

**Minutes of the meeting of the SOUTH BANK COLLEGES BOARD
held on Tuesday 3 March 2026 at 4-6.30pm, Technopark, 1B16**

Present

Ruth Farwell (Chair)
Steve Balmont
Sue Dare (Vice Chair)
Paul Kett (on Teams)
Karlene Morrison-Briscoe
Sophia Okosun

Apologies

Chris French
Issa Issa
Lydia Song

In attendance

Anna Bazeos, Board Secretary
Simon Cruickshank, Group CFO
Samuel Curtis, Group Company Secretary (until item 8)
Craig Hanlon-Smith, Principal LSBTC
Monica Marongiu, Principal Lambeth College
Fiona Morey, Executive Principal
Wijay Pitumpe, Interim Executive Director of Finance

1. Chair's Business

The Chair welcomed Trustees to the meeting and noted the apologies received.

The Board had earlier participated in a development session which provided an update on the Phase 2 project and curriculum strategy. The Board noted that the forthcoming Project Working Group meeting would consider the Plot C update in greater detail.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Board noted Paul Kett's declaration of a new interest as Director of the South Bank Employers' Group, effective from February 2026. No other new interests were declared.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2025 as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising

The Board noted that all items on the action tracker were either complete or included on the agenda, with two matters remaining ongoing. It was noted that the sustainability item had been deferred to the new academic year following discussion at the December Board meeting. The action relating to the management accounts, including the tracking of estates expenditure within the cash flow, remained on the tracker and had been transferred to the new Interim Finance Director.



The Board noted the forthcoming departures of three Trustees within the next year. Members were advised that recruitment processes had commenced to identify successors and allow for appropriate handover periods. It was noted that earlier recruitment would take place for the Chair's role due to its links with the LSBU Board.

5. Executive Principal's Report

The Executive Principal presented the report and highlighted key developments across the College. The Board noted strong student retention and improved in-year apprenticeship achievement, with a predicted 2025/26 achievement rate of 57%. The Board also noted updates on the submission of the College of Technical Excellence for Clean Energy bid, the successful decant of the Clapham campus ahead of the Gateway College rebuild, and the College being awarded WorldSkills College of Technical Excellence status. Key areas of focus were identified as apprenticeship performance, student attendance (particularly for 16 to 18 year olds) and improving student progress at Level 3 and in GCSE English and maths.

The Board noted a health and safety incident at the Brixton site, which had led to revisions to relevant policies. It was confirmed that the incident had been managed appropriately, including the completion of a fire risk assessment and updates to battery storage policies. A visit from the London Fire Brigade had also been scheduled.

The Board discussed the arrangements in place to support adult learners who had experienced disruption to learning and noted that catch-up sessions and additional support had been implemented to mitigate the impact.

The Board discussed the number of safeguarding disclosures and sought assurance that appropriate monitoring and controls were in place, particularly given that students were temporarily spread across additional sites following the decant. The Board was assured that safeguarding arrangements remained robust and that associated risks continued to be closely monitored.

The Board further discussed apprenticeship performance, including the importance of consistent progress reviews and the benefits of a more centralised management approach. The Board noted that improvements had

been made since the previous meeting and that projected achievement rates were expected to exceed national benchmarks.

Action: CHS/FM to provide the Board with an update on apprenticeship progress by the end of March.

6. Curriculum Strategy for 2026-27

The Board received an update on the Curriculum Strategy for 2026/27. It was noted that the strategy focused on the growth of provision in 16 to 19 education, apprenticeships, and Levels 3 and 4, aligned with national, regional and local skills priorities, while maintaining a strong focus on financial sustainability and high-quality learner outcomes. There would be less sub-contracting of provision.

The Board noted opportunities for growth, particularly in Croydon and within digital and technical pathways, alongside a number of challenges, including estates capacity, staff recruitment, and potential funding changes.

The Board further noted that planned growth would be managed within existing capacity and that learner outcomes and inclusion would remain key priorities. It was confirmed that detailed curriculum plans would return to the Board for approval in May, alongside the Accountability Agreement.

The Board queried whether staff would be able to travel easily between the Clapham campus and Croydon. The Board was advised that travel was not anticipated to present a significant challenge.

Action: The Governance Office to arrange an additional one-hour online Board meeting in May.

7. Report from Students' Union President

The Board received the report from the Students' Union President. The Board noted that students appeared to be content and performing well across the College.

The Board noted that a successful LGBTQ conference had recently been held, with strong student representation and engagement, led by the Students' Union LGBTQ community representative. The Board also noted plans for a Muslim community event to take place before the end of Ramadan.

The Board noted the planned Students' Union surgery, which aimed to gather and better understand student concerns and feedback. The Board sought clarification on how issues raised would be progressed within the College. It was confirmed that an update on the process and outcomes would be provided to the June Quality and Improvement Committee as part of the student voice report, with a further update to be presented to the Board in July.

Action: FM/CHS to provide an update to the June Quality and Improvement Committee, with a follow-up report to the July Board.

8. Accounting Officer's Report

The Board received the report and noted the internal and external launch of the Group Strategy, together with ongoing engagement with staff, civic partners, employers and policymakers to support implementation and strengthen the Group's external profile.

The Board noted progress in developing strategic partnerships, including engagement linked to the Gatwick Airport Economic Zone and collaboration with partners including Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and Croydon Council. Discussions were also underway with further education partners, including South Thames College Group, to strengthen progression pathways.

[REDACTED]

The Board also discussed the end-of-year audit process and noted early indications that improvements were required in the integration of HR and finance systems. It was noted that the outcome of the review would be reported to the Board.

Action: SC/WP to circulate the review of the end-of-year audit process to the Audit Committee in advance of its June meeting and subsequently to the Board.

9. Interim Executive Director of Finance Report

The Board noted the report underpinning the budget for the next financial year. The Board acknowledged key pressures within the current financial position, including overspending on staffing and the erosion of contingency, and noted the expectation that actions were in place to recover the budget position by the end of the year.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



The Board agreed that management accounts would be enhanced with additional narrative, particularly in relation to key budget risks and financial forecasts, and that these would continue to be shared with the Board on a monthly basis.

The Board was advised that Period 7 accounts would be circulated in the coming weeks and would be accompanied by an enhanced narrative in light of the Board's discussion. Trustees were encouraged to review and challenge the information provided, and it was noted that, if necessary, a further meeting could be convened to discuss the accounts in more detail.

Action: WP to circulate Period 7 accounts with enhanced narrative.

10. **Any other business**

There was no other business.

11. **Public Benefit Guidance**

The Board noted the report.

12. **Reports from Committees**

The Board noted the reports from the Committees. Trustees requested that a reminder be circulated when Committee minutes are uploaded to the Board portal to ensure members are aware when the documents are available for review.

Date of next meeting
18 May 2026 via Teams

Confirmed as a true record

..... (Chair)