AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 25 November 2025
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Ms E Bradbury, Ms J Dommett. Mrs C H Dove, Mr B Hickey, Mrs C Houghton, Mr M King, Mr A Martin, Mr T P McGee, Mr J O'Sullivan, Mrs T Ryan, Dr A Smith, Mr M Taylor and Mrs H Watts.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs D Blackburn	Assistant Principal (Finance)
Ms C Phillips	Assistant Principal (Curriculum and Quality)
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 Mr T P McGee be elected Chairperson for the ensuing academic year.

Mr T P McGee in the Chair.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

For the benefit of new Governors everyone introduced themselves. Governors noted that this would be the last meeting that Mr M King would attend as a Student Governor. He was thanked for his contribution to the Governing Body and was asked to pass on to to Matilda Warren O'Niell the Governing Body's thanks for her contribution to the Governing Body.

3. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRPERSON

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That Mr G Hynes be elected Vice Chairperson for the ensuing academic year.

4. OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

The Chairperson referred to the passing of Judy Miller who had been a Foundation Governor at the college since April 2015. As a mark of respect Governors held a moments silence and a moment of reflection was led by Mr T P McGee.

5. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

The Chairperson advised Governors of the following appointments:

a) Mr J O'Sullivan and Mrs T Ryan have been appointed as a Foundation Governors.
b) Ms E Bradbury and Mrs C Houghton have been elected as Staff Governors
c) Mrs H Watts has been elected as a Parent Governor.
d) Ms J Dommett (Principal)

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr L Byrne, Ms H Donelon, Mr G Hynes, Ms J Paton, Miss M Warren O'Niell and Mr A Bailey (Vice Principal).

7. ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTER OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS/CODE OF CONDUCT

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.

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. Mrs Watts as Headteacher at New Mills High School declared an interest in item 25 a Review of the College's Admission Policy.

9. 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.

10. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

A copy of the proposed committee membership had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. Governors were asked to consider becoming a member of the Audit Committee.

RESOLVED: a) That the committee membership as circulated be approved, subject to a) the deletion of Mrs Miller on the Audit, General Purposes and Employment Committees. b) that Mr J O'Sullivan be appointed as Health and Safety Governor.

11. CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Catholic Education Service (CES) had recommended that Catholic Sixth Form Colleges adopt the AOC Code of Governance. Governors were reminded that is a condition of funding that a Code of Governance is adopted. The Clerk was asked to forward a copy of the Code of Governance to new Governors.

RESOLVED: That the AOC Further Education Code of Governance be adopted by the college.

12. GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2025, 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.

13. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

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

14. COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(i) Audit Committee	3 November 2025
(ii) Resources Committee	November 2025
(iii) General Purposes and Employment Committee	4 October 2025
(iv) Teaching and Learning Committee	7 October 2025

(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 – 3 November 2025

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) Internal Audit Presentation on ILR – Minute 5

Mr Martin reported that Wbg gave a presentation on the process they follow when undertaking an Individual Learning Record (ILR) audit. Ms Dommett informed Governors that the ILR return for 2025 had been sent to the DfE.

ii) Draft Statutory Accounts – Minute 8

Governors noted that the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2025 would be considered at this meeting.

iii) External Audit Completion Report – Minute 9

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 2025.

Murray Smith LLP felt that the college had been well prepared for the audit and that they had been impressed by its organisation. Mr O'Sullivan sought clarification on how the Teachers Pension audit had been undertaken.

iv) Risk Management – Minute 10

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

v) Audit Committee Annual Report – Minute 12

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

vi) Co-opted Governors – Minute 15

Ms Garratt had indicated that she would like to continue as a Co-opted Governor, whilst Mr Anwar had indicated that he would not be seeking re-appointment as a Co-opted Governor on the Audit Committee.

RESOLVED: That Ms Garratt be appointed as a Co-opted Governor on the Audit Committee for the period 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2029.

b) Resources Committee – 4 November 2025

i) Health and Safety Annual Report 2024/2025 – Minute 8

Governors noted that the number of accidents was 10 compared to 9 in the previous year. One incident had been reported under RIDDOR and 12.5 days had been lost compared to no days in the previous year. There had been 1 day's absence due to work related ill health compared to 4 in the previous year.

ii) Management Accounts – Minute 7

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

iii) Budget 2025/2026 – Minute 8

Governors noted that the Budget for 2025/2026 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 2025 would be considered at this meeting.

c) General Purposes and Employment Committee – 14 October 2025

i) Admissions 2025/2026 – Minute 6

Governors noted that details of the number of students on roll were included in the Principal's Report. There are was 2563 which is a growth of 33 students. The number of students comprised of 1343 in L6, 1220 in U6 and 33 Pathway students. and that the college is funded for 2540 students.

iii) Admissions 2026/2027 – Minute 7

Ms Dommett advised Governors that the Open Days had been held on Saturday 20 September 2025 and 18 October 2025. 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 2026/2027 is 30 November 2025. All category 1 students will have a telephone interview before Christmas 2025. Applications from category 2 students who have submitted their application forms by 30 November 2025 will then be assessed. All applicants will be notified whether they are being considered for interview. Students who are to receive further consideration will receive a letter before Christmas 2025 inviting them to an interview in January/February 2026.

A report will be presented to the GP Committee in January 2026.

d) Teaching and Learning Committee – 7 October 2025

i) Results Overview – Minute 7

Governors noted that the 2025 results at the college had been outstanding. The number of high grades had increased by 1% where the college is significantly (5%) above the national averages for this and subsequent grade points. The college had also out performed statistical neighbours and were pleased with an excellent set of results. There have been some updates to raw and value-added results (A level) following reviews of marking and they are included in the Principal's report. A number of Governors have attended Quality Review meetings this term.

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

ii) Curriculum Issues – Minute 12

Ms Phillips outlined the latest position in relation to the proposed Post 16 Level 3 Reforms. Under the current Government plans September 2026 is the last time that the college can offer some of the Applied General subjects it currently offers. The courses that will be affected are Applied Business, Law and Criminology the 3 biggest AGQ courses at the college.

The recent announcement of V level qualifications may mean that AAQ, BTEC and CTEC qualifications may cease. The college feels that it is a strong position to respond to the changes in curriculum.

Ms Phillips advised Governors that an update will be provided at the next Teaching and Learning Committee on 3 February 2026.

16. APPROVAL OF STATUTORY ACCOUNTS

A copy of the College's Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2025 had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. Both the Audit Committee and the Resources Committee had discussed these at their November 2025 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 2025 Mrs Blackburn reported on the key aspects of the Statutory Accounts.

The college's financial health would be reported as "outstanding" to the DfE in December 2025.

RESOLVED: That the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ending 31 July 2025 be approved and that the Chairperson be authorised to sign them on behalf of the Governing Body.

17. BUDGET 2025/2026

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the main changes to note since the budget was approved in June 2025 were:

i) The budget will be re-forecasted in January 2026.
ii) Pay Awards – the teachers pay award has been agreed at 4% and would be paid to staff in November backdated to 1 September 2025. Dr Smith asked if there was a grant to help with the cost. Mrs Blackburn replied that there was no grant and the cost of the pay award would have to be met from within the college's budget.
iii) Employer's National Insurance Grant - The grant was to cover April 2025 to March 2026 but it was agreed with the external auditors that the full grant would be included in the 2025/2026 budget. It had been confirmed that the grant will continue from April 2026 to March 2027.
iv) The minimum living wage will increase in April 2026.
v) Expenditure on IT will be increased to cover a) Wireless infrastructure, b) to review solutions for backing up data held in college in line with cyber security considerations and c) new tills in the canteen.
vi) High Needs income has still not been finalised.

The budget would be reviewed in January 2026

RESOLVED: That the budget position be noted.

18. GOVERNING BODY SELF ASSESSMENT 2025

A copy of the details of the Governors Self – Assessment returns for the academic year 2024/2025 had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised Governors that the average overall score was similar to last year and was around 4.8. He thanked Governors for their support in completing the Self – Assessment forms.

Governors were encouraged to have a look at the webinar sessions arranged by the Diocese and 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 2024/2025 be received.

19. GOVERNORS ATTENDANCE RECORD 2024/2025

Details of the Governors attendance at both Governing Body meetings and Committee meetings during the academic year 2024/2025 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 2024/2025 be approved.

21. i) PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

That the report of the Principal, copies of which were circulated, was presented and discussed. The report was supplemented with an additional booklet "A Celebration of Catholic Life at Aquinas – Autumn Term 2024/2025". Ms Dommett advised Governors that the committees review and consider the many issues that are highlighted in his report.

Ms Dommett advised Governors that her report was in a slightly different format from the previous Principal's reports. The Principal's report will provide a key point of reference for the challenges that the college is facing. It aims to provide easily referable data and ensure GDPR compliance. The format of the report is a work in progress and will develop over time. Governors are asked for their comments on the new format and if there anything that they would like to be included, they should let her know.

RESOLVED - That the Principal's report be received.

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

a) Examination Results 2025 - There have been some updates to raw and value-added results (A level) following reviews of marking and about 45 students grades had changed as a result. Vocational qualification results were good and GCSE resits were significantly better than General FE colleges and the national average.

b) Admissions -The number of students on roll on the census date in October the number was 2563 students a growth of 33 students which is slightly smaller than anticipated. 26 Students were admitted from the waiting list. Adult Education numbers remain steady.

c) Strategic Issues – the college has 6 priorities for the 2025/2026 academic year and they were as follows:

i) to sustain outcomes and improve performance in essay based subjects

ii) enhance student recruitment

ii) adapt college SAR and QIP processes to support Ofsted

v) navigate the acadamisation landscape

v) national decisions around curriculum reform, V level to replace BTEC

vi) strengthening provision for pathways, adult education and skills

The Catholic Life of the college would always be at the forefront of what the college does.

d) Safeguarding – Details of the number of safeguarding cases that the college had faced during the period August – November 2025 were provided, broken down by area of concern. Governors noted that there had been 94 safeguarding concerns involving 62 students. There were no cases of radicalisation/prevent referrals. The main areas were mental health (28) and external agency contact (26). The numbers are very low considering the number of students on roll at the college. In future it is planned to give a term by term breakdown of numbers so that Governors can see the peaks and troughs. There are more boys than girls experiencing safeguarding problems.

e) Attendance – A summary of attendance across the whole of the college was provided. In comparison to the previous year, whole college attendance is up by 3%. In future it is planned to give a term by term breakdown of numbers.

f) Academisation - The college continues to have informal discussions with Holy Cross and Xavarian colleges about a cross Diocese MAT. The Chair of Governors and the Principal are meeting with Richard Woods, Director of Education at Shrewsbury Diocese to ascertain whether or not the Diocese would support a cross Diocese MAT.

g) Staffing - Governors noted the staffing appointments that had been made for September 2025 along with the leavers at the end of the Summer term 2025.

h) SEND – There are 28 High Needs students on roll in mainstream. There are 43 mainstream students who have an EHCP. There are 33 students in the Pathway department all with high needs and an EHCP. There is a lot of conflicting data around SEND and information will be reported to Governors more rigorously in future.

i) Adult Education – The college is still awaiting confirmation from the GMCA on funding for some academic courses.

j) The Careers termly report was noted.

Mrs Watts added that she found the report very informative and asked does the safeguarding report reflect what is actually going on in college. Ms Dommett replied that the college has written a safeguarding assembly for students. Senior tutors, Counselling team, safeguarding team are all involved. It is felt that students can talk to staff and raise concerns

In addition the following booklets were circulated: Positive Feedback, Reflection and Prayer booklets.

(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 Report - The report covered the first term of the 2025/2026 academic year and gave details of the various activities that had taken place at the college including the following:

i) Prayer and Celebration of the Eucharist ii) Pilgrims of Hope -Jubilee Year Moments

iii) Lower sixth Induction to the Chapel and Catholic Life Assemblies iv) Youth SVP and CAFOD – working the Common Good v) Theme Weeks vii) Autumn Retreat 2024, vii) Welcome Mass Celebrations

viii) A day of Culture at Aquinas

c) Core RE and RS

d) "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 the stories of student successes in adversity, overcoming health issues, U17's national volleyball team, Swimming in the British and English Championships, shortlisted as a finalist for QS Impact Awards 2025, represented England in the Junior Home Counties Fell Race Championships, reaching the final of a national economics essay writing competition, entered SFCA art competition and work made it onto the website link.

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

Adult Education, Biology, Business, Applied Business, Economics, Careers, Chemistry, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Enrichment, Euroweek, Exams, India Project, Law, Learning Support, Mathematics, Media, Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Pathways, Performing Arts, Physics, Politics, Psychology and Sport.

23. SAFEGUARDING POLICY/KCSIE

Ms Dommett advised Governors that the amended Safeguarding Policy was on the Governors Portal and changes to the policy had been highlighted. She also advised Governors that the general statement is line with that produced by Stockport MBC and incorporated the statutory changes. Particular attention was drawn to the sections on AI, Cyber Bullying, Use of Mobile Phones. If Governors had any comments or required any further information they should contact Ms Dommett.

24. 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. The Audit Committee at it's meeting on 3 November 2025 had recommended the approval of Risk Management Annual Report for 2024/2025 and the amended Risk Management Policy.

RESOLVED: That Risk Management Annual Report for 2024/2025 and the amended Risk Management Policy be approved.

25. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Governors were advised that the Audit Committee had considered its Annual Report for the financial year 2024/2025 at it's meeting on 3 November 2025, a copy of which had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting.

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

26. ADMISSIONS POLICY REVIEW

Ms Dommett introduced a revised Admissions Policy which had been circulated to all

Governors prior to the meeting. She outlined the reasons why it was felt necessary to amend the current policy. Particular reference was made in relations to including a Waiting List, Definition of Terms and a re-wording of section in relation to students with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) to fit in with the Code of Practice.

A discussion took place on Category 1.D in relation to the length of time that should count as the qualifying period for siblings. After a full discussion it was agreed that it remain unchanged at 6 years. There were no other changes proposed to the Categories 1 and 2.

It was agreed that a section would be included on an Appeals Procedure for a student who had not been offered a place at the college. Ms Dommett undertook to see if it was a legal requirement to have an appeal procedure and would report back to the next Governing Body meeting. The policy would be implemented for the 2027/2028 academic year. However, before the policy could be introduced there would need to be a period of consultation.

27. GOVERNOR'S VISIT FORM

Ms Dommett introduced a draft Governor's College Monitoring Visit form which had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. She reminded Governors that it was a recommendation form the External Governance Review that a Governor's Monitoring Visitform be introduced.

RESOLVED: That the Governor's Monitoring Visit form be approved.

28. EMAIL ADDRESSES

Governors were reminded that will no longer be able to use personal email addresses for college business and must use their college email address. A system will be put in place so that a message will be sent to the personal email address asking Governors to check the college email account. In addition a two factor authentication will be implemented using the Microsoft authenticator app on their mobile phone.

Members from the IT team will attend Governing Body meetings to assist Governors with any difficulties that they may be experiencing.

29. AUTUMN TERM NEWSLETTER FROM FE COMMISSIONER, SHELAGH LEGRAVE.

Governors noted the contents of the FE Commissioner's Autumn Term 2025 Newsletter.

30. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

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

31. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governors consideration.

32. OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE OSCAR ROMERO BUILDING

Governors were reminded that the official opening of the Oscar Romero building is on Wednesday 26 November 2025 at 6.00pm to 7.30pm

33. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Any Other Business.

34. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17 March 2026 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____ Date_____

Chairperson