

# AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 25 June 2024

Time: 4.30pm

Venue: College

## GOVERNORS PRESENT

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

## IN ATTENDANCE

Ms H Donelon	Prospective Foundation Governor
Mr A Bailey	Vice Principal
Mrs D Blackburn	Assistant Principal (Finance)
Mr T Conlon	Clerk to the Governing Body

Mr T P McGee in the Chair.

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

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

### 2. INTRODUCTION

The Chairperson referred to the passing of Simon Cheadle, (Catering Manager at the college) suddenly on 24 June 2024. He had intended to retire at the end of the academic year. It was noted that Brendan Hickey's father in law and a friend of Hazel Dove had also passed away suddenly.

### 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr B Hickey, Ms J Paton and Mr D Pearson (Principal).

### 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 19 March and 8 May 2024, 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 following Committee meetings, copies circulated previously,

(i) Audit Committee	3 June 2024
(ii) Resources Committee	10 June 2024
(iii) Teaching and Learning Committee	11 June 2024

(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 – 3 June 2024

i) Audit Review – Minute 6

Mr Pearson had attended the meeting to receive feedback from the auditors on the college's performance. Both internal and external auditors had reported that they have a good dialogue over the planning and timing of the audits. They added that there was a good working relationship with the college.

ii) Internal Audit Reports – Minute 8

All the Internal Audit Reports had received strong assurance.

iii) Internal Audit Plan 2024/2025 – Minute 10

RESOLVED: i) That Wylie Bisset be appointed as Internal Auditors for 2024/2025, ii) The Internal Audit Plan of 18 days be agreed and iii) That the fees for 2024/2025 which are exclusive of VAT and expenses be agreed at £11,470. Future inflation prices would be limited to 2%.

iv) Policy Reviews – Minute 15

The following policies had been reviewed by the Audit Committee and recommended to the Governing Body for approval:

a) Anti Bribery    b) Fraud and Corruption    c) Hospitality and Gifts    d) Whistleblowing

RESOLVED: That the recommendation made by the Audit Committee in relation to the above policies be approved.

b) Resources Committee – 10 June 2024

i) Charging Policy for Adult and Continuing Education Courses – Minute 4

RESOLVED: That the recommendation made by the Resources Committee in relation to the fees to be charged for Adult and Continuing Education Courses for 2024/2025 be approved.

ii) The budget for 2024/2025 and Authorisation of Two Year Financial Plan are separate items on the agenda.

iii) Policy Review

The Financial Regulations had been reviewed by the Resources Committee and recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

RESOLVED: That the recommendation made by the Resources Committee in relation to the Financial Regulations be approved.

c) Teaching and Learning Committee – 11 June 2024

i) Dr Smith advised Governors that the role of the committee was to look at a) the quality assurance of teaching and learning, b) performance data and c) improving targets and monitoring the progress of students. The last meeting of the committee had focussed on quality review and the in year progress made by subject areas.

ii) Policy Reviews

The following policies had been reviewed by the Teaching and Learning Committee and recommended to the Governing Body for approval:

a) Attendance    b) Staff Code of Conduct    c) IT Acceptable Use including AI  
d) Student Discipline

RESOLVED: That the recommendation made by the Teaching and Learning Committee in relation to the above policies be approved.

## **7. BUDGET 2024/2025**

Mrs Blackburn gave Governors an overview of the budget that had been presented to the Resources Committee at its meeting on 10 June 2024.

Mrs Blackburn introduced a set of papers in relation to the proposed budget for 2024/2025 that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. The papers contained a) a spreadsheet of cash income and expenditure b) the same converted into an accounting format and c) a written commentary. Mrs Blackburn outlined the process of moving from a cash budget to an accounting budget.

The ESFA have now confirmed that the income from them for 2024/2025 will be £13,059,439 compared to £12,488,348 for 2023/2024 and is an increase of £571,019. The funding is based on 2,424 students compared with 2,395 for last year an increase of 29 students. An inflationary increase of 1.89% has been applied to all funding bands, now giving a top rate of £4,8432 compared with £4,753 for 2023/2024. 97 % of students are at the top rate of £4,843. The ESFA funding above contains £372k for 62 High Needs students; this element of funding provides the first £6,000 additional support funding per High Needs students who need one to one support. The total income for the 2024/2025 financial year is £15,499,972 compared to £14,841,363 last year an increase of £658,609.

In addition, the college has still to evaluate the cost of new High Needs students to the Local Authority. This covers the assessment of the additional costs over £6k. The college estimates that the cost of moving from L6 to U6 for continuing students with high needs at £263,000. They are about to submit claims for new students starting in September 2024.

The Teacher's Pension Grant will continue until 31 August 2025 and is confirmed at £781,286 an increase of £227,478.

The draft budget shows a contingency reserve of £122,176 compared to £81,606 last year, an increase of £40,570. Whilst the initial trading surplus is £181,429.

All aspects of staffing and non pay costs will be monitored to ensure the running of the college as efficiently as possible. A 5% increase had been included in the staffing budget with various inflationary increase for non pay costs.

Mrs Blackburn drew Governor's attention to the Financial Health calculated from the initial budget where the overall outcome is that it is classed as Good at 200 within the range 180 to 230.

RESOLVED: That the budget for 2024/2025 as recommended by the Resources Committee be approved.

## **8. TWO YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the two year financial plan has to be submitted to the ESFA by the end of July 2024. The plan includes the outturn for 2023/2024, the budget for 2024/2025 and the forecast of 2025/2026. The college's financial health for the three years will be Outstanding, Good and Good.

Mr McGee advised Governors that the college was in a good financial position.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson be authorised to sign the Two Year Plan on behalf of the Governing Body.

## **9 (i) PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT**

That the report of the Principal, copies of which were circulated, was presented and discussed. The report was in a new format with the report being supplemented with an additional booklet "A Celebration of Catholic Life at Aquinas – Summer Term 2023/2024".

RESOLVED - That the Principal's report be received.

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

Mr Bailey advised Governors that the report would focus on the key issues facing the college. The main areas covered in the report were a) new building project, b) chaplaincy, c) finance d) HR, e) careers.

a) New building project – This continues to progress as planned with completion and an opening date in early November. Students from earth sciences have visited the building site and had a tour as well as being talked through the stages that construction and design teams go through, giving them insight into careers in this area.

b) Chaplaincy – There had been a real drive in improving quality of RE taught and on attendance in RE lessons. The college’s Mission and Ethos meetings have focussed on the preparation for the denominational inspection. Support has been provided to non-subject specialist staff to teach Core RE with more explicit links to Catholic Life across the broader curriculum. A review of the college’s links with Catholic partner schools has been undertaken and it is planned to deliver Religious Studies lessons to year 10 groups. It is hoped that this will encourage more students to attend the college. Governors noted that the Mission Day would be held on 15 July to refresh, refocus and support staff.

c) Budget 2024/2025 - This had been dealt with under the budget for 2024/2025.

d) Human Resources - Mr Bailey reported on the resignations and appointments that had been made to the college and thanked all staff for their commitment, diligence and hard work. Mr Martin sought clarification on the reason for leaving as Exam data cleansing. This related to invigilators who had not worked for some time and were taken off the payroll file.

e) Careers – A series of careers events had been held during the summer term, including one to one career meetings and After Aquinas event, held in March 2024. Feedback from students, parents, carers and organisations was included in the report.

## 11. (iii) A CELEBRATION OF CATHOLIC LIFE AT AQUINAS

The report detailed examples of the rich catholic life of the college. It gave a flavour of the opportunities on offer and the achievements of students. It gives a picture of how students are living out the mission of the college.

a) Chaplaincy – The report covered the Celebration of the Eucharist, Whole College Liturgy, CAFOD Young Leader Programme, May Theme Week – Mary the Timeless Role Model, Mission and Catholic Life – Sister Patricia’s visit. Mrs Dove added that it was lovely to see the students involved in Mass and nice to hear music and singing. The Parish priests involved in the college help to understand what the college needs.

b) “Be More” – One of the strategic aims of the college is to ensure students and staff thrive at every stage of their journey, enabling them to “Be More”. The article covered Will Thompson’s story about how he coped following his brother, who sadly took his own life one month after Will had started at the college. Will has a place at UA 92 from September 2024. The article also covered Leah Kidd (training for GB Skeleton) and Laurie Whitwell (a career in journalism).

c) Pastoral Care – Mr Taylor had attended the recent Careers Day and felt that the students were shy and socially awkward. He felt that this was probably as a result of Covid and little inter action with others. All of which reinforced the pastoral care that the college provides. Miss Smith agreed and added that students have grown up with mobile phones and access to the internet too soon. They are aware of cyber bullying and the fact that people can post anything on the internet.

d) Ault Education – The Art Exhibition is at the college on Sunday 30 June 2024 between 1.30pm and 3.00pm

e) Governors noted the activities in the following areas within the college:

Art & Design, 3D, Graphics, Biology, Business, Careers, Chemistry, Duke of Edinburgh Award - Gold, Economics, Enrichment, Fundraising, Geography and Geology, India Project,

IT/Computing, Japanese, Law, Learning Support, Mathematics, Pathways, Performing Arts, Social Sciences and Sport.

Governors felt that new format for the Principal's Report was very informative and asked Mr Bailey to pass this on to Mr Pearson. He was also asked to pass on to all staff the Governors appreciation of the excellent work that they are doing at the college.

## **12. CHAPLAINCY**

The Chaplaincy Report had been included in the Principal's Report.

## **13. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP**

The Chairperson advised Governors that vacancies exist for two Foundation Governors and one Co-opted Governor. Confirmation of the appointment of Hannah Donelon as Foundation Governor was still awaited from the Diocese. The Chairperson added that he was actively looking at trying to find potential Foundation Governors.

## **14. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2023/2024**

i) Governors were asked to consider which Committee they would be interested in being members of for 2024/2025. A copy of the Committee Membership for 2023/2024 had been circulated for information.

ii) The Chairperson advised Governors that he and the Clerk to the Governors would look at the various committees and would email a proposed membership along with proposed Chair and Vice Chair of the committees for Governors to consider.

iii) That Mr B Hickey be appointed as the Health and Safety Governor.

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

v) That Mr B Hickey be appointed as the Governor representative on the Mission Group

vi) That Mr M Taylor be appointed to serve on the Careers Group

vii) That Mr G Hynes be appointed as a Governor responsible for Personal Development.

## **15. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/2025**

A schedule of meetings for the Academic Year 2024/2025 had been circulated to all Governors for information.

The Clerk to the Governing Body advised Governors that the meetings in the Summer Term 2025 had all been put back a week from previous years. This was to avoid meetings in the first week when the college returns after the half term break and local primary schools are still on holiday.

RESOLVED: That the schedule of meetings for the Academic Year 2024/2025 as circulated be approved.

## **16. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION**

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

## 17. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governors' consideration.

## 18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

i) External Governance Review - The Chairperson advised Governors that the college commenced its external review of governance in May 2024 and was anticipating it to be finalised by mid July 2024. Unfortunately, due to a significant change in personal circumstances of Rob Peacock (External Assessor) it has had to be postponed.

The college will assess the situation at the beginning of the next term and either recommence or recommission the review in due course

ii) Admissions Policy – A copy of the proposed amended Admissions Policy had been circulated to Governor prior to the meeting. The Chairperson outlined the reasons for the amendments and made particular reference to the amendment that would require a reference to be provided by the students secondary school.

RESOLVED: That the amended Admissions Policy be approved.

iii) Miss M Braithwaite advised Governors that she had decided to retire as a Foundation Governor at the end of the academic year and not seek re-appointment. She thanked Dr Smith and Mr Pearson, who had been Principals during her time as Governor at the college. Miss M Braithwaite also thanked the Governors for their support over the last 30 years.

On behalf of the Governing Body the Chairperson thanked Miss M Braithwaite for her dedication and service to the college and wished her all the best for the future.

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

## 19. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 19 November 2024 at 4.30pm.

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_