

AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 28 November 2023

Time: 4.30pm

Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Miss M Braithwaite, Mr L Byrne, Mrs C H Dove, Mr C Green, Mr P Horton, Mr G Hynes, Mr A Martin, Mr T P McGee, Mrs J Miller, Mr D Pearson, Dr A Smith and Mr M Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr A Bailey	Vice Principal
Mrs D Blackburn	Assistant Principal (Finance)
Mrs A Taylor	Head of RE – Minute 7 only
Mr T Conlon	Clerk to the Governing Body
Ms H Donelon	Prospective Foundation Governor
Ms J Paton	Observer

Mr T Conlon in the Chair

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously

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

Mr 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 Mr T McGee.

4. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Donelon and Ms Paton as observers. For the benefit of Ms Donelon and Ms Paton everyone introduced themselves.

5. NEW PARENT GOVERNOR

The Chairperson advised Governors that following an election a new Parent Governor had been elected. However, the college has been unable to make contact with the parent to confirm that they wish to take up the role as a Parent Governor.

6. **FOUNDATION GOVERNOR**

The Chairperson advised Governors that Ms H Donelon had expressed an interest in becoming a Foundation Governor at the college and that the necessary paper work had been completed for submission to the Diocese.

After a full discussion it was agreed that the Governing Body would recommend to the Diocese that Ms Donelon be appointed as a Foundation Governor at the college.

7. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr R Harris, Mr B Hickey, Mr I Ishaq and Mr M Matthew.

8. **CATHOLIC LIFE AT THE COLLEGE**

In preparation for a Denominational Inspection, Mrs Taylor (Head of RE) made a presentation to Governors on Catholic Life at the college and how Governors fulfil the Catholic Mission already. The presentation covered the following areas:

- a) Catholic Life at the college
- b) Framework for the inspections
- c) Mission and Ethos Group
- d) Governor involvement
- e) Quality Assurance with Loreto College

Governors were reminded that

- i) Everything that we do contributes to the Catholic life and the mission of the College
- ii) Governors are present at the Mission and Ethos meetings
- iii) Governors are present at the safeguarding and pastoral meetings
- iv) Governor reports celebrate the staff and students - anecdotal examples of “living life to the full” and “freedom, justice and love”

Governors were asked to contact Mrs Taylor if they required any further information or clarification on the areas covered. Mrs Taylor undertook to share the slides used in her presentation with Governors.

Governors thanked Mrs Taylor for her interesting and informative presentation.

9. **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.

10. **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.

11. **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.

12. **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GOVERNORS**

It was agreed that all Governors (except Student Governors) are required to complete and sign the Code of Conduct for Governors issued by Shrewsbury Diocese. Completed forms should be returned to the Clerk as soon as possible.

13. **GOVERNING BODY MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2023, 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.

14. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNING BODY MINUTES**

There were no matters arising that were not covered by the agenda for the meeting.

15. **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

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

(i) Audit Committee	6 November 2023
(ii) Resources Committee	7 November 2023
(iii) General Purposes and Employment Committee	4 July and 10 October 2023
(iv) Teaching and Learning Committee	3 October 2023

(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.

15. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

a) Audit Committee – 6 November 2023

Mr McGee as Chairperson of the Governing Body had attended the meeting at the request of the External Auditors to receive the Financial Statements Audit and Management Letter.

i) Draft Statutory Accounts – Minute 6

Governors noted that the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2023 would be considered at this meeting.

ii) External Audit Completion Report – Minute 7

Governors noted that the draft Management Letter from Murray Smith 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 2023. Murray Smith LLP felt that the college had been well prepared for the audit and that they had been impressed by its organisation.

iii) Internal Audit Strategy 2023/2024

Governors noted that the Audit Plan for 2023/2024 would consist of 17 days with addition of contingency as necessary.

iv) Risk Management – Minute 12

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

v) Audit Committee Annual Report – Minute 14

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

vi) Committee Terms of Reference – Minute 15

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

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

b) Resources Committee – 7 November 2023

i) Health and Safety Report 2022/2023 – Minute 6

Governors noted that the number of incidents and staff absences due to illness and that the number of days lost was 11 compared in the previous year to 107 days and this related to 3 members of staff. The main cause of absence had been due to musculoskeletal disorders (8 days).

ii) Management Accounts – Minute 7

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the Management Accounts were now on the Governors Portal.

iii) Budget 2023/2024 – Minute 8

Governors noted that the Budget for 2023/2024 would be considered at this meeting.

iv) Draft Statutory Accounts – Minute 9

Governors noted that the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2023 would be considered at this meeting.

v) Capital Build – Minute 11

This would be covered in the Principal's Report to Governors.

c) General Purposes and Employment Committee – 4 July and 10 October 2023

i) Admissions 2023/2024 – Minute 6

Governors noted that at the start of the term the actual number of students on roll was 2449 including 35 Pathways and that the college is funded for 2396 students. Mr Pearson added that by the census date in October there were 2410 students.

iii) Admissions 2024/2025 – Minute 7

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the number of applications received to date is in line with what the college would expect at this time of the process.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the Open Days had been held on Saturday 23 September 2023 and 4 November 2023. In addition, the college had also been scheduled to attend school events and whilst they would avoid large open events they would still attend year 10/11 assemblies at secondary schools.

The closing date for applications (which are online) for 2024/2025 is 30 November 2023. All category 1 students will have a telephone interview before Christmas 2023. Applications from category 2 students who have submitted their application forms by 30 November 2023 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 2023 inviting them to an interview in January/February 2024. The telephone interviews for category 1 students have already started.

Miss Braithwaite asked how many students were the college looking to recruit in L6 for September 2024. Mr Pearson replied that there are 1350 in L6 this year and the college would be looking to recruit around 1200 students in L6 for September 2024. A report will be presented to the GP Committee in January 2024.

d) Teaching and Learning Committee – 2 October 2023

i) Results Overview – Minute 6

The results in previous years had been based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) and Centre Assessed Grades (CAG) with 2022 results based on formal examinations with some areas for examination known. Most colleges were where they felt they would be but the Aquinas College's results had increased by around 10% when compared with the national average. The college had also outperformed statistical neighbours and were an excellent set of results.

Governors record their appreciation of the work of the staff at the college.

ii) Denominational Inspection – Minute 9

Mr Pearson advised Governors that a national framework has been finalised and that the Diocese will appoint a team of inspectors and that at least one inspector must have experience of working in a sixth form college. The Denominational Inspection would probably take place after Easter 2024 and would take two days with three inspectors.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the Catholic Life of the college included more payer and liturgy. Ethics was now called General Religious Education.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that Mission and Ethos Group within college were preparing for the inspection. The process is graded and recent changes allow for the overall grade to be a 2 even if there is a grade 3 in one area.

iii) Quality Reviews

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the Quality Review meetings had been held in college during the week commencing 30 October 2023 and thanked those Governors who had attended the meetings

16. **GOVERNING BODY SELF ASSESSMENT 2023**

A copy of the details of the Governors Self – Assessment returns for the academic year 2022/2023 had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised Governors that the average overall was similar to last year and was around 4.7. He thanked Governors for their support in completing the Self – Assessment forms.

The subject of academisation was raised and Mr Pearson replied that at the moment cross diocese discussions were taking place.

Governors were encouraged to have a look at the webinar sessions arranged by the SFCA to enhance their personal development.

The Chairperson advised Governors 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 2022/2023 be received.

17. **GOVERNORS ATTENDANCE RECORD 2022/2023**

Details of the Governors attendance at both Governing Body meetings and Committee meetings during the academic year 2022/2023 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 2022/2023 be approved.

18. **APPROVAL OF STATUTORY ACCOUNTS**

A copy of the College's Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2023 had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. Both the Audit Committee and the Resources Committee had discussed these at their November 2023 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 2023

Mrs Blackburn reported on the key aspects of the Statutory Accounts.

The college's financial health would be reported as "outstanding" to the ESFA in December 2023.
RESOLVED: That the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2023 be approved and that the Chairperson be authorised to sign them on behalf of the Governing Body.

19. **BUDGET 2023/2024**

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the budget for 2023/2024 was approved at the last meeting of the Governing Body with a surplus of £137,000. Since then an additional £330,000 has been received from the ESFA to cover the pay award. The high needs income has been confirmed at a higher level than the budget by about £125,000. Additional bank interest of around £140,000 is anticipated. There are additional staffing costs of £153,00 and small increases in other budget areas.

These changes have increased the forecast surplus to £541,000. the surplus delivers a financial health rating as "good".

As the Capital Building work progresses money will be drawn down to cover the expenditure.

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that there will be regular reforecasts of the budget during the year to ensure that the surplus reflects the latest information and the cash flow is as accurate as possible.

Dr Smith asked if the move to the public sector could cause any risks to the capital building programme by the removal of cash surpluses. Mrs Blackburn replied that there should not be any impact on the college but the college could still not reclaim VAT.

RESOLVED: That the budget position be noted.

20. (i) **PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT**

That the report of the Principal, copies of which were circulated, was presented and discussed.

RESOLVED - That the Principal's report be received.

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

a) Chaplaincy Report

The report covered the 2022/2023 academic year and gave details of the various activities that had taken place at the college including the following:

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|---|---|-----------------------|
| a) Prayer and liturgy | b) Justice, Service and Advocacy | c) Leader development |
| d) Pastoral care | e) Spiritual development/Evangelisation | |
| f) Community building and Outside connections | g) Continuing Professional Development | |
| h) Plans for 2023/2024 Celebrations | i) A report on the Autumn Term 2023 activities including a Welcome Mass | |

b) Examination Results – 2023

The results for 2023 produced a 99% pass rate for A Levels and Vocational Qualifications, which were much stronger than in 2019. The high grades in A levels (A*- B) was 8% above where it was in 2019 at 57%. The vocational courses were equally as good and every bit as strong as the A levels bearing in mind

recent changes. Five level 3 courses had a 100% pass rate and 14 students were awarded 3 or more A* at A level. There was 100% pass rate on BTEC Level 3 Courses. 5 students secured places at Oxbridge universities and 5 students secured a place to study medicine and 1 to study veterinary science. These were the best results that the college has ever had and reflected the hard work of students and the commitment and care staff show students.

c) Curriculum

The curriculum reform will see Applied General subjects being defunded and removed from 2025. This will impact on the curriculum offer and some of the more popular vocational courses such as criminology, BTEC Law and Applied Business will no longer be offered. Consultations are under way internally and externally as the college seeks alternative suitable approaches and provision.

d) Capital Building

The new building project continues and planning permission has been granted with a limited amount of conditions. Detailed design and costs are being drawn up to arrive at a final programme of works. It is anticipated that work will commence in January 2024. A plan of how the building might look was also shown. Whilst it is hoped the building would be ready for September 2024, it is more likely that it will half term in October 2024. It still hoped that the costs will remain in line with the budget set.

e) Skills and Technical Qualifications

The focus on skills and technical qualifications in the FE sector has meant that sixth form colleges are considering whether becoming an academy and joining the schools' sector might be a better way forward. The skills budget has been devolved to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Discussions are taking place across Diocese and other catholic sixth form colleges (Holy Cross and Xaverian) to consider various options. The college is not currently part of the Diocese plan for a for a number of geographically organised Multi Academy Trusts (MATs).

f) Staffing

Governors noted the staffing appointments that had been made for September 2023 along with the leavers at the end of the Summer term 2023.

f) Governors noted the varied and rich opportunities that were available to students. Mrs Miller added that students in L6 had not been able to undertake extra-curricular activities at their secondary schools due to Covid.

Miss Braithwaite added that the quality of the college magazine was very good along with the Positive Feedback, Reflection and Prayer booklets.

21. **RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND 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.

RESOLVED: That Risk Management Annual Report for 2022/2023 and the amended Risk Management Policy be approved.

22. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Governors were advised that the Audit Committee had considered its Annual Report for the financial year 2022/2023, a copy of which had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting.

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

23. 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.

24. POLICY REVIEWS

The following policies had been reviewed by Governors:

- a) E-safety b) Safeguarding c) Drugs d) Behaviour e) Anti-bullying
- f) Lettings Policy g) Protection of Students from Extremism and Radicalisation

RESOLVED: That all of the amended policies detailed above be approved.

25. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

The Chairperson advised Governors that he had dealt with a parental complaint concerning a student who had not been entered for an examination.

26. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governors consideration.

27. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a) Certificate Evening

Mr Pearson reminded Governors that the Certificate Evening is on Monday 18 December 2023 at 7.30pm at the college.

- b) Mass

Mr Pearson advised Governors that mass would be held on Tuesday 19 December at 3.30pm in the Lecture theatre.

28. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19 March 2024 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____