RIVACRE VALLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BOARD

12th MARCH 2025 at 16.00pm

Meeting held virtually over Teams

NON-CONFIDENTIAL

Members of Governing Body

Name	Category	Role	Date of end of tenure	Attendance
Mrs Kate Docherty	Headteacher		Ex Officio	✓
Mr Ian Aspden	Co-opted		10/03/2027	✓
Mrs Sarah Millard	Co-opted		17/05/2025	Apologies
Mrs Lisa Sivori	Co-opted		06/10/2025	✓
Mrs Yvonne Colclough	Co-opted (Staff)		10/03/2027	✓
Mr John Leite	Parent		10/10/2027	✓
Mrs Lisa Thoms	Parent	Vice Chair OCT 26	16/10/2027	✓
Mrs Jacqui Critchley	Local Authority	Chair OCT 26	12/03/2027	✓
Mrs Gemma Flynn	Staff		09/10/2026	✓
Vacancy	Co-opted			
In Attendance:				
Gemma McCann	SBM			✓
Stephen Ewell	Clerk			✓

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received in advance of the meeting from Sarah Millard

RESOLVED:

- That the apologies received from Sarah Millard be accepted.
- That the meeting was deemed quorate.

2. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no further declarations made by Governors.

RESOLVED: That there were no further declarations of pecuniary interest for this meeting.

3. GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERSHIP/CONSTITUTION

Governors noted the remaining Co-opted Governor vacancy, and the Chair stated that she would follow up with *Governors for School*s to ascertain if there were any suitable candidates available.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Governors considered the non-confidential minutes of the previous meeting which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the non-confidential minutes of the previous meeting held on 23rd January 2025 be approved.

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no actions brought forward from the previous meeting.

ACTION PLAN

Item No.	Action	/ho by/ When by	Update

The following questions had been raised in advance of the meeting.

Q. What was the outcome of IT support quotes?

A. The SBM has sought several IT support quotes – unfortunately what they offer in terms of services varies so it is more challenging to be able to compare exact like for like. There will be an update in meeting.

Q. Has the recording for the SEND training been sent out yet?

A. Sarah Millard sent the SEND recording out on 23/1/25. Please let KD know if you would like it forwarded onto you again.

Comparison of IT Support Quotes

Cheshire East had given notice that their IT support would end on 31st August, and quotes had been provided by a number of alternative providers. The SBM shared the summary on screen.

The following providers had submitted quotes:

- School ICT Support
- Seven 11 Systems
- Hi Impact
- JTRS

School ICT Support was a company set up by existing support staff who work for Cheshire East. Seven 11 Systems, and JTRS are both well-established companies with good reputations.

Governors reviewed the quotes summary which provided pricing as well as the length of contract and the length of each support visit to the school. All providers offer both office and classroom IT support.

The Chair noted that the details had been presented to the meeting so that Governors could consider the different levels of cover provided, as well as the length of contract being entered into. The quotes submitted were for a three-year contract. Governors noted that if the level of service was poor it would be good to have an early termination clause in the contract.

The SBM highlighted that School ICT Support was a newly set up company, and there was some element of risk by choosing this provider.

Q. *How many clients have they already signed up?*

A. *They have filled twelve of twenty available slots.*

Q. *How long have they been set up?*

A. *They have only just been established. They are experienced support staff but have not had to consider the business side of things before.*

Q. *What has the Budget been set at?*

A. *At, £7,265 which was the original Cheshire East cost. All the quotes are cheaper than this.*

The Headteacher added that weekly visits are really essential to the effective running of the school, and it would be important to choose a provider that will continue supporting weekly visits.

Governors further considered the quotes provided and noted the following:

- Hi Impact support circa 90% of all Wirral schools.
- JTRS are potentially too focussed on Apple products.
- It would be possible to move to the newly established provider School ICT Support in future when they have become established as a successfully operating business.
- The Chair will obtain some feedback on Hi Impact from a school she clerks for tomorrow and revert to the Headteacher.

Q. *If the school is receiving weekly visits, how likely is there to be an additional charge for a call out?*

A. *Very unlikely, there has only been one incidence of a call out previously.*

Governors resolved that a short list of two providers, Hi Impact and Seven 11 Systems be determined and the Headteacher and SBM make a decision following any further feedback from the Chair.

RESOLVED: Hi Impact and Seven 11 Systems be shortlisted to provide the ICT support contract.

Governors thanked the SBM for her work in sourcing and summarising the ICT support quotes.

6. NON-CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS

Safeguarding Governor Report Thursday 27th February 2025.

Ian Aspden provided Governors with an update on the recent Safeguarding Governor meeting. The following areas were highlighted:

- The check of the single Central Record had been undertaken.
- There have been some reductions in the number of Child in Need and Child Protection cases – the latest metrics are detailed below.

	Child Protection CP	Child in Need CIN	Team around the Family TAF
Number of children	0	1	5
Number of families	0	1	4
Other concerns:	1 child: S47 enquiries 3 families / 4 children: Operation Encompass notifications (domestic violence) 2 families / 3 children: MARAC (Multi agency risk assessment conference) 6 families / 7 children: Education Information requests		

- Governor Basic Awareness training has been circulated to Governors.
- Children's use of online applications continues to be an issue as parents continue to allow access to inappropriate aged platforms.
- The school successfully challenged, via the escalation process, social services on their ruling on a recent case.
- There will no longer be a separate group meeting to consider On-Line Security; instead, it will be a standing item on the Safeguarding meeting agenda.
- A summary of the lessons learnt from the Sara Sharif case was provided for Governors to consider.

RESOLVED: Governors received the Safeguarding Governor Report

7. HEADTEACHERS REPORT

The Headteacher's Report had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The report included a summary of Continuing Professional Development undertaken by the staff, and a summary of recent school celebrations with illustrative photos.

The following questions had been raised in advance of the meeting.

Q. Mental Health Week – how is the Mental Health of children in the school overall?

A. Mental Health: The school ELSAs are kept busy but this is mainly with low level issues and concerns. There is one child whose parents have requested a referral to CAMHs. Quite a few children require "fidget toys" in class which seems to be a rising trend.

The Headteacher added that there is a 12-18 month wait following a CAMHs referral. As well as the use of "fidget toys" in class, there are a number of children who require headphones due to sensory processing concerns / difficulties. . There are now two Wellbeing Classes available over lunchtimes, which provide a quieter space for any children that require it. One is located in Key Stage 1 and the other in Key Stage 2.

> **Q.** *Why has there been an increase in the use of* "fidget toys"*?*
>
> **A.** *Possibly because parents are now more aware of them, and also some of the children see the other children and want to use the toys as well. It is potentially a bit of a trend currently derived from the local community and postings on social media.*

Governors discussed and noted that ADHD has become an easy label for children with poor behaviour and is definitely part of a trend.

> **Q.** *How many ELSAs are there in school?*
>
> **A.** *There are now three trained ELSAs with one just completing her training. The school is very lucky to have three ELSAs in school supporting the children.*
>
> **Q.** *Are the ELSAs employed by CWAC?*
>
> **A.** *No, they are employed by the school, and the school has supported them through their ELSA training.*
>
> **Q.** *How long have there been ELSAs in school?*
>
> ***A.*** *For about five or six years.*

RESOLVED: Governors received the Headteacher's Report.

8. **STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SSDP)/SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION (SEF).**

There was no update/revision to the SEF for this meeting.

The SDP had been updated in advance of the meeting, and Governors were requested to take some time reviewing the SDP and respond with any questions.

The following observation had been made in advance of the meeting.

Noted that the school has higher FSM and SEND than National Average and also noted that absence and persistent absence are higher than National Average.

The Headteacher stated that this matter would be reviewed at the next FGB meeting.

RESOLVED: Governors received the SDP Update.

9. **POLICIES**

There were no policies presented to the meeting for Governors to review.

10. **SCHOOL BULLETIN**

The latest School Bulletin had not yet been circulated.

11. **SIP REPORT**

The SIP Report will be arranged for the Summer Term. The Headteacher will ask Daryl Pickering to focus on the Middle Leadership Team and undertake a mini-Ofsted style approach focused on subject leadership with the objective of identifying any knowledge gaps that can be addressed.

RESOLVED: Governors received the SIP update.

12. **FINANCE**

<u>Minutes of Finance Panel meeting on 3rd March 2025</u>

Governors reviewed the minutes from the Finance Panel, and the Headteacher noted that the Budget remains tight and Reception numbers for September 2025 are currently showing 36 first place requests, which is lower than the PAN of 45. Governors had been requested to consider two versions of the Budget, with one showing Reception intake at 45, and one showing intake with 36.

Governors also reviewed a number of different scenarios relating to staffing, and some long-term considerations for the structure of the SLT, including any potential retirements in the future, and what impact this would have. It had been agreed to prepare the draft Budget based on the current staffing levels.

Ian Aspden added that it had been a positive meeting, with well-prepared supporting papers that explained the different scenarios considered. Supplies and Services looks very tight for next year, and the SBM will be monitoring it closely.

RESOLVED: Governors received the minutes of the Finance Panel 3rd March 25.

Draft Budget and Three-Year Plan

Governors reviewed the Draft Budget and Three-Year Plan as summarised below.

SECTION 1 - SUMMARY MEDIUM TERM PLAN	Actual 2023-24	Forecast 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26	Forecast 2026-27
(A) Balance Brought Forward (previous E)	146,437	98,409	8,603	32,713
(B) Projected Income (From F)	2,078,172	2,252,107	2,365,306	2,363,369
(C) Projected Expenditure (from D)	2,126,200	2,341,913	2,341,195	2,402,307
(D) In year surplus/-deficit (B-C)	-48,028	-89,806	24,110	-38,938
(E) Projected Carry Forward (A+D)	98,409	8,603	32,713	-6,225

Governors noted that the Budget 25/26 was a positive carry forward of £32,713, and there was only a small deficit carry forward for 26/27 of £6,225. There are no concerns at this stage, and it will be fairly straightforward to mitigate this deficit, and the school would also anticipate some in-year transfers which will support the Budget.

The SBM will be contacting all Nursery children that aren't joining Reception to ascertain which school they are going to and why.

The following questions were submitted in advance of the meeting.

Q. *How are we looking financially? As I know there isn't really any money in the pot as such or we have to be careful as to what we spend! And with having no funding it does bother me going forward and to what and how it will look like between now and next year!*

A. *Current budget position 2024 / 2025 - Uncertainties over special needs children's funding have made budget projections during the year difficult.*

3-year budget - A difficult budget to balance. Special needs numbers/funding levels putting extreme pressure on budget and also uncertainty. 2025 Reception numbers likely to be less than originally forecast. Assumed for 2026 numbers will be back to 45 - need to monitor. Supplies and Services generally held at current cash figure-very tight.

The budget is getting more challenging as income is now being either matched or outstripped by expenditure. Through prudent budgeting the school has been able to end the year in a positive position and can set a positive budget for 2025/26.

RESOLVED: Governors received the current budget position 2024/2025 and approved the Final Budget 2025/ 2026.

<u>School Fund Spring 25 Update</u>

Governors reviewed the latest School Fund balance as detailed below.

Balance brought forward; (29th May 2024)	£8,402.97	
	IN	OUT
Community Shed, Staff absence insurance, photo commission, fundraising Band, Bank charges, community shed, Food, Poppy appeal, resources, Fundraising	£6,590.11	£1,896.89
Total	£13,096.19	

The School Fund Statement of Intent 25/26 was provided, which included £3,000 spend on supporting the development of the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).

The following questions were submitted in advance of the meeting.

Q. *Why is staff absence insurance charged to School Fund? Could we think of ideas to raise money?*

A. *Staff absence should not be charged to School Fund. The SBM has now transferred the money which had incorrectly been paid into the School Fund into the main budget. She has also contacted the Insurance Company to investigate why payments are being paid into two different* *accounts – 1 main school budget and 1 School Fund. Any fundraising ideas will be gratefully received*.

RESOLVED: Governors received the School Fund update and approved the Statement of Intent 25/26.

13. SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME

The summary had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The following questions were submitted in advance of the meeting.

Q. *Is car parking space sufficient?*

A. *Parking is never enough but the cost to expand the school car park is currently prohibitive.*

Governors discussed the school car park.

Q. *Has the school looked into expanding the car park in the past?*

A. *Yes, but no cost-effective solutions were available.*

RESOLVED: Governors approved the School Buildings and Capital Expenditure Programme.

SFVS, MIFP and Scheme of Delegation

Governors reviewed the SFVS responses to the thirty standard questions, and the Headteacher added that most of the processes are efficient now and in line with best practice, and that no areas of concern have been identified.

The Chair and Ian Aspden had reviewed the SFVS, MIFP and supporting documents in detail.

Governors were in agreement that Fraud risks should be considered at the next Finance Panel meeting

RESOLVED: Governors approved the SFVS submission, MIFP and Scheme of Delegation.

Benchmarking Documents

Governors reviewed the Benchmarking Documents.

Governors queried the Premises costs which seemed high.

Spend is relatively high when compared to the comparison set. This is probably due to several factors:

- Size of site. We have a large site – cost of maintaining this is significant.
- Occupation costs – age of building – maybe less efficient.
- Staff costs – we employ our premises staff.

In terms of staffing, the Headteacher had provided the following information:

When the school reviews the SLT composition/grading it will consider all information available, e.g. any updated information from HR/Benchmarking. It is also critical to consider context as this plays a significant part. On paper schools may appear similar but can vary significantly and present very different challenges, which may hinder or improve recruitment processes.

There is currently no scope to reduce the headcount at the school, and Yvonne Colclough added that the SLT and all staff support each other on an ongoing basis in what is now a very challenging school.

The Headteacher added that the support of the FGB is very important to the SLT and staff when managing the challenges of the school. The increase in SEND children has changed the school from how it was a few years ago, and there are now a number of children at the school that previously would not have been educated in a mainstream education setting.

RESOLVED: Governors received the Benchmarking Update.

<u>NGA Skills Matrix</u>

The Headteacher informed Governors that the NGA Skills Matrix is available for completion in Perspective, and Governors were requested to update their record in due course.

14. GOVERNOR TRAINING AND VISITS

A number of Governors confirmed they had completed the SEND training which had been circulated by Sarah Millard, and Ian Aspden indicated that he would complete the training soon.

The Chair had circulated the Modern Governor Safeguarding training, and Governors were requested to complete the training as soon as possible.

15. CORRESPONDENCE TO CHAIR/CHAIRS ACTIONS

There were no matters to be brought to Governors' attention.

16. GDPR UPDATE

There were no GDPR matters to be brought to Governors' attention.

17. GOVERNING BOARD COMPOSITION

There were no changes to be brought to Governors' attention.

18. DATE AND TIME OF MEETINGS 24/25

Governors noted the remaining meeting dates for the 24/25 Academic Year as detailed below.

FGB	Tuesday	06/05/2025	16:00pm
FGB	Thursday	19/06/2025	16:00pm

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Headteacher informed Governors that the school would continue to pay the Local Living Wage updated amount, following a positive response from Governors to the email that was circulated. The SBM will notify the CWAC.

RESOLVED: Governors approved for the school to pay the Local Living Wage Updated Amount.

There were no further non-confidential business matters raised during the meeting.

Signed by ………………………………… Chair Dated ………………………….

There were no actions to be carried forward to the next meeting.

ACTION PLAN

Item No.	Action	Who by/ When by	Update