

# Council Assembly

## (Budget and council tax setting meeting)

MINUTES of the Council Assembly (Budget and council tax setting meeting) held on Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 7.00 pm at Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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### PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor for 2023-24, Councillor Michael Situ (Chair)

Councillor Suzanne Abachor	Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Evelyn Akoto	Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Jasmine Ali	Councillor Richard Leeming
Councillor Naima Ali	Councillor Richard Livingstone
Councillor John Batteson	Councillor James McAsh
Councillor Rachel Bentley	Councillor Kimberly McIntosh
Councillor Cassandra Brown	Councillor Darren Merrill
Councillor Maggie Browning	Councillor Portia Mwangangye
Councillor Victor Chamberlain	Councillor Graham Neale
Councillor Sunil Chopra	Councillor Margy Newens
Councillor Stephanie Cryan	Councillor Leo Pollak
Councillor Ellie Cumbo	Councillor Reginald Popoola
Councillor Sam Dalton	Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Helen Dennis	Councillor Bethan Roberts
Councillor Esme Dobson	Councillor Catherine Rose
Councillor Gavin Edwards	Councillor Jane Salmon
Councillor Sabina Emmanuel	Councillor Martin Seaton
Councillor Natasha Ennin	Councillor Andy Simmons
Councillor Sam Foster	Councillor Charlie Smith
Councillor Renata Hamvas	Councillor Cleo Soanes
Councillor Barrie Hargrove	Councillor Emily Tester
Councillor Ketzia Harper	Councillor Chloe Tomlinson
Councillor Jon Hartley	Councillor Joseph Vambe
Councillor Youcef Hassaine	Councillor David Watson
Councillor Esme Hicks	Councillor Irina Von Wiese
Councillor Emily Hickson	Councillor Kieron Williams
Councillor Adam Hood	Councillor Kath Whittam
Councillor Nick Johnson	Councillor Ian Wingfield

## 1. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

### 1.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Dora Dixon-Fyle, Laura Johnson, Maria Linforth-Hall, Hamish McCallum, and Jason Ochere.

Apologies for early departure were received from Councillor Victoria Mills.

### 1.2 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The leader of the council, Councillor Kieron Williams, shared his sympathies to those dead and wounded in the Gaza conflict

The leader of the opposition, Councillor Victor Chamberlain, offered his hope for a lasting peace in the middle east.

The Mayor of Southwark called for a minute's silence in memory of innocents caught in war.

The Mayor of Southwark announced the passing of Patrick Kelly, past councillor of the borough. Councillor Ian Livingstone spoke to his memory.

Althea Loderick, the chief executive, welcomed the new Strategic Director of Housing, Hakeem Osinaike, from 1 March 2024, and announced Toni Ainge, substantive Director of Leisure, has taken over as the interim Strategic Director for Environment, Neighbourhoods and Growth.

### 1.3 NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE MAYOR DEEMS URGENT

Council assembly agreed to accept Appendix 2 to item 2.1 as late and urgent.

At this juncture, the meeting agreed the programme motion.

That the meeting be conducted as follows:

Time	Business
7.00pm – 7.20pm	<b>1. Preliminary business and announcements</b>
7.20pm – 10.00pm	<b>Item 2.1. Policy and Resources Strategy 2024-25 - Revenue Budget</b>  1. Consideration of this item is not time limited but the meeting is subject to the guillotine.  2. Debate to include:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six questions on the report</li> <li>• Councillor Stephanie Cryan to present recommendations (10 minutes)</li> <li>• Councillor Adam Hood to reply on behalf of opposition (5 minutes)</li> <li>• Four amendments to be moved and seconded (3 minutes each)</li> <li>• Report and amendments to be debated as a single debate (all speakers 3 minutes each)</li> <li>• Reply to the debate from Councillor Stephanie Cryan (3 minutes)</li> <li>• Separate vote on each amendment</li> <li>• Recorded vote on substantive motion.</li> </ul> <p>Members can only speak once, except for Councillor Stephanie Cryan, who will reply to the single debate.</p> <p>This report has a legal requirement to take a recorded vote on the substantive motion.</p>
	<p><b>Item 2.2. Setting the Council Tax 2024-25</b></p> <p>There is no debate on this item.</p> <p>This report has a legal requirement to take a recorded vote on the substantive motion.</p>
	<p><b>Item 2.3. Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25</b></p> <p>To be considered as normal.</p>

### Item 2 Reports for decision

Each report to have a single debate, subject to the guillotine.

### 1.4 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

The Mayor announced that all councillors had been granted a dispensation by the monitoring officer to vote on Item 2.2: Setting the council tax 2024-25.

### 1.5 MINUTES

The minutes of the council assembly meeting held on 22 November 2023 were agreed as

a correct record.

## **2. REPORT(S) FOR DECISION FROM THE CABINET**

### **2.1 POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY: 2024-25 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

There were six questions on the report, the written responses to which were circulated at the meeting. There were six supplemental questions.

There were four amendments to this report.

In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 1.14.9, Councillor Stephanie Cryan, cabinet member for communities, democracy and finance, moved the report.

In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 1.14.9, Councillor Adam Hood responded to the cabinet member's statement.

Councillor Ellie Cumbo moved Amendment A. This was formally seconded.

Councillor Rachel Bentley, seconded by Councillor David Watson, moved Amendment B.

Councillor Victor Chamberlain, seconded by Councillor Emily Tester, moved Amendment C.

Councillor Irina von Wiese, seconded by Councillor Graham Neale, moved Amendment D.

Following debate (Councillors Emily Hickson, Joseph Vambe, Nick Johnson, Evelyn Akoto, Youcef Hassaine, Jane Salmon, Richard Livingstone, Jasmine Ali, Richard Leeming, Cassandra Brown, Catherine Rose, Ketzia Harper, James McAsh, Esme Hicks, Ian Wingfield, Portia Mwangangye, Cleo Soanes, Margy Newens, Charlie Smith, Chloe Tomlinson, and Kieron Williams), Councillor Stephanie Cryan exercised her right of reply.

Councillor Victor Chamberlain made a point of personal explanation following Councillor Richard Livingstone's speech. Councillor Victor Chamberlain asked, following Councillor Portia Mwangangye's speech, that members not accuse others inappropriately. The Mayor called for all councillors to treat all participants with respect. Councillor Victor Chamberlain made a point of personal explanation following Councillor Chloe Tomlinson's speech. The monitoring officer asked that councillors bring their concerns to her after the meeting.

Amendment A – Carried

Amendment B – Lost

Amendment C – Lost

Amendment D – Lost

At this juncture the clerk explained that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which had come into force on 25 February 2014, required a recorded vote on key budget decisions by local authorities. The regulations required a

recorded vote on decisions only. Therefore in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 1.16(4) (a roll call recorded vote), an announcement was made at the beginning and end of one minute, after which the vote was taken.

The substantive motion was put to the vote, and the votes having been recorded, the Mayor declared the result as follows:

In favour of the substantive motion (48):

Councillors Suzanne Abachor, Evelyn Akoto, Jasmine Ali, Naima Ali, John Batteson, Cassandra Brown, Maggie Browning, Sunil Chopra, Stephanie Cryan, Ellie Cumbo, Sam Dalton, Helen Dennis, Esme Dobson, Gavin Edwards, Sabina Emmanuel, Natasha Ennin, Sam Foster, Renata Hamvas, Barry Hargrove, Ketzia Harper, Jon Hartley, Youcef Hassaine, Esme Hicks, Emily Hickson, Sarah King, Sunny Lambe, Richard Leeming, Richard Livingstone, James McAsh, Hamish McCallum, Kimberly McIntosh, Darren Merrill, Portia Mwangangye, Margy Newens, Leo Pollak, Reginald Popoola, Sandra Rhule, Bethan Roberts, Catherine Rose, Martin Seaton, Andy Simmons, Michael Situ, Charlie Smith, Cleo Soanes, Chloe Tomlinson, Joseph Vambe, David Watson, Kath Whittam, Kieron Williams, and Ian Wingfield

Against (0):

Abstained (9):

Councillors Rachel Bentley, Victor Chamberlain, Adam Hood Nick Johnson, Graham Neale, Jane Salmon, Emily Tester, Irina von Weise and David Watson

Absent (6):

Councillors Dora-Dixon-Fyle, Laura Johnson, Maria Linforth-Hall, Hamish McCallum, Victor Mills and Jason Ochere,

The Mayor declared that the substantive motion was carried.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council Assembly approved:
  - a. the final balanced budget as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
  - b. the allocation of the additional funding from the final local government finance settlement comprising:
    - £0.072m additional Services Grant
    - £3.272m additional ring fenced Social Care grant
    - An expected £0.970m National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) levy releaseas detailed in paragraphs 8-12 of the report.
  - c. the refreshed general fund capital programme for the 10 year period to 2033-34 and the refreshed housing investment programme (HIP) for the 10 year period to 2033-34 (paragraphs 21-23 of the report).

2. That Council Assembly noted:
  - a. the 6 February 2023 cabinet report at Appendix 1, which provides details of the draft budget following the local government provisional settlement
  - b. the updated Public Health Grant updated allocations (paragraph 16)
  - c. the requirement, as stipulated in the Final Local Government Finance Settlement, for the development of a productivity plan (paragraphs 10-11).
3. Council assembly noted that:
  - a. This administration has committed to improving public spaces where women have told us they feel unsafe.
  - b. That following a borough-wide consultation, the following five areas were identified by women in Southwark as priority areas for improvement:
    - Burgess Park
    - Canada Water
    - Elephant and Castle
    - Rye Lane
    - Tooley Street
  - c. That an environmental visual audit was carried out in each of these five areas in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police Service which highlighted public realm works required to improve the safety of these areas.
4. Council assembly further noted:
  - a. We are committed to ending misogyny and harassment of, and violence against, women. Working with women and men to find solutions to these deep rooted issues, we will challenge ourselves, our partners and men, to take action as allies, so women can live free from violence, abuse and fear.
  - b. Southwark Council has invested in CCTV, increasing the operator capacity by 20%.
  - c. The council is investing in better and more reliable lighting on our streets; over 7,000 lamppost columns have been upgraded to LED lighting.
  - d. The council is working with the community to identify areas that will benefit from enhanced lighting.
  - e. We are committed to establish a ground-breaking Women's Safety Centre so that women experiencing violence and abuse can access the support they need in one place.
  - f. Southwark has established a network of safe havens at businesses in known harassment hotspots where women and other vulnerable people can access

safety and support when in need at night time. Staff in these businesses have received training to administer support.

5. Council assembly resolved to:
  - a. Allocate £250,000 from the Southwark 2030 Reserve Fund to ensure that the recommendations from the environmental visual audits are delivered and to make the borough safer for women and other vulnerable people.

### **Southwark Pride Fund**

6. Council assembly noted:
  - a. The council is committed to celebrating the diversity and heritage of our borough, including the contributions of the LGBTQ+ community who have helped shape Southwark's history and continue to shape our Borough.
  - b. Southwark is the proud home of a large, diverse and thriving LGBTQ+ community.
  - c. Results of the 2021 Census show Southwark to have one of the largest populations of LGBTQ+ people in England.
  - d. Southwark Council is proud to have worked with our LGBTQ+ community and the Mayor of London to open an LGBTQ+ centre in our borough to serve our whole city. The centre provides a safe, inclusive, intergenerational and intersectional space run by the community for the community. Our Council Delivery Plan commits to a permanent LGBTQ+ cultural space. Work is now underway to provide this permanent LGBTQ+ cultural space in Blackfriars in partnership with the LGBTQ+ community.
  - e. Last year, Southwark held its first 'Pride in Southwark' event to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community. At this event, the leader of the council committed to making Southwark a safer, more equal place for everyone in the LGBTQ+ community.
7. Council assembly resolved to:
  - a. Announce a new Southwark Pride Fund to celebrate and commemorate Pride month. The £30,000 fund will be used to help our community and local Voluntary Sector Organisations celebrate and commemorate the contributions of our LGBTQ+ communities in Southwark.
  - b. This will be an annual fund and will form part of the Council's Grants Programme. We will fund this from the Southwark 2030 Reserve Fund for 2024/25 with a growth item to be added to the baseline budget in 2025/26.

## **2.2 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX 2024-25**

At this juncture the clerk explained that the Local Authorities (Standing Orders)

(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which had come into force on 25 February 2014, required a recorded vote on key budget decisions by local authorities. The regulations required a recorded vote on decisions only. Therefore in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 1.16(4) (a roll call recorded vote), an announcement was made at the beginning and end of one minute, after which the vote was taken.

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Absent (6):

Councillors Dora-Dixon-Fyle, Laura Johnson, Maria Linforth-Hall, Hamish McCallum, Victor Mills and Jason Ochere

The Mayor declared that the substantive motion was carried.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2024-25 Southwark element of the council tax for band D properties in Southwark, including an increase of 2.99%, be set at **£1,321.58** (Appendix B).
2. That the 2024-25 formal resolution for Southwark council taxes in 2024-25 be approved (Appendix A).
3. That no discount be applied to properties in the former parish of St Mary



Newington for 2024-25.

4. That Council Assembly noted the Greater London Authority (GLA) proposal to set a precept level of **£471.40** for band D, which the GLA will consider on 22 February 2024 (Appendix C).
5. That the existing local war disability and war widow/widowers' schemes for housing benefit be continued in 2024-25.
6. That Council Assembly established a council tax setting committee to set the council tax for the year 2024-25, in accordance with section 67(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and agreed the role and functions, matters reserved, and political composition (Appendix D).
7. That Council Assembly appointed the below councillors to serve on the council tax setting committee.

	<b>Labour (5)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (2)</b>
1.	Cllr Stephanie Cryan	Cllr Rachel Bentley
2.	Cllr Natasha Ennin	Cllr Irina von Wiese
3.	Cllr Sarah King	
4.	Cllr Martin Seaton	
5.	Cllr Kieron Williams	

8. That Council Assembly appointed Councillor Stephanie Cryan as chair and Councillor Rachel Bentley as vice-chair of the council tax setting committee.
9. That the special council tax setting committee will meet on Friday 23 February 2024. This will allow council tax notices to be issued in line with the normal statutory timetable.

### **2.3 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-25**

Councillor Stephanie Cryan, cabinet member for communities, democracy and finance, formally moved the report.

The recommendations contained within the report were put to the vote and declared to be carried.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That council assembly approved the Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy for 2024-25, and its appendices:
  - a. Appendix A - Capital Strategy 2024-25 to 2033-34
  - b. Appendix B - Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25

- c. Appendix C - Annual Investment Management Strategy 2024-25
- d. Appendix D - Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024-25
- e. Appendix E - Prudential Indicators 2024-25 to 2026-27.

### **3. AMENDMENTS**

The amendments were circulated in supplemental agenda no. 2.

The meeting closed at 9.29 pm.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**