

Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

Tuesday 3 February 2026

6.30 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1
2QH

Supplemental Agenda no. 1

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Date: 27 January 2026

Meeting Name:	Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
Date:	3 February 2026
Report title:	2026 Member Induction and Member Development Programme
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
From:	Director of People and Organisational Development

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee note:
 - a. the development of the 2026 Member Induction Programme
 - b. the development of the Member Development Programme
 - c. the governance arrangements in place to oversee member development activity

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. In June 2025, the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee considered a report seeking approval to develop a comprehensive, multi-year Member Development Programme, which included a refreshed and strengthened approach to the 2026 Member Induction. The Committee endorsed this approach and agreed that officers would return to the Committee in February 2026 to provide an update on progress.
3. This report provides the Committee with an update on the development of the 2026 Member Induction Programme, the wider Member Development Programme, and the governance arrangements now in place to oversee ongoing member development activity.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

2026 Member Induction Programme

4. Following feedback received through a training needs analysis (TNA) including conversations and a questionnaire, a revised and robust Member Induction Programme has been developed for new and returning councilors (**Appendix 1**). Members had shared that they felt the previous induction had

been too intense, resulting in difficulty managing work-life balance effectively. For this reason, the revised Induction Programme has been scheduled across May, June, September and October 2026.

5. The Member Induction Programme also incorporates a specific set of learning offers for Cabinet Members, as well as learning opportunities specifically for opposition members.
6. In addition to the findings identified through the TNA process, feedback from the new Member Development Steering Group identified that other critical learning modules should be created relating to mental health and resilience, housing, data protection, cyber security and corporate parenting.
7. The Member Induction Programme will be delivered by a mix of officers and trusted external providers, such as the LGA.
8. Personal development plans (PDP) will be offered to members during the fourth month of induction to identify areas of strength and areas of development, which will further inform the ongoing Member Development Programme.
9. Evaluation of individual sessions and an overall evaluation of the induction programme will be carried out and analysed by the Member Development Steering Group. Outcomes following induction can reported to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee if required.
10. The programme also clearly lists essential and recommended sessions for members and also clearly defines those sessions which are directed at all Members, Cabinet Members, and those with charing responsibilities or specialist roles (i.e planning/scrutiny committee).

Member Development Programme

11. A new Member Development programme covering years 1-3 of the electoral cycle, following induction, has also been developed (**Appendix 2**). The programme is informed by feedback from the TNA, the Member Development Steering Group, and the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. The programme also aims to align topics within the offer to the core skills element of the LGA Political Skills Framework (**Appendix 3**).
12. The programme includes topics such as community engagement, community leadership, charring and facilitating public/community meetings, using social media and public speaking.

Member Development Steering Group

13. To ensure broad representation and ownership of the programme, a cross-party Member Development Steering Group has been established. Membership of the Steering Group is as follows:
 - Cllr Stephanie Cryan (Chair)
 - Cllr Esme Hicks

- Cllr Jane Salmon
 - Cllr Bethan Roberts
 - Doreen Forrester-Brown, Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Assurance)
 - Chidi Agada, Head of Constitutional Services
 - Stephanie Bryan, Head of Learning and Development
 - Graham Elder, Interim Learning and Development Partner (Member Development)
 - Mandy Headley, Learning and Development Partner (Corporate)
14. The steering group has met quarterly over the last 12 months and key activities agreed to date include the adoption of a Member Development Strategy and a new learning request process, which was launched in September 2025.
 15. Following the May 2026 election, membership of the Steering Group will be reviewed to ensure the group continues to appropriately reflect the political composition of the council.
 16. We continue to work towards achieving the LGA Council Member Development Charter Accreditation and all of the work mentioned throughout this report will contribute positively towards achieving this commitment.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

17. The Member Development Programme is specially designed to support the council's Southwark 2030 vision, principles and goals.
18. The Member Development Programme is intended to equip members with enhanced knowledge, skills and abilities in key areas such as strategic planning, financial oversight, community engagement and decision making. Better informed councilors are more likely to make sound and strategic decisions that positively impact the lives of residents and those working within the borough. Development in areas such as communication will also enable members to better connect with and represent the diverse needs of the borough.
19. Well-informed council members are better equipped to make sound financial decisions, ensuring responsible use of public funds. The programme also aims for cost-effectiveness through strategic procurement and internal delivery of learning modules, ensuring that investment in member development provides maximum value for the community.
20. The council's ambition to achieve LGA charter and charter plus status enhances the council's reputation and instills greater public trust and confidence. Holding charter status can also serve as a positive signal to residents who may be considering becoming a councillor in the future. Knowing that the council has a robust development programme in place may encourage more individuals from diverse backgrounds to explore opportunities

to serve their community as elected representatives.

Climate change implications

21. Following council assembly on 14 July 2021, the council has committed to considering the climate change implications of any decisions. In line with the council's commitment to environmental sustainability and the Southwark 2030 goal of a healthy environment, the Member Development Steering Group will continue to carefully consider how to minimise the programme's carbon footprint and promote environmentally responsible and sustainable practices.
22. Recognising the increasing implications of climate change for our borough, the Member Development Programme will also include a learning module on climate change awareness so that all elected members are equipped with the necessary knowledge to help effectively address this critical challenge.
23. As an example, sharing training materials, including handouts and resources, digitally leads to a substantial reduction in paper consumption which can sometimes be associated with printing large volumes of training materials. This approach also provides a more easily accessible, searchable and updatable method of accessing this information.
24. Another example includes reducing travel-related emissions through the strategic use of some e-learning modules and online workshops as components of the programme. Some sessions can also potentially be recorded, allowing members to review learning at a time convenient for them. This will subsequently reduce the need for trainers' and councillors' travel to in-person sessions via car or public transport for some parts of the programme.

Resource implications

25. The cost of the 2026 Induction Programme and the Member Development Programme will be met from the member development budget. The current estimated cost for the 2026 Member Induction Programme is £8,000.

Legal/Financial implications

26. The monitoring officer has a legal responsibility to ensure good governance and that members adhere to high standards of conduct in discharging their duties as elected representatives of their community. The Member Induction Programme and Member Development Programme will support the council and the monitoring officer in ensuring this duty is discharged.

Consultation

27. The formation of a Member Development Steering Group is essential to the development and implementation of the programme. This steering group has been established as mentioned above.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Draft 2026 Member Induction Programme
Appendix 2	Draft Member Development Programme
Appendix 3	LGA Political Skills Framework

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Ben Plant, Director of People and Organisational Development		
Report Author	Stephanie Bryan, Head of Learning and Development		
Version	Final		
Dated	26 January 2026		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance		Yes	
Cabinet Member		N/A	N/A
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			27 January 2026

May 2026 Council Member Induction Programme

Months 1-2

Topic	Content Overview	Audience	Status
IT equipment collection and set up	-	All Councillors	Essential
Induction and welcome 90 minutes	Overview of Southwark 2030 Our current and future budgetary position; Governance arrangements and the responsibilities of specific committees, such as Planning, Licensing and Scrutiny Committees (decision making process) The role of Members and Officers	All Councillors	Essential

Key issues and Officers Meet the officers evening	Key borough issues/controversy/current affairs – history and background Meet key officers and understand their roles.	All Councillors	Essential
Code of conduct and standards	This session will cover issues crucial to the ethical operation of members' roles, including the council's Code of Conduct, the subject of bias and predetermination and the use of council resources. Also included for discussion are the topics of Freedom of Information, and IT including blogging and social media.	All Councillors	Essential
Being an effective councillor 1 hour session	Part 1: Setting Boundaries and Time Management (1 hour) This session covers the following topics; • Tailoring Your Time Management Plan • Practical Time Management Techniques • Setting and Communicating Boundaries	All Councillors	Essential for new councillors recommended for existing councillors
Housing Course Part 1	This session covers essential touchpoints along a resident's journey. (Homelessness, Temporary Accommodation, Housing allocation, repairs, change in tenancy following a deceased family member, becoming a leaseholder etc.)	All Councillors	Essential

Managing casework and prioritising	Making objective decisions about priorities, to create maximum impact from your work. Prioritising, referring and feeding back. Looking at specific Southwark examples and how to respond to them	All Councillors	Recommended
Committee Chairing	This session will cover how to prepare for Committee meetings, participants, opening the meeting, maintaining control, ending effectively and handling difficult exchanges and conflict	All those appointed to Committee Chair	Essential for new chairs Recommended for returning chairs
Introduction to scrutiny	Selecting topics effectively Scrutiny reflections – what is it? What makes good scrutiny Maximising scrutiny effectiveness Common pitfalls	All those appointed to Scrutiny	Essential for new scrutiny members Recommended for returning scrutiny members
The role of a cabinet member	This session will cover the following: The role of a Cabinet member, what to expect as a cabinet member (a typical week and month), key activities and what to prioritise and sources of information and support	All those appointed to Cabinet Member or Deputy Cabinet Member	Essential for new cabinet members Recommended for returning cabinet members

Portfolio Introduction 121	This session will cover the following: Key issues, key terms and knowledge, essential reading, future challenges, essential and recommended meetings to attend	All those appointed to Cabinet Member or Deputy Cabinet Member	Essential for new cabinet members Recommended for returning cabinet members
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Topic	Content Overview	Audience	Status
Personal safety skills	Face-to-face personal safety and areas councillors should consider in their public facing role.	All Councillors	Essential
Effective Councillor	Part 2: Being an Effective Councillor (1 hour) • Defining Your Legacy: Moving beyond day-to-day tasks to identify what you want to achieve during your term. • Setting Ward and Community Goals: Techniques for developing and tracking your long-term projects and big ideas. • Community Engagement Fundamentals: ◦ Initial steps for engaging with the community to understand their needs and build support for your initiatives. ◦ Connecting your casework to broader community issues.	All Councillors	Essential for new councillors recommended for existing councillors

Being an effective scrutiny member and core questioning skills	This session will cover the following • Planning your questioning approach • Distinguish between poor practice and good practice questions • Structured questioning • Develop helpful and communicative active listening skills • Learn how to avoid common questioning mistakes	All those appointed to Scrutiny	Essential
Planning committee training	This session covers the knowledge of legislation and policy relating to planning, licensing, and appeals required. This session also provides an understanding of the principles and importance of making rational decisions	All those appointed to Planning Committee	Essential
Licensing committee training	Covers the key knowledge of legislation and policy relating to planning, licensing, and appeals. What is required and an understanding of the principles and importance of making rational decisions	All those appointed to licensing committee	Essential
Working with senior officers Part 1 – knowledge	Covers key roles, functions and responsibilities	All those appointed to cabinet	Essential

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Months 3-4

Topic	Content Overview	Audience	Status
121 Personal Development Plan (PDP) Meeting	121 meeting with an officer to complete your PDP, considering your own learning priorities and creating a plan for the coming year to tackle these, including key achievement measures.	All Councillors	Essential
Working with officers	This session will cover expectations of Members and Officers, conduct, constructive challenge, creating and maintaining positive and supportive relationships. (There will also be a separate session available for the opposition)	All Councillors	Recommended
Local Government Finance		All Councillors	Recommended

Decision making at Southwark	This session covers the process of decision making within the council and the role of Officers and Members	All Councillors	Recommended
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Topic	Content Overview	Audience	Status
121 Personal Development Plan (PDP) Meeting (If not completed in Month 3	121 meeting with an officer to complete your PDP, considering your own learning priorities and creating a plan for the coming year to tackle these, including key achievement measures.	All Councillors	Essential
Practical equality diversity and inclusion	Overview TBC	All Councillors	Essential
Safeguarding	Overview TBC	All Councillors	Essential

Digital Drop In	An opportunity to receive support with any tech/equipment issues, have questions answered and obtain guidance on how to get best results from council equipment/systems.	Available for all Councillors	Available
Working with senior officers Part 2 – Skills	This session covers, building effective relationships, influencing effectively, navigating difficult conversations and questioning effectively	All those appointed to cabinet	Recommended

Member Development Programme

ONGOING LEARNING						
Subject	Delivered by	Content	Notes	Ideal Timescale	Additional/Alternative Learning	Links to LGA Framework
YEAR ONE						
Community Engagement	External	Engagement myths Why is engagement important? Who can you engage with? How do you engage and empower people? Reaching the 'hard to hear'. Delivering difficult messages Action planning		Year 1	LGA e-learning: Community engagement and leadership LGA workbook: 1. Community leadership 2. Engaging with young people 3. Neighbourhood and community engagement	Local leadership Partnership working Communication skills Political understanding
Community Leadership	External	What is community leadership? Why is community leadership important? Sources of information Risks and obstacles to community leadership Involving everyone Action planning		Year 1	LGA e-learning: Community engagement and leadership LGA workbook: 1. Community leadership 2. Engaging with young people LGA Local leadership framework for councillors	Local leadership Partnership working Communication skills Political understanding
Housing Essentials	Southwark Officers	Housing context Homelessness Housing needs			Housing support Southwark Council	

Subject	Delivered by	Content	Notes	Ideal Timescale	Additional/Alternative Learning	Links to LGA Framework
		Allocation policy Disrepair policy Anti-Social Behaviour Succession rules Leaseholder issues Service Charges Section 20 Notices Who to go to – key contacts			LGA workbook: Supporting residents with complex issues	
Being an effective Corporate Parent		What does it mean to be a corporate parent? What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers? The role of partner agencies in supporting us as corporate parents. Giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings. Arrangements in place for children to have access to independent advocates. Understanding: How many take this up? How are concerns raised through this service reported? How do we show children in our care that we have high aspirations for them?			Corporate parenting: Resource pack for councillors Local Government Association Councillor workbook: Supporting residents with complex issues Local Government Association The role of the LADO – national-lado-network.co.uk	

Subject	Delivered by	Content	Notes	Ideal Timescale	Additional/Alternative Learning	Links to LGA Framework
		Providing stable environments for children in our care. Looking after the health and wellbeing of children in our care. Supporting children in care's emotional needs and help them to build healthy, loving relationships. Measures to ensure that children in care are not unnecessarily criminalised. What are outcomes like for our care leavers? What is meant by: • Staying Put • Staying Close Providing children in care with the right type of placements. Children placed out-of-area, and how they are supported. Supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Registered and unregistered settings. Planning for the future and commissioning services. Supporting foster carers.				

Subject	Delivered by	Content	Notes	Ideal Timescale	Additional/Alternative Learning	Links to LGA Framework
		Supporting kinship carers. Safeguarding children and the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer				
YEAR TWO						
Handling difficult conversations	External	Managing persistently challenging people Using assertive techniques in challenging situations Choosing the appropriate communication style for a situation Saying no effectively Giving negative feedback Handling objections Managing being lobbied effectively	Building your awareness, enabling you to respond rather than react. Being mindful and interacting a positive way that gains understanding, cooperation and agreement rather than antagonising a situation.	Year 2	LGA e-learning: 1. Facilitation and conflict resolution 2. Handling intimidation LGA workbook: 1. Facilitation and conflict resolution 2. Handling complaints for service improvement	Partnership working Communication skills
Chairing and Facilitating public/community meetings	External	Structuring meetings Assertiveness Handling questions Involving everyone		Year 2	LGA e-learning: 1. Facilitation and conflict resolution 2. Handling intimidation	Local leadership Partnership working Communication skills Political understanding
Using Social Media	External	Key platforms Creating value and avoiding pitfalls	Using social media effectively to reach, involve and engage with people. Understanding the	Year 2		Local leadership Partnership working

Subject	Delivered by	Content	Notes	Ideal Timescale	Additional/Alternative Learning	Links to LGA Framework
			right platforms to use and how to use them effectively depending on your goals.			Communication skills Political understanding
YEAR THREE						
Influencing and Negotiating	External	What do you want to achieve? What are your key priorities? Negotiating positions Influencing styles Understanding people		Year 3	LGA e-learning: Influencing skills LGA workbook: Influencing skills	Communication skills
Effective Decision Making	External	Gathering information Decision making steps and process Guarding against bias	Could include additional information resources relating to democratic decision making	Year 3		Regulation and monitoring
Media Skills	External	Interviews with TV/Radio and Print – theory and practice Handling ad hoc enquiries Delivering your core messages and key quote	Members are interviewed by the facilitator prior to the session and then see the written article that results in the session and receive feedback. In the session members also receive key knowledge and skills and are then interviewed by the facilitator with the	Year 3		Communication skills Partnership working Political understanding

Subject	Delivered by	Content	Notes	Ideal Timescale	Additional/Alternative Learning	Links to LGA Framework
			chance to learn from each other.			
Public Speaking	External	Use tips to design powerful speeches and presentations Review your speech, diagnose problems and build in improvements Handle a difficult audience with confidence Deal with questions effectively Use your voice to best effect Acknowledge and overcome your nerves	This could be delivered as 121support or in a group setting. Members should have a speech in mind or drafted that they can build on and improve as a result of their learning.	Year 3		Communication skills Local leadership Partnership working Political understanding
Stress management and personal resilience	External	Identifying and recognising stressors Stress management strategies Building your resilience		Year 3	LGA e-learning: Stress management and personal resilience LGA workbook: Stress management and personal resilience	Partnership working
Speed Reading	External	Learn to use the process of rapidly recognising and absorbing phrases and sentences on a page all at once rather than identifying individual words.		Year 3	How to Speed Read - 6 Easy Techniques Speed Reading Lounge	

*Learning providers/facilitators should endeavour to address positive indicators from the relevant core behaviours within the political skills framework.

The Political Skills Framework a councillor's toolkit



Created by Professor Jo Silvester
for the Local Government Association (LGA)



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Introduction

Councillors by their very nature have strong leadership instincts and we must continuously develop those skills to ensure that we are able to meet the challenges, opportunities and risks that come with the Localism agenda. Government has given us a set of tools with which to lead and it has never been as important to properly equip Members to take full advantage of these new powers and provide genuine local leadership in our towns, cities and villages.



The landscape is far more complex than it was a decade ago and local government has a democratic right to provide leadership across a geographic area, not confined to local government services, but a right to influence every aspect of services provided locally.

Developing new leadership skills to meet this challenge is vital and it is through shared learning that Councillors can and will maximise the opportunity to provide genuine local leadership of place

At the Local Government Association we believe that great leaders make great places. In 2004 when we commissioned the first version of the political skills framework there had been very little research into what traits and skills define great local political leaders. The aim of this framework is to provide a foundation for the support and development we offer to our elected members. We are proud to be producing the third iteration of the political skills framework as we aim to keep pushing forward the thinking and development of political support for councillors.

Councillor Richard Stay

Lead Member on Leadership Development,
Improvement Board LGA
Executive Member,
Central Bedfordshire Council
Chairman, Improvement East

What is the Political Skills Framework and why was it developed?

To be effective in any job you need to know what is required of you and have the knowledge and skills to achieve it. Teachers, doctors, plumbers and chief executives are not born with the knowledge and skills they need for their jobs – these are learned, practised and improved over time. The Political Skills framework sets out the key knowledge and skills needed to support new and experienced councillors in their efforts to develop the knowledge and skills to be effective in their role.

The framework was originally drafted in 2004 and revised again in 2007 in recognition of the substantial culture change in attitudes towards political roles and how they should be carried out. This included growing recognition of the need for training and development among councillors themselves.

The latest version of the framework reflects the fact that whilst councillors' responsibilities may remain largely unaltered, they have evolved over time and the political and social environment in which they carry out these responsibilities has changed fundamentally. New council structures, vastly increased use of new technology and social media, public sector spending cuts, and rising public expectations (to name but a few) are all having a profound effect on how councillors undertake their role.

Political Skills toolkit II

The Political Skills toolkit (PSF) is designed to support local councillors and those working with them in their efforts to review and support individual development needs. The tool-kit contains:

1. A revised easy-to-access political skills framework that takes account of changes in councillors' roles prompted by recent developments in local government and the wider social context.
2. Self-reflective learning reviews based on each of the PSF skill sets that can be used by councillors to identify their own areas of strength and areas for development.



Six core skills for councillors

There are six core skill areas for all councillors in this tool-kit. Depending upon your specific role as a councillor the circumstances and contexts within which you apply these skills may vary, the core skill areas will remain relevant for all councillors.

Local leadership

This refers to the need for councillors to engage with members of their community in order to learn about issues of local concern and help to facilitate a vision for the locality. It involves encouraging trust and respect between individuals and groups by mediating fairly and constructively between different organisations and sections of the community.

Partnership working

This aspect of the councillor role focuses on the need to build good relationships with others (i.e. colleagues, officers, community groups and other organisations) by identifying and working collaboratively to achieve shared goals. It recognises the need for councillors to recognise and value different contributions, delegate or provide support as required, and to take a long-term view in developing partnerships.

Communication skills

This skill area recognises the need for councillors need to demonstrate excellent communication skills across many different settings, including the ability to listen sensitively and use appropriate language with different groups. Councillors must also communicate regularly and effectively with all parts of their community using different forms of media.

Political understanding

This skill set recognises the need for councillors to develop a range of political skills in order to communicate their values, promote a political vision, and encourage democratic processes and public engagement. It recognises that councillors need to work across group boundaries at times, yet still be able to maintain their own political integrity.

Scrutiny and challenge

Scrutiny and challenge is an important day-to-day aspect of the councillor role. Councillors need to act as a critical friend by identifying opportunities for scrutiny inside and outside the council, and by providing constructive challenge and feedback to others. To be effective in this role, councillors need to analyse information quickly and present arguments that are concise, meaningful and easily understood.

Regulating and monitoring

This skill set relates to the more judicial aspects of the role that require councillors to understand their legal responsibilities and follow protocol when evaluating arguments and making decisions. Not only do councillors need to balance public needs and local policy, they must also monitor progress and seek feedback on their own learning needs.

Positive and negative indicators

Each of the skill set definitions describe what is expected of councillors if they are to be effective and influential in their role. It is recognised that there is no 'one best way' to be a councillor. Each member will approach their role as a community leader in a very different way from their colleagues, but by discussion with over 350 members and officers the indicators below reflect commonly held views about what might be considered excellent and poor councillor behaviour.

Positive (desirable) behaviours and Negative (undesirable) behaviours are included for each of the skill sets. No member could be expected to demonstrate excellent levels of positive behaviour all of the time, and never demonstrate any Negative behaviour, but excellent councillors generally demonstrate far more Positive than Negative characteristics.

These behaviours are described as positive and negative indicators because they provide an indication of the types of behaviour that councillors associate with excellent and poor performance. They are not meant to be prescriptive – but rather to help councillors and those who work with them reflect on how they perform their role and how what they do fits with each of the skill areas. They also provide a way to foster a shared understanding of what constitutes excellent councillor performance among the wider community.

Why are there negative indicators?

In any role it is just as important to be clear about what we think is unacceptable or poor behaviour as it is to be clear about what we view as excellent. Although there may be some difference of opinion, this work has helped us to understand the views most people share. For example, we know that behavioural integrity is important because most of the people we interviewed considered it unacceptable for members to change their views just to fit with the views of those in power. Neither was it considered appropriate for them to act in a way that did not reflect their values or those of their political group.



Local leadership

“People can elect their councillor confident in the knowledge that they will be able to act on the issues they care about and have campaigned on.”

(A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act, November 2011, p.5)

Positive

- ✓ Engages with their community, canvasses opinion and looks for new ways of representing people
- ✓ Keeps up-to-date with local concerns by drawing information from diverse sources, including hard to reach groups
- ✓ Encourages trust and respect by being approachable, empathising and finding new ways to engage with others
- ✓ Creates partnerships with different sections and groups in the community and ensures their involvement in decision-making
- ✓ Mediates fairly and constructively between people and groups with conflicting needs
- ✓ Works with others to develop and champion a shared local vision

Negative

- ✗ Doesn't engage with their community, waits to be approached and is difficult to contact
- ✗ Maintains a low public profile, not easily recognised in their community
- ✗ Treats groups or people unequally, fails to build integration or cohesion
- ✗ Has a poor understanding of local concerns and how these might be addressed
- ✗ Concentrates on council processes rather than people
- ✗ Is unrealistic about what they can achieve and fails to deliver on promises



Self reflective learning

How do I see myself as a ward member?	
What do you think are your particular strengths? (eg, what do you bring to the role of councillor that you think is particularly good?)	Prompts... How is my role changing and what is driving that change What sections of my community have I engaged with and canvassed opinion? How have I looked for new ways of representing people? How up-to-date am I on local concerns? Would others see me as approachable? Who have I built partnerships with? When did I last act as a mediator? How do I champion others' needs?
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done well over the past year?	
In which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

Partnership working

Positive

- ✓ Works proactively to build good relationships with colleagues, officers, community groups and other organisations
- ✓ Emphasis on achieving shared goals by maintaining focus and mobilising others
- ✓ Knows when to delegate, provide support or empower others to take responsibility
- ✓ Makes people from all backgrounds feel valued, trusted and included (eg, says 'thank you')
- ✓ Understands and acts on their role in building and shaping key partnerships at local, regional and national levels
- ✓ Understands how and when to assert authority to resolve conflict or deadlock effectively

Negative

- ✗ Prefers to exert control and impose solutions by using status rather than through persuasion and involving others
- ✗ Fails to recognise or make use of others' skills and ideas
- ✗ Typically avoids working with people with different views or political values
- ✗ Prefers to act alone and fails to engage or network with others
- ✗ Often uses divisive tactics to upset relationships within their group, or council policies and decisions
- ✗ Defensive when criticised, blames others and doesn't admit to being wrong



Self reflective learning

How am I at working in partnership?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (Eg, what do you bring to this area of your as a councillor that you think is particularly good?)	Prompts... • Do I have good relationships with colleagues and officers? • How do I help others build partnerships? • How do I support and empower others? • Do I value and include people from different backgrounds? • What networks and partnerships have I developed? • Do I stay calm and focused under pressure? • Am I engaging with all relevant groups within my ward?
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

Communication skills

Positive

- ✓ Provides regular feedback to people, making sure they are kept informed and manages expectations
- ✓ Regularly informs and communicates with their community using all available media (eg, internet newsletters and email)
- ✓ Listens to others, checks for understanding and adapts their own communication style as required
- ✓ Creates opportunities to communicate with different sectors, including vulnerable and hard to reach groups
- ✓ Speaks confidently in public settings (eg, in council and community meetings, and the media)
- ✓ Communicates clearly in spoken and written forms (eg, uses appropriate language and avoids jargon or 'council speak')

Negative

- ✗ Slow to respond to others; tends to communicate only when necessary
- ✗ Doesn't listen when people are speaking and uses inappropriate or insensitive language
- ✗ Communicates in a dogmatic and inflexible way
- ✗ Unwilling to deliver unpopular messages, uses information dishonestly to discredit others
- ✗ Tends not to participate in meetings and lacks confidence when speaking in public
- ✗ Presents confused arguments using poor language and style



Self reflective learning

How am I at communicating with others?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (eg, what do you bring to this area of your role as a councillor that you think is good?)	Prompts... • How regularly do I communicate with different sections of the community? • What different methods do I use to communicate? • How well do I listen and adapt to others? • Do I feel comfortable using technology to communicate with people? • Am I confident when speaking in public? • Do I feedback regularly to others to keep them informed?
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

Political understanding

Positive

- ✓ Demonstrates a consistency in views and values through their decisions and actions
- ✓ Helps to develop cohesion within and between different groups and also between different groups and the council
- ✓ Clearly communicates political values through canvassing and campaigning
- ✓ Actively develops their own political intelligence (eg, understanding local and national political landscapes)
- ✓ Looks for ways to promote democracy and increase public engagement
- ✓ Is able to put party politics aside and work across political boundaries when required, without compromising political values

Negative

- ✗ Lacks integrity, has inconsistent political values and tends to say what others want to hear
- ✗ Puts personal motives first or changes beliefs to match those in power
- ✗ Has poor knowledge of group manifesto, values and objectives
- ✗ Fails to support political colleagues in public
- ✗ Doesn't translate group values into ways of helping the community
- ✗ Lacks a clear political vision of what they would like to achieve



Self reflective learning

How am I at political understanding?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (eg, what do you bring to this area of your role as a councillor that you think is particularly good?)	Prompts... • How have I promoted democracy and increased public engagement? • Are my values clear and reflected in what I do? • How do I build cohesion between members of my own group? • Can I work effectively in other political environments (eg, outside council)? • How have I developed my political intelligence? • How well do I work with people with different views and values?
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

Scrutiny and challenge

Positive

- ✓ Identifies areas suitable for scrutiny and ensures that citizens and communities are involved in the scrutiny process
- ✓ Quickly understands and analyses complex information
- ✓ Presents concise arguments that are meaningful and easily understood
- ✓ Understands the scrutiny process, asks for explanations and checks that recommendations have been implemented
- ✓ Objective and rigorous when challenging process, decisions and people
- ✓ Asks challenging but constructive questions

Negative

- ✗ Doesn't prepare well or check facts and draws biased conclusions
- ✗ Too reliant on officers, tends to back down when challenged
- ✗ Fails to see scrutiny as part of their role
- ✗ Too focused on detail, doesn't distinguish between good, poor and irrelevant information
- ✗ Uses scrutiny resources inappropriately (eg, on issues over which they have no influence)
- ✗ Overly aggressive: prefers political 'blood sports' to collaboration and uses scrutiny for political gain

Self reflective learning

How am I at scrutiny and challenge?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (eg, what do you bring to this area of your role as a councillor that you think is particularly good?)	Prompts... • How do I engage in scrutiny as an everyday part of my role? • What new areas have I identified for scrutiny? • How do I deal with new information? • Are my arguments always concise, meaningful and easily understood? • Am I constructive in my criticism? • Am I fair, objective and rigorous when challenging processes or people?
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

Regulating and monitoring

Positive

- ✓ Understands and acts on their judicial role in meeting legal responsibilities (eg, duty of care, corporate parenting)
- ✓ Uses evidence to evaluate arguments and make independent, impartial judgements
- ✓ Chairs meetings effectively, follows protocol to make sure all views are explored and keeps process on track
- ✓ Understands and abides by the councillor's code of conduct
- ✓ Follows legal process, balances public needs and local policy
- ✓ Monitors others' performance and intervenes when necessary to ensure progress
- ✓ Is committed to self-development, seeks feedback and looks for opportunities to learn

Negative

- ✗ Doesn't declare personal interests, makes decisions for personal gain
- ✗ Fails to check facts or consider all sides and makes subjective or uninformed judgements
- ✗ Leaves monitoring and checks on progress to others
- ✗ Makes decisions without taking advice, considering regulations or taking account of wider issues
- ✗ Misses deadlines, leaves business unfinished and lacks balance between council and other commitments



Self reflective learning

How am I at regulating and monitoring?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (eg, what do you bring to this area of your role as a councillor that you think is particularly good?)	Prompts... • How well do I understand and act on my judicial role? (eg, corporate parenting) • How effectively do I chair meetings? • Do I know enough about legal process? • Are my judgements based on evidence? • Do I monitor others to ensure progress? • When have I sought feedback or looked for opportunities to learn?
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

Some questions and answers

All these behaviours look very daunting, aren't they a little unrealistic?

There are many different ways in which local councillors can perform their roles well, and no two councillors are likely to perform their roles in exactly the same way. Every member has their unique areas of strength as well as areas they would like to improve.

Councils may of course require different sets of skills at different times – and since a council is a team whilst it may be desirable for all members to have all the skills it isn't always necessary that they do. For example, if the Leader is not a particularly inspired communicator, s/he could ask a colleague to handle the media or major presentations while the Leader concentrates on using their strengths elsewhere.

The PSF provides a starting point for individual councillors to reflect on their own skill profile, before deciding what they want to develop and how. Some councillors might decide that they want to be excellent in all areas, whereas others might prefer to focus on one or two key areas.

One important message from the work that went into creating the PSF, is that there are common views about what makes a good or a poor councillor and, wherever possible, councillors should strive to demonstrate Positive rather than Negative behaviours.

Learning prompt for councillors



Think about the way you perform your role. Focus on one of the skill areas and decide whether you (or others) would rate this as an area of strength. Can you recall any recent occasions when you have demonstrated any of the Positive characteristics for this skill set? Have there been times when you have used negative behaviours? Are any of the behaviours surprising? Also take time to think about your own personal values – does your behaviour always reflect what you believe? When is it difficult to act with integrity? Do you think that some styles of behaviour are not appropriate in politics – or does 'anything go'?

Can I change some of these characteristics?

These characteristics are based on the views of over 350 elected members and officers. However, they are not prescriptive; they provide a base for members and officers to consider their own unique council structure, culture and context. You may decide that the culture of your own authority influences the way in which members are expected to behave towards officers, for example, or the way in which political groups communicate with one another.

Learning prompt for councillors



Think about the behaviour of your political colleagues. How might their behaviour reflect the council's culture? For example, do members generally keep up-to-date with community issues and local concerns? What support is provided to help them to do this? Are there reasons why some members are not as able to keep as up-to-date with these issues as other members?

Why is political understanding included?

Most councillors are affiliated to a political party. Even if standing as an Independent, values form an important guide for the electorate in deciding how to vote. Political systems are at the heart of local government and to be successful, councillors must be able to understand the processes by which decisions are taken and how influence is exerted.

However, there is also an ongoing need for political skill with a small 'p'. Political skill means being able to influence and persuade others, and the ability to mobilise support to achieve objectives. Members must be able to work in political environments inside and outside the council.

Learning prompt for councillors: How do the political parties in your local authority work together? Is there the opportunity for cross-party working? In what way does this impact on the success of large council projects?

Using the Political Skills Framework

The PSF can be used in many different ways and in many different areas. As part of our reviews we have asked members and officers how they have used the PSF, these were some of the examples they gave:

- member induction
- training and development programmes
- self-review
- 360-review systems
- mentoring
- learning materials
- personal development plans
- development centres.

For example, Irene MacDonald (a former councillor and member peer) has used the PSF for new councillor induction: drawing up and delivering a programme of training linked to the PSF. She has also used it for work with political groups to stimulate discussion. Irene says this works very well because it encourages the political group to share their perceptions of the group's strengths and where they could develop further. This has led to action plans focusing on what is needed to achieve organisational development.

In the full report there are case studies which describe how the PSF has been used as basis for creating bespoke development activities for councillors.

Learning resources

There is also a growing array of learning resources available to councils and councillors and most local councils will already have many resources to draw upon. However, learning and development should be based on a needs analysis and the learning objectives clearly described. The PSF provides a basis for conducting individual and organisational learning needs analyses. Once the needs have been identified the types of development opportunities available might include:

- member handbooks
- new councillor handbook
- induction training
- officer briefings
- guidance notes
- e-learning resource packs
- workshops/seminars
- external training and know-how
- work shadowing
- visits to other councils
- mentoring and coaching
- training
- learning needs analysis
- 360-degree review.

Over to you

This toolkit is a starting point. It can be used with new members to help them understand their roles as well as a base for member reviews and personal development planning. We encourage you to innovate and adapt the materials for your own use. Our ultimate aim is to support and enhance the performance of local councillors in what can be a complex and isolated role.

Useful contacts – update

Councillor development contacts in:

- Local Government Association
Political Mentoring Toolkit –
download from:
<http://tinyurl.com/btjk2l4>
- SOLACE
- SEEMP
- Work Psychology Partnership:
info@workpsychologypartnership.com
<http://www.workpsychologypartnership.com/>





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We consider requests on an individual basis.

Meeting Name:	Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
Date:	3 February 2026
Report title:	Variable Service Charges
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	See paragraphs 41-42
From:	Dominic Cain, Director of Customer and Exchequer

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Audit, Governance & Standards Committee:

1. Note the contents of the report highlighting the complexities of administering service charges, the processes in place maintaining the effective management of billing and collection and the processes in place providing independent verification of the approach to billing.
2. Take account of the significant work underway through the Housing Improvement Programme implementing the 'Good Landlord Plan and the Corporate Transformation Programme that will provide further oversight and improvements in:
 - Governance & System Controls
 - Procurement and Contract Management
 - Data Integrity & Insight

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Homeownership portfolio stands at approximately 16,000 properties which increases year on year. The total annual revenue service charge is currently £36m per annum (2024/25 actuals) on a total Housing Revenue Account of approximately £350m (2024/25). Approximately 55% of the owned portfolio has non-resident homeowners, mostly sub-letting the property at a market rent.
4. Regulation governs the approach to leaseholder management and the leases set out the landlords and lessee's obligations in detail.
5. Variable service charges are constructed from the actual costs incurred to the Housing Revenue Account in the provision of communal services to tenants and homeowners.
6. Appendix 1 provides details of the processes used by Homeownership

Services in the construction of the annual revenue service charges, to ensure accuracy and reasonableness in accordance with the lease, legislation and case-law.

7. At the meeting of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee on 19 November 2025, officers were requested to provide a report on how the Council ensures the accuracy of service charges to leaseholders.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Internal Oversight & Communication

8. Variable service charges to homeowners form part of the Council's internal audit programme and have also been subject to Scrutiny. The service charge construction process has been found to be robust.
9. The billing pack issued to homeowners includes a booklet explaining what is included in the service charge and how it has been constructed. The booklet also provides helpful information, and details of independent advice agencies. A summary breakdown of the charge accompanies the invoice or credit note.
10. Since 2004 homeowners have been able to request an itemised breakdown of each element within their actual service charge. In September 2025 Southwark introduced on-line breakdowns, accessible through the homeowners MySouthwark account. Between 7 October 2025 and 21 January 2026 there have been 1,358 views to the breakdowns. The information has been accessed over 2,000 times since being made available in September.
11. Between September and December 2024 there were 944 requests for a breakdown via an e-form on the website. In the corresponding period in 2025 this number dropped to 243. 163 of those requests were made following the issue of the actual charges with 62 homeowners indicating that they either did not have or did not want to have a MySouthwark account.
12. Throughout 2025 the Homeownership Service piloted a number of new initiatives, along with the itemised breakdowns. These included three ward based surgeries (at Denmark Hill, Newington and Rotherhithe), along with three post billing surgeries in March following the issue of the 2025/26 estimates. A further six post billing surgeries were held in October following the issue of the 2024/25 actual service charges.
13. In addition the Homeownership Service introduced on-line appointments for homeowners, both face to face and via telephone. Since March 2025, 1,049 appointments have been booked through the platform, with 960 taking place and 89 being cancelled.
14. Homeownership Services are also providing articles for the monthly housing newsletter. The articles are, and will be, on a variety of issues including statutory requirements, case-law, policies and processes, engagement and general information and advice about homeownership.

Customer Enquiries

15. Contact Centre staff are fully trained and have ongoing support to ensure the quality and accuracy of call handling for homeowner enquiries. More complex enquiries relating to how the bill has been determined or recovery and enforcement action will be dealt by specialist officers within the homeownership team.
16. The majority of calls into the contact centre relate to the raising of repairs – staff follow guidelines and identification tools to accurately determine the classification of repairs. Repairs orders are raised directly with the repairs teams and the quality and accuracy are reviewed as part of a quality assurance process- all calls are recorded.

Determining the accuracy of billing

17. Homeownership Officers analyse approximately 500,000 lines of repairs data each year. Where queries exist in relation to specific data the team liaise directly with the relevant Housing Service to determine the validation of any specific issues. Housing will liaise with contractors to provide additional information as is required. All information will be substantiated with invoicing and works orders documentation.
18. In 2024/25 for the actualisation of charges £32m worth of Communal Repairs costs were analysed. This resulted in approximately £8.9m of service charges.
19. Variable service charges to homeowners are then constructed in accordance with the lease, the legislation and case law.
20. The lease defines what services can be charged for through the service charge, and how the costs should be apportioned to the individual property. Right to Buy leases are also subject to implied covenants under schedule 6 of the Housing Act 1985.
21. The legislation defines what a service charge is and provides the structure that landlords must comply with in levying those charges.
22. There is extensive case law on service charges, which provides further definition and interpretation of both the legislation, standard lease clauses and individual leases.
23. When constructing the variable service charges the officers of Homeownership Services take into account the terms of the lease, the prevailing legislation, and case law.
24. Service Charge apportionment- for most services the apportionment used is bed-weighting. Leaseholders are only charged costs incurred to their individual block, estate and heating estate. No charge is made where a service is not provided. Details of approach to charging are contained in the appendix.

Adjustments

25. On average less than 0.7% of the service charge is written back each year. Over three years this equated to £712,664 on a total billed amount of £105,769,068.
26. These figures include write backs for freehold properties sold on the open market where a new service charge account is created. The charge written back is then invoiced to the new freeholder.

Housing Improvement Programme and transformation initiatives

27. Significant work is underway as part of the Council's implementation of the Good Landlord Plan in the Housing Department. The Housing Improvement Programme amongst other areas focuses on the end-to-end transformation of the Council's Repairs processes. This includes implementation of new technology to enable greater oversight of the commissioning of repairs work and greater insight through enhanced reporting functionality.
28. The work not only focuses on compliance but looks to further ensure the accuracy and oversight in management of works building on existing governance structures.
29. The Housing Improvement Programme meets monthly to review performance with Directors from Housing, chaired by the Strategic Director of Housing and also attended by the Director of Customer & Exchequer.
30. Similarly, there is further work underway corporately to strengthen the Council's procurement function. This work aims to develop a new operating model for procurement within Southwark providing further governance and support. The work will also focus on post award contract management ensuring contractors perform to the requirements of the contracts.

Policy framework implications

31. At this stage there are no specific policy framework implications.
32. Government has recently concluded the initial stages of a consultation for proposed changes under the Leasehold Reform Act. Any changes as a result of regulatory change will be evaluated and implemented as required.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

33. There are no community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts associated with this report.
34. All leaseholders and freeholders on estates who receive communal services will receive service charges, and are required to pay them in accordance with their lease or transfer agreement.
35. The Council does offer different payment terms, outside of the lease, to assist

homeowners in paying their charges. Homeownership Services also signposts homeowners who may be vulnerable or having difficulty in paying, to the various independent advice agencies who may be able to assist.

Climate change implications

36. Currently the legislation requires that service charge demands and formal notices be sent by post. However, Homeownership Services are pro-actively working towards electronic delivery of non-statutory notices. The Service is also planning on the development of an opt-in on-line service where appropriate.

Resource implications

37. There are no resource implications within this report.

Legal/Financial implications

38. There are no legal or financial implications in relation to this report.

Consultation

39. There are no consultation implications within this report.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

40. Not applicable.

REASON FOR URGENCY AND LATENESS

41. The report was requested by the current committee, and this is the last meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee for this financial year.
42. The subject matter of this report required input from a number of different divisions, and required further time to ensure that the information was as complete and thorough as possible.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

No.	Title
Not required	

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	AGSC Presentation

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Dominic Cain, Director of Customer and Exchequer Services		
Report Author	Louise Turff, Head of Homeownership Services		
Version	Final		
Dated	26 January 2026		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance		No	No
Strategic Director of Resources		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			26 January 2026



Service Charges

Louise Turff

Head of Homeownership Services
London Borough of Southwark

Revenue Service Charge Construction

- Communal services provided:
 - Buildings Insurance
 - Heating
 - Lighting
 - Repairs (including pest control, water tanks, service installations)
 - Cleaning
 - Grounds Maintenance
 - Lifts
 - Door entry systems
 - Security Services
 - TV aerial
- Costs incurred to block, estate and heating estate. Leaseholders are only charged for costs incurred to their individual block, estate and heating estate.
- No charge is made where a service is not provided



Costs Incurred

- Most rechargeable costs are incurred by divisions within the Housing Department in the provision of communal services to housing tenants and homeowners.
- The divisions are responsible for inspecting, monitoring, approving and paying for services received, including repairs, cleaning, grounds maintenance and others.
- The Sustainability and Energy Management Unit team manage and monitor the energy supply procured via the LASER contract. LASER forward verified invoices which the SEMU approve and forward to Housing Finance.
- Homeownership Services procure, manage and monitor the leasehold buildings insurance contract and provides the administrative service of construction, billing and collection of service charges.



Revenue Service Charge Construction – Repair Orders

○ Recording

- Expenditure is recorded on NEC Housing i-world, or on SAP (invoices and journal payments)
- Most day to day repairs (fabric and service installation) are raised via i-world

○ Payment

- Once a repair marked as complete payment is made via an open PO on SAP

○ Coding

- The works order identifies the repair, codes it to the relevant block, estate or heating system, provides the completion date and actual cost



Revenue Service Charge Construction – Repair Orders

○ Analysis

- HOS downloads all completed repairs on a monthly basis and analyses for chargeability.
- Officers check for accuracy of coding, sufficiency of description and total cost (for s20 consultation). Service providers instruct consultation via a pro-forma.

○ Reconciliation

- Total cost of all repairs orders are reconciled back to the payments made on SAP (this cannot be done on an individual basis due to insufficient resources).
- Monthly credit memos are analysed to ensure any payment credits are allocated against relevant works orders
- Some repairs raised outside of i-world – SAP is scrutinised for separate invoice payments on communal works



Revenue Service Charge Construction – Fuel

- Fuel costs are identified via invoices paid for metered billing
- Allocation of meters
 - Communal meters were surveyed to identify installations served (lifts, district heating systems, door entryphone, block and estate lighting etc)
 - The proportion used by each installation on each meter is identified and costs are allocated to relevant services on that basis
- Invoiced costs are reconciled against payments made on SAP
- Accrued costs are included if meters have not been billed – usually due to faulty meters or other disputes
- Service installations are subject to regular planned preventative maintenance and inspection

Revenue Service Charge Construction

– Cleaning & Grounds & Maintenance

- In House team
 - Cleaning, grounds maintenance, pest control and arboricultural work is carried out in-house, with costs being journalled on SAP
 - The in-house team cleaning and grounds maintenance teams provide hours worked per block/estate
- Cost Calculation
 - The cost per hour is calculated by dividing the total cost of the service charged to the HRA by the number of hours worked per year
 - The hourly rate is then multiplied by the hours worked per block/estate to identify the cost per block/estate
- The arboricultural service provides cost per estate for tree work
- Pest Control provides cost per block/estate
- All charges reconciled back to journalled costs in SAP

Service Charge Apportionment - Revenue

- For most services the apportionment used is bed-weighting
- Heating has a double weighting – to reflect the type of heating (full, partial, hot water etc)
 - Secondary (or tertiary) mains serving individual blocks are charged on a block basis
 - Boilers, primary mains, plant rooms and fuel are charged on a heating estate basis
 - Where heat meters have been installed homeowners will pay for actual fuel used to heat their own property
- Security services – concierge and CCTV
 - have traditionally been weighted to reflect services provided to the estate and public realm as well as to the block. As the service has changed to be block based only costs are now charged to the block only

Service Charge Apportionment - Revenue

- Premiums
 - Buildings insurance is calculated on the cost of individual premiums. The premium is calculated from the reinstatement value of each block.
- Overheads
 - Calculated from the direct and indirect costs recorded on SAP – these include staffing, office, transport, IT, phone and other sundry costs.
 - Overheads include direct staff management of the services, including the cost of Payroll, Finance, HR, Communications, Corporate Democratic Core and centrally recharged office costs.
- Administration
 - charged at 10% of all other costs.

Adjustments

- On average less than 0.6% of the actual service charge is written back each year.
- The table below shows the adjustments against the actual service charges for the last three years (to date).

Year	Write Backs	Total Billed	Percentage	No Accounts Adjusted	%age Accounts Adjusted
2022/23	£174,459	£29,204,288	0.60%	78	0.51%
2023/24	£439,739	£39,791,779	1.11%	5,173	33.90%
2024/25	£98,466	£36,773,001	0.27%	78	0.51%
Total	£712,663.87	£105,769,068.00	0.67%	5,329	35.53%

- These figures include write backs for freehold properties sold on the open market, where a new service charge account has to be created. The charge written back is re-invoiced to the new freeholder.
- The figure for 2023/24 includes an adjustment to the administration fee element of the service charge for homeowners on communal heating systems served by gas-fired boilers following a decision made by the Cabinet Member for Council Homes and Homelessness. This adjustment was in the total sum of £182,782 to over 3,000 accounts.

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COMMITTEE: AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (OPEN AGENDA)

NOTE: Original held in Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to Virginia Wynn-Jones, Constitutional Team on 020 7525 7055 or virginia.wynn-jones@southwark.gov.uk

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Councillor Adam Hood	1
Councillor Graham Neale	1
Councillor Andy Simmons	1
Councillor Kieron Williams	1

RESERVES

Councillor Maggie Browning	By email
Councillor Gavin Edwards	By email
Councillor Nick Johnson	By email
Councillor Margy Newens	By email
Councillor David Parton	By email
Councillor David Watson	By email

OTHER COUNCILLORS

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Doreen Forrester-Brown	1

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BDO (Internal Auditors)

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Total Print Run:	10
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List Updated: October 2025