider national context and the school following its operational judgement regarding pupil and staff welfare.
The CEO stressed that the newer school buildings had not been constructed with air conditioning and that schools received no specific funding to install, operate or maintain it.

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Director Question / Challenge:
A Director expressed concern that buildings constructed within the previous five to ten years had been designed without sufficient cooling, insulation or ventilation to cope with hot weather.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO agreed and advised that Valley Park was being constructed to a similar standard design. A request to replace downstairs carpet with vinyl had attracted an indicative cost of approximately £100,000 because it would also require acoustic adjustments. Air conditioning was not included within the Department for Education's standard design specification.
Director Question / Challenge:
A Director asked whether the cost and benefit of air conditioning should be considered not only in relation to attendance and curriculum delivery but also staff welfare, pupil retention and future parent expectations.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The Chief Financial Officer agreed that cooling would increasingly affect attendance, curriculum continuity, staff health and safety, recruitment, retention and parental decision-making.
✅ **APPROVED:** Wantage Primary Academy budget for 2026/27.
☐ **ACTION:** CEO to obtain and evaluate air-conditioning options, with final investment decisions to return through the appropriate governance route.

20.3 Twickenham Primary Academy Budget
The CEO reported that Twickenham remained in a relatively positive position and already benefited from air conditioning.
The longer-term forecast became more challenging by 2029/30 because the school would reduce by one class each year while retaining a number of permanent staff.
The budget retained existing staffing assumptions because reductions might be required gradually. Fixed-term contracts and natural turnover would provide some flexibility and reduce the risk of compulsory redundancies.
The Trust intended to continue using reserves to sustain support-staff provision for as long as reasonably possible.
The Chief Financial Officer advised that the three-year deficits remained manageable and were supported by significant reserves. The fourth-year projection appeared more challenging but fell outside the immediate formal reporting period.
✅ **APPROVED:** Twickenham Primary Academy budget for 2026/27.

20.4 Sires Hill Primary Academy Budget and Business Case
The CEO reported that the Sires Hill budget had changed significantly since its presentation to the Operations Committee.
The earlier version showed an in-year deficit that would have exhausted the school's reserves. The principal issue was the affordability of the leadership structure.
When Sires Hill opened, the cost of the Executive Principal and Executive Vice Principal roles had been shared with Didcot. In practice, the Executive Vice Principal role had become fully allocated to Sires Hill.

The Trust had since concluded that one Executive Principal should not oversee Didcot, Sires Hill and Valley Park simultaneously. The Executive Principal model would therefore be limited to two schools, with Didcot and Valley Park sharing executive leadership.

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The Operations Committee had therefore approved a business case to:

- remove the Vice Principal role;
- introduce a substantive Principal role;
- establish more affordable assistant-headship capacity; and
- move towards a leadership model similar to other Trust schools, where senior leaders retained a teaching commitment.

Sires Hill did not have sufficient reserves to include air conditioning in its budget. The Trust would therefore explore lower-cost mitigation such as canopies, shade, fans and ventilation.

✅ **APPROVED:** Sires Hill Primary Academy budget for 2026/27 and the financial effect of the approved leadership business case.
☐ **ACTION:** CEO to progress recruitment of a substantive Sires Hill Principal for September 2027.
☐ **ACTION:** Trust to identify affordable heat-mitigation options for Sires Hill.

20.5 Didcot Primary Academy Budget
The CEO advised that the Didcot budget included indicative investment in air conditioning and the continuing cost of support staff.
The budget was intended to show the realistic cost of operating the school in the manner the Trust considered necessary, including support for pupils with additional needs.
The use of reserves would reduce the carry-forward balance over time. A longer-term pressure was forecast around 2029/30 due to permanent staffing levels and the possibility that income increases would not keep pace with inflation.
The CEO noted that the Trust had historically managed similar longer-term risks through fixed-term staffing and annual budget adjustment.
✅ **APPROVED:** Didcot Primary Academy budget for 2026/27.

20.6 Heat, Capital Investment and Investment Strategy
The Board discussed the recent heat-related disruption across the schools.
The Chair recalled visiting Sires Hill during a previous summer and described the communal areas as extremely hot. Leaders confirmed that the classrooms relied largely on open doors and air movement and that the playground surface had also deteriorated in the heat.
Directors agreed that the adverse media coverage of one school was unfair when heat-related closures affected schools nationally.
A Director observed that Twickenham had remained open because it had air conditioning, whereas several newly built local secondary schools had also reduced their school day because of the heat.
The CEO acknowledged the difficulty of retaining significant reserves while schools were experiencing unacceptable temperatures. She considered that the severity and duration of the recent heat justified a more active capital response.
The Board discussed whether quotations should be obtained outside the peak summer period. The CEO confirmed that installation during the winter was likely to be more cost-effective.
The Chief Financial Officer requested a formal minute confirming that the Board authorised submission of the Budget Forecast Return using the assumptions and figures presented.

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✅ **APPROVED:** Chief Financial Officer authorised to submit the Budget Forecast Return based on the budgets and assumptions presented to the Board.
The CEO advised that the Trust's investment strategy would need to be reconsidered if substantial reserves were required for air conditioning and other capital works. Locking funds away for a full year produced the highest interest return and had supported staff benefits such as free lunches, but reduced immediate access to cash.
The Chief Financial Officer advised that shorter-term and easy-access investments could still generate meaningful returns. She agreed to work with the CEO on a cash-flow model that balanced capital expenditure, liquidity and interest income.
The possibility of installing air conditioning initially in larger shared spaces, such as halls, was discussed as a potentially more affordable first phase.
☐ **ACTION:** CFO to submit the Budget Forecast Return.
☐ **ACTION:** CEO and CFO to review the Trust investment strategy and cash-flow requirements in light of possible capital expenditure.
☐ **ACTION:** CEO to consider phased cooling options, including priority installation in halls or larger shared teaching spaces.

The Board approved the budgets, authorised BFR submission and discussed investment timing and phased air-conditioning options before the CFO and accountant left.
The Chief Financial Officer and EduFin Accountant left the meeting at approximately 11:31.
Jenelle Ross-McIntyre rejoined shortly afterwards following a temporary disconnection.

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14. Review and Approve Expenditure Over £50,000

Introduced by: Chair
The CEO confirmed that there were no separate expenditure requests over £50,000 requiring approval outside the annual budgets already approved.
Any prospective air-conditioning or capital project would return through the appropriate governance process when detailed proposals and quotations were available.

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15. Review and Approve Expenditure on Recruitment Needs Over £50,000

Introduced by: Chair
The CEO confirmed that there were no recruitment proposals over £50,000 requiring separate Board approval.
Relevant staffing commitments had been incorporated into the annual budgets.

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16. Receive 'Dear Accounting Officer' Letter from ESFA / DfE

Introduced by: Chair
No new Dear Accounting Officer letter had been received for consideration.
✅ **APPROVED:** Position noted.

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17. Policies: Review and Approval

Report introduced by: CEO

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The Board considered:

1. Director Expenses Policy;
2. Performance Review and Appraisal Policy; and
3. Financial Policies and Procedures / Finance Manual.

The CEO highlighted that the Director mileage rate had increased.

✅ **APPROVED:** Director Expenses Policy.
✅ **APPROVED:** Performance Review and Appraisal Policy.
✅ **APPROVED:** Financial Policies and Procedures / Finance Manual.
☐ **ACTION:** HOO update the policy schedule and publish the approved final versions where appropriate.

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18. Receive Pupil Survey Results

Report introduced by: CEO and Deputy CEO
The Board received the Trust-wide pupil survey report.
A total of 433 pupils had responded, compared with 373 in the previous year. The survey had been completed by pupils in Years 3 to 6. The Trust had discontinued the previous lower-school hands-up survey following feedback that responses could be overly influenced by pupils' immediate mood or experience on the day.
The CEO highlighted a downward movement in the percentage of pupils reporting that:

- they felt safe at school;
- they enjoyed school;
- they enjoyed learning; and
- behaviour was good.

The decline was not described as a sudden collapse but was a consistent downward trend requiring investigation.
The school comparison showed that Didcot pupils generally reported the most positive experience. Twickenham had lower scores in enjoyment of learning and behaviour. Wantage had a lower score for pupils reporting that they felt safe.
The CEO emphasised that school leaders had not yet had sufficient time to contextualise the findings. Principals would discuss the outcomes directly with pupils, and the proposed stakeholder model could provide additional channels for pupil voice.

Director Question / Challenge:
Directors considered whether the strongest results at Didcot could provide learning for other schools.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The Deputy CEO cautioned that the numerical difference between the highest and lowest schools was not as wide as the RAG presentation initially suggested. Didcot's stronger classification reflected improvement from the previous year rather than an absolute judgement that pupil perceptions were fully satisfactory.
The Deputy CEO explained that classes containing a pupil with highly complex behavioural needs could report behaviour more negatively because pupils might witness dysregulation, physical incidents or significant disruption. Such responses were valid reflections of pupils' experience and should not be dismissed.
The Trust therefore needed to help pupils understand behaviour associated with additional needs while also ensuring that other children felt safe and supported.
The CEO asked how schools could better reassure pupils following a serious behaviour incident and what additional support children might need after witnessing dysregulation.

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Didcot's approach was highlighted as a possible model. Leaders reviewed individual comments, spoke directly to the pupils concerned, responded to themes in assemblies and conducted a follow-up survey approximately seven weeks later to assess whether perceptions had changed.

Director Question / Challenge:
The Chair linked this approach to the concept of procedural justice: pupils might respond more positively where they understood that their views had been heard and that a fair process had followed.

Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO and Deputy CEO agreed that direct follow-up and visible action were likely to improve pupil confidence and could be applied more consistently across the Trust.

☑ **APPROVED:** Pupil survey results received and noted.
☐ **ACTION:** Principals to review and contextualise their school-level results with pupils.

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19. Receive First and Second Internal Audit Reports

Report introduced by: Head of Operations
The Board received:

1. the spring internal scrutiny report on procurement and value for money; and
2. the summer internal scrutiny report on estates and health and safety.

Both reports had already been scrutinised by the Operations Committee.
The Head of Operations reported that both audits had resulted in substantial assurance. This represented a strong green assurance rating, although not the highest possible category.
Two minor actions arose from the summer audit:

- strengthening caretaker recording of duties; and
- an amendment relating to the Governance Handbook.

Both actions were either complete or well underway.

☑ **APPROVED:** Internal scrutiny reports received and substantial assurance noted.

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21. Agree Schedule for Trust Board and Committee Business for 2026–2027

Introduced by: Chair
The Chair thanked the Clerk for circulating the proposed meeting dates and invited Directors to identify any significant clashes.
No material conflict was raised.
The CEO noted that the Governance Handbook and current committee business plan had been drafted using the existing governance model. If the stakeholder and QES arrangements changed, some dates, remits or business allocations might need to be amended.
The Chair asked whether the Board currently had capacity to chair any additional stakeholder body.
The CEO advised that she was not presently proposing a Director-chaired stakeholder committee, but would consider the point while refining the model.

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✅ **APPROVED:** 2026/27 Board and Committee meeting schedule approved, subject to any later amendment arising from the governance review.
☐ **ACTION:** Clerk to issue final calendar invitations.

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22. Review Trustee and Committee Contribution, Terms of Reference and Delegation Structures

Introduced by: Chair

The Board considered:

1. whether committee meetings allowed sufficient time for critical matters;
2. whether reports provided sufficient information;
3. whether the Board had enough Directors to maintain quorum and provide effective support and challenge; and
4. whether Directors had sufficient direct connection with the schools.

22.1 Committee Meeting Length and Focus
The QES Co-Chair considered the meeting length sufficient and believed that the Committee had enough time to consider the right matters. She looked forward to seeing how the proposed structural changes would affect the agenda.
Other Directors agreed that the current QES meeting length was generally appropriate. While individual matters could occasionally require extended discussion, recent meetings had not routinely overrun.
Directors considered that the Committee was focusing on the correct strategic areas.

✅ **ASSURANCE:** Committee meeting length considered sufficient.

22.2 Quality and Quantity of Information
The Chair asked whether Directors required additional information.
A Director referred back to the earlier discussion about contextual understanding and direct engagement. The Director did not wish to become involved in operational detail but felt that occasional opportunities to attend school activities would help Directors understand how strategy and Trust decisions were experienced in practice.

The CEO suggested that school events, performances, fairs and other activities could be shared with Directors on an optional basis.
A Director explained that more notice would make attendance feasible, particularly for Directors who lived further away. Last-minute invitations were difficult to accommodate, but an annual or termly planner would allow Directors to reserve dates.

The Deputy CEO agreed to circulate known annual events.
Another Director offered to involve colleagues in future school-fair activity.
A Director explained that, in her professional role, she operated predominantly at a strategic level but still needed occasional direct contact with staff and service users to understand whether strategy was being implemented effectively. She believed the same principle applied to Trust governance.

The CEO emphasised that Directors added significant value through strategic governance even when operating at a distance. Visiting schools was not the sole or defining feature of

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governance. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that direct contact was valuable and welcomed greater visibility where it could be achieved without creating an attendance obligation.
The Chair supported optional attendance and described previous school performances and awards events as positive opportunities to hear informal feedback and increase Board visibility.
✅ **AGREED:** Directors to be offered optional opportunities to attend school events, without creating a mandatory attendance expectation.
☐ **ACTION:** Deputy CEO and Clerk to circulate an annual or termly schedule of significant school events to Directors.

22.3 Board Size, Capacity and Skills
The Chair asked whether the Board had sufficient numbers to maintain quorum and provide support and challenge.
The CEO advised that the Board remained relatively lean. Additional Directors would provide greater resilience for committees, exclusion panels, complaint hearings and other governance activity.
The Chair reflected that most Directors had taken on additional work during the year, including panels, hearings, complaints and Ofsted-related activity. One or two additional Directors could spread the workload without making the Board unwieldy.
The CEO supported targeted recruitment and suggested that an odd number of Directors might also be helpful for decision-making. She confirmed that the new Governance and Administration Officer would provide additional capacity to support recruitment and onboarding.

Director Question / Challenge:
A Director suggested that the Board should consider recruiting someone with significant SEND experience, given the increasing complexity of need across the Trust. A retired SEND leader, specialist or teacher educator might add valuable expertise.
Response / Assurance Provided:
The CEO strongly supported the suggestion. The Board already included experience in finance, business, education and workforce management. Directors were not expected to be specialists in every field, but SEND expertise would complement the current skills profile.
The Director indicated that she knew several individuals with relevant backgrounds and could make introductions. The CEO confirmed that geography would not prevent appointment because Directors could participate remotely.

☐ **ACTION:** CEO and Clerk to commence targeted Director recruitment, with SEND expertise identified as a priority.

22.4 Role and Engagement of Members
The CEO explained that members met formally at the AGM, approved the accounts and helped establish the Trust's vision and strategic direction. Members delegated the majority of governance functions to the Board and were invited to the strategic away day and other meetings where appropriate.
Members were not expected to undertake the same routine governance activity as Directors, although they remained welcome to engage more broadly.

☐ **ACTION:** Clerk to verify and update contact details for all Trust members.

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✅ **APPROVED:** Board and committee contribution reviewed. Current meeting length and information were broadly sufficient; additional school-engagement opportunities and targeted Director recruitment would strengthen the model.
The review covered meeting length, direct engagement with schools, optional event attendance, Board capacity, SEND recruitment and the role of members.

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23. Chair's Sign-Off of Schools' PE and Sport Premium Reports

Report introduced by: Deputy CEO
The Deputy CEO confirmed that the school-level PE and Sport Premium reports had been considered through QES.
The allocated funding had been spent for the intended purpose of making additional and sustainable improvements to PE, sport and physical activity.
The Board was advised that the national funding would reduce in the following year as the government began to discontinue or scale back the premium.

✅ **APPROVED:** PE and Sport Premium reports for WPA, TPA, SHPA and DPA received and Chair's sign-off confirmed.

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24. Any Other Business

24.1 Wantage Permanent Exclusion Follow-Up

Confidential: stored in confidential annex.

24.2 End-of-Year Thanks

The Chair thanked Directors, executive leaders, Principals and school staff for their work throughout the year.
The Chair reflected that the Trust had learned and achieved a great deal and asked that the Board's thanks be conveyed to all Principals and staff.
The Chair requested that Directors be updated by email regarding:

- the delayed Key Stage 2 outcomes; and
- the outcome of the Sires Hill Ofsted discussion.

The CEO thanked Directors for their extensive contribution, including work undertaken alongside their professional commitments.

☐ **ACTION:** CEO and Deputy CEO to convey the Board's thanks to Principals and staff.

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25. Confidential Status of OLT Documents

Introduced by: Chair

The Board considered the confidential status of the documents presented at the meeting, with reference to the Academy Trust Handbook.

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It was agreed that supporting papers and detailed minutes would remain confidential unless specifically approved for publication.

✅ **APPROVED:** Confidential status of the meeting papers and minutes confirmed.

Meeting closed at approximately 11:50

Appendix A – Summary of OLT Board Action Points (Tuesday 14 July 2026)

Action No.	Owner	Minute Item	Action	Deadline
1	Chair	1	Provide the Clerk with his updated professional email address.	As soon as possible
2	All Directors	2	Review their biographies on the Trust website and provide any amendments to the Clerk.	September 2026
3	Relevant Directors	5	Complete outstanding 2025/26 CPD requirements.	End of the 2025/26 academic year
4	Clerk	5	Circulate the equality, diversity and non-bias training link by email.	As soon as possible
5	Clerk	5	Source and circulate an appropriate GDPR training module.	For completion by September 2026
6	Clerk	6	Upload the approved May 2026 Board minutes to the OLT website and GovernorHub and arrange the Chair's electronic signature.	Following approval
7	Deputy CEO / Clerk	7 and 12.7	Circulate the delayed Key Stage 2 outcomes to Directors once released.	On release
8	CEO	12.2	Add the Valley Park funding-agreement risk to the Trust Risk Register.	Next Risk Register update
9	CEO	12.2	Review Reception and potential Year 1 and Year 2 demand before determining the opening-year class structure.	Autumn 2026
10	CEO	12.2	Conclude the Valley Park ICT tender.	End of summer term 2026
11	CEO	12.3	Update Directors following the meeting with Ofsted.	Following the Ofsted meeting
12	CEO	12.4	Obtain advice on the proposed stakeholder-engagement and QES model from the external governance adviser.	Before next Board consideration
13	CEO / Head of Operations	12.4	Confirm that the proposed local-governance arrangements comply with the Articles of Association.	Before implementation

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Action No.	Owner	Minute Item	Action	Deadline
14	CEO	12.4	Refine the stakeholder-engagement and QES model, including Director triangulation, Principal involvement and continuous stakeholder feedback, and return it to the Board.	Autumn 2026
15	CEO	20.2	Obtain and evaluate air-conditioning options, with final investment decisions returning through the appropriate governance route.	During 2026/27 capital planning
16	CEO	20.4	Progress recruitment of a substantive Sires Hill Principal.	For appointment by September 2027
17	Trust leadership	20.4	Identify affordable heat-mitigation options for Sires Hill.	Before the next summer period
18	CFO	20.6	Submit the Budget Forecast Return based on the budgets and assumptions approved by the Board.	Statutory submission deadline
19	CEO / CFO	20.6	Review the Trust investment strategy and cash-flow requirements in light of possible capital expenditure.	Summer 2026
20	CEO	20.6	Consider phased cooling options, including priority installation in halls or larger shared teaching spaces.	During 2026/27 capital planning
21	Head of Operations	17	Update the policy schedule and publish the approved final versions where appropriate.	Following approval
22	Principals	18	Review and contextualise their school-level pupil-survey results with pupils.	Next QES reporting cycle
23	Clerk	21	Issue the final 2026/27 Board and Committee calendar invitations.	As soon as possible
24	Deputy CEO / Clerk	22.2	Circulate an annual or termly schedule of significant school events to Directors.	Beginning of 2026/27
25	CEO / Clerk	22.3	Commence targeted Director recruitment, with SEND expertise identified as a priority.	Autumn 2026
26	Clerk	22.4	Verify and update the contact details held for all Trust members.	As soon as possible
27	CEO / Deputy CEO	24.2	Convey the Board’s thanks to Principals and staff.	End of summer term 2026

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Appendix B- OLT Board and Committee Meeting Dates 2026-2027

Full Board	Operations	AGM
22 September 2026 10:00–11:00 *Policy Approval*	**20 October 2026** 10:00–11:30	**8 December 2026** 10:00–12:00
24 November 2026 11:15–13:15	**Thursday* 19 November 2026** 10:00–11:00 **Audit & Risk Committee*	
23 March 2027 10:00–12:00	**9 February 2027** 10:00–11:30	
18 May 2027 **Strategy Away Day 09:30 – 13:00** 13:00–15:00	**20 April 2027** 10:00–11:30	
20 July 2027 10:00–12:00	**22 June 2027** 10:00 – 11:30	

Document Reference Disclaimer

All documents and reports referred to within these minutes were circulated to members via GovernorHub in line with the corresponding agenda and published in advance of the meeting. Each minute item recorded herein directly corresponds to the relevant numbered agenda item for that meeting. Supporting papers are retained on GovernorHub as part of the official governance record in accordance with Omnia Learning Trust protocols.