

MEETING OF THE FULL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Thursday 18th March 2021

6pm

Held remotely online via ZOOM video conference

College mission statement:

We at St Francis Xavier College aim to provide for the educational needs of our students in a Catholic environment that proclaims Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. We are committed to a community based on mutual respect where we recognise our responsibilities to ourselves and others.

July 2005

MINUTES – PART ONE

PRESENT:

Mr N Sheta, Foundation Governor, Chair of Governors	Mr G Thompson, Principal
Mr M Belfour, Foundation Governor, Vice Chair of Governors, Chair of the F&R Committee	Ms R Clark, Staff Governor (teaching)
Mr D Freeman, Foundation Governor	Mrs E Preece, Staff Governor (non-teaching)
Mr D Navarro, Foundation Governor	Ms P Rowe, Co-opted Governor, Chair of the CSQ Committee
Mr R Vianello, Foundation Governor, Chair of the Audit Committee	Ms S Jones, Co-opted Governor
Mrs B Meier, Foundation Governor	
Mrs K Taylor, Foundation Governor	
Mr S Ebele, Foundation Governor	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms K Foan, Associate Principal, Curriculum
Mr C Graham, Associate Principal, Ethos
Mrs E Lewis, Clerk to the Governors

The meeting was opened at 6.04pm by Mr Sheta and was quorate throughout. All present were able to see and hear one another.

- 1. OPENING PRAYER:** offered by Mr Thompson.
Mr Sheta welcomed all to the meeting and reflected on the duties and responsibilities of the Governing Body, how it operates strategically and the relationship with the Senior Leadership Team.
- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Received from Mr P Barber were accepted.
- 3. MEMBERSHIP OF GOVERNING BODY:**
 - 3.1. Mr Dave Navarro, appointed Foundation Governor to a four year term from 7th January 2021, was welcomed to the Governing Body.
 - 3.2. Mr Michael Belfour's re-appointment as Foundation Governor to a fourth term of four years from 10th June 2021 was noted.
 - 3.3. **Declarations of interest:** Mr Sheta declared that his wife would be engaging with the college lettings team to promote and market the college facilities on NappyValleyNet¹ This interest has been noted on the Register of Governors' Interests. No other interests were declared.
- 4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**

¹ <https://nappyvalley.net/>

- 4.1. **3rd December 2020, Part one:** Included in the papers for the meeting and previously circulated 21st January 2021 were agreed to be a true and accurate record to be signed in due course.
 - 4.2. **Review of Confidential Minutes:** It was confirmed that the minutes of the confidential part two of 4th December 2012 remain confidential, and not published on the website, as they contain reference to two specific individuals. Other recent confidential minutes would be reviewed in part two of this meeting.
5. **MATTERS ARISING (if not covered by agenda items):**
- 5.1. **From item 16:** It was noted with agreement that an invitation would be extended to the Chaplain to take part in the Governors' focus morning in the autumn term.
 - 5.2. **From items 17.1.6.2 and 17.2:** It was confirmed that all the required financial returns for year ended 31st July 2020 had been filed with the ESFA on 25th February 2021 within the extended period.
6. **REVIEW OF ACTIONS CARRIED FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**
- 6.1. It was confirmed that all serving governors had completed and passed the online safeguarding course and had read at least Part Two of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2020.
 - 6.2. Mr Sheta confirmed the expectation of full reports on governor engagement in webinars, conferences, training etc later in the meeting under item 12.6
7. **INFORMATION / DATA COMMUNICATED SINCE DECEMBER 2020 MEETING:** The list detailed on the agenda was acknowledged. Mr Sheta emphasised the value of ongoing communication between meetings.
8. **CHAIR'S REPORT /ACTION:**
- 8.1. Mr Sheta reported that he had signed an updated Letter of Representation at the request of Buzzacott ("External" Auditors) on 23rd February 2021, prior to their signing-off the financial statements, as agreed to be appropriate by the F&R Committee. There had been no change to the content.
9. **STUDENT GOVERNORS' REPORT:** Not applicable, these seats are currently vacant. Mr Thompson advised that two student governors would be appointed in the summer term in accordance with the change of cycle set out in the Conduct of Business² agreed at the previous meeting.
10. **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT TO GOVERNORS:** Mr Thompson introduced his written report number 85 which had been distributed prior to the meeting in hard or soft copy according to governors' preference. Some questions had been received in advance of the meeting and were addressed during the item.
- 10.1. **Presentation of Executive Summary:** Mr Thompson's report opened with an executive summary which he spoke to and amplified. The body of the report provided further narrative, illustrations, data, tables, graphs and supporting appendices.
- 10.1.1. **Response to Covid-19**
- Mr Thompson and Ms Foan provided more detail on how the college was preparing its process of assessment and awarding of grades (TAGs) in the summer to ensure that it would be appropriate and robust. The quality assurance plan was required to be submitted to the awarding bodies early the following week. Mr Thompson described the various facets of impact, including on student enrolment, arising from the earlier results dates on 10th and 12th August, falling during the summer break.
- In response to a query from Ms Clark, Mr Thompson clarified that the 92% attendance to online lessons excluded GCSE classes or tutorials. Mr Thompson had been asked whether the 92% level had been maintained throughout the whole period of the pandemic and said that it had been lower in the autumn first term, hovering around 86 – 87%. The level of attendance had remained good since students had returned.

² Standing Orders

Mr Thompson reported 458 responses to a learner voice survey (just under 40%), conducted in January question. Mr Ebele asked how that rate compared to previous learner surveys and heard that this was better in number and quality of responses than the survey undertaken in the first lockdown period. It was observed that the return rate for the learner voice surveys would be much higher as they were completed in college under supervision.

Ms Rowe discussed the subtle difference between a question about keeping up to date with work and another about making progress with studies. Ms Foan and Mr Thompson put the nuance of the questions into context and, overall, concluded that it was pleasing that the majority of student felt they were keeping up with their work. Mr Thompson commented that outside the covid situation there would be a number of students who do not feel they are making progress with their studies.

10.1.2. Curriculum and Quality:

Mr Thompson discussed the forecast, from a current mid year position, that the A Level value added outcome would be positive at 0.12 (predicted assuming formal exams would be sat) compared with an actual outturn of 0.47 last year.

He mentioned that the FE White Paper had not referenced the academisation of Catholic Sixth Form Colleges and said that it had since been confirmed that this white paper would not be the vehicle for that to change.

A question had been submitted about the impact on assessing the progress of students who had had been affected by the cancellation of RQF exams after one day at the beginning of this spring term. It was confirmed that they would be awarded a TAG (Teacher Assessed Grade) and would not be disadvantaged. 58 of the 70 students due to sit the exam that went ahead had taken it. Ms Foan advised that good outcomes, yet to be compared with previous results, had just been received for level 2 Business.

Mr Thompson had been asked about the improvement in retention and discussed the reasons why this might be. He confirmed that internal comparative analysis would happen but rates would not be published by the DfE.

Ms Rowe had commented that the government determination to introduce a binary approach of either A Levels or T Levels seemed to be gathering an unstoppable pace and presented a high risk to the college. Mr Thompson agreed that the prospect of the range of BTEC, CTEC and UAL vocational (applied general) courses offered at the college becoming unfunded meant that A Levels and T Levels had to be considered as the only alternatives.

10.1.3. Recruitment:

Mr Thompson reported encouraging progress to date with student recruitment for 2021 – 2022 in the context of two well reviewed virtual open events and no “in person” event. He advised that whilst the number of applications was currently 400 down compared to the same point last year, they were ahead of the previous two years. 700 telephone information and guidance discussions had taken place successfully with applicants on 1st March as an alternative to the one to one interviews that would previously have been held.

Ms Rowe had asked what strategies were being put in place to mitigate the drop in applications. Mr Thompson said there would be a renewed drive on getting into schools by whatever means available as this had not been possible so far. He outlined the range of activities designed to keep applicants warm in order to get a good conversion rate and said there would be a concentration on progressing level one and two students already at SFX internally and a focus on supporting year twelve students to minimise drop out.

10.1.4. Funding and Financial Health:

Mr Thompson restated that the financial health rating of the college would be “RI” (requires improvement) this year, 2020 – 2021 and explained the factors which contributed to that. He confirmed the plan to return to “good” next year supported by

better recruitment of students. The predicted operational deficit for this year was noted to be -£153k. He outlined the funding allocation which had been received for 2021 – 2022 and commented on the elements of it that had changed with most impact including the indices of multiple deprivation (IMD). Mr Thompson acknowledged that the staffing costs as a percentage of income (78%) was high. The aim was to be below 75% and ideally nearer to 70%. The intention to save the equivalent of 2 full time staff remained a target within that planned reduction in costs. Negotiated pay settlements would bring the in-year level of increase for teaching and support staff to 2.42%.

[Mrs Taylor was offline temporarily between 6.52 and 6.55pm]

Mr Thompson said there was no official clarity on whether the college remained in “early intervention”. The accounts and cashflow report were being submitted to the ESFA monthly and it was understood that these were considered to be satisfactory. It had been confirmed that the college did not meet any of the risks that would require an April cashflow return to the ESFA.

Mr Thompson reported two bids recently submitted to the CIF³. He had also provided, appended to his report, an outline plan with drawing for construction of a new block as a hub for delivery of the business T Level from September 2022. The proposal to access match funded T Level capital funds for this project would be revisited later in the meeting by report from the F&R Committee.

Noting that Oliver House prep school⁴ would be closing on 18th July 2021, Ms Clark asked whether anything was known about what would be happening. Mr Thompson said that a meeting had been held earlier in the week and he expected information to be revealed in the coming weeks.

10.1.5. Progress against in year strategic objectives 2020 – 2021.

These were referenced throughout the report. Mr Thompson said they were the main agenda items for meetings of the College Management Development Committee (CMDC). He expressed his pride in the work and achievement of management teams against these objectives.

10.1.6. Staffing Matters:

Mr Thompson paid tribute to the whole staff body and expressed his pleasure in how they had responded as a community. With sadness, he announced the resignation of Mrs Jacqui Houston, Director of HR who would be leaving on 30th April after 23 years service.

Mr Thompson noted that the Staff wellbeing forum had been active throughout lockdown with a programme of fitness and mindfulness. He referred to an example of the wellbeing bulletin appended to the report.

Mr Thompson advised that staff had been invited to come forward for a discussion on voluntary severance to moderate the staffing costs as outlined in section 4.

10.1.7. College Events:

Mr Thompson commended the events, activities and outside speakers that had continued remotely throughout lockdown. He commented that the engagement of parents at remote progress review evenings had been far better, due, he suggested to the arrangements being more convenient to fit with other commitments.

10.1.8. Catholic Ethos:

Mr Thompson commended the work of the Chaplain with staff and students. Mr Graham endorsed this strongly and described the daily range of prayer and reflection she provided as well as the welfare support.

³ Condition Improvement Fund

⁴ 7 – 11 Nightingale Lane, SW4

Mr Thompson advised that a new Catholic Schools' Inspection framework would be piloted in Southwark from September 2021. It was planned to inspect two of each provider in the pilot. Recruitment of inspectors was hoped to include a sixth form specialist. He and Mr Graham emphasised that because judgements against the key priorities would be the same in schools and sixth form colleges, it would be more realistic to expect the outcome to be "good" would be a realistic outcome to expect.

10.2. **Questions on report:** Had been taken in 10.1.

The Principal's report was accepted.

11. ORAL REPORTS FROM GOVERNORS COMMITTEES:

11.1. **Audit committee:** Draft minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2021, chaired by Mr Vianello, had been included in the papers and were taken as read. There were no questions on the minutes.

11.1.1. Mr Vianello referred to the Fraud Awareness presentation that had been made to the committee, chair and vice chair of governors and the senior leadership team. He said it had been helpful and recommended other governors to view the slides.

ACTION: Mrs Lewis to upload slides to governors ShareFile portal for reference

He advised governors that the report on the internal audit assignments (February 2021) had been included in the papers. No recommendations had been arisen. Mr Vianello said that the committee had begun discussion and planning of the internal audit strategy for 2021 – 2022 which was expected to focus on IT systems.

11.1.2. Mr Vianello proposed two policies for approval included in the papers for the meeting. Both had undergone routine biennial review and had been accepted by the Audit Committee:

11.1.2.1. **Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) policy:** Noting that, in order to facilitate searches and embrace more commonly used terminology, the title had become "Whistleblowing", the policy was **unanimously approved for immediate adoption.**

11.1.2.2. **Anti-fraud, corruption, bribery, malpractice policy:** was **unanimously approved for immediate adoption.**

11.1.3. Mr Vianello advised that the committee had completed performance reviews on both audit firms which recorded satisfaction with the audit work undertaken. A benchmarking exercise had been completed to market test the fees charged by Buzzacott LLP for end of year financial statements and regularity audit (plus auditing the accounts of the trading subsidiary) which the committee had accepted as reasonable. It was noted that the number of interested providers in the market was quite limited.

Mr Vianello proposed continued appointment of RSM Risk Assurance Services LLP as the Internal Audit Service to the college and Buzzacott LLP as "external" auditors for a further year.

The recommendation to re-appoint both firms was approved unanimously.

The Audit Committee would meet next on 4th May 2021.

11.2. **Finance and Resources Committee:** Minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2021, and draft minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2021, both chaired by Mr Belfour, had been included in the papers and were taken as read. The minutes noted that Mr Sheta had succeeded Mr Opara as Vice-Chair of the committee. There were no questions on the minutes.

11.2.1. **Filing of end of year financial returns:** Mr Belfour confirmed that the filing of the audited financial statements for year ended 31st July 2020 and other financial returns due for collection had been completed on 25th February 2021, to meet the extended deadline. He explained that an extension had been granted to accommodate late notification that no funding adjustment was required as a result of the ESFA funding assurance review. He explained that once that outcome had been advised, Buzzacott had required the updated letter of representation which Mr Sheta had mentioned and

assurance that there had been no post balance sheet events which could affect the College's accounts before they could be signed off as audited.

- 11.2.2. **Risk-based April Cashflow Return:** Mr Belfour noted that, as Mr Thompson had mentioned, subsequent to the meeting of the F&R Committee, guidelines had been published for the April 2021 risk-based cashflow return which confirmed that the college did not fall into any of the categories triggering submission of the return. With regard to the next financial return to the ESFA, Mr Belfour advised that details were due to be released on 31st May 2021 in respect of the end of July annual return (IFMC and narrative) including confirmation of the authority level for signing that off. Regardless, the full governing body and F&R committee would both meet prior to the filing date to review and approve the return.
- 11.2.3. **Charging Policy 2021 – 2022:** Mr Belfour introduced the updated Charging Policy which had been included in the papers for the meeting with the changes highlighted. On behalf of the F&R Committee he proposed the policy for ratification and adoption.
Updated policy was approved unanimously for immediate adoption.
- 11.2.4. **Application for a match funded capital grant:** Mr Belfour said that the F&R Committee had received and discussed a proposal to submit an application for a match funded capital grant to fund the construction of a modular build to create a T Level Business Hub for delivery of the new Business T Level which the college would introduce from September 2022.

Mr Belfour reminded the governing body of the background to the proposed modular build for which planning permission was in place until January 2022. He referenced the donation in 2019 of approximately £700k made to the college by the Diocese arising from a "right to light settlement" they had received due to the construction of a care home which overshadows the college site. The original purpose of the modular build was to house the Art Department. In the meantime, some of the donation had been used to improve the lighting for the department which had proved to be a satisfactory solution.

At the time of the F&R meeting on 23rd February 2021, tenders had gone out for construction of the proposed new business hub and had been expected to be returned with costs in the same region as those made in 2019 - requiring a college matched contribution of £350k. Mr Belfour advised governors that the tenders returned on 10th March 2021 were, in the event, for significantly higher prices than those presented to the F&R Committee and set out in Mr Thompson's report, and would push the college commitment to £577k (including VAT) if the application was successful and the project went ahead.

Mr Belfour said that Mr Thompson had consulted himself and Mr Sheta about the implications of the increased commitment on receipt of the three bids. They had all agreed it would be in the best interest of the college to grasp the one-off, ring-fenced opportunity to win some start up match funding to develop the college estate for the introduction of T Levels by going ahead to bring the proposal to submit an application for match funding to the governing body for approval.

Mr Sheta invited Mr Thompson to explain why it was important to have this new facility. Mr Thompson laid out his reasons in the context of the agenda of a binary approach to level three qualifications ie the funded qualification being either A Levels or employer led T Levels. He said now was the opportune time to move forward ahead of other local colleges to provide the new qualifications as an attractor for more new students. He described why the T Levels required a completely different model of teaching, learning and flexible, workplace style space and office environment. Mr Sheta observed that the development would give the college a marketing edge.

Mr Belfour said the application may not be successful and reminded governors that there had already been some up-front costs (as referenced in the letter of representation; but he said there was nothing to be lost by submitting a bid.

Mr Ebele asked whether there would be other routes to capital funding if this particular bid was unsuccessful. Mr Thompson explained that the college may be eligible to apply for expansion into other T Level subjects eg Health and Care as it seemed that time-

limited start-up funds had been released each year. Mr Belfourd commented that it was unlikely that availability of money would get easier going forward.

It was agreed unanimously that the application should be submitted supported by a letter of confirmation from Mr Sheta, on behalf of the governing body, that match funding of £577k would be available for the capital project if the bid was successful.

The F&R Committee would meet next on 20th April 2021 (provisional interim date) and / or 22nd June 2021.

11.3. **Curriculum Standards & Quality Committee:** Draft minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2021, chaired by Mr Rowe, had been included in the papers and were taken as read. There were no questions on the minutes.

Ms Rowe said that the committee had welcomed the two new governor members and Mr Belfourd as an observer at the meeting. She invited Mrs Meier to talk about how the presentation by Ms Maria Grazia Zingale had impacted on her impression of the Modern Languages and Travel and Tourism departments and the follow up she had subsequently had with Ms Zingale. Mrs Meier commended the presentation and described how she had been inspired with ideas on virtual learning and had taken the ideas and tools back to her workplace.

The committee would be taking the opportunity of a routine review of its terms of reference in the summer term to re-work and underpin the focus on the quality of the provision and monitoring of progress towards improvement targets.

Ms Rowe recapped encouraging progress with the link governor scheme and noted which governors and departments had linked up⁵. Mrs Taylor volunteered to link with the Media department.

[Ms Jones left the meeting during this item with apologies, highlighting the SFCA Anti-racism webinar she had attended earlier in the day]

Ms Rowe asked Mr Thompson for an update on how governors should proceed with link visits now that students were back in college. Mr Thompson and Ms Foan responded and advised that whilst departments were currently focused on requirements for the summer awards resumption of link activity would be most appropriate, helpful and useful a week after return from the May half term holiday (w/c 14th June 2021). Updating of the protocol would create a flexing of the original approach to take account of the possibility of online linking and a more blended approach to learning going forward.

Ms Rowe emphasised her interest in setting up a communication / support group for link governors to share experience / ideas / good practice.

ACTION: Mrs Lewis would circulate some potential dates for a ZOOM discussion.

The CSQ Committee would meet next on 19th May 2021.

11.4. **Appeal Committee:** had not met since the previous meeting of the governing body.

11.5. **Remuneration Committee:** had not met since the previous meeting of the governing body. Would meet next on 9th June 2021.

11.6. **Governance Committee:** had not met since the previous meeting of the governing body. Would meet next on 9th June 2021.

12. GOVERNANCE:

12.1. **Admissions Policy:** Mr Thompson introduced the policy for annual review for 2021 - 2022 which had been included in the papers for the meeting and explained the minor change at 7.1.1. **The policy was approved unanimously.**

⁵ As set out on the governor committee list paper for 12.2

- 12.2. **Committees:** An update had been included in the papers for the meeting included Mr Navarro appointed to the CSQ and Audit Committees and shuffling of membership arising from appointment of Mr Sheta as Chair of Governors. The link governors had also been updated. A vacancy on the Remuneration Committee was filled by Mr Ebele. It was noted that Mr Sheta could no longer chair the Remuneration Committee and a successor would be appointed when the committee meets in the summer term.
- 12.3. **Vacancies:** Mrs Lewis reported that there were currently vacancies for two student governors, a parent governor and two foundation governors. It was expected that the student governor would be appointed in the summer term. Mrs Lewis reported that one foundation governor applicant, a former student, was nearing the final stage of the appointment process and that an application had been made to fill the other vacancy by another former student which was in the early stages. Mrs Lewis outlined the efforts being made to attract a volunteer to stand for election as a parent governor.
- 12.4. **Tracking against governance improvement plan:** Progress against the agreed areas for development had been rag rated on the chart included in the papers for the meeting. This was reviewed with governors and accepted.
- 12.5. **Schedule of meetings for 2021 – 22:** A suggested provisional schedule for consideration had been included in the papers for the meeting. Committees would consider their own timetables at the next meeting.
- ACTION: Governors to consider the dates proposed for meetings of the full governing body and notify Mrs Lewis of any preferences.**
- Mr Navarro enquired what the plans were for how future meetings would be held. It was agreed this was a point for discussion but would continue remotely for the foreseeable future.
- 12.6. **Governor Engagement: Feedback from meetings / conferences / webinars:**
- Mr Belfourd had attended the regional AoC governance conference on 2nd March. He reported that HMI Rieks Drijver had given an informative presentation on Ofsted. Ms Rowe and Mr Sheta had also attended this conference and articulated their thoughts on the presentations and speakers.
- Ms Jones and Ms Rowe had attended the SFCA Governance Webinar on anti-racism earlier in the day. Ms Rowe said it had provided an interesting and stimulating perspective of what governors need to be aware of and had introduced a Ten Point Plan developed by Newham sixth form college (NewVIC). An open letter was expected to be sent to Clerks and Principals. Mrs Lewis reminded governors that the SFCA Webinars were recorded and the link circulated after each event. She would look at creating a library of these resources to make them more accessible – possibly on ShareFile or in Google classroom.
- 12.7. **Report / update from Safeguarding Governor:** Ms Jones had unavoidably left the meeting. Safeguarding arrangements of new governors had been reviewed during the Internal Audit Assignment in February 2021 when no recommendations had been made.

13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:** Mr Sheta would send a note of thanks to all staff on behalf of governors.

14. Mr Sheta invited governors to consider whether they were satisfied that the information received and all decisions taken at this meeting had been centred on improving the experience and levels of achievement of students at St Francis Xavier college in a safe environment that embraces the Catholic ethos, prevent duty and promotes equality, diversity & inclusion?.

This was agreed unanimously.

This part one of the meeting ended at 7.54pm when Mrs Preece and Ms Clark withdrew from the meeting.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

Date of next meeting of the full Governing Body: Tuesday 6th July 2021