

**Sutton College Governing Board  
Part A Minutes of meeting  
Thursday 17/07/2025 from 13:00-17:00 in B1 at Sutton College**

Tom Dillon (TD)	Ex-officio/Principal	Present	
John Dodds (JD)	Business & Community Governor	Present	
Raywen Ford (RF)	Business & Community Governor	Present	
Cllr Ed Joyce (EJ)	Co-opted Governor	Present	
Kate Leeming (KL)	Business & Community Governor	Present	
Manas Nath (MN)	Business & Community Governor	Present	
Charlotte Sallabank (CS) (VCoG)	Business & Community Governor – Vice Chair	Present	
Jenny Sims (JS) (CoG)	Business & Community Governor – Chair	Present	
Colin Kin Hang Siu (CKHS)	Business & Community Governor		Apologies
Elizabeth Tumath (ET)	Business & Community Governor	Present	
Catherine Winslow (CW)	Business & Community Governor	Present	

**In attendance:**

Jan Underhill – Assistant Director Wellbeing, Public Health & Wellbeing Directorate	Present
Delrose Earle – Vice Principal, Sutton College	Apologies
Laurie Nicholls (LN) Director of Services/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DLSS/DSL)	Present
Barbara Eays (BE) Director of Executive & Corporate Operations/Clerk	Present

AGENDA ITEM	MINUTES	ACTION NO:
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>JS opened the meeting at 13:00 and welcomed those present.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Colin Kin Hang Siu and Delrose Earle. These were accepted. CS had notified JS/BE that she would be late.</p> <p>The meeting was confirmed as <b>quorate</b>.</p> <p><b>Declarations of Pecuniary interests</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest in agenda items for this meeting.</p>	
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Minutes of meeting 09/04/2025 (Parts A &amp; B)</b></p> <p><b>Part A</b> Minutes of the meeting held on 09/06/2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p><b>Part B</b> Minutes of the meeting held on 09/06/2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Matters arising from the minutes not covered on this agenda:</p> <p>TD reported that a member of SLT has now joined the Borough's EDI Steering Group. BE confirmed that she would be attending her first meeting on 31/07/2025. An update will be given at the next Governing Board meeting. JU said that there are various staff networks at the Council which are very productive and also open to College staff. In response to the question as to whether or not Governors could join any of the Council staff networks, JU said that the current staff networks within the Council are designed for internal discussions among staff and not presently open to external participants, such as Governors.</p>	

	<p>Action: EDI update at next meeting following BE attending Steering Group meeting on 31/07/2025.</p> <p>The proposed dates for Governing Board meetings for the 2025-26 academic year were agreed. BE to send out calendar invites to all participants.</p>	53
	<p>Action: BE to send out calendar invites to all participants for Governing Board meetings being held in the 2025-26 academic year.</p> <p>RF said that the CPD day held on Monday 14/07/2025 was a good event and that DE's comments regarding RL were met with a standing ovation from staff. JS said that she had written to RL to wish him well and to thank him for his contribution to Sutton College, to which he had responded thanking Governors for their good wishes.</p>	54
4	<p><u>Governing Board Questions/SLT Responses 17/07/2025</u></p> <p>Went through the questions on the spreadsheet to ensure clarity of responses.</p> <p>The discussion focused on the challenges of clearly interpreting the College's financial reports. It was noted that while standard financial reports cover the finance aspect, the academic side remains "cloudy" due to grants, making it difficult to easily discern whether the College is over or under budget. Concerns were raised that the true financial position is never fully known. It was suggested that the Finance Manager could help clarify accruals and other complex entries. JD said that he is committed to monitoring the situation and observing if the number of queries decreases from his side.</p> <p>JS acknowledged that figures will sometimes change and that the overlap between financial and academic years is unavoidable.</p> <p>ET suggested including a plain-language summary to accompany the financial report, clearly outlining the College's position. JS confirmed that the figures are directly from the system and not manually interpreted, reinforcing the validity of challenging them to ensure accuracy.</p> <p>TD confirmed that the College is solely using the Agresso system. He explained that grant income is received monthly and cross-referenced with the GLA portal, with any discrepancies immediately queried. Allocations first go to the Council's account before being transferred to the College's, and any lags in this process are actively followed up. The dates for the next Governing Board meetings align with the ILR returns, and this report represents the first for the new financial year.</p> <p>RF highlighted that the increased transparency and 'triangulation' have significantly built trust in the financial systems. She stressed the importance of having confidence that the systems are not only in place, but also understood by those responsible for them.</p> <p>JU emphasised that the level of scrutiny is currently very high, specifically to prevent any budget surprises across the entire Council and to ensure accurate forecasting. JS acknowledged the well-known difficulties being experienced across the Council and said that, given these challenges, it would be very difficult for the College to fall 'out of kilter' financially.</p>	

<p>However, CW countered that actions from the government can still put the College 'out of kilter,' as these are not always immediately rectifiable. She said that there remains a huge amount of risk due to factors outside the College's control. JU pointed out that in the past, a high level of manual recording presented a huge risk, and that the current system is an improvement. CW added that we now have one year's worth of evidence demonstrating that the current system is working effectively.</p> <p>CS inquired about the frequency of forecasting reviews. TD explained that forecasting is done termly. This is further supported by monthly budget meetings with the Finance Manager and data from the Agresso system is uploaded and cross-checked every two months. JU confirmed that this is normal practice, highlighting the role of a finance business partner who conducts a 'forensic exploration' of the budget monthly.</p> <p>JS thanked JD for his questions.</p> <p>TD provided an explanation of the Trailblazers initiative, which is a nationwide government initiative designed to help individuals re-enter work or education through a more tailored approach e.g. working with ex-offenders as part of this programme. The current phase runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and is part of the broader South London Partnership bid. The salaries for the Step Ahead staff, which are fixed term, are paid through this funding. While there are discussions to extend the initiative, this has not yet been confirmed. It was agreed that TD to share the Trailblazer figures with Governors.</p> <p><b>Action: TD to share the Trailblazer figures with Governors.</b></p> <p>In terms of question 7 regarding pensions, TD confirmed that all staff are automatically opted into the pension scheme and must individually choose to opt out. The pension costs are factored into the budget and any staff member not opting in will result in a saving for the College. He confirmed that the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) significantly impacted the College, but we were able to achieve savings as part of the recent restructure and we will now be able to clearly identify what these specific savings are.</p> <p>The discussion around question 8 centred on understanding how many individuals might effectively enrol twice by attending Welcome Weeks, and what that means for funding. The goal is to determine how many enrolments Welcome Week sessions actually represent. It was pointed out that Welcome Weeks will cover topics like British Values, and participants will receive a certificate, as this constitutes a different learning aim for which the College receives funding. TD confirmed that this applies to funded courses.</p> <p>RF emphasised the benefit of covering this at the outset, as it is a distinct 'unit of learning' that makes it easier to demonstrate. JS noted that this approach is also a good way of getting early warnings before a course officially begins. TD added that tutors would typically cover this content in their classes anyway.</p> <p>Essentially, by structuring Welcome Weeks to include fundable learning aims, the College can capture additional revenue while also providing crucial foundational knowledge to learners upfront.</p> <p>In terms of question 9, TD said that the College's main goal is to transition from physical printing to digital solutions. As our current contracts expire, we will be reducing the amount of photocopiers as we need to limit the amount of material printed for learners. Full use of Google Classroom will continue to be used and there</p>	<p>55</p>
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	<p>is also a printer at the Library that learners can make use of. It is recognised that certain subjects will still require some printing and we will need to define what those are and to what extent. We will also need to monitor any private printing to ensure resources are used appropriately.</p> <p>CW expressed a slight concern regarding the learner enrolment numbers for the upcoming year, as there appears to be a significant gap between current figures and targets. TD said that enrolment numbers are monitored by enrolment update reports and decisions on whether to run specific courses will be made in September. This will allow the College to assess the latest enrolment figures and mitigate financial risk by only running courses that are viable. RF asked that should a course be closed, would learners affected be provided with IAG to help them with their next steps, to which TD responded that yes, they would be offered IAG.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Curriculum &amp; Quality report</b> (Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</p> <p>JS highlighted the excellent and strong retention rates, which she said are worth noting.</p> <p>Regarding table 1A in the report, still awaiting final results, but anticipate that the existing gap will narrow. Early indicators explain the current figures and outline the ongoing efforts to improve and support them.</p> <p>RF said that an explanation had been given at the CPD day on Monday 14/07/2025 regarding the difference between 'pass' and 'achievement'. TD said that it was a lot to take in and that the goal is for every individual to fully understand the distinction.</p> <p>TD clarified that someone who achieves a qualification is when they successfully complete a course, whereas someone passes a course if they complete it but do not necessarily attain the full qualification. TD said that they refer to them as 'completers', which explains the observed 'gap' in the data. However, the term 'pass' cannot simply be swapped for 'complete' due to established terminology. Achievement signifies success.</p> <p>The QAR data will be a "summer project" for TD. It was noted that inspectors had complimented the MIS team on its reporting.</p> <p>Once the final results are in, the relevant reports will be updated. These results will provide a solid indication of our current standing, which will then be used to shape the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) timeline. This timeline can be confirmed now that the Governing Board dates have been set.</p> <p>JS highlighted that, looking across all key indicators, the College is demonstrating a solid performance with a consistent positive trend.</p> <p>JS extended congratulations to all staff for their contributions and for providing strong evidence of their efforts. TD echoed this, acknowledging the hard work, commitment, and passion of the staff, noting a Lead Inspector's comment that 'you can't train people to be passionate.'</p> <p>DE was thanked in her absence for her report.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Learner Services, Safeguarding &amp; Prevent report</b> (Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</p>	

	<p>LN reported that due to the delay in launching the College's new website, which was beyond the College's control, a proactive decision was made to contact all current learners on Leisure &amp; Hobbies (non-funded) courses before the summer break, to invite them to enrol either by phone or in person. RF said that learners had been frustrated at not being able to enrol and LN said that that had been recognised and the reason why an email was sent to existing learners so that they could enrol.</p> <p>A decision was then made to revert to the College's 'old' website and to launch the 2025-26 programme. TD provided an update on the website launch delay, attributing it to several factors, including issues with the current website host and the online payment portal. He emphasised that these delays were not caused by the College. The new website is now scheduled to go live on Tuesday 26/08/2025. This date is based on insights from daily meetings that SLT attends to monitor progress. To ensure a smooth transition, increased testing is underway for various scenarios, such as course approvals and making payments especially given staff are now on annual leave at various points through the summer. The College is also seeking assurances from their current website developers that their solutions, particularly for online payments, are secure.</p> <p>JD was reassured that from a learner's perspective, there has been no change to their experience when enrolling online using the 'old' website. The delay meant that the College did not 'go live' as early as usual with the 2025-26 programme. It was noted that the week after the bank holiday is traditionally quiet for enrolments so should be a good week to launch the new website.</p> <p>Despite the challenges, the College has increased its web chat capacity to boost enrolments. Current figures show enrolments are down 23% compared to last year.</p> <p>During Welcome Weeks, the Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) teams will be actively delivering sessions. This strategy aims to free up individual advisors to focus on one-to-one support later in the term. Additionally, safeguarding officers will also be present during these Welcome Weeks.</p> <p>LN said that the College has decided to bring <b>cleaning services</b> in-house, as the cost of the previous cleaning contract was unsustainable. This move is expected to yield a 30% saving on £70,602.</p> <p>To achieve this, the College will now employ its own cleaning staff, and site staff will take on some cleaning tasks. The College will also be reducing the number of cleaning weeks to 40 per year. A deep clean this summer is still planned, as it is already paid for.</p> <p>So far, four internal cleaners will be appointed, growing the in-house team. This new arrangement also offers flexibility. LN said that if the College has not recruited cleaners by the time the current contract ends, we do have the flexibility to extend our contract on a monthly basis. CW expressed support for the in-house model.</p> <p>A key concern raised was whether learners would notice a decline in cleanliness. LN confidently stated no, explaining that the site team has been briefed, is very keen, and understands the reasons behind the change. Additionally, there is an opportunity for staff to undertake a funded Cleaning Operative qualification, and cleaners will be paid £2-3 higher than minimum wage.</p>	
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	<p>This in-house model is based on the successful implementation carried out at Wallington. While JD reiterated concerns that unclean toilets or classrooms could deter learners, LN remains confident that the new system will maintain standards.</p> <p>LN explained what had transpired when a group of eleven youths entered the unmanned library with the apparent intention of unlawfully entering Sutton College. The police were notified and both library and borough facilities staff have been extremely supportive in helping to identify those responsible in order to prevent further incidents. Fortunately, nothing was taken. LN said that we have not yet received a visit from the police.</p> <p>EJ said that in his council role he acts as a liaison with the police. He highlighted existing channels between local councillors and residents, and confirmed the Chief of Police will be attending a September meeting, providing an opportunity to raise questions directly. LN confirmed that CCTV footage has already been shared with the police.</p> <p>JS raised concerns about building security during evening hours and holidays when the College is closed. It was noted that a specific point of entry seemed to be the primary vulnerability. One of the actions taken was to seal shut the accessible lavatory windows in the College. The library, who has also secured its windows, was cited as being very helpful in this regard. CW asked if there would be any implications in terms of fire safety due to the sealing of the lavatory windows. LN confirmed, supported by TD, that this action would not impact fire safety or means of exiting the building. Security personnel are reportedly dealing with these issues daily, and JU is aware of the situation. JU said that the library building has had full fire engagement and a risk assessment for self-access, requiring PIN entry unless someone 'tailgates.'</p> <p>JS concluded that, for now, as long as all necessary measures have been taken, the focus should be on monitoring the situation. EJ advised that if 'tailgating' is observed, it should be reported. JS suggested continued monitoring and to call Council security if feeling under threat, with the option to escalate matters with EJ if necessary.</p> <p>The College is implementing a new <b>digital phone system</b>. This transition means the phone service will be accessible via laptops, PCs, and a dedicated app on personal phones, eliminating the need for separate mobile work phones. This move aligns with the Council, which has recently adopted the same provider.</p> <p>A key benefit of the new system is its enhanced reporting capabilities, offering more detailed data on aspects like missed calls and call hunting, allowing for deeper analysis and long-term strategic use. The system also significantly increases flexibility, particularly for staff when working from home. JU has already found the new system to be effective.</p>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Confidential Items</b></p> <p>Discussions under the following agenda items were recorded confidentially under Part B minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal's update</li> <li>• Finance Demo</li> <li>• Item from Learner Services, Safeguarding &amp; Prevent update</li> <li>• Risk register</li> </ul>	
<b>11</b>	<b>AOB – none.</b>	
<b>12</b>	<b>Dates of future meetings</b>	

	<b>Full Governing Body meetings from 18:00-20:00 on Wednesdays unless otherwise specified.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 01/10/2025</li> <li>• 10/12/2025</li> <li>• 14/01/2026</li> <li>• 11/03/2026</li> <li>• 13/05/2026</li> <li>• 08/07/2025</li> </ul>	
<b>13</b>	<b>Closure</b> The meeting closed at 15:40	



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: Jenny Sims  
Chair of Governors

Date: 01/10/2025

