

**Sutton College Governing Body
Part A Minutes of meeting
Wednesday 01/10/2025 at 18:00 in Room D2 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		Apologies
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		Apologies

In attendance:

Jan Underhill (JU) – Director Wellbeing, Public Health & Wellbeing Directorate	Present
Delrose Earle (DE) - Vice Principal	Present
Laurie Nicholls (LN) Director of Learner Experience/DSL	Present
Barbara Eayrs (BE) Director of Executive & Corporate Operations/Clerk	Present

AGENDA ITEM	MINUTES	ACTION NO:
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies for Absence</p> <p>JS opened the meeting at 18:00 and welcomed those present.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Kate Leeming, Colin Kin Hang Siu and Catherine Winslow. These were accepted.</p> <p>The meeting was confirmed as quorate.</p> <p>Declarations of Pecuniary interests.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest in agenda items for this meeting.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of meeting 17/07/2025 (Parts A & B)</p> <p>Part A Minutes of the meeting held on 17/07/2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Part B Minutes of the meeting held on 17/07/2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>BE reported that the EDI meeting originally scheduled for 31/07/2025 has been postponed to 02/10/2025. She will represent the College at this meeting and will share an update with the Governors on 10/12/2025.</p> <p>Action 53 update: BE to share EDI update from meeting attended on 02/10/2025 at Governing Board meeting on 10/12/2025.</p> <p>TD explained that the Trailblazer funding will be extended and what this will look like is still being discussed by Government. The Step Ahead service which is funded by the Trailblazer fund has been very successful and the College is looking to continue with this service regardless of where the funding comes from.</p>	57

3	<p>Matters arising from the minutes not covered on this agenda</p> <p>A request was made for Governors to be advised of the name of any new members of established staff. DE said that the new Head of Curriculum & Quality – Vocational & Creative would be asked to attend the start of the next Governing Board meeting so that introductions can be made.</p> <p>Action: Newly recruited Head of Curriculum & Quality – Vocational & Creative to attend start of next Governing Board meeting so that introductions can be made.</p>	58
4	<p>Governing Board Questions</p> <p>Q1 : Before SLT can give a complete answer to KL's question about the Welcome Weeks and the British Values test, further details are required. However, DE stated that the Welcome Weeks will be subject to the same evaluation process as other courses.</p> <p>Q6 : Regarding RFs question about postponing the awards ceremony, TD explained that we are finalising a location for the proposed date. The College plans to hold the event early in the new academic year, after the previous year has ended, to ensure all learners have received their certificates. We are also looking into using an external venue to enhance the learner experience. Once the date and location are confirmed, this information will be shared with the Governors.</p> <p>Action: Share date of awards ceremony with Governors once confirmed.</p> <p>Q8 : TD responded to CS's query about the table in the Principal's Report (Item 6, Report 1), explaining that it summarises the College's performance against the 2024-25 funding allocation. He said that the table is used to map the College's curriculum offer and identify any funding shortfall, which aids in future planning for growth. TD confirmed that the red figures in the report indicate a negative position.</p> <p>For the FCFJ Level 3 initiative, the College achieved 81% of the funding allocation. Since the required achievement target is 97%, the potential clawback is currently estimated at £42,411.</p> <p>TD noted that the DfE has a specific funding stream for learners from out of the London borough. Historically, the College has not met this allocation, so this expected shortfall is already factored into the budget. TD emphasised that performance is not just about funding, but also achievement and retention. He explained that last year, the DfE initially announced they would not fund over-achievement, but later reversed this in the summer to cover over-achievement up to 104%. The total possible clawback cannot be finalised until after the R14 return, which includes the final achievement data. Any results not submitted by the R14 deadline will be counted as non-achievement. JS noted that while this system is harsh, it is standard practice across the sector.</p>	59
5	<p>Governors' Business</p> <p><i>(Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</i></p> <p>JS explained her plan for how Governors will link with College managers. Following discussions with TD, it was felt that Governors should work in pairs, rotating their link after each academic year. Each Governor pair will be assigned to a specific manager. They will meet with this link manager once per term to share their expertise and provide support as a critical friend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum – DE • Learner Service – LN 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Innovation – JT • Business – LM • Lettings Strategy – VL • Marketing – KW • Compliance, including Safeguarding/EDI – LN <p>Governors should contact JS to express their interest in where they would like to volunteer their time. This exercise is crucial for both advancing the group's efforts and facilitating future succession planning. JS emphasised that the volunteering is for sharing expertise, not for coaching or mentoring. Since everything Governors do must have a positive outcome, time will be dedicated during Governing Board meetings for Governors to provide verbal feedback on their volunteering experience, including discussions with relevant managers and any resulting impact.</p> <p>Action: Governors to contact JS to express their interest in where they would like to volunteer their time in terms of linking with managers and sharing expertise.</p> <p>JS will follow up regarding the ideas emanating from the meeting held in July 2025 in terms of community partnerships.</p> <p>JS confirmed that, as per good practice, the next meeting will include the re-election of the Chair and Vice Chair by a show of hands. Both JS and CS agreed to continue in their current roles until the next meeting, at which point the confirmation vote will take place.</p> <p>Action: Re-election of Chair and Vice Chair to be on agenda for 10/12/2025.</p> <p>JD confirmed he is willing to serve another term as Governor, but cannot guarantee remaining on the Board for the full three years.</p>	60
6	Principal's & MIS update - CONFIDENTIAL	
7	Finance data update - CONFIDENTIAL	
8	<p>Curriculum & Quality update (Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</p> <p>DE highly commended the College staff team for their exceptional hard work, noting that the 33% rise in enrolments clearly reflects their dedication and commitment to the College. Both the Governors and JU joined in recognising this achievement.</p> <p>The success in Unique Learner Numbers can be attributed to the Marketing Department, whose efforts have been consistent across all advertising. This successful strategy has been in development since 2022, and the results confirm its effectiveness.</p> <p>CS praised the data, and DE responded that preparing the report was "not onerous, but a pleasure," viewing it as an opportunity to review, analyse, and share data with all staff. CS then raised a concern about the "danger of hitting a ceiling" in growth. DE acknowledged this, stating that it puts the College in a good position and therefore able to focus on a mid to long-term strategy. Given the likely decrease in government funding, the priority is developing a strategy to increase fee income. To achieve this, all departments will have the opportunity to focus on supporting the Leisure & Hobbies department to identify and capture market gaps.</p> <p>DE said that the College is looking to increase its fee income by targeting prospective learners who have a reasonable income, but require improved English skills. Potential new offerings could include specialised courses like Medical and Accounting ESOL, which would help mitigate risks associated with declining government funding. JS noted</p>	61

	<p>the importance of market research to determine the maximum sustainable fee. DE responded that Marketing is already conducting local research and she is exploring strategies like adding value through "bolt-on" courses instead of simply raising the hourly rate.</p> <p>The new website now supports discount codes for promotions like early enrolment.</p> <p>The College is also planning an Open Day on Wednesday, 03/12/2025, from 15:30-18:30. This event will feature displays by the Leisure & Hobbies department, allowing them to showcase their arts and crafts and discuss their courses. Items will also be on sale. BE will be sending calendar invitations to all Governors for the event.</p> <p>Action: BE to send out calendar invites to Governors for the Open Day event being held on Wednesday 03/12/2025.</p> <p>DE confirmed the need for more efficient use of space to allow the College to positively meet market demands.</p> <p>RF brought up that because learners pay a significant amount for their courses, they have high expectations, especially concerning facilities—citing the need for items like hand soap and towels in every art room. LN confirmed that morning checks take place, but that she would raise the specific issue with the Facilities helpdesk.</p> <p>Action: LN to raise the issue of replacing hand soap in the art rooms on the Facilities helpdesk.</p> <p>DE said that earlier curriculum planning is to enable managers to have more time to prepare and present their plans for the 2026-27 academic year for review by SLT. She noted that while improvements have put the organisation "ahead of the curve" in many areas, the intent is to improve further by deepening market analysis and ensuring the curriculum is focused on high quality. DE also mentioned that with a steady three-year increase in retention, the next steps will focus on quality and sustainability. Also the value of the Welcome Weeks will be evaluated as all of this feeds into robust curriculum planning.</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding the long-term evaluation of learners, with JS questioning HOLEX's involvement in this area. DE confirmed plans to analyse College-wide long-term progression data in earnest and is compiling case studies (such as the floristry tutor who progressed from Entry 3 to Level 3, now running a business and teaching).</p> <p>In terms of support, DE stressed the value of Governors working with departments to lend their expertise, an effort that JS believes will foster more creativity through collaboration. JS concluded by stating she will write a thank you note for Inform this week to recognise the staff's hard work and commitment.</p> <p>Action: JS to write a thank you note for Inform this week to thank staff for their hard work and commitment.</p> <p>Action: DE to share the data in terms of the final examination results at the next meeting.</p>	62
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9	<p>Learner Experience update (Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</p> <p>LN reported that the impact of the newly introduced Welcome Week and collaborative working of teams within the College saw 625 learners receive valuable face-to-face</p>	

course and careers guidance. This is 46% of our Autumn term funded learners, which compared to 2024-25 at the same point last year was 0%. These sessions were led by the IAG and Step Ahead teams and were very well received. For courses without a Welcome Week, learners will instead receive an individual class visit, an online session, or be shown the IAG/Step Ahead video which is available on Google classroom. Feedback will be gathered via the ILJ1 and the IAG survey which is sent out later in the year.

JD inquired whether the IAG sessions during Welcome Week informed learners about the potential progression routes and career opportunities related to the course they are enrolled on. DE emphasised the extreme importance of Welcome Week in preparing the learner for their course, including coverage of British Values. She noted that embedding British Values is vital in the current climate, and that IAG sessions often focus on removing barriers to learning in addition to offering careers advice.

An earlier Ofsted observation had highlighted that British Values were not sufficiently embedded in sessions, with tutors feeling it consumed too many guided learning hours. To address this, an extra week was added to accredited courses for induction. This provides learners with the opportunity to gain an additional qualification focused on developing a deep understanding of British Values.

Regarding ET's question about non-attendance, DE explained that learners who miss Welcome Week will miss out on important course outline information. However, adjustments will be made to ensure they receive this information upon attending their first class.

Action: LN to share the link to the IAG videos with Governors.

LN reported that the reintroduction of face-to-face course approval sessions, while challenging, has proven worthwhile. So far, over 1,500 learners have been assessed for the 2025-26 academic year. This successful process has led to a significant decrease in course transfers because learners are being assessed and enrolled on the correct courses from the start. A standout metric is the massive reduction in ESOL transfers, dropping from 40 at this point last year to just 1 this year.

The College has achieved significant advancements in its support systems, now benefiting from a year-round ALS manager. A new automated system ensures that the moment a request for support is submitted, the manager is instantly notified. This allows tutors to get the necessary information within 24 hours, enabling immediate intervention and allowing the learner's journey to be tracked from the outset.

Currently, only one identified learner is awaiting specialised support. This enhanced tracking allowed the College to accurately gauge demand for extra services, such as additional BSL/Counselling courses, which were subsequently added. Separately, the new Barista course was noted as having one of the highest demands.

In terms of finance, a slight reduction in anticipated refunds is expected.

In response to RF's question about preferential treatment for existing learners enrolling on the course they are attending for the following term or academic year, LN confirmed that the College proactively contacted all existing learners by phone to give them an early chance to enrol for the upcoming academic year, due to the delay in the main program going live. Learners should enrol now for Spring Term courses to secure their place. If a course reaches capacity, learners must 'register their interest,' which may

	<p>result in an offer for an alternative course, placement on a waitlist, or, if demand is sufficient, the creation of a new course.</p> <p>The pre-release 'Employability Growth Plan' programme with HMP Highdown was launched on Friday 12/09/2025, with 7 attendees. The initial session was a success, focusing on practical skills like identifying strengths and starting to build tailored CVs. The Step Ahead team praised the participants' skill sets, and positive feedback came from the South London Partnership. Two participants registered with Step Ahead for workplace preparation assistance. This program is a product of collaboration between the College and the Borough. In response to CS's question, LN confirmed that attendance was voluntary, but highly encouraged. LN to ascertain if attendance at these workshops was a condition of early release. JS asked how it meshed with those organisations that have a contract to teach in the prison to which LN responded that Step Ahead are not delivering education, but preparing the prisoners for the outside world.</p> <p>Action: LN to ascertain if attendance at the HMP Highdown Step Ahead sessions were a condition of early release.</p> <p>LN reported that the installation of the new Vodafone UC softphone system went well, providing a more efficient and portable phone solution with better reporting options. This can also be used when working from home on a pc or laptop, as well as through an app on a personal mobile device. You can set your working pattern so that you will not receive any calls outside your working hours. Data will be shared at the next Governing Board meeting.</p> <p>Action: LN to share phone system data at next Governing Board meeting.</p>	67
10	<p>Your Voice 2024/25 update (Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</p> <p>BE reported that in 2023-24, 38 emails were received via Your Voice, 8 of which were compliments, 18 comments and 12 complaints, all of which were investigated where appropriate and responded to. There was a reduction in complaints this academic year of 25% via Your Voice.</p> <p>A new tracking and monitoring system is in the final stages of development for capturing feedback for Your Voice compliments, comments and complaints. This system will assist in collecting more detailed information from people who write into the College, including valuable data on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).</p>	68
11	<p>Risk Register (Verbal update)</p> <p>TD confirmed that SLT will be finalising the Risk Register by half term. Once updated the link will be shared with Governors.</p> <p>Action: TD to share Risk Register link with Governors once updated.</p>	69
12	<p>Confidential Items Discussions under the following agenda items were recorded confidentially under Part B minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal's Report Finance Report 	
13	AOB	

	<p>The need to fill the vacant student governor position was highlighted by JD. JS also confirmed the necessity of advertising for a staff governor and will prepare the ad for both roles. A key requirement for the student governor role is a commitment to a term exceeding one year.</p> <p>Action: JS to create an advert for both a student and a staff governor.</p> <p>CS commented on the cake fair, noting that it seemed to have been a great success and the learners were clearly very enthusiastic. It was highlighted that a significant amount of money was raised for Macmillan Cancer Support.</p> <p>LN confirmed the completion of action 63 above – the Facilities helpdesk request she had submitted during the meeting had been fulfilled by the site supervisors, who had replaced the soap in the art rooms.</p> <p>LN reported that during Welcome Week, learners were informed about the various types of support available while on their course. This includes assistance with licences, textbooks, and the loan of IT equipment. Requests for funding are reviewed by a panel and drawn from the College's main allocation. Information regarding Safeguarding and the availability of mental health first aiders was also distributed.</p> <p>TD is preparing a report for the Council's Strategy Resources Committee. The relocation project's next phase has been transitioned to JU and TD. There is no date update for the College's move currently available, as the project is still within the planning process.</p>	70
14	<p>Dates of future meetings Full Governing Body meetings from 18:00-20:00 on Wednesdays unless otherwise specified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10/12/2025 • 14/01/2026 • 11/03/2026 • 13/05/2026 • 08/07/2025 	
15	<p>Closure The meeting closed at 19:57.</p>	

Signed: _____  _____ Print Name: Jenny Sims
Chair of Governors

Date: 10/12/2025

