

## AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 21 March 2023

Time: 4.30pm

Venue: College

### GOVERNORS PRESENT

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

### IN ATTENDANCE

Mr A Bailey (Vice Principal)  
Mrs D Blackburn (Assistant Principal Finance)  
Mr T Conlon (Clerk to the Governing Body)

Cllr T P McGee in the Chair.

#### 1. OPENING PRAYER

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

#### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr R Harris, Mrs J Miller and from Mr G Hynes for his late arrival.

#### 3. STUDENT GOVERNORS

It was noted that Mr I Ishaq and Mr M Matthew had been elected as Student Governors.

#### 4. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

The Chairperson advised Governors that Mr J Mairs had resigned as a Co-opted Governor due to work commitments.

#### 5. 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.

#### 6. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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. INDIA TRIP

Priya Bradshaw made a presentation to Governors on the visit by 26 students to India from 12 -23 February 2023. It was the first time since Covid that a visit had been made. The college have been organising trips to India since 2005.

More information can be found in the Principal's Report to Governors.

Governors thanked Ms Bradshaw for her interesting and informative presentation.

## 8 (i) GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED – i) That the minutes of the meetings held on 29 November 2022 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.

## 8. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

### a) Governing Body Self-Assessment 2022 – Minute 15

Cllr McGee introduced a paper that had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting that responded to the points raised in Governing Body Self-Assessment review for 2022. Governors noted the responses.

Cllr McGee reminded Governors that the college needs to be ready for an Ofsted inspection that is likely to take place before the end of May 2023. Dr Smith advised Governors that the Headteacher unions had asked that the inspections be paused following an incident where a Headteacher had committed suicide following an inspection.

### b) Governors Email Addresses – Minute 25

Mr Pearson advised Governors that progress was being made on how Governors can access a college email address. A notification will be sent to a Governors personal email address advising them that there is a message in their college email address. Mr Bailey added that Governors would need the college email address to access Google Drive. Information will be sent to Governors and a training session would be held to help Governors familiarise themselves with the new system.

## 9. (i) COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(i) Audit Committee	13 February 2023
(ii) Resources Committee	14 February 2023
(iii) General Purposes and Employment Committee	24 January 2023
(iv) Teaching and Learning Committee	7 February 2023

(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 COMMITTEE MINUTES

### a) Audit Committee – 13 February 2023

#### i) Internal Audit Reports – Minute 7

Mr Martin advised Governors that Wylie and Bissett had completed their first two pieces of work a) Overall Financial Controls and b) Corporate Governance. Both reports had been classified as strong assurance.

#### ii) Risk Register – Minute 9

The Audit Committee had recommended that individual committees be made aware of risks that come under their remit. It was agreed that an item would be included on the agenda for the committees to highlight the areas of risk.

### b) Resources Committee – 14 February 2023.

#### i) Budget Update – Minute 7

The Governors noted the budget had been re-forecasted at the end of January 2023 and that the budget is running as expected.

### c) General Purposes Committee and Employment Committee – 24 January 2023

#### i) Admissions 2022/2023 - Minute 7

Governors noted the information in relation to the admissions process for 2023/2024 with particular reference to the number applications from category 2 students which was the highest number ever received and was up by 250 from last year, which was a low year. Mr Pearson advised Governors that offers to students had been sent by February half term.

The predicted number for U6 in September 2023 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 2023. This would give a total of around 2400 students by census date in October 2023.

#### 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 2021/2022 academic year.

#### iii) Employment Committee – Minute 5 (b)

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the issues of a teacher on long term sickness had been resolved.

### d) Teaching and Learning Committee – 7 February 2023

#### i) Denominational Inspection – Minute 6

Governors noted that the Diocese had informed the college that it would not have a Denominational Inspection in the current academic year. The Diocese are behind with training inspectors.

ii) Review of Learning at the College – Minute 9 (iii)

Dr Smith advised Governors that a training session had been held for members of the Teaching and Learning Committee on 8 March 2023. The session was focussed on the Learning and Progress Cycle and the Aquinas Teaching Essentials at every level of planning and delivery: subject, lesson and activity. The session had been interesting and informative.

10. BUDGET 2022/2023 HALF YEAR FORECAST

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the budget had been re-forecast at the end of January 2023. The main points to note are as follows;

The staffing budget for teachers had been re-forecast to include an estimate of the pay settlement. The support staff budget includes the pay award that was settled in November and backdated to September 2022. There is a contingency of around £116,000 in the staffing budgets.

The utilities budget has been increased by £437,638 and remains an unpredictable area.

The high needs budget income is still being finalised at the budget stage so a prudent estimate of income is included which is often exceeded. The budget has been increased to £252,000.

The budget is running as expected.

The surplus on the budget has decreased from £398,000 to £387,000.

RESOLVED: That the budget position for 2022/2023 be noted.

11. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college as part of the Funding Agreement Contract has to produce an accountability statement and agreement committing to develop a curriculum that meets the skills and employment needs of its local area. as part of the skills agenda. The Accountability Statement needs to be completed by 23 May 2023 and it needs Governors approval.

The Accountability Statement is in terms of the curriculum that the college offers. It will need to take account of the Local Skills Improvement Plan and all employers in Greater Manchester will need to contribute to the plan. The plan has not been finalised. Whilst the college is mainly academic in terms of the courses it offers, it is part of the FE sector and, therefore, has to contribute to the local plan. It was noted that 15% of the students at the college live outside of Greater Manchester. An Accountability Statement will need to be completed every year.

Mr Hynes added that some students go into apprenticeships, employment and stay in the local area.

RESOLVED: That the Chairman be authorised to sign the Accountability Statement on behalf of the Governing Body

12. (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.

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

### a) Reclassification of Sixth Form and FE Colleges

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the Office of National Statistics has confirmed that FE colleges return to the Public Sector and that they cannot borrow money commercially. In addition, HM Treasury wants the financial year to end on 31st March which has massive implications for the sector. The full impact of the changes will unfold over time and Governors will be kept informed of developments.

### b) Accountability Statement

The recent skills white paper, the college will be required to complete an annual accountability statement committing to developing a curriculum that meets the skills and employment needs in the local area. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has to develop a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) by March each year. The contribution of sixth form colleges in this regard is limited, particularly for academically rather than vocationally focussed colleges such as Aquinas. The college will engage in the LSIP discussions but it is unlikely that the college will make significant changes to its curriculum.

As a sixth form college Aquinas remains aligned to this FE agenda despite not being its major focus and as more and more colleges become academies the college will face further marginalisation.

### c) Academisation

At the end of December 2022 the final pieces of legislation were passed to enable sixth form colleges to become academies. This led to the Catholic Education Service (CES) and the nine Diocese that have sixth form colleges to think about how colleges fit into their plans for academisation of their schools. Most Diocese are working towards geographically clustered groups of schools forming fairly large Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (MAT). There is a willingness encouraged by the government that all schools become academies by 2030.

The possible options for the college include the following:

1. Remain as a college – do not become an academy
2. Academise and form an empty MAT for other partners to join at a later date
3. Academise as part of the Diocese schools' model
4. Academise as part of a horizontal MAT with other Catholic colleges (potentially across diocese)

The above options will be explored at the Governors' training session on 10 May 2023 and it is expected that the Diocese will have a view on how to proceed.

### d) Applied General Qualifications

The college offers 10 subject choices of an applied general nature and these are an important part of the offer made to students. These courses are more accessible than A levels due to being assessed via course work rather than examinations. The amount of course work has been reduced over the last five years.

The government have decided that they need further reformation and any subjects that overlap with their flagship T-levels will be discontinued. The deadline for reform is July 2024 with new courses being called Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs). Courses not eligible for reformation will cease to be offered after this date. This will affect 4 of the courses offered at the college but will account for about one sixth of the entries for these popular subjects. The Sixth Form College Association is working to influence these decisions and at the very least delay the timeframe.

#### d) Accommodation Strategy

Mr Pearson advised Governors that good progress was being made with the plans for additional classrooms. The college are meeting with the design team on a weekly basis to develop the college's preferred option in preparation for a planning submission. It hoped that a decision on the bid for financial support will be received later in spring. If the bid is unsuccessful the college will have to decide how it proceeds.

#### e) Inspections

Mr Pearson advised Governors that Loreto and Xaverian colleges have both been inspected recently. The college is expecting that it will be inspected soon after the Easter break, but there is only a five week option before examinations start.

#### f) Funding

The college has received details of its funding from the ESFA for 2023/2024 and will be based on 2396 student numbers. All bands have been increased by 2.2%, the highest band for study programmes of over 580 hours has increased from £4,542 to £4,642. This accounts for 97.1% of the budget. The next band contains a further 2% of students including any student over 19 and has increased from £3,757 to £ 3,840. The retention factor has increased by £66,000, course weighting factor has been reduced partly because Psychology is no longer included and that has reduced by £150,000.

The overall effect of these changes is that income for 2023/2024 has fallen by £66,000. The Teacher's pension grant has been confirmed for 2023/2024 which mitigates against the increased costs.

#### g) Staffing

Mr Pearson reported on the resignations and appointments that had been made to the college and thanked all staff for their commitment, diligence, and hard work.

#### h) Adult Education

Governors noted that both the academic and leisure course had continued in the Spring term. Planning was also underway to improve the marketing of courses for the next academic year. Particular reference was made to the resignations of Garry Cullen (AAT Co-ordinator) and Graham Cowling (Access to HE Co-ordinator).

#### i) Careers

Governors noted the work that was undertaken by the Careers Department with particular reference to Careers Guidance, U6 Consultation Evenings, National Apprentice Week, Enrichment Programmes for the Spring term and After Aquinas Careers Event.

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

Chaplaincy, Trips and visits, Biology, Duke of Edinburgh, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, English, Enrichment, Environmental Science, Geography, IT and Computing, Languages, Law, Mathematics, Music, Financial Studies and Film and Media, Performing Arts, Physics Politics, Public Services, Pathways and Sports departments, Theology and Young Enterprise team.

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.

### 13. GENDER PAY REPORT

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the Gender Pay Report has to be on the Government Website before the end of March 2023. The report is also on the college website and it will be submitted to the next meeting of the Employment Committee for information.

RESOLVED: That the Gender Pay Report be agreed.

### 14. PROVIDER ACCESS POLICY

A copy of the college's revised Provider Access Policy had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the revised Provider Access Policy be agreed.

### 15. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

The Health and Safety Policy had been reviewed by the Resources Committee and recommended for approval.

RESOLVED: That the amended Health and Safety Policy be approved.

### 16. GOVERNOR TRAINING SESSION

Governors noted that the training session was scheduled for 10 May 2023 at 4.30pm and that it was hoped that Damian Cunningham, Director of Education for Shrewsbury Diocese would attend to outline the Diocese plans for academisation. It was agreed that the following items would be included in the training session.

- a) Denominational Inspections
- b) Strategic Issues and Priorities
- c) Academisation

### 13. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

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

- a) Sent out regular updates to Governors to keep them informed of developments at the college.
- 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.

d) Had dealt with an issue raised by a member of staff who had left the college.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governor's consideration.

15. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

No Any Other Business had been submitted for Governors consideration.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

a) Governor Training Session - 10 May 2023 at 4.30pm

b) Summer Term Meeting - 27 June 2023 at 4.30pm

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_