

AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 3 March 2009

Time: 4.30pm

Venue: The College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Dr P Beatty, Mrs M Bentley, Mr J Brathwaite, Miss M Braithwaite, Mr L Byrne, Mrs C Calverley, Mr G Carty, Mr P Feehily, Mr D Fowell, Mrs P Lynch, Cllr T P McGee, Mr A Moss, Mrs E Rice, Fr V Whelan and Dr A Smith (Principal).

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs D Blackburn	Assistant Principal
Mr D Pearson	Assistant Principal
Mr W Spencer	Assistant Principal
PC Carl Wooding	Local Area Police Officer
Mr T Conlon	Clerk to the Governing Body

Cllr T P McGee in the Chair

Before the meeting commenced the Chairman welcomed PC Carl Wooding to the meeting as an observer. All Governors introduced themselves.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Beckitt, Mr P Carpenter, Mrs C H Dove, Mrs H Kelly and Prof A Trinci.

2. APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT GOVERNOR

The Chairperson welcomed Mr J Brathwaite to the meeting as Student Governor.

RESOLVED: That Mr J Brathwaite be appointed as a Student Governor.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any of the items on the Agenda for this meeting. No interests were declared.

4. REVISED INSTRUMENT AND ARTICLES OF GOVERNMENT

The Clerk to the Governors advised the Governing Body that since the last meeting there had been correspondence with the DIUS and the Shrewsbury Diocese in relation to the composition of the Governing Body since the introduction of the new Instrument and Articles of Government. A copy of the letter dated 11 December 2008 from the DIUS had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. The letter gave approval to increase the number of co-opted to 3 from 2 and to reduce the number by which foundation governors must exceed other governors from 3 to 2. The Shrewsbury diocese had also given their approval to the changes.

The Instrument of Government now reads:

Instrument 2(1) (b) – up to three governors who have been co-opted by the governing body (“co-opted governors”)

Instrument 2 (1) – provided that at all times the number of foundation governors (other than additional foundation governors) shall out number the other governors (other than LSC governors and additional foundation governors) by at least two.

RESOLVED: That the revised Instrument and Articles of Government for the college be approved.

5. (i) GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meetings held on 14 November 2008, copies of which had been circulated previously, (a) be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record and (b) be authorised for publication in accordance with the College Instrument and Articles.

5. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were not included on the Agenda.

6. (i) COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the following Committee meetings, copies circulated previously,

(i) Audit Committee	2 February 2009
(ii) Finance and Building Committee	20 January 2009
(iii) General Purposes and Employment Committee	10 February 2009

(a) be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record and (b) be authorised for publication in accordance with the College Instrument and Articles.

6. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

a) Audit Committee - 2 February 2009

i) Audit Committee Terms of Reference – The Audit Committee had reviewed its Terms of Reference and had recommended the revised document to the Governing Body for approval. A copy of the revised Audit Committee Terms of Reference had been circulated to all Governors for information and particular attention was drawn to 2.2 x ii) and 2.2 xii).

RESOLVED: That the revised be Audit Committee Terms of Reference approved.

b) Finance and Buildings Committee – 20 January 2009

i) Health and Safety Policy – The Annual Report on Health and Safety had been discussed and noted. Governors were reminded that they have a responsibility for Health and Safety, but need assurances from the college that matters are being dealt with accordingly.

ii) Financial Regulations and Procedures – The Finance and Buildings Committee had reviewed the Financial Regulations and Procedures and had recommended the revised documents to the Governing Body for approval.

RESOLVED: That the revised Financial Regulations and Procedures be approved.

c) General Purposes Committee – 10 February 2009

i) Admissions 2009/2010

The total number of applications received to date for 2009 is 1526 compared with 1605 for 2008 and 1574 for 2007 at the same date. The estimated number of offers that have been made for September 2009 is 1245. This should produce a new lower sixth similar in number to 2008. Governors noted that the number of category 5 offers was 429; however, there are 4 special consideration cases, so the actual number of offers that have been made is 433. In addition there are currently 22 late category 1-4 applications who would be invited to attend induction, but no guarantee of a place at the college would be made.

ii) Admissions 2010/2011

Governors were advised that it was too early to be making any decision about 2010/2011, it would depend on how 2009/2010 applications had finally settled. The number of Year 11 students would be similar to the previous year and is fairly steady for the next four years. The new building will be open by September 2010 and this may have an impact on students deciding which college to choose.

d) Employment Committee – 10 February 2009

i) Policy Reviews

These would be dealt with under the item Policy Reviews.

ii) Grievance Policy

Governors noted that a review of the Grievance Policy had been delayed because of the introduction on 1 April 2009 of new legal requirements relating to grievance procedures.

7. BUDGET 2008/2009 HALF YEAR FORECAST

Mrs Blackburn reported that the budget for 2008/2009 was very tight. The ILR is again showing an over delivery in both student numbers and cash terms on 16-18 year old students. Under the new funding methodology once students have been on the course for six weeks funding is for the full year. However, if a student drops out, this will affect the provider factor which is part of the overall calculation. The over delivery for the current year is estimated at £220,000 and this will not be paid by the LSC. There is a shortfall in the 19+ delivery and this will be clawed back by the LSC in March 2009, it is estimated at £6,000.

A re-forecast of the 2008/2009 budget was undertaken in January 2009 and the accounts show a small surplus for the year of about £18,000. Whilst there have been extra costs incurred due to the extra students recruited in September 2008, these have been offset by the major reduction in interest rates. When the budget was set the base rate was 5.75% and it is currently 1%. All loan repayments are at base rate +0.35%.

The capital project costs to date are £10.8m and valuations have been received from Norwest totalling £7.8m. Short term borrowing as at January 2009 was only £400,000, but fluctuates month on month. LSC capital grants received to date are £8.2m and just over £2m has been claimed but not yet paid.

Negotiations on the 2009/2010 have started with the LSC. An interim allocation for 16-18 students has been received and this should be finalised by the middle of March 2009. The college has applied for an increase in funding but the outcome is still uncertain.

8. POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

A copy of the draft Post Inspection Action Plan that had been prepared by the college had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. The Action Plan had been considered by the two management groups within the college but had not yet been considered by the senior management of the college. In addition the Standards Group had been looking at performance. This group does not include the Principal or the Vice Principal.

Governors noted that the college had received a grade 1 although some departments had been graded lower.

Mr Spencer thanked those Governors who had taken part in the inspection process.

Cllr McGee reminded Governors that some of the proposed action would not take place until the next academic year and that would impact on the Quality Review meetings next year. A rationalisation of the adult IT courses had taken place in January 2009 as part of a pilot scheme.

The Governors noted the draft Post Inspection Action Plan and agreed that a progress report be presented at the Autumn Term Governing Body meeting,

9. POLICY REVIEWS

A number of policies have been reviewed at the various committee meetings whilst others have been issued to a number of Governors for them to review. The following policies have been recommended for approval;

- a) I.T. Acceptable Use – Policy and Procedure
- b) Equality and Diversity Policy
- c) Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
- d) Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

After a full discussion it was:

RESOLVED: That the Policies detailed above be approved.

10. (i) PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

The report of the Principal, copies of which had been circulated, was presented and discussed.

RESOLVED - That the Principal's report be received.

10. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

The Principal indicated that in order to assist Governors he had highlighted key words in his report.

- a) Introduction

i) Dr Smith advised Governors that extra work was being undertaken by senior colleagues on the new building in addition to their normal day to day work. Many others are contributing in many ways and this will have to continue for another year as the furnishing and systems within the new building are finalised.

ii) Dr Smith advised Governors that a new Bill has just been published called The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill. The Bill will establish a new sector for sixth form colleges by designating all current sixth form colleges as such by April 2010. The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) will be established and it will be responsible for future recurrent funding arrangements; capital provision for sixth form colleges will lie with the Building Schools for the Future Programme (BSF); and it will make arrangements for the performance of sixth form colleges including the introduction of the Framework for Excellence (FfE). The arrangements for Catholic colleges will need to be checked carefully so that they are legally satisfactory. Dr Smith advised Governors that as chair of the Association of Catholic Sixth Form Colleges he was working with civil servants to try and ensure that this is the case. The Sixth Form Colleges' Forum has also been involved in negotiations with the DCSF and DIUS. The provisions of the Bill will also include the abolition of the LSC.

b) Admissions

The telephone queueing arrangement had taken place on 6 December 2008; this was the fourth year that the system had been in operation. The lines opened at 8.00am and by 9.00am the work had been completed. Mrs E Rice had attended on the day.

Admissions for 2008 and 2009 had been dealt with under matters arising from the General Purpose Committee held on 10 February 2009.

c) Staffing

Dr Smith reported on the resignations and appointments that had been made to the college for January 2009 and indicated that the new members of staff had settled in well at the college. Particular reference was made to the number of staff on maternity leave.

d) Building Issues

The college is being managed to ensure that the present students continue with their education with the minimum of disruption and it is business as usual. There has been the loss of some facilities where parking, social space and sports areas have been reduced. The completion of the new sports pitches in about two months time will be a major boost in that area of the college. Student numbers are similar to last year.

The Estates Manager has been absent due to illness for some time and this has added extra pressure to the department. However, the team have responded positively to the ever changing demands placed on them.

The Joseph Mayer building is now part of the college site and there have been some refurbishments to provide better office space for the performing arts department. In addition two temporary structures located there have also been repositioned.

An agreement for the settlement figure for the classroom block has now been reached with Pannone and Partners.

e) League Tables

Dr Smith referred to coverage in the local press of the fact that Aquinas College had the highest points per student in Stockport in the government's published league tables at 888.7 – beating even two independent schools. The reason for this is the breadth of the curriculum offered by the college. In this context the average number of A levels at the college is 4.46 compared with an authority average of 3.70, LSC average 3.54 and across England at 3.53. Dr Smith felt that more importantly than the position in the league tables was the fact that students at the college are unusually broadly educated compared with their peers.

f) Physical Education Department

A summary of the work undertaken by the PE Department was provided and particular reference was made to the appointment of a Further Education Sports Co-Ordinator and the impact that this had on the work of the department and the college as a whole. Many new sports had been introduced at the college and there was greater liaison with other schools in the authority including primary schools. There was a wider participation in sport across the college.

The Governors noted the varied activities that the PE Department was involved in.

The Governors congratulated Greg Carty (student Governor) who had recently been to Malaysia to represent England in fencing at the Junior Commonwealth Games.

g) Conclusion

Dr Smith drew Governors' attention to a letter that he had received following the recent visit by students to Auschwitz and Krakow. The letter had commented on how well behaved and how respectful the students had been. There have also been recent visits to Mumbai and New York and reports in a similar vein had been received by staff accompanying these students

11. BUILDING PROJECT

a) As part of a national review of college capital building projects the college was required to report on progress of the project to the LSC. As result of the meeting no modifications were required to the plans.

b) The main building work remains on schedule and is beyond a third of the way through a 104 week programme. The steel work is now in place for zone A and the metal decking floors are about to have concrete poured in.

c) Work on the sports ground continues with a scheduled completion date of 6 March 2009, although the final operations are particularly susceptible to delay due to the weather.

d) There is regular contact with the Local Authority Planning Department who are currently considering the proposals for fencing and landscaping. It is understood that approval has been given for the fencing proposals.

e) All legal matters in respect of the purchase of Stockport Sunday School and the associated land have now been completed. The Shrewsbury Diocese has been kept informed of the progress on this matter and their agreement is necessary for easement

agreements to United Utilities for electrical services to the new substation which forms part of the project.

f) The college continues to be the subject of Freedom of Information enquiries.

g) The Neighbourhood meetings continue to take place and local residents have the opportunity to raise their concerns with the college and the contractors. The last meeting was held for 9 February 2009 at 6.30pm at the college and the next meeting is scheduled for 10 May 2009. A newsletter is sent to local residents at regular intervals to keep them informed of the progress of the project. Car parking continues to be a cause for concern for residents but the college and the contractors are doing everything possible to minimise the impact on the locality. It was noted that students are required to let the college have details of their car registrations.

h) The target date for completion remains May/June 2010.

i) The Clerk of Works is now working the equivalent of three days a week and is on site every day and meets with the development team regularly and reports formally every Tuesday.

j) The Strategic Capital Group meets on a weekly basis and there is daily contact with the contractors.

The Governors recorded their thanks to all the staff involved in the capital project for all their hard work.

12. GOVERNOR TRAINING SESSION

It was agreed that the training evening on 6 May 2009 would be used to update Governors on the 14 – 19 Agenda and the developments in Stockport and how it affects the college. Dr Smith agreed to arrange for Phillippa Ollerhead and Ed Lack to make a presentation to Governors

13. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

The Chairperson advised the Governors that since the last meeting he had signed the lease for Stockport Sunday School.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governors consideration.

15. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

a) Governors Training – 6 May 2009 at 7.00pm

b) Summer Term meeting - 23 June 2009 at 4.30pm

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____

Terry Conlon
Clerk to the Governors