

## AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 23 June 2020

Time: 4.00pm

Venue: Virtual

### GOVERNORS PRESENT

Miss A Aspacio, Dr P Beatty, Miss M Braithwaite, Mr L Byrne, Mr P Carter, Mrs C H Dove, Mr R Harris, Mr P Horton, Mr G Hynes, Mr A Martin, Cllr T P McGee, Mrs J Miller, Mr D Pearson (Principal), Ms J Siddall, Miss E Shuttlewood, Dr A Smith, Mr M Taylor and Ms E Urbancova.

### IN ATTENDANCE

Ms C Vitti Vice Principal  
Mrs D Blackburn Assistant Principal  
Mr T Conlon Clerk to the Governing Body

Cllr T P McGee in the Chair

#### 1. OPENING PRAYER

The meeting began with a prayer led by Cllr McGee.

#### 2. INTRODUCTION

The Chairperson opened the meeting by saying that the meeting was taking place in difficult times and he thanked everyone for joining the virtual meeting. The only other meeting to have taken place this term was the Audit Committee.

#### 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

#### 4. 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.

#### 5. (i) GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meetings held on 10 March 2020, copies of which had been circulated previously, (a) be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record subject to some typographical amendments 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 covered by the Agenda for the meeting.

6. (i) COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 1 June 2020, copies 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.

6. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

i) Strategy for Internal Audit 2019/2020 – 2021/2022 – Minute 7

RSM had submitted a Strategy for the provision of an Internal Audit Service for 2020/2021. The Audit Plan for 2020/2021 would consist of 18 days with the addition of contingency days as necessary. The fee for 2020/2021 based on 18 days would be £9,500 which is inclusive of expenses but exclusive of VAT. This gives a daily rate of £528.

RESOLVED: i) RSM be appointed as Internal Auditors for 2020/2021 and ii) that the Strategy for the provision of an Internal Audit Service for 2020/2021 be agreed.

ii) Benchmarking – Minute 8

Governors noted that the college compared favourably with other colleges in the sixth form sector and across all other colleges and thanked the staff for their hard work.

iii) Appointment of External Auditors – Minute 10

RESOLVED: i) That Mazars be appointed as External Auditors for 2020/2021 and ii) That the fee for 2020 which is exclusive of VAT and expenses be agreed at £17,500 an increase of £6,050 broken down as follows:

- a) External Audit including Regularity assurance £15,400 an increase of £5,400.
- b) TPA audit £1,500 an increase of £450.
- c) Regularity limited assurance work £600 an increase of £200.

iv) Policies – Minute 14

Mrs Blackburn reported that the Whistleblowing, Hospitality, Fraud, Bribery, Safeguarding and Bereavement policies had been reviewed by members of the Audit Committee and that after making some minor amendments recommended the policies for approval by the Governing Body.

RESOLVED: That the Whistleblowing, Hospitality, Fraud, Bribery, Safeguarding and Bereavement policies be approved.

## 7. BUDGET 2020/2021

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the college had received its ESFA budget for 2020/2021 based on 2253 students. There has been an increase of 4.7% in the rate of funding per student and increases in some of the other funding factors means the overall effect is that the college should receive up to an additional £900,000 in 2020/2021.

Other than the increase to the rate the budget increases for 2020/2021 are due to a small increase to student numbers plus an increase in the number of students in Band 5, students who are studying a full time programme of more than the 540 hours. There have been changes in the weighting that is given for some subject areas i.e. STEM. The funding for core maths has not yet been confirmed but it is anticipated that it will remain at its present value. The increases have not been consolidated beyond next year.

Mrs Blackburn circulated a set of papers in relation to the proposed budget for 2020/2021. The papers contained a) a spreadsheet of cash income and expenditure b) the same converted into accounting format and c) a written commentary.

The ESFA have now confirmed that the income from them for 2020/2021 will be £10,370,448 compared with £9,410,257 for 2019/2020 and is an increase of £960,191. The funding is based on 2,253 students compared with 2,243 for last year an increase of 10 students.

There has been an increase in the retention factor of £83,000 and course weighting factors of £103,000 due to a change in the funding rules. High needs funding has increased by £48,000 to £300,000 for 50 students; this element of funding provides the first £6,000 additional support funding per High Needs students who need one to one support. Another major factor is the increase of £150,000 for core maths.

The draft budget includes £247,399 from Stockport MBC for students with high needs. Some of this income has yet to be submitted to the Local Authority. This figure is understating the predicted final outcome.

The Teachers Pension Grant will continue until 31 March 2021 and is estimated at £310,000 an increase of £24,558.

The draft budget shows a contingency reserve of £156,134 compared to £98,893 last year, an increase of £57,421. This is again a small surplus given the level of income. Whilst the trading surplus is £295,476.

Despite this the budget is still tight due to increased staffing costs. All aspects of staffing and non pay costs will be monitored to ensure the college is running as efficiently as possible. Mrs Blackburn added that there are risks associated with Adult Education and the canteen, income will be dependent on when the college re-opens.

Cllr McGee advised Governors that an announcement was expected soon on when schools and colleges would re-open.

Dr Smith added that the budget was good when compared with previous years, the biggest risk is what will happen in September 2020, the complexity could be huge. It is anticipated that in the coming years a modest increase in student numbers will not generate large amounts of additional income.

RESOLVED: That the draft budget for 2020/2021 as presented be approved.

8. TWO YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the college needed to complete a two year financial plan that has to be submitted to the ESFA by the end of July 2020. The plan includes the outturn for 2019/2020, the budget for 2020/2021 as presented to Governors and the forecast for 2021/2022. The final year is optional and given the uncertainty for that year will not be completed.

The two year financial plan only requires the Principal to sign it as the ESFA is conscious that the timing does not fit in with the normal Governors meetings. The plan will be submitted to the ESFA and then shared with Governors as all the details have already gone to the full Governing Body via the budgets and management accounts. It was acknowledged that the timescale for completion was very tight.

Mrs Blackburn drew Governors attention to the Financial Health Statement for 2018 to 2019 that had been issued by the ESFA and circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. The Financial Health of the college for the period 2018 to 2019 was graded as Outstanding.

(i) PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

- 9 That the report of the Principal, copies of which were circulated, was presented and discussed. Mr Pearson advised Governors that due to the fact that the normal round of committee meetings had not taken place his report was under the headings of those committees.

RESOLVED - That the Principal's report be received.

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

a) Teaching and Learning

i) Student Engagement – The college had closed on 20 March 2020 due to Covid19 and since that date there has been a full programme of remote learning activities in all subjects with a continued pastoral input alongside. Due to a lack of IT equipment owned by students the college had loaned out IT equipment to some students.

The government made a decision to cancel the summer examinations and introduced a policy for schools and colleges to assess the performance of students. This involved producing Centre Assessed grades and rank ordering students in each subject.

Upper 6 students were taught the course content but no formal assessments were set. Lower 6 students work has continued with remote teaching and assessments set and marked accordingly. There have been regular checks and teachers have been impressed by the commitment of students and their engagement with remote learning.

ii) Pastoral – The college has tried to maintain a robust pastoral programme, communicating important messages, signposting support and keeping students in touch with the college and their peers. A leavers' assembly was put together by staff and students which was entertaining and encapsulated the spirit and ethos of the college.

Some students had difficulties in maintaining their engagement for all kinds of reasons and pastoral support for those students was provided as detailed in the report.

iii) Centre Assessment Grade

As a result of the closure of schools and colleges, OFQUAL announced that there would be no formal examinations this summer and schools and colleges were asked to produce Assessment Grades for all affected qualifications. The college has had to adapt and respond as the term progressed. A comprehensive strategy was put in place to support teaching departments to decide on CAGs and for fair and accurate methods of ranking students to be established. The quality teams looked at a 3 to 4 year trend and the SLT oversaw that the quality of decisions and the review of grades at subject and whole college level was accurate and fair. Staff and senior managers have had to sign off the final grade. The Principal as Head of Centre has to sign a declaration to all exam boards that the assessments are fair and accurate. The grades have now been submitted to the various examining boards. A Governor asked if there was an appeals process against the grade given for students. Mr Pearson replied that an appeal can only be made if there has been an administrative error. He added that students can resit in the Autumn Term if they feel that the grade can be improved or does not reflect their ability.

Dr Beatty felt that a lot of work had been done by the college. Mr Pearson replied that the college had triple checked the grades before submitting them. Mr Harris added that the staff had worked really hard balancing remote learning, marking students work and assessing grades, there had been a clear criteria to follow and he was confident that the grades are robust. Ms Siddall agreed with the comments made by Mr Harris and felt that the students would get the grade that they deserved. Miss Shuttlewood advised Governors that she had been in college last week and felt that she had benefited by going into college and with the one-to-one-calls with tutors.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that 50% of students have received unconditional offers from universities.

Ms Urbancova joined the meeting whilst this item was being discussed.

#### b) Resources

i) Budget 2020/2021 - This had been dealt with under the budget for 2020/2021.

ii) Mr Pearson advised Governors that the impact of social distancing may well continue into the new academic year. With the current restrictions the class sizes will be about 8. The combination of some classes on site and some continued remote learning will possibly impact on some students and retention may suffer. The SFCA continues to lobby the Government to retain funding factors that the college delivers in a "normal year" so that future funding is not adversely affected.

#### c) Employment

i) Mr Pearson reported on the resignations and appointments that had been made to the college and thanked all staff for their commitment, diligence and hard work. Particular reference was made to Angela Allen (Business Studies and staff welfare) who was retiring after 27 years at the college.

ii) Mr Pearson advised Governors that this would be the last meeting of the Governors that Carina Vitti would attend before taking up her post as Principal at Holy Cross College in Bury. The Governors thanked Carina for her contribution to the college over the past 5 years as Vice Principal and wished her well in her new post.

#### d) General Purposes

##### i) Admissions 2020/2021

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college had tried to stay in touch and reassure students that their place at the college was secure. Enrolment may take a little longer but the college will make sure that students are on the right courses.

To date 750 out of a target number of 1150 students have accepted their place at the college. This figure is around the normal acceptance rate for this time of the year.

The Welcome Days planned for the beginning of July 2020 are always a good indicator of how many students will be at the college.

There will be an extended induction period when the college returns in September 2020 but the college is confident that it can manage social distancing in college. Governors acknowledged that students will deal with this in different ways. Cllr McGee added that the Government expect all students to be in the college in September and that it may be necessary to loan IT equipment to some students so that they are not disadvantaged. Mr Pearson replied that over 150 pieces of equipment had been loaned out and that the college had ordered some more. Dr Smith said that he was hugely impressed with the way the college had dealt with a very difficult situation.

#### ii) Welcome Days

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the Welcome Days would be online and that the college aims to provide a high quality online experience. Applicants will be able to do some research on their subject choices, providing them with guidance that gives activities to do and links to research material.

#### iii) Summer Term 2020

Mr Pearson advised Governors that since Covid the college has prioritised remote teaching and have organised some one-to-ones with students both in college and remotely. He added that he felt that students had done their best. The college has been gathering information on the most successful practice during lockdown which will help with planning for when the college opens in September 2020. At this moment in time it is not clear how the college will operate at the start of the new academic year.

## 10. POLICIES

The following policies had be reviewed by Governors and after a number of amendments they were recommended to the Governors for approval.

- a) Whistleblowing      b) Hospitality      c) Fraud policy      d) Bribery
- e) Data Protection      f) Recruitment      g) I T Acceptable Use
- h) Safeguarding      i) Bereavement      j) Financial Regulations

RESOLVED: That the above policies be approved.

11. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2020/2021

i) Governors were asked to consider which Committee they would be interested in being members of for 2020/2021. A copy of the Committee Membership for 2020/2021 had been circulated for information.

RESOLVED: That the Committee membership for 2020/2021 remain as detailed on the paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

ii) That the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Committees for the academic year 2020/2021 are as follows:

	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Vice Chair</u>
a) Audit Committee	Mr A Martin	Mrs J Miller
b) General Purposes and Employment	Mr P Horton	Mr L Byrne
c) Remuneration Committee Braithwaite	Mrs C H Dove	Miss M
d) Resources Committee	Miss M Braithwaite	Mr P Carter
e) Teaching and Learning	Dr P Beatty	Dr A Smith

iii) That Dr P Beatty be appointed as the Health and Safety Governor.

iv) That Mrs C H Dove be appointed as the SEND Governor.

v) That Miss M Braithwaite be appointed to serve on the JCC.

12. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2020/2021

A schedule of meetings for the Academic Year 2020/2021 had been circulated to all Governors for information. During the Autumn Term 2020 all committees would meet. At this stage it was not known what format the meetings would take place. A decision would be made when the college returns in September 2020.

RESOLVED: That the schedule of meetings for the Academic Year 2020/2021 as circulated be approved.

13. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

The Chairperson advised Governors that there had been no action since the last meeting.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governors' consideration.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

i) Pay Increase for Principal and Vice Principal



The Remuneration Committee felt that it would be appropriate to increase the pay of the Principal and Vice Principal in accordance with the pay award agreed by the SFCA for other teaching staff at 1.5% backdated to 1 September 2019 and 1.25% from 1 April 2020.

The Governing Body recorded their thanks and appreciation to Mr Pearson and Ms Vitti for their hard work and commitment to the college.

RESOLVED: That the recommendation made by the Remuneration Committee in relation to the pay of Principal and Vice Principal be approved.

ii) The Chairperson thanked every one for attending the meeting and for their support and commitment to the college and hoped that they would enjoy the summer break.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

18 November 2020 at 4.30pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

Date \_\_\_\_\_