

## AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 23 November 2021

Time: 4.30pm

Venue: Virtual

### GOVERNORS PRESENT

Dr P Beatty, Miss M Braithwaite, Mr L Byrne, Mrs C H Dove, Mr C Green, Mr R Harris, Mr B Hickey, Mr P Horton, Mr G Hynes, Mrs C Knights, Mr J Mairs, Mr A Martin, Cllr T P McGee, Mrs J Miller, Mr D Pearson, Dr A Smith, Mr M Taylor.

### IN ATTENDANCE

Mr A Bailey	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

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr S Coker and Mr D Quansah.

#### 5. INTRODUCTIONS

For the benefit of the new Governors everyone introduced themselves.

#### 6. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

i) Governors noted that Mr C Green and Mr R Harris had been elected as Staff Governors for a period of 4 years ending on 31 August 2025.

ii) Governors noted that Mrs C Knights had been elected as a Parent Governor for a period of 3 years 31 August 2024.

iii) It was agreed that Dr P Beatty and Mr J Mairs be appointed as Co-opted Governors for a period of 4 years 31 August 2025.

iv) Committee Membership:

a) It was agreed that Mr C Green and Mr J Mairs would be members of the Resources Committee.

b) It was agreed that Mr R Harris would be a member of the Teaching and Learning Committee.

c) It was agreed that Mrs C Knights would be a member of the General Purposes Committee and the Employment Committee.

v) It was agreed that Mr I Anwar and Ms M Garratt be re appointed as Co-opted Governors on the Audit Committee for a period of 3 years starting on 1 January 2022.

vi) Governor Vacancies - It was noted that there was a vacancy for a Foundation Governor and it was agreed that the skills matrix that governors had completed would be used to identify any skills gap.

## 7. 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.

## 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.

There were no interests declared.

## 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. 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.

## 11. GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021, 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.

## 12. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the Governing Body minutes.

### 13. COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(i) Audit Committee	8 November 2021
(ii) Resources Committee	9 November 2021
(iii) General Purposes and Employment Committee	6 July and 12 October 2021
(iv) Teaching and Learning Committee	5 October 2021

(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.

### 14. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

#### a) Audit Committee – 8 November 2021

Cllr 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. This was a new requirement under the revised Audit Code of Practice.

#### i) Draft Statutory Accounts – Minute 7

Governors noted that the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2021 would be considered at this meeting.

#### ii) Internal Audit Annual Report for 2020/2021

It had been decided that Internal audit visits would be suspended in 2020/21 as the internal auditors could not attend on site. As a result, the college developed in house processes and procedures to give the Audit Committee the assurances that it needed to give an opinion to the Governing Body.

#### iii) Financial Statements Audit and Management Letter – Minute 11

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 2021. There were 4 management letter points that had been draw to the Audit Committee's attention.

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) Fraud Log Book – Minute 18

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

vii) Internal Audit proposals for 2022/2023

Whilst the provision of an internal audit service is not mandatory it gives greater assurance to the Audit Committee so that an Annual Audit Opinion can be given to the Governing Body. The college had not gone out to tender for the provision of an internal audit service for some time, the appointment had been on an annual basis on a recommendation from the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee had recommended that the college should go out to tender for the provision of internal audit for 2022/2023.

Dr Smith felt that it was appropriate for the college to go out to tender. Cllr McGee added that internal audit gives greater assurance to the Governing Body. Mr Hickey also felt that it gave protection to Mrs Blackburn and her colleagues.

RESOLVED: That the college go out to tender for the provision of an internal audit service for 2022/2023.

b) Resources Committee – 9 November 2021

i) Financial Assessments and Governors Dashboard – Minute 6 (d)

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the college did not fall within the scope of the Office for Students in relation to the PGCE course it operates on a franchise basis with Bolton University.

ii) Health and Safety Report 2020/2021 – Minute 7

Governors noted that the number of incidents and staff absences due to illness and that the number of days lost was 42 compared in the previous year to 41 days and this related to 4 members 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 2021 would be considered at this meeting.

c) General Purposes and Employment Committee – 6 July and 12 October 2021

i) Analysis of Student Withdrawal – Minute 8 6 July 2021

Governors noted the information in relation students leaving that effected the retention data and the number of all leavers in the academic year 2020/2021

ii) 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.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that there had been a good response to testing, however, there were 60 positive cases at the start of term who started in isolation. This number went down to as low as 10 in the following weeks but there has been a slight rallying recently and there are now 41 cases of Covid with those students isolating. If the number increased to around 100 the college would have to re-introduce the wearing of mask in college. The numbers at the college are similar to those in the North West and with similar colleges in ACVIC. The college is no longer required to undertake the track and trace process of students to determine whether they need to isolate. There are 9 members of staff, mainly support staff absent due to Covid.

ii) Admissions 2021/2022 – Minute 7

Governors noted that at the start of the term the actual number of students on roll was 2484 including Pathways. The latest figures are 2427 with a L6 of 1290 and U6 of 1112. In addition, there are 25 pathway students.

iii) Admissions 2022/2023 – Minute 8

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 Day had been scheduled for Saturday 25 September 2021 and Open Evenings in October 2021 but these had been cancelled because of Covid 19. These would now be virtual events. 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 2022/2023 is 30 November 2021. All category 1 students will have a telephone interview before Christmas 2021. Applications from category 2 students who have submitted their application forms by 30 November 2021 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 2021 inviting them to an interview in January/February 2022 The telephone interviews for category 1 students have already started.

iv) Committee Terms of Reference – Minute 9

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

v) Employment Committee 12 October 2021 – Minute 6 Gender Pay Gap Report

Mr Pearson advised Governors that it is now a statutory requirement for us to undertake an annual gender pay gap analysis. The analysis is undertaken at an identified period of the year to provide a snapshot of the college position. At the identified time the college had 235 staff including invigilators and the split was 165 (70%) females and 70 (30%) males. The college has a teaching staff split of 69% female and 31% male. Females on average earn more than males due to the fact that there are more females than males on management points. The snapshot date for the public sector was 31 March 2020.

#### d) Teaching and Learning Committee – 5 October 2021

##### Impact of Covid 19 – Minute 6

Dr Smith advised Governors that a report on the impact of Covid 19 on teaching and learning had created a huge workload for staff but 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 Teacher Assessed Grade (TAGs). There had been 36 initial enquiries from students about the grade they had been given. 22 students went on to request Stage 1 reviews (Centre led), of which 6 then progressed to stage 2. Out of the 6 Stage 2 Appeals, one was upheld (Chemistry C to B), three were dismissed and the outcome of 2 is not yet known.

A discussion took place on the future of BETCs and it was noted that the SFCA had set up a petition and had asked colleges to support it. Mr Pearson agreed to send out the link to Governors. Any change has been deferred for at least a year. T levels were being promoted to replace vocational courses. The government policy is that at age 16 students choose one of the following a) academic, b) training or c) vocational – a new T level qualification with work place experience to replace BTECs. Governors noted that about 20% of the courses at the college are currently BTECs. Mr Hickey stated that BTECs were resilient and had been around for a long time. Mr Pearson added that single BTECs may survive but students could struggle to get university offers based on BTEC results. Less than 2000 students nationally took T levels last year.

##### iii) Section 48 Inspections – Minute 9

Governors were advised that Mr Hickey had agreed to replace Miss Braithwaite as a member of the college's Mission and Ethos Group. It was felt that Mr Hickey's previous experience would be useful to the group. Mr Pearson added that the college could be inspected next year.

#### 15. GOVERNING BODY SELF ASSESSMENT 2021

A copy of the details of the Governors Self – Assessment returns for the academic year 2020/2021 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. Particular reference was made to the comments on the Governing Body could benefit from more diversity. The Chairperson advised Governors that the only control that they have over the appointment of Governors is in relation to the 2 co-opted governors. It was noted that Covid 19 had limited the Governors involvement with the college.

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.

Mr Pearson added that the college would need to make arrangements for the external review of governance at the college. Peer to peer review is not considered good practice. It was agreed that the college would see what arrangements other Catholic colleges are making and that an item would be included on the agenda for the next Governing Body meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Governors Self - Assessment returns for the academic year 2020/2021 be received.

16. GOVERNORS ATTENDANCE RECORD 2020/2021

Details of the Governors attendance at both Governing Body meetings and Committee meetings during the academic year 2020/2021 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 2020/2021 be approved.

17. APPROVAL OF STATUTORY ACCOUNTS

A copy of the College's Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2021 had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. Both the Audit Committee and the Resources Committee had discussed these at their November 2021 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 2021. A note had been included in the Audit Committee's Annual Report about the controls in place at the college as a result of internal audits being suspended. 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 2021.

RESOLVED: That the College's Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 July 2021 be approved and that the Chairperson be authorised to sign them on behalf of the Governing Body

18. BUDGET 2021/2022

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the budget for 2021/2022 was approved at the last meeting of the Governing Body with a surplus of £352,000. The high needs income has been confirmed at a higher level than the budget by about £80,000. National Insurance will increase from 13.8% to 15.05% from April 2022, which in a full year would be between £40,000 and £50,000 but will only account for one third of the year in 2021/2022. The pay awards for teaching staff is less than what had been budgeted for, the support staff pay award has not yet been agreed.

The Chairperson asked what had been the impact on the college of increasing energy prices. Mrs Blackburn replied that the tender for energy supply goes out to tender at this time of the year. The increase could be significant and the college will need to monitor the usage. There has been changes to the college lighting which could save £60,000 and the college had moved to purchasing more chromebooks rather than replacing desktop computers which reduces power usage. Mr Pearson added that non pay costs account for a small amount of the college budget.

RESOLVED: That the budget position be noted.

19. (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.

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

a) Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG)

The college had successfully completed the TAG process which had resulted in strong outcomes for students. There had been a small number of appeals that were quickly resolved.

b) Admissions 2021/2022

Enrolment was higher than expected and the college recruited 150 more students than the target number. All students were timetabled on their preferred course and costs have remained within the budget.

The new cohort of student have found it difficult returning to classroom-based teaching. It is felt that there is a deficit in their skills, knowledge and experience that the college needs to address to get them ready for university and other final destinations. It is important to keep the efficiencies that have been gained from lockdown. Students were interviewed over the telephone before the term started. The college obtains student feedback to ensure that the wellbeing of students is monitored. There has been an increase in students presenting with anxiety and other mental health concerns that has led us to increase the amount of counselling opportunities available.

Mrs Knights advised Governors that her daughter was in L6 and was glad to get back to some form of normality. Mr Harris added that staff were carrying on as normal and were keen to get back to meeting the students.

c) Admissions 2022/2023

Dr Smith noted that the remote applications 2021/2022 were similar to for 2020/2021 with 2300 applications for around 1200 places. Applications for 2022/2023 at this stage are similar to last year. Mr Pearson advised Governors that the over recruitment for 2021/2022 was mainly from category 1 students with a 7/8% increase. He also added that Xaverian and Loreto had also over recruited. The demographics show that the number of students will go up for the next few years. Both Mr Hickey and Dr Smith congratulated the college on how it had coped under very difficult circumstances.

d) Electrical Fault

The college suffered a major electrical fault early into the term which resulted in all electricity to the college being cut off. This happened on a Friday afternoon and all students were sent home. The college was unable to restore power over the weekend and found that the switch needed replacing. The IT servers had to be taken down safely from the back up power. There was also a significant amount of food in freezers and fridges which could not be kept refrigerated.



The facilities staff and everyone else involved did extremely well to resolve the issues and temporary power was provided by a large diesel generator on site for two weeks. The switch has been refurbished and is being monitored until a new replacement arrives.

#### e) Covid

In September the Covid number peaked with 60 positive student cases. This dropped down to 10 but there are currently around 20 student cases. The impact on staff has been minimal with only a couple of staff off at any one time.

Mr Green advised governors that he started work at the college during the first lockdown and was impressed with the resilience of everyone to ensure that students get the best possible experience.

#### f) Academisation

Legislation is being put in place to allow Catholic Sixth Form Colleges to become academies. Whilst there are some multi academy trusts across the Diocese, the Diocese are not currently in favour of large scale academisation across the board. Consequently, Diocesan schools and colleges are not being encouraged to seek academy status. It was agreed that an item be included on the agenda for the Training session in May 2022.

#### g) Inspections

The college was last Ofsted inspected in January 2017 and it is understood that there is a backlog of about two years, with outstanding college coming in scope once again. Therefore, the college needs to be planning for an inspection within the next two years.

The college could also have a Denominational Inspection by the Diocese in the near future.

#### h) Staffing

Governors noted the staffing appointments that had been made for September 2021 along with the leavers at the end of the Summer term 2021.

i) Governors noted the reports from the following areas:

j) Adult Education, Careers, Mental Health promotion day, Various trips and visits that had been undertaken, Art and Design, Law, Maths, Performing Arts, Science and Sports teams.

## 20. 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.

Dr Beatty asked if the policy covered such things as the recent electricity breakdown. At the moment it is not clear what caused the problem. Mr Green added that more voltage than normal came through the college site, a power surge elsewhere could have been the cause of the problem. The college had no liability for the cut in supply elsewhere.

Dr Beatty asked if he could have a copy of the report from Electricity North West when it is received. Mrs Blackburn replied that the Disaster Recovery Plan is being reviewed.

RESOLVED: That Risk Management Annual Report for 2020/2021 and the amended Risk Management Policy be approved.

#### 21. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Governors were advised that the Audit Committee had considered its Annual Report for the financial year 2020/2021, a copy of which had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting.

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

#### 22. GENERAL PURPOSES AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

RESOLVED: That the revised General Purposes and Employment Committee Terms of Reference be approved.

#### 23. SAFEGUARDING POLICY

A copy of the revised Safeguarding Policy had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting with the changes highlighted. Mr Bailey thanked Governors for the feedback that they had provided to the initial draft policy. Many of the suggestions made had been included in the revised policy. Mrs Dove thanked Mr Bailey for including the college's Mission Statement in the policy.

RESOLVED: That the revised Safeguarding Policy be approved.

#### 24. 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.

#### 25. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

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

#### 26. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governors consideration.

#### 27. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Future Meetings – It was agreed that for the Spring Term the Governing Body and the Audit Committee would continue to be held remotely, all other committees would meet in person at the college.

b) New Governors – The Chairperson hoped that the new Governors had found their first meeting to be informative and interesting.

28. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8 March 2022 at 4.30pm.

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Terry Conlon  
(Clerk to the Governors)