

AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 19 March 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 B Hickey, Mr G Hynes, Ms A Lindsay, Miss R Lobo, Mr T P McGee, Mr A Martin, Ms J Paton, Mr D Pearson, Dr A Smith, Miss A Smith and Mr M Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms H Donelon (Prospective Foundation Governor)

Mr T Conlon (Clerk to the Governing Body)

Mr T P McGee in the Chair.

1. OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

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

2. INTRODUCTIONS

For the benefit of new members everyone was asked to introduce themselves.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mrs J Miller, Mr A Bailey (Vice Principal) and Mrs D Blackburn (Assistant Principal Finance).

4.CO-OPTED GOVERNOR

RESOLVED: That Ms J Paton be appointed as a Co-opted Governor and that she be appointed to the Resources Committee.

5. PARENT GOVERNOR

It was noted that Ms A Lindsay had been elected as a Parent Governor. It was agreed that she be appointed to the General Purposes and Employment Committees

6. STUDENT GOVERNORS

It was noted that Miss R Lobo and Miss A Smith had been elected as Student Governors. The Chairperson advised Governors that the Student Governors could decide between themselves who will be a member of the General Purposes Committee and the Resources Committee and that both are members of the Teaching and Learning Committee.

7. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

The Chairperson advised Governors that Mr P Horton had resigned as a Foundation Governor due to personal circumstances. Mr Hickey suggested that a card be sent to Mr Horton thanking him for his services to the college.

8. 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.

9 (i) GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED – i) That the minutes of the meetings held on 28 November 2023 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.

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

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

10. (i) COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(i) Audit Committee	12 February 2024
(ii) Resources Committee	13 February 2024
(iii) General Purposes and Employment Committee	23 January 2024
(iv) Teaching and Learning Committee	6 February 2024
(v) Remuneration Committee	13 February 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.

10. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

a) Audit Committee – 12 February 2024

i) Internal Audit Reports – Minute 7

Mr Martin advised Governors that Wylie and Bissett had completed their first two pieces of work

a) Freedom of Information and b) Health and Safety. Both reports had been classified as strong assurance.

ii) A discussion took place on how many first aiders there were in the college. Each medium and high risk department had first aiders within it who tend to deal with incidents within the department and there are around half a dozen general first aiders who are called to incidents around the college. Mr Green added that all the PE staff are trained first aiders having completed the St Johns Ambulance 3 day training course which is refreshed every 3 years. Mr Hickey asked if there were

first aiders on college trips. Mr Green replied that every high risk trip has a first aider, he added that as part of the Enrichment Programme students are also doing first aid.

b) Resources Committee – 13 February 2024.

i) Budget Update – Minute 7

The Governors noted the budget had been re-forecasted at the end of January 2024 and that the budget is running as expected and the projected outturn was quite positive.

ii) Capital Build – Minute 9

Governors noted that the building would not be ready for occupation until around October 2024 half term.

c) General Purposes Committee and Employment Committee – 23 January 2024

i) Admissions 2024/2025 - Minute 7 This would be covered in the Principal's report.

ii) Student Destinations – Minute 8

The Governing Body noted the information on the destination of students who had left the College at the end of the 2022/2023 academic year.

iii) Employment Committee – Gender Pay Report – Minute 5

The Gender Pay Report had been considered and agreed at the Employment Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Gender Pay Report be agreed and that it be submitted to HMRC by the end of March 2024.

d) Teaching and Learning Committee – 6 February 2024

i) Denominational Inspection – Minute 6

Governors noted that the Diocese had informed the college that it would have a Denominational Inspection in the current academic year. This would be either between now and the end of the Spring term or early in the Summer term before the half term break at Whit. The team would consist of two inspectors from the Diocese and one with sixth form college experience. The inspection would not cover adult education, it would focus on 16-19 students during the daytime.

ii) Student Destinations – Minute 8

The Governing Body noted the information on the destination of students who had left the College at the end of the 2022/2023 academic year. Mr Pearson advised Governors that tomorrow at 3.30pm the After Aquinas Event will take place in the college with over 100 employers, universities and outside agencies present. All L6 students and parents have been invited.

e) Remuneration Committee – 13 February 2024

i) Succession Planning – Minute 6

Governors noted the senior management structure at the college and the details of the areas of responsibilities that the Senior Leadership Team covered. Mr Pearson added that he is looking to

broaden the SLT from 6 to 8, with additional new posts at Director level from the teaching staff. He would like to appoint the two new posts to the SLT for the summer term 2024 or for September 2024. It was suggested by Governors that they could be involved in the appointment process.

ii) Joint Management Group – Minute 6

Mr Pearson advised Governors that that he intends to establish four major project groups and will split members of the JMG into the four groups.

iii) Senior Postholders Remuneration – Minute 7

The Committee noted that the pay award for teachers had been 5% payable from 1 September 2023.

The Committee had recorded their thanks and appreciation to Mr Pearson and all the college staff 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.

11. BUDGET 2023/2024 HALF YEAR FORECAST

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the budget had been re-forecast at the end of January 2024. The main points to note are as follows;

- i) The staffing budgets had been re-forecast to include the pay settlement.
- ii) The utilities budget is much lower than last year but remains an unpredictable area.
- iii) The top funding band applies to around 98% of the students at the college and has been increased from £4,642 to £4,753 which would help cover the 6.5% pay award for teachers.
- iv) The high needs budget income has been increased from £350,000 to £475,000.
- v) Bank interest increased from £80,000 to £200,000.
- vi) The outturn forecast has increased from £137,000 to £400,000.
- vii) The budget is running as expected.

RESOLVED: That the budget position for 2023/2024 be noted.

12. BUDGET 2024/2025

The college has not yet received the income allocation from the ESFA for 2024/2025, although most of the factors that make up the budget have been provided.

The funding rates have just been confirmed with an increase of 1.89%. The original forecast was for a 1.80% increase. Initial implication of that change and all other changes to income factors have led to an estimated increase for ESFA income of £720,000.

A major concern has been the funding for the advanced maths premium that funds the growth in the number of students studying maths. Last year the college received £175,000 for the advanced maths premium, most of which was generated from the students studying core maths. This income is now being split to give an advanced maths premium using data for all maths courses except core maths and then a new core maths premium. The college will not qualify for any advanced maths premium as numbers are similar year on year and it is for growth in numbers studying maths. The new core maths premium will give £900 per student for those studying core maths. It would appear that on this basis, that the funding will be similar to 2023/2024.

12. CAPITAL BUILD

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the contractors only moved on site on 12 February 2024 and this means that the building will not be ready for occupation until around the October 2024 half term. Whilst this misses the September 2024 deadline set by the DfE, it is felt that they are relaxed about small overruns. Departments cannot be moved into the building at the start of the new academic year but, it is hoped that the large space on the ground floor can be used as timetabled support for students as soon as it becomes available. Some of the delay has been as a result of the need to redesign the roof structure but only a few minor things are now outstanding.

The curriculum reforms have added some complexity to deciding exactly how the building will be used.

13. (i) PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

That the report of the Principal, copies of which were circulated, was presented and discussed. In introducing his report Mr Pearson advised Governors that there have been a number of significant developments recently. These developments relate to the college's every day practices as well as the long-term curriculum offer.

RESOLVED - That the Principal's report be received.

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

a) Curriculum Reforms

The curriculum reforms will impact on the offer that the college can make to students, with vocational courses either removed or reformed. The college's three biggest vocational courses of Criminology, Law and Business will all go and the college will need to provide suitable alternatives. The changes will take effect for 2025/2026 academic year. It is not clear what a change in government would have on the proposed reforms, it could lead to a delay in the process and a review of policy.

b) Academisation

The college continues to explore the options around becoming an academy. The college continues to meet termly with the Diocese and remains in loose discussions with Xavarian and Holy Cross colleges who are in the Salford Diocese. The expectation is that all schools and colleges will become academies by 2030. As an academy and part of a MAT the college would lose some autonomy. The Diocese are looking at three geographical areas based on Stockport, Telford and Wirral. The Diocese are concerned that the college would be too big a player in any schools MAT structure.

Some concern was expressed about joining an academy with Xavarian and Holy Cross colleges who are not in the Shrewsbury Diocese and how the other colleges could have an influence on how the college is run. It was noted that Loreto in Hulme is run by the Sisters of Loreto, a religious order.

Miss Smith asked for clarification on the relationship of the college and the Diocese. Mr McGee explained how the relation works and how the Diocese differs from a local authority.

Dr Smith added that academisation is Government Policy, it is a recommendation rather than a requirement. It was noted that there are now more academies than schools in our education system. Funding for academies comes directly from central government rather than through the LA.

Mr McGee advised Governors that there are 14 Catholic Sixth Form Colleges in the country. These colleges are more likely to become academies rather than FE colleges because they meet the schools agenda not the skills agenda.

An item will be included on the agenda for the Governors' training session on 8 May 2024 when an update will be provided on how best to proceed if things have progressed.

c) Admissions

Governors noted the information in relation to the admissions process for 2024/2025 with particular reference to the number applications which were 3002, which was the highest number ever received. There had been a large demographic upturn in Stockport and GM. Mr Pearson advised Governors that offers to students had been sent by February half term.

The predicted number for U6 in September 2024 is 1100 students. The maximum that the college can comfortably cope with is 2400 students. Therefore, the aim is to have a L6 of 1344 for September 2024. This would give a total of around 2450 students by census date in October 2024, which is 35 above this year's numbers.

e) Staffing

Mr Pearson reported on the resignations and appointments that had been made to the college. He advised Governors that the recruitment of staff has become more challenging in the last year or so but was hopeful that the college could continue to find high quality staff. He thanked all staff for their commitment, diligence, and hard work.

f) Strategic Priorities

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college are looking to utilise experienced college managers to continue to focus on the development of each student in terms of spiritual, academic and personal journey. The college are exploring if there are better ways to develop good habits and behaviour in students that will help them be better prepared for their next steps. The work will build on the recent project focused work that has helped to achieve excellent outcomes over the last two years.

Governors commented on the big change that students face when leaving school to join the college and then on moving to university. Students need to work more independently. Ms Lindsay felt that it was important to get parents and carers on board to support their child. Mr Pearson agreed and added that those students who struggle may not have good support at home. He added that the college may produce a video for parents on how to help the child through college. Miss Smith added that from a student's perspective getting parents involved on how to help their child with their studies would be good. She added that the first few weeks can be damaging to a student's mental health but she also said that she had heard a lot of good things about the college before starting. Dr Smith added that colleges prepare students for university better than schools.

Ms Donelon felt that from a personal point of view it was more difficult moving from school to college than from college to university. She added that it would be useful for students to be made aware of where they can go for help, Ms Paton said that the first few weeks at college were quite difficult. From a staff point of view Mr Harris added that it is not just at home but how free time is

used within the college. Mr Hickey advised Governors that schools are trying to encourage independence but transition from school to college is difficult.

It was agreed that an item be included on the agenda for the Teaching and Learning Committee for this to be explored further and that a member of the Pastoral Team be asked to attend.

h) Adult Education

Governors noted that both the academic and leisure course had continued in the Spring term. A teacher and a student both have a linocut print in the Manchester Open Exhibition at Home Cinema, until the end of April 2024.

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

Art and Design, 3D, Graphics, Careers, Chaplaincy, Computer Science, Core RE, Duke of Edinburgh Award -Gold, Economics, English, Enrichment, Geography, Geology, India Project, IT and Computing, Law, Learning Support, Mathematics, Media and Film, Performing Arts, Physics, Politics, Pathways and Sports departments, Uniformed Public Services.

The Governors thanked Mr Pearson for his informative report and asked that he pass on to all staff the Governors appreciation of the excellent work that they are doing at the college.

14.POLICY REVIEWS

Governors were asked to volunteer to review the policies detailed below and to report back to the appropriate committee. The following was agreed:

<u>Policy</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Governor</u>
Financial Regulations	Resources	Mary Braithwaite
Anti Bribery	Audit	Tony Martin
Fraud and Corruption	Audit	Tony Martin
Hospitality and Gifts	Audit	Hazel Dove
Whistleblowing	Audit	Hazel Dove
Safer Recruitment	Employment	Tom McGee
Staff Code of Conduct	Employment	Ambrose Smith
Equality Diversity and Inclusion	General Purposes	Michael Taylor
Data Protection	General Purposes	Leo Byrne
IT acceptable use including AI	General Purposes	Ambrose Smith
Attendance	Teaching and Learning	Ambrose Smith
Disciplinary (Students)	Teaching and Learning	Ged Hynes
Communication policy	Across all committees	Tom McGee

The policies would be sent to Governors prior to the Summer Term committee meetings.

15. GOVERNOR TRAINING SESSION

Governors noted that the training session was scheduled for 8 May 2024 at 4.30pm. It was agreed that the following items would be included in the training session.

- a) Curriculum Reform
- b) External Review of Governance
- c) Academisation Update
- d) Update on Capital Build
- e) KCSIE

16. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

The Chairperson advised Governors that the only action since the last meeting he had undertaken the following action:

- a) Had received and responded to Mr Horton following his resignation as a Foundation Governor.
- b) The implementation of an Appraisal system for the Principal and Vice Principal.
- c) Had dealt with an appeal against the exclusion of a student from the college and had upheld the original decision.
- d) He had agreed the college's Accountability Statement, copies of which had been circulated to Governors,

17. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governor's consideration.

18. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Governors were invited to the end of term Mass that would be on Tuesday 26 March 2024 at 3.30pm.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- a) Governor Training Session - 8 May 2024 at 4.30pm
- b) Summer Term Meeting - 25 June 2024 at 4.30pm

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____