Southwark Council

Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on Tuesday 3 February 2026 at 6.30 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT:	Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chair) Councillor Graham Neale Councillor Andy Simmons
OFFICER SUPPORT:	Clive Palfreyman, strategic director of resources Hakeem Osinaike, strategic director of housing Ryan Collymore, director of repairs and maintenance Ceri Theobald, assistant director of building safety and compliance David Quirke-Thornton, strategic director of children's and adults' services Aaron Winter, BDO Angela Mason-Bell, BDO Tim Jones, director of corporate finance Laura Sandy, corporate risk and insurance manager Doreen Forrester-Brown, assistant chief executive, governance and assurance Sarah Feasey, head of law Ben Plant, Director of People and Organisational Development Stephanie Bryan, Head of Learning and Development Graham Elder, interim learning and development partner Dominic Cain, director of customer and exchequer Louise Turff, head of homeownership services Virginia Wynn-Jones, constitutional team

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adam Hood. Apologies for early departure were received from Councillor Graham Neale.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The members present were noted as the voting members.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The chair agreed to accept items:

14: 2026 Member Induction and Member Development Programme
15: Variable Service Charges
16: Repairs and maintenance update

as late and urgent.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 19 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

5. GOVERNANCE CONVERSATION: STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S AND ADULTS' SERVICES

David Quirke-Thornton, strategic director of children's and adults' services, attended the committee meeting. Members thanked the strategic director for attending.

Officers undertook to circulate information about school place availability to all councillors.

7. RETROSPECTIVE DECISION: GATEWAY 1&2 INTEGRATED COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICE

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee noted the decision taken by the Strategic Director of Children and Adults Services to award the Integrated Community Equipment Service Contract to Provide Equipment Hub for a period of two years, commencing on 1 August 2025, with a one-year extension option, for the annual value of £3.75 million and a total contract value of £11.25 million. This decision was taken in line with the emergency powers contained in the council's Contract Standing Orders, for the reasons set out in paragraphs 5 to 7 of the report.

8. REPORT ON RETROSPECTIVE CONTRACT-RELATED DECISION: COMMUNAL LIGHTING AND ELECTRICAL TESTING CONTRACTS - CONTRACT A: NORTH OF THE BOROUGH AND CONTRACT B: SOUTH OF THE BOROUGH

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

RESOLVED:

1. That the audit, governance and standards committee noted the retrospective contract decisions detailed in the report.

2. That the audit, governance and standards committee noted the actions taken by the Director of Repairs and Maintenance as set out in paragraphs 37 to 45 of the report to ensure that the risk of future retrospective contract decisions is minimised for the future.

3. That the audit, governance and standards committee made no further recommendations to help improve future decision-making.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT FEBRUARY 2026

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

Members congratulated the Adopt London Partnership and the Health and Safety Enforcement teams for their substantial positive audit outcomes.

Members thanked BDO for the work they've done for the council.

RESOLVED:

That the audit, governance and standards committee noted the update reports, as attached at Appendix A and B of the report.

10. ANNUAL REPORT ON CORPORATE RISK

Officers introduced the report. Members noted the addendum report. Members had questions for the officers.

Officers undertook to bring back an update on the areas of risk management which had a significant difference between the risk assessment and the controlled risk assessment: A Good Start in Life schools and education, and Safer Southwark crime and ASB.

RESOLVED:

1. That the audit, governance and standards committee noted the annual report on corporate risk.

2. That the audit, governance and standards committee reviewed the current assurance framework and provided comments to officers for their consideration prior to the finalisation of the register by the Strategic Director of Resources.

11. REPORT ON THE OPERATIONAL USE OF THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

RESOLVED:

That the committee noted the information relating to the use of RIPA in 2025.

12. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS MADE UNDER THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT IN 2025

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

RESOLVED:

That the committee noted the report.

13. WHISTLEBLOWING COMPLAINTS AND OUTCOMES

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

RESOLVED:

That the committee noted the report.

14. 2026 MEMBER INDUCTION AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

Officers undertook to bring a report back on the member induction process in 2026-27.

Officers undertook to build further IT training into the induction programme.

Officers undertook to ensure the EDI training included specific information on antisemitism, islamophobia, and anti-black racism.

Officers undertook to consider the internal audit of staff induction process for recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee noted:

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.

15. VARIABLE SERVICE CHARGES

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

Officers undertook to follow up on the members' enquiry about admin charges and overheads.

Officers undertook to check if an internal audit into look at energy costs and variable service charges would be helpful in the 2026-27 audit year.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit, Governance & Standards Committee:

1. Noted 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. Took 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.

16. REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

Officers undertook to write to the committee to confirm the percentage of council leaseholds being used as private rented accommodation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee noted positive trends in relation to performance against the Improvement Plan agreed with the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH), and good progress towards our commitment to become a Good Landlord, including plans to strengthen the Repairs Service.

2. That the committee noted ongoing delivery of the current capital investment programme, and its focus on health, safety and compliance.

3. That the committee noted the timeline for the development of a new 5-year investment plan, based on the findings of the stock condition survey and engagement with our residents and stakeholders.

17. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE WORK AND PERFORMANCE OF THE AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE IN 2025-26

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

RESOLVED:

That the audit, governance and standards committee forward this report on its work and performance in 2025-26 to all councillors.

18. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE FOLLOWING YEAR (2026-27)

Officers introduced the report. Members noted the updated details of appendix 2 set out in the addendum report. Members had questions for the officers.

Members noted the planned inclusion of the update report on the members' induction programme in February 2027 or June 2027.

Officers undertook to include an update on the audit programme and the planned internal audit in-housing.

RESOLVED:

1. That the audit, governance and standards committee considered the proposed draft work programme for 2026-27 and made amendments to the details set out in paragraphs 8 to 10 of the report.

2. That the audit, governance and standards committee, subject to the requested changes set out above, agreed the work programme for 2026-27 set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

19. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS OF THE CIVIC AWARDS SUB-COMMITTEE FOR 2025-26

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

RESOLVED:

That the committee considered the nominations for the positions of co-opted members of the audit, governance and standards (civic awards) sub-committee outlined in closed Appendix 1 and 2 of the report and agreed to select the following appointees:

Toby Ou Yang
Tendai Chagweda
John Rhodes
Sarah Ewens.

20. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS OF THE CIVIC AWARDS SUB-COMMITTEE FOR 2025-26

Meeting ended at 8.40 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: