



## **Council Assembly (Budget and Council Tax Setting Meeting)**

MINUTES of the Council Assembly (Budget and Council Tax Setting Meeting) held on Wednesday 25 February 2026 at 7.00 pm at Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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### **PRESENT:**

The Worshipful the Mayor for 2025-26, Councillor Sunny Lambe (Chair)

Councillor Suzanne Abachor	Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Evelyn Akoto	Councillor Richard Leeming
Councillor Jasmine Ali	Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall
Councillor John Batteson	Councillor Richard Livingstone
Councillor Rachel Bentley	Councillor James McAsh
Councillor Cassandra Brown	Councillor Hamish McCallum
Councillor Maggie Browning	Councillor Darren Merrill
Councillor Victor Chamberlain	Councillor Victoria Mills
Councillor Sunil Chopra	Councillor Portia Mwangangye
Councillor Stephanie Cryan	Councillor Graham Neale
Councillor Ellie Cumbo	Councillor Margy Newens
Councillor Sam Dalton	Councillor David Parton
Councillor Mohamed Deen	Councillor Leo Pollak
Councillor Helen Dennis	Councillor Reginald Popoola
Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle MBE	Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Esme Dobson	Councillor Bethan Roberts
Councillor Gavin Edwards	Councillor Catherine Rose
Councillor Sabina Emmanuel	Councillor Jane Salmon
Councillor Natasha Ennin	Councillor Martin Seaton
Councillor Sam Foster	Councillor Andy Simmons
Councillor Renata Hamvas	Councillor Michael Situ
Councillor Barrie Hargrove	Councillor Charlie Smith
Councillor Ketzia Harper	Councillor Cleo Soanes
Councillor Jon Hartley	Councillor Emily Tester
Councillor Youcef Hassaine	Councillor Irina Von Wiese
Councillor Esme Hicks	Councillor David Watson
Councillor Emily Hickson	Councillor Kath Whittam
Councillor Laura Johnson	Councillor Kieron Williams
Councillor Nick Johnson	Councillor Ian Wingfield

## 1. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

### 1.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Naima Ali, Adam Hood, Jason Ochere and Joseph Vambe. Apologies for early departure were received from Councillors Maria Linforth-Hall, Hamish McCallum and Victoria Mills.

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

The Mayor announced his congratulations to Councillor Charlie Smith and his wife on their sixtieth wedding anniversary.

The deputy leader and cabinet member for children, education, and refugees announced the Outstanding Ofsted result for a foster care children's home.

The leader of the council announced her disappointment in misunderstandings of Freedom of Information requests about takeaway spends, which she noted were paid for by the council in support of people in need and as thanks to young people for engaging with and supporting the borough.

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

At this juncture, the meeting agreed the programme motion.

That the meeting be conducted as follows:

Time	Business
7.00pm – 7.10pm	<b>1. Preliminary business and announcements</b>
7.10pm – 10.00pm	<b>Item 2.1. Policy and Resources Strategy: 2026-27 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Consideration of this item is not time limited but the meeting is subject to the guillotine.</li><li>2. Debate to include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 15 questions on the report (20 minute time limit)</li><li>• Councillor Stephanie Cryan to present recommendations (10 minutes)</li><li>• Councillor David Watson to reply on behalf of majority opposition (5 minutes)</li><li>• Two 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></ul></li></ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 2025-26</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. Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy 2025-26</b></p> <p>To be considered as normal.</p>
	<p><b>Item 2.4 Proportionality and allocation of seats on committees</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 2026-27.

Councillor Hamish McCallum declared a pecuniary interest in item 2.1: Policy and resources strategy: 2026-27 budget and medium term financial strategy, as his partner works for KPMG. He left the room for this item and took no part in the decision-making.

#### **1.5 MINUTES**

The minutes of the council assembly meeting held on 12 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

### **2. REPORTS FOR DECISION FROM THE CABINET**

#### **2.1 POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY: 2026-27 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

There were 16 questions on the report, the written responses to which were circulated at the meeting. There were six supplemental questions.

There were two amendments to this report.

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

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

Councillor Victor Chamberlain, seconded by Rachel Bentley, moved Amendment A.

Councillor James McAsh, seconded by Councillor Reginald Popoola, moved Amendment B.

Following debate (Councillors Margy Newens, Portia Mwangangye, Cassandra Brown, Emily Tester, Helen Dennis, Richard Leeming, Graham Neale, Sam Foster, Victoria Mills, Ian Wingfield, Richard Livingstone, Jane Salmon, Kath Whittam, John Batteson, Jasmine Ali, Natasha Ennin, Gavin Edwards, Evelyn Akoto, David Parton, Cleo Soanes, Jon Hartley, Charlie Smith, Catherine Rose), Councillor Stephanie Cryan exercised her right of reply.

Amendment A – Lost

Amendment B – 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 (43):

Councillors Suzanne Abachor, Evelyn Akoto, Jasmine Ali, John Batteson, Cassandra Brown, Maggie Browning, Sunil Chopra, Stephanie Cryan, Ellie Cumbo, Sam Dalton, Mohamed Deen, Helen Dennis, Dora Dixon-Fyle, Esme Dobson, Gavin Edwards, Sabina Emmanuel, Natasha Ennin, Renata Hamvas, Barrie Hargrove, Jon Hartley, Youcef Hassaine, Esme Hicks, Emily Nickson, Sarah King, Sunny Lambe, Richard Leeming, Richard Livingstone, Darren Merrill, Victoria Mills, Portia Mwangangye, Margy Newens, David Parton, Leo Pollak, Sandra Rhule, Bethan Roberts, Catherine Rose, Martin Seaton, Andy Simmons, Michael Situ, Charlie Smith, Cleo Soanes, Kieron Williams, Ian Wingfield

Against (0)

Abstained (14):

Councillors Rachel Bentley, Victor Chamberlain, Sam Foster, Ketzia Harper, Laura Johnson, Nick Johnson, James McAsh, Graham Neale, Reginald Popoola, Jane Salmon, Emily Tester, Irina von Wiese, David Watson, Kath Whittam

Absent (6):

Councillors Naima Ali, Adam Hood, Maria Linforth-Hall, Hamish McCallum (disclosable pecuniary interest), Jason Ochere, Joseph Vambe

The Mayor declared that the motion was carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council Assembly approved:

1. The allocation of the £2.6m additional funding from the Final Local Government Finance Settlement, as outlined in paragraphs 8 -14 and Table 1 of the report, to increase the budget for Temporary Accommodation.
2. The final balanced budget as detailed in Table 2 of the report.

That Council Assembly noted:

3. The 2 February 2026 cabinet report at Appendix 1 of the report, which sets out the draft budget following the provisional settlement.
4. The council will set the council tax on 27 February 2026 via the Council Tax Setting Committee, following confirmation of the final GLA precept on 26 February 2026 (agenda item 2.2).
5. An increase in Southwark's local Council Tax for 2026-27 of 4.99% (agenda item 2.2).
6. Paragraphs 17-33 of the report confirming the Strategic Director of Resources 'Section 25' statement as published in the 2 February 2026 Cabinet Report.

## **2.2 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX 2026-27**

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, John Batteson, Cassandra Brown, Maggie Browning, Sunil Chopra, Stephanie Cryan, Ellie Cumbo, Sam Dalton, Mohamed Deen, Helen Dennis, Dora Dixon-Fyle, Esme Dobson, Gavin Edwards, Sabina Emmanuel, Natasha Ennin, Sam Foster, Renata Hamvas, Barrie Hargrove, Ketzia Harper, Jon Hartley, Youcef Hassaine, Esme Hicks, Emily Hickson, Laura Johnson, Sarah King, Sunny Lambe, Richard Leeming, Richard Livingstone, James McAsh, Darren Merrill, Victoria Mills, Portia Mwangangye, Margy Newens, David Parton, Leo Pollak, Reginald Popoola, Sandra Rhule, Bethan Roberts, Catherine Rose, Martin Seaton, Andy Simmons, Michael Situ, Charlie Smith, Cleo Soanes, Kath Whittam, Kieron Williams, Ian Wingfield

Against (0)

Abstained (8):

Councillors Rachel Bentley, Victor Chamberlain, Nick Johnson, Graham Neale, Jane Salmon, Emily Tester, Irina von Wiese, David Watson

Absent (7):

Councillors Naima Ali, Adam Hood, Maria Linforth-Hall, Hamish McCallum (disclosable pecuniary interest), Victoria Mills, Jason Ochere, Joseph Vambe

## **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council Assembly:

- a) Approved the 2026-27 Southwark element of the council tax for band D properties in Southwark, including an increase of 2.99% for the council and 2.00% for the adult social care (ASC) precept, be set at £1,456.75 (Appendix B of the report).
- b) Approved the existing local war disability and widow/widowers' schemes for housing benefit (paragraphs 16 to 18 of the report).
- c) Approved that no discount be applied to properties in the former parish of St Mary Newington for 2026-27.
- d) Established a Council Tax Setting committee to set the Council Tax for the year 2026-27 and agrees the role and functions, matters reserved and political composition (Appendix D)
- e) Devolved the appointment of a chair and vice chair of the Council Tax Setting committee to the council tax setting committee, and agreed the below councillors to serve on the committee.

	<b>Labour (4)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (2)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
1.	Cllr Stephanie Cryan	Cllr David Watson	Cllr Kath Whittam
2.	Cllr Bethan Roberts		
3.	Cllr Ellie Cumbo		
4.	Cllr Richard Leeming		

2. That Council Assembly noted

- a) the Greater London Authority (GLA) proposal to set a precept of £510.51 for band D, which will be considered on Thursday 26 February 2026 (Paragraph 4 and Appendix C of the report). [The Greater London Authority \(Consolidated Council Tax Requirement Procedure\) Regulations 2025](#).
- b) the formal resolution for Southwark council taxes in 2026-27 (Appendix A) which will be approved by the Council Tax Setting committee on 27 February 2026.
- c) that the special Council Tax Setting committee will meet on Friday 27 February 2026. This will allow council tax notices to be issued in line with the normal statutory timetable.

### 2.3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026-27

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

After debate (Councillors Andy Simmons, Barrie Hargrove), Councillor Stephanie Cryan replied to the debate.

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 2026-27, and its appendices:
  - Appendix A – Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27
  - Appendix B - Interest Rate forecasts
  - Appendix C - Prudential Indicators
  - Appendix D - Annual Investment Management Strategy (AIS)
  - Appendix E - Capital Strategy

- Appendix F- Annual Minimum Revenue Provision
- Appendix G - Glossary Statement

## 2.4 PROPORTIONALITY AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES

This item was deemed to be formally moved.

### RESOLVED:

Council assembly:

1. Noted the updated political balance of the council following the publication of the agenda as follows:

Group	Members	%
Labour	45	71.43
Liberal Democrat	11	17.46
Green	4	6.35
Independent members (not a group)	3	4.76
Total	63	100.00

2. Noted that for the purpose of calculating the allocation of seats on committees, only political groups with greater than one member are considered.
3. Noted changes to proportionality and the possible change to the allocation of seats on committees from that agreed by council assembly on 12 November 2025. The new allocation is set out at paragraph 5, in Table 2 of the report.

## 3. AMENDMENTS

The amendments were circulated in supplemental agenda no. 1.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**