

AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 24 November 2020

Time: 4.00pm

Venue: Virtual

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Miss A Aspacio, Dr P Beatty, Miss M Braithwaite, Mr L Byrne, 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, Miss E Shuttlewood, Dr A Smith, Mr M Taylor and Ms E Urbancova.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr A Bailey	Acting Vice Principal
Mrs D Blackburn	Assistant Principal (Finance)
Mr T Conlon	Clerk to the Governing Body

Mr T Conlon in the Chair

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That Cllr T P McGee be elected Chairperson for the ensuing academic year.

Cllr T P McGee in the Chair.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRPERSON

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That Mrs J Miller be elected Vice Chairperson for the ensuing academic year.

3. OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

The meeting began with a moment of reflection led by Cllr T McGee.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Ms J Siddall.

5. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

i) The Chairperson advised Governors that Mr D Cunningham, Director of Education at Shrewsbury Diocese had suggested that if the Governing Body were struggling to find Foundation Governors it could consider reducing the number that is included in the Schedule to the Instrument of Government. It was agreed that the Composition of the Governing Body remains unchanged.

ii) Governors noted that Mr Brendan Hickey would be appointed as a Foundation Governor and it was agreed that he would be a member of the Resources Committee.

- iii) It was agreed that Dr A Smith be appointed Chairperson of the Teaching and Learning Committee and that Mr M Taylor be appointed as Vice Chairperson of the Teaching and Learning Committee
- iv) It was agreed that Mr P Horton be appointed as Vice Chairperson of the Resources Committee
- v) Governor Vacancies - It was noted that there are vacancies for a Foundation Governor and a Co-opted Governor and it was agreed that the skills matrix that governors had completed would be used to identify any skills gap.

6. ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTER OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Governors were asked to complete the Declaration of Eligibility, Register of Pecuniary Interest and Code of Conduct Forms that had been circulated and to return them to the Clerk as soon as possible.

7. 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.

There were no interests declared.

8. OPEN GOVERNMENT

RESOLVED: That the Governing Body would continue to adopt the Open Government policy. Governing Body meetings and its committees would be open to the public, subject to the exclusion of observers for confidential items.

9. IMPACT OF COVID 19

The Principal's report that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting gave details of how the college had coped with the impact of Covid 19. Detailed reports had been submitted to the various committees on how Covid 19 had impacted on their area of responsibilities. The Teaching and Learning Committee had received a detailed report on the process that had been undertaken when awarding Centre Assessed Grades for students.

Enrolment usually takes place on site the week after students had received their GCSE results. This year each student was given an appointment with a member of staff for a 2 hour slot on the Thursday or Friday in the same week that the results were announced. The number of students recruited was above the target number.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college had tried to re-assure both parents and students that students would have access to a full, high quality programme of study and to keep things as normal as possible. Lessons were delivered in the normal fashion but with half the group present and half remoting in so that social distancing could be maintained in classrooms. The aim was to make it as close as possible to normal. All classes were split into 2 streams. Whilst one stream attends college for a full week the other stream will be joining the class remotely. So whilst one stream is present for 1 week the other stream remotes in or works at home and the following week they do the opposite. This requires students to be in the same stream for each of their 3 subjects, or 4 for those who start on 4 subjects.

This model adds complexity for the teacher, having an audience present in the classroom and on line at the same time. Most of the technology needed was already available but microphones have been added to classrooms and cameras where needed. Students and staff have adapted well and all agree that things are working well and everyone is rising to the challenge.

The model adopted significantly reduces the occupancy of the college with around 700 students in at any one time. This helps to avoid congestion in college and on buses and trains when students are travelling to the college. This cuts down the impact a positive case has on the number of contacts and it reduces the amount of track and trace time that would be required.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the workload on all staff has changed and become more demanding. Support staff are facing new tasks to complete and finding new ways to help everybody. Teaching staff are finding time to support each other and the students have got on with things as best they could. Much has changed in college and new and creative ways are being found to do things that were once routine.

Dr Smith felt that Governors should not under estimate what the college has done and how well it has coped in very challenging circumstances. All staff and students have been under extreme pressure. Mr Bailey added that students had taken on board everything they have been asked to do and that the core curriculum has been retained. A questionnaire undertaken by the Student Council showed that students were happy with the model of teaching and felt fully supported. The wellbeing of students is very important.

Miss Shuttlewood advised Governors that a petition had been signed by 92 student requesting full time education in college. It was agreed that Mr Pearson and Mr Bailey would address this outside of the Governors meeting. Ms E Urbancova felt that clear communication with students and parents was very important. Dr Beatty added that everyone wants to return to normal as soon as possible, they want security. Mr Harris felt that flexibility is key, some students want a return to full time education for security. He added that he felt that L6 students were in a good vein of working and that staff are managing in the best way they can for students.

Mr Pearson replied that some difficult decisions have had to be made, both staff and students would want to return to full time education in the college. If the college returned to full time it would present more challenges in managing the building. He agreed that good communication is key. Information is given to students on a weekly basis. Some important decisions have to be made for the start of the Spring Term in January 2021. Meetings had taken place with Heads of Departments and some adjustments may be made for next term. Mr Bailey added that it may be good to survey all students or have a focus group to see what students want. Dr Smith added that if it is not safe students should not return. Mr Pearson replied that the spread of the virus was not from the college but from families in their own home.

Mr Hynes asked how were students with additional needs coping. Mr Pearson replied that it varies but Mr Bailey was helping in the Pathways Department on safeguarding issues.

Cllr McGee advised Governors that in Stockport the number of people with Covid 19 is coming down. He added that most people would not be vaccinated until Easter 2021.

He expressed the view that the current blended method of learning would continue in the Spring Term. Any decision had to be made based up on the scientific information and that everyone should act responsibly. He asked that when a letter is sent to parents the Governors also receive a copy for information.

Governors congratulated the college on how well it was coping under very difficult circumstances and that it should be proud of the way it had handled the situation.

10. GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2020, copies of which had been circulated previously be, (a) approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record and (b) authorised for publication in accordance with the College Instrument and Articles.

11. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the Governing Body minutes.

12. COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(i) Audit Committee	9 November 2020
(ii) Resources Committee	10 November 2020
(iii) General Purposes and Employment Committee	8 October 2020
(iv) Teaching and Learning Committee	1 October 2020

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

13. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

a) Audit Committee – 9 November 2020

i) Draft Statutory Accounts – Minute 7

Governors noted that the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2020 would be considered at this meeting.

ii) Internal Audit Annual Report for 2019/2020 – Minute 9

The report from RSM concluded that the college has adequate and effective risk management control and governance processes to manage the achievement of the College's objectives.

Mr Hynes noted that in the report the opinion stated that the college had adequate controls, what does that mean? Mrs Blackburn replied that adequate is the best opinion that you can get.

iii) Financial Statements Audit and Management Letter – Minute 13

Governors noted that the draft Management Letter from Mazars LLP indicated that subject to carrying out a post balance sheet events review there will be an unqualified opinion on both the Financial Statements and Regularity Audit for the year ended 31 July 2020.

The issues in relation to the Greater Manchester Pension Scheme for support staff concerning the assets and liabilities being de-pooled and allocated to individual colleges continues.

iv) Risk Management – Minute 14

Governors noted that the Annual Report on Risk Management would be considered at this meeting.

v) Audit Committee Annual Report – Minute 16

Governors noted that the Audit Committee Annual Report would be considered at this meeting.

vi) Committee Terms of Reference – Minute 17

Resolved: that the amended Audit Committee Terms of Reference be agreed.

vii) Fraud Log Book – Minute 18

Mr Martin confirmed that he had seen the fraud log book.

viii) Internal Audit proposals for 2020/2021

Governors noted that the internal audit service for 2020/2021 would be deferred until such time as RSM can conduct audits on site.

b) Resources Committee – 10 November 2020

i) Pay Awards – Minute 5 (a)

Cllr McGee advised Governors that discussions between the SFCA and Unions were continuing on the pay awards for 2021/2022. A lot would depend on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

ii) Health and Safety Report 2019/2020 – Minute 6

Governors noted that there had been fewer accidents and staff absences due to illness and that the number of days lost had reduced from 90 in the previous year to 41 days and this related to 1 member of staff.

iii) Draft Statutory Accounts – Minute 9

Governors noted that the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2020 would be considered at this meeting.

c) General Purposes and Employment Committee – 13 October 2020

i) Impact of Covid 19 – Minute 6

Mr Horton advised Governors that a report on the impact of Covid 19 had been considered and that the college had been congratulated on how well it was coping under very difficult circumstances.

ii) Admissions 2020/2021 – Minute 7

Governors noted that at the start of the term the actual number of students on roll was 2327. The latest figures are 2280 with a L6 of 1227 and U6 of 1024. In addition there are 29 pathway students.

iii) Admissions 2021/2022 – Minute 8

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the number of application received todate are what the college would expect.

Governors noted that the Open Day/Evenings had been virtual events. A new prospectus had been used and the feedback on it had been very positive. Information about the college had been sent on a memory stick to schools for use in Year 11 assemblies. A new website had been live from 30 October 2020 and it will be possible to take a virtual tour of the college. Each department had provided an overview of the courses it offers and the Students Council had been involved.

The closing date for applications (which are online) for 2021/2022 is 30 November 2020. All category 1 students will have a telephone interview before Christmas 2020. Applications from category 2 students who have submitted their application forms by 30 November 2020 will then be assessed. All applicants will be notified whether or not they are being considered for interview. Students who are to receive further consideration will receive a letter before Christmas 2020 inviting them to an interview in January/February 2021. The telephone interviews for category 1 students have already started.

iv) Employment Committee 13 October 2020 – Minute 5

Governors noted the arrangements for the appointment of a new Vice Principal. Mr Horton advised Governors of the need to involve Shrewsbury Diocese in all stages of the appointment process for the appointment of a new Vice Principal.

Cllr McGee thanked those Governors who had been able to take part in the Safeguarding refresher held earlier in the day.

d) Teaching and Learning Committee – 6 October 2020

Dr Beatty thanked Dr Smith for chairing the committee meeting. Dr Smith advised Governors that a report on the impact of Covid 19 had been considered and that the college had been congratulated on how well it was coping under very difficult circumstances.

ii) Results Overview – Minute 6

Governors noted that there had been no examination results and that students had received Centre Assessed Grade (CAGs). The outcome of CAGs was higher than any previous college outcomes. The overwhelming majority of students received the grade they were awarded by the college and although all grades A* to U were awarded the overall performance was higher by about 20% than in previous years.

Governors noted that from the information provided not a single subject was a cause for concern and that the BTEC results had been outstanding.

Mr Hynes asked what would happen post the A level process. Mr Pearson replied that the Government want examinations in 2021 to go ahead although it is not clear on how this will actually happen but a decision is needed soon. Cllr McGee added that the examinations scheduled for May/June 2021 have been put back by 3 weeks. From September 2023 the arrangements for admission to higher education will change and this will impact on students starting at the college in September 2021. Mr Taylor reported that discussion with the DfE and UCAS are ongoing. It is possible that the university year may start in January each year. Mr Hynes stated that the Government were expecting things to be back to normal by Easter 2021. Mr Pearson replied that the college were working on the assumption that it will be the next academic year before things are back to normal. Dr Beatty added that even if a vaccination is in place soon it will be the autumn before things start to return to normality.

Cllr McGee advised Governors that the SFCA had asked that all students take an exam or that an alternative is in place. Mr Pearson agreed that there was a need to know what the rule will be.

iii) College Focus – Minute 8

Governors noted that the college would continue to work hard to ensure that students had a good learning experience. In addition the health and welfare of both staff and students was important.

14. GOVERNING BODY SELF ASSESSMENT 2020

A copy of the details of the Governors Self – Assessment returns for the academic year 2019/2020 had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised Governors that the average overall was around 4.7. He thanked Governors for their support in completing the Self - Assessment Review form and that he, the Principal and the Governing Body Clerk would meet to discuss the points raised and report back to Governors.

RESOLVED: That the Governors Self - Assessment returns for the academic year 2019/2020 be received.

15. APPROVAL OF STATUTORY ACCOUNTS

A copy of the College's Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2020 had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. Both the Audit Committee and the Resources Committee had discussed these at their November 2020 meetings.

Members of the Audit Committee and Resources Committee had recommended that the Governing Body approve the Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2020. Mrs Blackburn reported on the key aspects of the Statutory Accounts.

Mr Hynes asked what were the predicted reserves of the college. Mrs Blackburn replied that it is difficult to show the actual reserves, some colleges are showing a negative balance but that is not the case at the college. The Mazars (External Auditors) have been looking at the value of the college assets and have determined that the college is a going concern.

RESOLVED: That the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2020 be approved and that the Chairperson be authorised to sign them on behalf of the Governing Body

16. BUDGET 2020/2021

Mrs Blackburn introduced a paper that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. The paper gave an overview of movement on the budget to date. There had been some significant changes to areas of funding and expenditure. The paper covered the following:

- a) Additional high needs income
- b) Examination Fees
- c) Teacher's Pension Contributions
- d) Pay Awards

There is still some uncertainty around the main staffing budgets because the impact of pay awards is not yet known. The budget position had been reported to the Resources Committee on 10 November 2020. The budget would be reviewed in January 2021 and there will be regular re-forecasts during the year to ensure that the surplus reflects the latest information and cash flow is accurate as possible.

RESOLVED: That the budget position be noted.

17. GOVERNORS ATTENDANCE RECORD 2019/2020

Details of the Governors attendance at both Governing Body meetings and Committee meetings during the academic year 2019/2020 had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting.

The Chairperson thanked all Governors for their support at the various Committee meetings and at the Governing Body meetings.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report on Governors attendance for the academic year 2019/2020 be approved.

18. PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

The main points of the report had been dealt with in the Covid 19 Impact as shown in Minute 9 for this meeting.

Mrs Miller asked how was the college providing pastoral support for those students who needed it as a result of Covid 19. Mr Pearson replied that the college was targeting those students who fell behind in Y11 and that staff would note those students that were not engaging in learning. He added that there may be a need to increase the number of hours for counselling. Mr Bailey advised Governors that there had been a change in the role for group tutors and that the college is being proactive with students to identify any problems. MyAquinas has a Disclosure Box for students to report any concerns and this is reviewed by Mr Pearson, Mr Bailey and Mrs Greenidge on a weekly basis. Mr Harris echoed what Mr Bailey had said and felt that staff would identify any problems with student and that the system for contacting students was working effectively.

Miss Shuttlewood felt that students were able to speak to their tutors if there was a problem.

19. RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Mrs Blackburn outlined the key elements of the report to Governors. It was noted that the risk management process was well established in the college with regular reports to the Senior Management Team. In addition Risk Management was a standard item on the Audit Committee Agenda. Governors noted that the college has had clean audit reports from both Internal and External auditors.

RESOLVED: That Risk Management Annual Report for 2019/2020 and the amended Risk Management Policy be approved.

20. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Governors were advised that the Audit Committee had considered its Annual Report for the financial year 2019/2020, a copy of which had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Committee's Annual Report be received.

21. AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

A copy of the revised Audit Committee Terms of Reference had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting.

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

22. ATTENDANCE DIOCESE GOVERNOR BRIEFINGS

The Chairperson hoped that at least one member of the Governing Body would attend the Diocese termly Governors briefing meetings. He added that he hoped to attend the meeting and was aware that other Governors were attending the meetings in their role as a Governor at other schools.

23. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

This had been reported in Minute 5 (i) - Committee Membership in relation to the appointment of a Foundation Governor.

24. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governors consideration.

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Any Other Business

26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9 March 2021 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____

Terry Conlon
(Clerk to the Governors)