

**Sutton College Governing Body  
Part A Minutes of meeting  
Wednesday 10/12/2025 at 18:00 in Room B1 Sutton College**

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| Tom Dillon (TD)                 | Ex-officio/Principal                       | Present   |
| John Dodds (JD)                 | Business & Community Governor              | Apologies |
| 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              | Apologies |
| Charlotte Sallabank (CS) (VCoG) | Business & Community Governor – Vice Chair | Apologies |
| Jenny Sims (JS) (CoG)           | Business & Community Governor – Chair      | Present   |
| Colin Kin Hang Siu (CKHS)       | Business & Community Governor              | Present   |
| Elizabeth Tumath (ET)           | Business & Community Governor              | Present   |
| Catherine Winslow (CW)          | Business & Community Governor              | Present   |

**Invited:**

Michaela Moher (MM) – Head of Curriculum & Quality – Vocational & Creative Present

**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 Apologies  
 Barbara Eays (BE) Director of Executive & Corporate Operations/Clerk Present

| AGENDA ITEM | MINUTES   | ACTION NO: |
|-------------|---|------------|
| 1           | <p><b>Welcome and Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>JS opened the meeting at 18:00 and welcomed those present.</p> <p>LT had confirmed that she would be attending, but would be late.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Laurie Nicholls, Manas Nath, John Dodds and Charlotte Sallabank. These were accepted.</p> <p>Introduction of Michaela Moher – Head of Curriculum &amp; Quality – Vocational &amp; Creative department. MM explained that she had joined the College in September 2025 and has spent the last few months getting acquainted with the department and the tutors. She said that she is enjoying the challenge of the department and is now in the position where she can reflect on the SAR. She is currently working on the QIP to see what can be built on and also working on curriculum planning. MM said that she will continue to work on what is going well in terms of the curriculum plan and look for areas for growth. MM has a background in education, careers and employability, which is a good foundation to build on. This is the first time that she is working in a College environment. Colleagues have been a huge support to her and she is working in collaboration with the other departments as well. Governors then introduced themselves to MM, including JU. MM was thanked for taking the time to attend the meeting.</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> |            |

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| <p><b>2</b></p> | <p><b>Minutes of meeting 01/10/2025 (Parts A &amp; B)</b></p> <p><b>Part A</b></p> <p><b>Part A Minutes of the meeting held on 01/10/2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting, with the proviso that the initials recorded in the minutes as RW be amended to RF.</b></p> <p><b>Part B</b></p> <p><b>Part B Minutes of the meeting held on 01/10/2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</b></p>   |  |
| <p><b>3</b></p> | <p><b>Matters arising from the minutes not covered on the agenda</b></p> <p>In reply to the query from RF concerning the awards event due to take place on 15/07/2026, TD confirmed that the event will recognise the cohort of learners from a two-year period, not just the current year's learners.</p> <p>JS expressed concern regarding the lack of uptake for the advertised staff and student governor positions and indicated that a new approach was needed.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>4</b></p> | <p><b>Governing Board questions to SLT</b></p> <p>JS thanked SLT for level of scrutiny and responses given in terms of the questions posed by Governors.</p> <p>TD reviewed the responses to the questions from Governors to ensure the Governors were satisfied with the answers provided.</p> <p>TD highlighted the difficulties with the shift to the new Amazon Workspace system. He confirmed that a new update is scheduled and that College and Council IT teams are coordinating efforts to mitigate any future adverse impact. JS emphasised the Governors' expectation that the College not revert to a situation of unclear financial status. TD said that monthly scrutiny meetings are held with the Council's Finance Business Partner, the College's Head of Finance, himself and JU.</p> <p>Regarding the training for tutors delivering accredited courses, DE confirmed that basic training is complete. However, she noted remaining weaknesses and stated that the primary focus will now be on the quality cycle to upskill tutors in engaging with that process.</p> <p>Regarding the identified community projects, DE suggested this topic could be included as a report item going forward. She noted that if no update is available, it would be recorded as such, which would then clarify the frequency of updates for the Board. JS supported this, stating that having these updates is important to demonstrate how public funds are being utilised.</p> <p>TD announced the recent release of the Connect to Work initiative and stated that further details would be forthcoming. In response to RF's query about whether this would lead to College expansion or a change in direction, TD confirmed it would involve both. He characterised the initiative not as a risk, but as an opportunity that could lead the Government to recognise the fundamental importance of Adult Education and potentially increase funding. DE added that access to diverse funding streams for different types of delivery could offer greater flexibility, allowing the College to better tailor programmes for local communities and reduce heavy regulation by the ASF (Adult Skills Fund).</p> |  |

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|                 | <p>Regarding Question 8, TD clarified that the funding is a grant and its objectives are aligned with both the Keep Britain Working initiative and Trailblazers. He noted that while the systems are complex because people cannot participate in both programmes simultaneously, the ultimate target remains the same. TD also reported that more grant opportunities are becoming available.</p> <p>Regarding the College's gender imbalance, RF asked whether new approaches could attract more male students. DE responded that this issue has been discussed, noting that the 20% male / 80% female ratio is consistent with the national average. She outlined a strategy to address this, including focusing outreach programmes on men, citing the successful visit to Highdown Prison as an example. DE further explained that bid submissions from organisations often lean toward female-focused projects, and the College is now seeking connections with more male-oriented organisations. She added that while some Employability programmes were expected to attract more men, this had not materialised. The only department currently matching the local borough's gender profile is the SEND department. JS said that language courses often see more men enrolled on them, but that unfortunately these courses were not funded.</p> <p>TD reported that there was no further update on the move although planning has been granted.</p> <p>TD reported that he and JU presented the College's Annual Report to the Strategy &amp; Resources meeting on Monday, 12/08/2025. He noted that the presentation generated significant positivity, including the nature of the questions asked. JS, who listened via live stream, confirmed that TD/JU handled the questions exceptionally well. The Councillors were unanimously supportive of the College and recognised its vital contribution to the community. Furthermore, the College was recognised with a rare round of applause from the attending officers and members.</p> <p>Regarding the press release announcing the deferral of the Council's relocation, CW asked if this would affect the College in terms of any funding issues, thereby exposing the College. TD said that questions were asked regarding the removal of the housing element from the plan, but not about the College. CW sought assurance that the College plan remains committed to high accessibility standards, which JU affirmed.</p> |           |
| <p><b>5</b></p> | <p><b>Governors' Business</b><br/><i>(Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</i></p> <p>Governors indicated by a show of hands their willingness for JS and CS to continue for another year in their capacity of Chair and Vice Chair of Governors.</p> <p>JS asked Governors to ensure they contact their link College managers to arrange a discussion. She clarified that the purpose is a meeting to understand the progress of the department(s), not a shadowing exercise. RF inquired about how to proceed in LN's absence, and TD confirmed that LN is still working remotely on reduced hours. RF said she would contact LN to set up an online meeting.</p> <p><b>Action: Governors to contact their link College manager/s to arrange a discuss to understand the progress of the department/s.</b></p> <p>CW confirmed that BE had scheduled a meeting for her and KL with their link manager for 19/01/2026.</p>   | <p>71</p> |
| <p><b>8</b></p> | <p><b>Curriculum &amp; Quality update</b><br/><i>(Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</i></p>  |           |

DE reported that the College achieved an exceptionally high 97.5% pass rate last year, a testament to the hard work of all staff. She emphasised the importance of recognising support teams—such as Marketing, Exams, IT, MIS, Customer Service, Curriculum Support Assistants and Site staff—whose magnificent support is often overlooked when celebrating success. DE stressed that this achievement was not solely due to Curriculum staff and concluded by expressing great pride in every member of the team.

The Governors formally wished to thank the staff for their efforts. JS will publish a message of thanks to staff in next week's edition of *Inform*. TD suggested that the Governors could also include their thanks on one of the slides for next week's CPD (Continuing Professional Development) day to formally acknowledge staff.

**Action: JS to publish a message of thanks to staff in next week's edition of *Inform* and a message of thanks could be included on one of the slides for next week's CPD day to formally acknowledge staff.**

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DE stated that certain areas of the curriculum plan require attention and development, as some pockets of the curriculum are currently supporting the performance of others. DE committed to circulating a detailed breakdown of this data once it is available, allowing Governors sufficient time to review and digest the information. Once the data is circulated, BE will create a question sheet so Governors can submit inquiries, which DE will answer when she is able.

**Action: DE to circulate detailed breakdown of curriculum plan data as some pockets of the curriculum are currently supporting the performance of others, once available. Once circulated, BE to create a question sheet so Governors can submit inquiries, which DE will answer when she is able.**

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JS requested time to discuss the Welcome Weeks to ensure the experience is positive and to verify that sessional staff have a clear understanding of their roles. DE characterised the implementation as a significant learning curve and noted its positive influence on the College's financial position. She advised that currently the data is too sporadic for a definitive report on outcomes, indicating it remains a work in progress.

DE affirmed the strategic value of the Welcome Weeks, which successfully add value for learners and provide tutors with dedicated induction time. However, the complexity of the chosen Awarding Body's administration process, not the qualification itself, has proven to be the primary weakness, resulting in an unacceptable rise in required man-hours. With two core objectives already met, DE anticipates having a comprehensive view of the initiative's benefits and challenges by the end of the Spring term. The College is committed to retaining the Welcome Weeks but will seek significant operational improvements for the next academic year.

JS stated that the current environment allows Governors to ask challenging questions and welcomed DE's honest response. JS stressed the importance of Governors being supportive, as the "trial and error" nature of the work means they may hear feedback from both learners and tutors. DE added that the College would likely not deliver the same qualification next year, as returning learners would have already completed the learning aim.

Confirmation was provided that sessional tutors who transition into established roles are subject to a probationary period. JU described the Council's probationary procedure as robust and formalised, involving formal meetings and letters to track staff performance.

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|                  | <p>TD stated that staffing is highlighted on the College's risk register due to significant pressures, particularly this term. The current flu virus has caused considerable, ad hoc strain on departmental capacity. A benefit in mitigating this strain is the presence of permanent tutors, who are able to cover classes where possible at no additional cost to the College.</p> <p>DE explained that Department Scrutiny and Quality reviews are presented collaboratively to all relevant parties, including SLT and the Curriculum Operations Officers. The goal is not just to present data, but to tell the "story of the department." DE provides the Heads of Curriculum and Quality (HCQs) with feedback and action points, which are reviewed at the subsequent meeting. This process continuously develops managers and provides SLT with a six-weekly overview of each department, leading to a better overall understanding of departmental operations. JS commented that this seems to be a very positive system and suggested it would be beneficial to see final data results mapped against the scrutiny meeting outcomes at the end of the year.</p>  |           |
| <p><b>9</b></p>  | <p><b>Learner Experience update</b><br/><i>(Document circulated in advance – to be taken as read)</i></p> <p>Regarding the breakdown of the pottery kiln extractor, RF asked if the College holds contents insurance. TD confirmed the extractors were installed long ago and are not covered by insurance. However, a positive update was received earlier today: a test on the kilns, advised by the repair company and Council Health &amp; Safety, is scheduled for Monday, 15/12/2025. The College has a quote for the repair and confirmed that the necessary funds are available. A decision will follow the test, determining which of the two possible repairs can be undertaken. Every avenue has been investigated to resolve this issue. A further update will be sent to pottery learners tomorrow, and the repair work may potentially be completed before the Christmas break. The latest update will also be circulated with the minutes.</p> <p><b>Action: BE to circulate update regarding Pottery Kiln with the minutes.</b></p> <p>In reference to the Step Ahead Service update, RF reported that her research indicates 'prisoner' is the preferred term over 'inmate.'</p> <p>CW informed attendees that she would need to leave at 19:45.</p> | <p>74</p> |
| <p><b>11</b></p> | <p><b>Confidential Items</b><br/>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 update</li> <li>● Item from Curriculum &amp; Quality update</li> <li>● Risk Register</li> </ul>   |           |
| <p><b>12</b></p> | <p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>LT reported that she attended the recent Open Day and joined the Zumba class. While on the lower ground floor, she visited the sensory room and noted that the surrounding corridor was somewhat messy. Additionally, exiting the building from the lower ground floor proved difficult, and she encountered two other individuals who were lost. TD stated that the College had not received prior feedback on these issues but thanked LT and committed to investigating both the signage clarity and the clutter observed outside the Studio. RF added that the corridor clutter could potentially constitute a fire risk.</p>  |           |

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|                  | <p>RF reported on a recent fire drill that occurred while she was in the art room. She was concerned about the congestion, specifically the difficulty of moving both learners and staff toward the assembly point at Waterstones. TD confirmed he would discuss this issue with LN and VL.</p> <p>KL reported that the Pilates class discussed whether the activity would be offered in the new building. TD expressed hope that further information about the new build could be shared with learners in the new year, but stressed the need to ensure accuracy in all relayed messages. He confirmed that the new building includes open spaces suitable for accommodating Pilates. JU added that the flexibility of the teaching spaces was highlighted as a key positive during the Council meeting on Monday. JS cautioned that the College must wait for more substantial, confirmed information before sharing further details. When RF asked if the College could utilise other external spaces, such as Oru, TD confirmed that all options are currently being explored.</p> <p>JS will email attendees regarding the 29/01/2026 celebratory meal to confirm numbers and book the restaurant.</p> <p><b>Action: JS to email attendees regarding the 29/01/2026 celebratory meal to confirm number and book the restaurant.</b></p> <p>JS thanked everyone for attending the meeting and extended best wishes for the festive season to those she would not see the following week.</p> <p>CW left at 19:40.</p> |  |
| <p><b>13</b></p> | <p><b>Dates of future meetings</b><br/> <b>Full Governing Body meetings from 18:00-20:00 on Wednesdays unless otherwise specified.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 14/01/2026</li> <li>● 11/03/2026</li> <li>● 13/05/2026</li> <li>● 08/07/2025</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p><b>14</b></p> | <p><b>Closure</b><br/> The meeting concluded at 19:46.</p>  |  |

