



Community Council Handbook 2026-27



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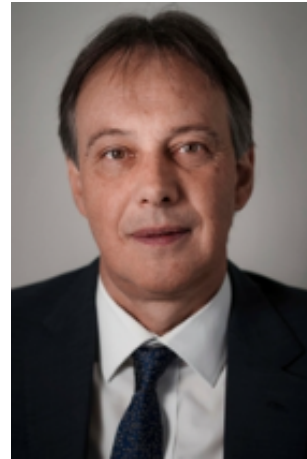


Welcome from David Gallie Chair of Trustees

Thank you for choosing to become a Community Councillor for The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust. While our central Trust Board provides strategic oversight, our local Community Councils are central to our trust model. Being on the ground with our pupils, staff, and communities, you are uniquely placed to understand local needs and bring our core values to life.

We aim to build diverse, collaborative councils. Whether you are a parent, a staff member, or part of the wider community, I hope this proves to be a deeply rewarding experience as you help our academies become the best they can be. On behalf of the Trust Board, thank you for your support.

David



Welcome from Hugh Greenway CEO

First, let me say thank you for your optimism and your selflessness. Anyone who volunteers to support schools is, by definition, an optimist. No one involves themselves in education to make tomorrow worse than today. And with that belief in a better possible future for all our children, you join a growing family. The Elliot Foundation was conceived to help all children achieve beyond even their own expectations and perhaps your most important function as part of our community engagement councils is to help schools sustain that aspiration and optimism on behalf of ALL their pupils.

Primary schools are the cornerstones of communities; they bring people together in a way that almost no other public function can.

To function properly schools must understand the communities they exist to serve but they must also be helped to communicate effectively with all of their stakeholders. Community engagement councils exist to support this and to help our schools shape a vision and ethos that meet the needs of their children and prepare them for continuing education, work and life.

Hugh





Elliot Foundation Academies Trust Values

1. Put children first

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

2. Be safe

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

3. Be kind & respect all

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

4. Be open

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

5. Forgive

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

6. Make a difference

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others



1. Introduction

- a. This handbook is designed to support Community Councillors to carry out their role effectively by providing guidance to support the effective set-up and ongoing running of Community Councils.
- b. This handbook is reviewed annually. Any suggestions for improvements to the Handbook, or any questions about Community Councils more generally, should be directed to Katie Stobbart (Head of Legal and Governance) at katie.stobbart@elliottfoundation.co.uk.

2. Function and Scope of the Community Council

- a. Whilst Trustees hold ultimate legal responsibility for the governance of all Elliot Foundation schools, Community Councils prioritise community connection and stakeholder insight.
- b. They are advisory bodies, made up of staff and volunteers from the academy community.
- c. Although the Community Council has no delegated authority, Community Councils provide a forum for school leaders, staff and the Trust Board to communicate meaningfully with representatives from the school's parent body and local community, so that the views and needs of the wider school community are understood and can inform decision making.
- d. The core function of Community Councils fall within the remit of four pillars, detailed below:

Pillar	Function
Community	<p>Acts as a link to local organisations and ensures the academy is responsive to local needs by: Fostering proactive relationships with local organisations, businesses, and services Cultivating initiatives that provide tangible benefits to pupils and their families Ensuring the academy is outward-facing and responsive to local community needs.</p>
Celebration	<p>Champions the academy's ethos and amplifies staff and pupil achievements by: Serving as advocates, reinforcing a positive reputation for the school and TEFAT Ensuring the academy's civic contribution is visible, valued, and widely understood.</p>
Context	<p>Represents the lived experience of parents and staff, to help ensure that Trust decisions are rooted in real-world context by: Offering local knowledge to help Trustees understand the lived experience of families Highlighting emerging themes, opportunities, or challenges within the local area.</p>
Check	<p>Taking part in Stage 3 complaints panels and statutory exclusion reviews.</p>

- e. Accountability for educational outcomes, budgets, estates, compliance and HR lies with the Principal, Operations Group and Trust Board.
- f. Professional governance advice, guidance and, where necessary, instruction will be provided from the Trust. Instruction, when given, must be followed.



3. Membership

- a. Community Councils should have a minimum of 6 members (maximum of 9), including:
 - i. The Principal;
 - ii. 2 parents;
 - iii. 1 staff member employed by the academy; and
 - iv. 2 - 5 community members.
- b. Each Councillor will have a term of office of 4 years.
- c. Each year, the Community Council should nominate a chair and share his / her contact information with the Head of Legal and Governance, Katie Stobbart. The Chair will be invited to participate in regular Chairs' Forums.
- d. Community Councils are encouraged to involve pupils in their meetings: this may be through pupil group presentations or by appointing student representatives. Each Community Council may decide how best to engage pupils in their work.
- e. Members are required to adhere to [Code of Conduct](#). Failure to do so may lead to suspension or removal if issues cannot be resolved constructively.
- f. Where a Community Councillor has consecutively missed six months of meetings without meaningful contact, the Principal and / or Trust may revoke membership. The Chair of the Community Council should try to make contact and investigate the reasons for non attendance.

4. The Recruitment and Appointment of Community Councillors

- a. Community Councils can appoint their own members in the 'community' category. Parent and staff councillors are appointed following an election.
- b. It is important that Community Councils reflect the diversity of the school community that they serve.
- c. Parent and staff representatives help to ensure that Community Councils stay accessible and connected to the academy community and provide a diverse range of perspectives.
- d. Parent and Staff Elections
 - i. Responsibility for the holding of parent and staff Community Council elections in individual schools is delegated to the Principal.
 - ii. The Community Council Recruitment Guide provides more information on the nomination and election process. Elections should be conducted in accordance with the Trust's procedure.
 - iii. Any dispute shall be dealt with and, if necessary, determined by the Head of Legal and Governance.

5. Safeguarding Requirements

- a. As set out in the [Trust's Safeguarding Policy](#), safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt appropriate action.
- b. Each Councillor will be required to have an enhanced DBS check.
- c. Councillors must read Keeping Children Safe in Education annually and confirm this via GovernorHub.



6. Declaration of Interests

- a. All Community Councillors are required to register all business and financial interests.
- b. Councillors should also consider any potential conflicts of interest, such as relationships with staff members.
- c. These interests should be declared in the 'Profile' section of each member's GovernorHub account.

7. Code of Conduct

- a. The Trust has high expectations of all those involved in governance across the organisation; they should be ambitious for all children, have a passion for education and a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes for all pupils whatever their circumstances.
- b. Councillors are required to act in the best interests of the school rather than act as a representative of their group, and should adhere to the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#).
- c. Councillors represent the collective lived experience of the academy community and advise the school accordingly. Individual pupil matters should be raised with the school directly.
- d. Members should not bring the school into disrepute as a result of their actions: this includes through their online / social media presence.
- e. Community Councillors must adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and give consideration to the agreement throughout their term of office.

8. Administration

- a. Community Council business will be supported by staff who work at the school where the community council is based. They will be responsible for:
 - i. Ensuring all members are given a GovernorHub account
 - ii. Arranging and supporting meetings;
 - iii. Communicating membership changes to the Trust.
- b. All Community Council communication and meeting documents will be shared via GovernorHub.
- c. In accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook September 2024, academies are required to make available certain information about their governance arrangements. The Trust publishes its governance arrangements via the Trust website [here](#) and [here](#).

9. Setting up your GovernorHub account

- a. The Trust uses GovernorHub as its online portal for sharing documents and important messages with councillors. It also helps you record key information about yourself.
- b. You will be sent an email asking you to set up your GovernorHub account. Please keep your GovernorHub password safe, and do not share it with anyone else. You can access GovernorHub via its web address (www.governorhub.com) and/or by downloading the GovernorHub app from the App Store or Google Play Store to your tablet or smartphone. Let us know if you have difficulties with the GovernorHub site or need support.
- c. Meeting papers will be uploaded to GovernorHub about a week before each meeting. You will receive an email alert when they are ready for you to read.
- d. We recommend that you access your meeting papers through GovernorHub, either online or by downloading them to your personal device to read during the meeting.



We do not provide printed hard copies of papers. If you print the papers off for yourself, please store them safely where no one else can read them and dispose of them appropriately afterwards by shredding them. All meeting papers are confidential and should be looked after carefully.

- e. You should use your GovernorHub profile to record:
- Your contact details
 - Your DBS certificate details
 - Your declarations of interests
 - That you've read "[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)"
 - That you agree to our [Code of Conduct](#)
 - Details of any training you complete, such as online training modules or in-person training sessions

There is also a noticeboard where you can share ideas and information with the rest of your community councillors.

10. Training and Support for Community Councils

- a. All new members will receive an induction into the role from their academy, including an induction meeting with the Trust Governance Officer. A template induction checklist is available to support academies.
- b. In order to ensure that Councillors feel equipped to carry out their role, the Trust provides regular support and training, including:
 - i. Access to guidance documents and templates;
 - ii. A range of online training modules via GovernorHub;
 - iii. Regular in-house training on topics of particular importance for schools/the Trust;
- c. The central governance team is also available for continuous support. Please direct queries to your school in the first instance, or - if pertinent - to the Trust Governance Officer at cccoordinator@elliottfoundation.co.uk.

11. Meetings

- a. **Meeting Schedule**
 - i. Community Councils are required to meet 3 times across the academic year; once each term with dates and times determined locally.
 - ii. TEFAT recommends that meetings should be limited to 2 hours and visits 1 hour.
 - iii. Where possible meetings should be scheduled during the school day or shortly thereafter. This supports the Trust's priority of reducing workload and supporting staff wellbeing, enables pupils to actively contribute, and allows members to actively engage with the school community.
- b. **Meeting Agendas**
 - i. Agendas will follow an annual workplan and focus on the core functions of the Community Council, as detailed in the four Pillars.

- ii. The purpose of each meeting will be to:
 - Build knowledge of TEFAT and the academy, via Headteacher updates.
 - Engage in collaborative conversations to identify and community priorities.
 - Record and track the progress of projects and actions.
 - Provide feedback and insights to the Board of Trustees.
 - iii. Members who wish to bring an item for discussion at a meeting, should propose this to the Chair and Principal at least 10 days before the meeting.
 - iv. Each term, the Trust Board will pose a question for all Community Councils to address, linked to Trust-wide priorities.
 - v. A tailored agenda should be distributed to all members of the Community Council in advance of the meeting via GovernorHub. It is good practice to share the agenda and any supporting documents 7 days before the meeting to allow everyone to prepare.
- c. **Attendance:**
- i. Meetings can only take place if the Principal and at least 3 additional Councillors are in attendance.
 - ii. Attendance of Councillors must be recorded at each meeting.
- d. **Recording the meeting**
- i. Formal minutes are not required. Community Councils will maintain an Attendance, Action and Impact log (template available), which must be updated at every meeting.
 - ii. The log records commitments Councillors agree to take forward during meetings.
 - iii. Actions should be practical, specific and time bound. Members are expected to complete any actions assigned to them.
 - iv. A nominated member of the Community Council will update the log during meetings.
 - v. During each meeting, the group will review progress, celebrate completed actions, and update next steps.
 - vi. Completed actions should note the impact or outcome achieved, not just that the task was finished.
- e. **Reporting to the Board of Trustees**
- i. After each meeting, Community Council Chairs (or another delegated member) must complete a short Google Form to provide the Board of Trustees with a triaged view of the academy - what's fine (assure), what needs thought (advise) and what needs action (alert):
 - **Assure:** Councillors provide assurance on how the academy is perceived within its community. They share positive feedback from parents, pupils, and partners, highlighting where the academy is building trust, pride and strong relationships locally.
 - **Advise:** Councillors advise the Board by sharing insights from stakeholder voice - what parents, pupils, staff and community partners are saying about their experiences. This may include opportunities, suggestions for improvement, or themes that could inform Trust-wide strategy and decision-making.
 - **Alert:** Councillors alert the Board to issues that may present a risk to the academy's or the Trust's reputation, relationships, or standing in the community. This includes raising concerns or perceptions that require urgent attention, proactive communication, or escalation to leadership.
 - ii. The form should be submitted within 10 school days of the meeting.



12. School Visits

- a. Visits should be pre-arranged and agreed with fellow Councillors, the Principal / Head of School and relevant staff as part of a planned programme for the year.
- b. Visits may take place as a group, however it is not expected that every member attends all school visits.
- c. Members and leaders should think creatively about school visits to ensure they are strategic, purposeful, clearly linked to the four pillars of the Community Council and allow opportunity to engage directly with staff and pupils.
- d. Visits are not inspections or observations.
- e. Following a school visit, Councillors should give feedback to the Community Council and discuss their findings.

13. Role in broader school life

- a. The Trust's intention is that Community Council members are recognised and supported to add significant value at a local level to an academy with local governance being meaningful, effective and enjoyable.
- b. As such it is hoped that Community Council members will be able to actively contribute to the broader life of the school; be that through attendance at class / whole school events, supporting identified local initiatives and positively promoting the school amongst the wider community.
- c. One of the core functions of the Community Council is to take part in Stage 3 Complaint Panel Hearings and Exclusion Reviews. Members' local knowledge makes them well suited to this role. Training is provided.
- d. It is also hoped that the Community Council Chair will act as a sounding board for the Principal and by so doing provide support and proportionate challenge within the recognised role of critical friend.
- e. The Chair may also be invited to participate in the recruitment process for the Executive Principal or Principal of the academy.

14. And finally, a big thank you

Thank you for stepping up to support your school in this voluntary role. Whilst the remit is advisory that does not mean that Councillors are not valued or that you are not governing; quite the opposite.

The model of Community Councils is based on a desire to ensure that discussions about arguably the most important aspects of school life - vision, values, well being and the threads of aspiration and expectation that should run through each and every school - take place at a local level and with time to consider them properly.

You also provide a vital feedback loop to the Trust Board and back again, drawing the attention of trustees to the successes but also to the challenges that your school and community may be facing. This is essential to the overall effectiveness of the Trust governance model.