

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

Wednesday 3 December 2025

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Cassandra Brown (Chair)
Councillor Rachel Bentley (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Irina Von Wiese
Councillor Mohamed Deen
Councillor Margy Newens
Councillor Jon Hartley
Councillor Youcef Hassaine
Martin Brecknell (Co-opted member)
Alie Kallon (Co-opted member)
Mannah Kargbo (Co-opted member)
Claire Williams (Co-opted member)

Reserves

Councillor Joseph Vambe
Councillor Maggie Browning
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Jason Ochere
Councillor Sam Foster
Councillor Victor Chamberlain
Councillor Adam Hood

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

You have the right to request to inspect copies of minutes and reports on this agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

Babysitting/Carers allowances

If you are a resident of the borough and have paid someone to look after your children, an elderly dependant or a dependant with disabilities so that you could attend this meeting, you may claim an allowance from the council. Please collect a claim form at the meeting.

Access

The council is committed to making its meetings accessible. For details on building access, translation, provision of signers or any other requirements for this meeting, please contact the person below.

Contact

Amit Alva on email: amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk



Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Althea Loderick

Chief Executive

Date: 25 November 2025



PRINTED ON
RECYCLED PAPER

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

Wednesday 3 December 2025
7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

Item No.	Title	Page No.
----------	-------	----------

PART A OPEN BUSINESS

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

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

In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear working days of the meeting.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.

Members to declare any interests and dispensations in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.

4. MINUTES

1 - 7

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2025.

5. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW - CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES

To interview Councillor Jasmine Ali, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Refugees covering a holistic overview of key strategies and projects under the cabinet member portfolio including Breakfast Clubs in Schools.

Item No.	Title	Page No.
----------	-------	----------

6. SOUTHWARK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (SSCP)

To receive the SSCP Annual Report for 2024/25 from Alasdair Smith, Director of Children's Services (*report to follow*)

- Major Changes- Children's well-being and schools bill in parliament, scrutiny of safe-guarding work, core child protection activity and reduction of children in child protection plan
- SSCP transformation and roles

7. CONNECT TO WORK PROGRAMME

To receive an update from officers Danny Edwards, Head of Economy and Nick Wolff, Employment and Skills Manager on employment support for those facing health and disability barriers to work, delivered through the Connect to Work programme. (*report to follow*)

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2025 - 2026

8 - 16

To consider the Work Programme for the 2025 – 2026 year.

DISCUSSION OF ANY OTHER OPEN ITEMS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING.

Date: 25 November 2025



Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 6 October 2025 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Cassandra Brown (Chair)
Councillor Rachel Bentley (Vice - Chair)
Councillor Mohamed Deen
Councillor Margy Newens
Councillor Youcef Hassaine
Martin Brecknell (co-opted member)
Alie Kallon (co-opted member)
Mannah Kargbo (co-opted member)

**OTHER
MEMBERS
PRESENT:** Councillor John Batteson and Councillor Portia Mwangangye

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Irina Von-Wiese.

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

There were no items of business which the Chair deemed urgent.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.

There were no disclosures of interests and dispensations.

4. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2025 were approved as a correct record.

5. COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PORTFOLIO

The commission first heard from Ben Davies (Blue Bermondsey business district) on the management of commercial leases including rent, repairs and marketing covering the following points

- 366 Businesses in the Business Improvement District (BID) area, Retail businesses in High Street where Southwark Council is the commercial landlord.
- Affordable workspaces in the BID to open in early Q1 2026; Small family-owned businesses in the BID and challenges faced, legal advice, rent reviews, issues carried over from Covid and rent reviews backdated 5 years which is allowed by legislation.
- Overdue repairs on business/commercial units especially with housing above; Local business owners unable to reach points of contacts for repairs within the council, lack of process to receive updates and identifying dates of overdue repairs.
- Empty commercial units with ongoing legal processes; Usage of BID units not as intended, such as consumer facing business with closed shutters or barricades.
- Impacts of admin work due to pending rent reviews and overdue repairs in flourishing BID that are mainly family-owned small businesses in a deprived area such as Blue Bermondsey.

The commission then received a report on Commercial Property Portfolio from Councillor John Batteson, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business and Mark Grant, Assistant Director of Property on Commercial Property Portfolio on the following themes

- Costs of running small businesses post Covid; Commercial properties is a key asset to the councils for revenue generation; 40% funds/income generated from Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets that are Commercial Units with housing properties above and 60% from General Fund Assets which are larger industrial/commercial units.
- HRA assets with occupied Housing properties above have access issues for repairs. New budget expected to include recently acquired and developed commercial properties and increased revenue from rent reviews due to increase in market rates.
- Annual income for 2025 year £25.5m up from £18m pre-Covid. Reviewing High Street Markets to ensure best value for the units, diversifying to encourage more footfall, review of the lettings policy for commercial properties and discussions on empty units in high streets.

- Void properties less than 3%, reviewing commercial property leases for supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). Affordable workplace strategy and using commercial property planning applications to allocate business units for affordable workspaces in the borough.
- Council Covid period Debt and Commercial income; resolutions: payments plans and legal options; Repair in commercial units, rent-review and pragmatic payment arrangements.
- Helping small businesses understand complex law around covenants in plain English and reviewing their circumstances for payment options.

The commission then asked questions on the following topics

- Proportion of properties curated by the council in the high street compared to other boroughs; reassurances on approaching businesses for rent reviews in a timely manner.
- Rent arrears and legal costs to councils; repairs in HRA commercial properties with leaks from above; Disposal of Land and commercial lets from the council.
- Criteria for rent review and market value rates; Communicating to residents regarding access for repairs; Tenants selection, tenants needs, protection of the neighbourhood character and assessment of local impacts.

Councillor Batteson explained to the commission that there have been instances where the council has used its commercial portfolios to save businesses that are important to the community. The council is now conducting rent reviews a lot earlier and covering any backlog of rent reviews from the Covid period.

Mark informed the commission that in instances like the Lloyd's Bank on Warship Lane, which was vacant for a considerable amount of time, disposal of land sale in this scenario has been carried out to bring it into economic development use. Two units in high street have also undergone a similar process. However, in cases of general fund our powers to bring it back into use is diminished as it is contained of a few big assets (under 300) when compared to the ones under HRA (900). Furthermore, the difference in rules between HRA and the General fund means that there is a higher possibility of bringing social and financial value in the latter rather than the former where you need to achieve market rates.

The commission learnt from Councillor Batteson recovering rent arrears by legal means is not the most cost-effective way for the council to recover debt. Commercial Assets in HRA are an income revenue stream. However, repairs carried out by the housing department in HRA assets are also a strain on the HRA funds. The council does provide housing tenants with a guidance pack including points of contact within the council, providing such guidance packs for businesses is a commitment that the council has agreed. Furthermore, Void commercial properties would require a significant investment from the council to bring it back into commercial use.

The commission heard from Mark that disposal of retail assets that are located

under housing assets would not be a viable asset management option, as the retail assets would be on a 999-year lease making it almost impossible to build additional housing on top. Furthermore, accessing houses with leaks over a commercial property is a time-consuming and frustrating process for residents, businesses and housing colleagues.

In addition, it's imperative that repairs for leaks are communicated urgently and effectively to residents due to the amount of significant damage that can happen very quickly. On rent reviews, the rent is assessed based on rules and regulations within the lease agreement, and market value on the end date on the lease agreement. Some leases have indexation like Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Retail Price Index (RPI) which sets the upper limit (the cap) and a lower limit (the collar) on a variable price, like an interest rate or rent. The legislation around Leaseholds is changing and this would mean rents could go up or down, historically rents always gone up. Furthermore, you would have fixed rate increases and wouldn't have CPI linked cap and collar increases. Some tenants might benefit from council indexation and others might have to pay fluctuating market rates; it is important a balance is made to ensure businesses stay open.

The use of lettings agents is important as they are Intune with the local needs of the neighbourhood which then goes out for bids and that it is reflected in the tenant selection process. The planning use for that unit is also shared with bidders and criteria such as business plan, sustainability, track record, startup, other businesses in the areas and not just the highest rent bid. It is important to maintain a blend of financial, economic and social value.

The Chair then highlighted the following areas for recommendations

- The current pilot between housing and waste and a need for a similar pilot between housing and commercial given their relationship
- Backlog of cases where businesses are affected and their experiences (Survey)
- Making it easier for businesses to navigate the council processes
- Need for agility in the council processes when dealing with businesses and their issues they face.

6. YOUTH SERVICES AND POSITIVE FUTURES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FUND

The commission then received a report from Councillor Portia Mwangangye, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks and Young People and Toni Ainge, Director of Leisure, Eva Gomez, Head of Culture and Justine Wilson-Darke, Youth and Play Service Manager on Youth Services and Positive Futures for Young People Fund (PFYPF) covering the following topics

- In-house youth service and commissioned youth service; Youth Centres and Adventure playgrounds (In-house services); Damilola Taylor Centre (DTC) and Kennel playground offer youth programmes

- Youth commissioned service get PFYPF of £1.2m which is given to VCS every two years for sport and culture programmes; Youth Parliament – representative branch of young people who get decision making powers on PFYPF allocation, influencing planning policy and safer Southwark aspects that affect young people
- One-hub website is a conduit for parents to find out what is going with the youth organisations; Youth in-house services being developed to support the upcoming cohort of young people; £500k from the governments youth transformation programme allocated to voluntary youth organisations.
- Southwark Youth Parliament and Young Advisors link to young people to be expanded to include youth interested in getting involved in community programmes.
- Exploring engagement with young people in parks, podcast centres and sports centres like the Burgess Sports Centre which is quite popular.
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) path finder programme funding £0.5m to be invested by August 2026; Small Grants fund given directly going to young people who want to get into football and can't afford boots, kits etc.; young girls who want to get into fashion or beauty.
- New state of the art equipment, fresh turf for football pitches at DTC; New music production space at the new ventures' youth centre; Capital investment in adventure playgrounds like Ellen Brown.
- Ring fenced funding from positive futures fund for young people who are neurodivergent and have SEND needs.

The commission then asked questions on the following themes

- Supporting families of children having neurodivergent needs and the need for quiet spaces and better training for staff
- Consultation in the report indicate that 33% of youth are not aware of the youth clubs; New funding £0.5m and hurdles in delivering within the timeframe of August 2026

The commission heard from Toni that the council is exploring ways in which playgrounds and parks can be all inclusive and some parks are being considered in having more capital investment for SEND disability needs.

Justine informed the commission that the council is working with a couple of organisations on training staff like Diversity Family Hub and Southwark Resource Centre team. The staff working in these areas have an annual training plan. There are some challenges with spaces in council buildings which are one-room facilities and not appropriate for quite spaces. In addition, resources and child to staff ratio is also a challenge.

Councillor Mwangangye explained to the commission that there is work being done with children services and through the Youth Transformation Programme to identify areas that have SEND children to make it easier to access Youth Clubs, Playgrounds and open spaces.

The commission was informed by Eva that through the DCMS funding, the council is developing social media channels through which they can reach more young people. The team is also working on engaging with young people in-person at school breaks to spread awareness on facilities, adult presence, youth workers being present at these youth centres.

The commission heard from Toni that the council team had to lobby the central government extensively to be granted DCMS funding and has achieved that. However, DCMS funding come with strict rules on where the funding could be used, although the funding can't be directly used in youth centres, it can be used for back-end work which will provide a firm base on which more can be delivered for youth services.

Eva explained to the commission that the DCMS funding will be useful in setting up a young people framework, hiring young researchers and direct involvement of young people in delivering youth projects. Furthermore, working with the local youth VCS sector in delivering challenging aspects in youth services.

7. CABINET RESPONSE TO EDUCATION AND LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 2024-2025

The commission discussed the Cabinet response to SEND recommendations on one-to-one support for the EHCP applications, delays in accessing EHCP funding, SEND legislation and SEND provision nationally.

The commission also discussed the expected government white paper on SEND in Autumn 2025.

The commission noted all Cabinet response to recommendations.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

The commission discussed possible work programme items

- Southwark 2030 Goals and having a strong economy
- Long term unemployment and getting people back to work
- Southwark Works and Youth Employment Challenges
- Connectivity between local businesses, schools and colleges for youth employment
- Big developers and social values (Local Jobs)
- Graduate jobs down by two-thirds
- Training jobs for young people as available jobs require 2-3 years of experience.

Meeting ended at 9:41 pm

CHAIR:

DATED:

Agenda Item 8

Meeting Name:	Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission
Date:	3 December 2025
Report title:	Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2025-26
Ward(s) or groups affected:	N/a
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/a
From:	Scrutiny Officer

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the education and local economy scrutiny commission note the work programme as at 3 December 2025 attached as Appendix 1.
2. That the education and local economy scrutiny commission consider the addition of new items or allocation of previously identified items to specific meeting dates of the commission.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The general terms of reference of the scrutiny commissions are set out in the council's constitution (overview and scrutiny procedure rules - paragraph 5). The constitution states that:

Within their terms of reference, all scrutiny committees/commissions will:

- a) review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the council's functions
- b) review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the cabinet and council officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time in areas covered by its terms of reference

- c) review and scrutinise the performance of the council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas
- d) question members of the cabinet and officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects and about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area
- e) assist council assembly and the cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues
- f) make reports and recommendations to the cabinet and or council assembly arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process
- g) consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants
- h) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working
- i) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the scrutiny committee and local people about their activities and performance
- j) conduct research and consultation on the analysis of policy issues and possible options
- k) question and gather evidence from any other person (with their consent)
- l) consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the scrutiny process and in the development of policy options
- m) conclude inquiries promptly and normally within six months

4. The work programme document lists those items which have been or are to be considered in line with the commission's terms of reference.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Set out in Appendix 1 (Work Programme) are the issues the education and local economy scrutiny commission is due to consider in 2025-26.

6. The work programme is a standing item on the education and local economy scrutiny commission agenda and enables the commission to consider, monitor and plan issues for consideration at each meeting.
7. The commission has within in its remit the cabinet portfolio elements listed below:

Children, Education & Refugees (Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member)

- **Early years and childcare** – including children and family centres, early years education, childminders and nurseries
- **Schools** – including school standards, inclusion, places and admissions; special education needs; free healthy school and nursery meals and fruit; healthy schools and Southwark's Let's Go Zero schools network
- **Further, higher and adult education** – including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), adult literacy and numeracy; and scholarships
- **Children's social care** – including children in care and care leavers, fostering and adoption, support for children with disabilities and their families; and child safeguarding
- **Family support** – including parenting programmes, the council's sure-start for teenagers service and support for families who are providing unpaid care for a child with a disability or health condition, including respite care
- **Youth offending services.**

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills & Business (Councillor John Batteson)

- **Increasing employment** - support to find a job or start a new carer; careers advice and work experience; paid internships; supporting young people and care leavers' into employment, education and training; relationship with Jobcentre Plus; supporting businesses to engage with schools and colleges (including the Education Business Alliance)
- **Vocational Skills** - including apprenticeships, vocational training and skills centres
- **Businesses support** - for local businesses, cooperatives, social enterprises and entrepreneurs; increasing procurement from local businesses; and relationships with local business groups and Business Improvement Districts.
- **High streets** – including town centre action plans, Thriving Highstreets Fund, markets
- **Commercial property** – management, leasing and rent setting of the council's retail and commercial units, office accommodation and related property

- **Industrial strategy** - growing industries that generate good jobs and wider value for our community, including green industries, life sciences and creative and cultural industries
- **Living Wage** - promoting the London Living Wage employers
- **Workers' rights** - promoting good employment practices and equality and diversity at work and trade union membership.

Deputy Cabinet Member for Young People (Councillor Portia Mwanganyye)

- Increasing the voice and influence of young people
- Southwark Youth Parliament
- The council's in-house and commissioned youth services
- Positive Futures Fund
- Southwark Young Advisors.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission agenda and minutes	Southwark Council Website	Amit Alva Amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=550&Year=0		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Work Programme 2025-26

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer
Report Author	Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer
Version	Final
Dated	25 November 2025
Key Decision?	No
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER	
Officer Title	Comments Sought
	Comments Included

Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team		25 November 2025

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission Work Programme – 2025/26

Meeting	Agenda items	Comment
7 July 2025	Pupil Place Planning in Primary Schools and its impact on Secondary School admissions under the Keeping Education Strong (KES) Strategy.	To get an update from the officers on Pupil Place Planning in primary schools and also review the Pupil Place Planning Annexe 2024-25 - Submitted to Cabinet in February 2025 (Appendix 6)
	Traders from East Street Market	To hear the traders' views on any improvements that have been made and/or in progress and any areas of concern/issues that the council could help with.

6 October 2025	Commercial Property Portfolio <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of commercial leases including rent, repairs and marketing Increased revenue targets. Letting Southwark properties, Debt Recovery Plans 	To receive a report from Councillor John Batteson, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business and Mark Grant, Assistant Director of Property on Commercial Property Portfolio.
	Youth Services and Positive Futures for Young People Fund	To receive a report from Councillor Portia Mwangangye, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks and Young People and Toni Ainge, Director of Leisure and Eva Gomez, Head of Culture on Youth Services and Positive Futures for Young People Fund.
3 December 2025	Cabinet Member Interview Councillor Jasmine Ali, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Refugees	To interview Councillor Jasmine Ali covering a holistic overview of key strategies and projects under the cabinet member portfolio including Breakfast Clubs in Schools.

3 December 2025	<p>Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Changes- Children's well-being and schools bill in parliament, scrutiny of safeguarding work, core child protection activity and reduction of children in child protection plan SSCP transformation and roles 	To receive the SSCP Annual Report for 2024/25 from Alasdair Smith, Director of Children's Services
	<p>Connect to Work programme</p> <p>Update on employment support for those facing health and disability barriers to work.</p>	To receive an update from officers Danny Edwards, Head of Economy and Nick Wolff, Employment and Skills Manager on the Connect to Work programme
Upcoming Meetings	Agenda items yet to be scheduled	Comment
2 February 2026 26 February 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet Member Interviews Youth Offer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEND- Post 16 Offers (jobs) Care leavers – Job opportunities Engagement with representatives of schools Youth Offending Services Work Experience and employment opportunities 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Southwark works and youth employment - employer engagement functions, Good People Partnership▪ Apprenticeships• Keeping Education Strong (KES) strategy update<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Falling schools rolls and schools closures▪ Secondary school pupil numbers• Skills Delivery Plan runs from 2023-25 under Economic Strategy• Southwark Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP)• Blue Youth Club- Bermondsey closed 5 years• Southwark 2030 Goals and having a strong economy• Long term unemployment and getting people back to work• Southwark Works and Youth Employment Challenges• Connectivity between local businesses, schools and colleges for youth employment• Big developers and social values (Local Jobs)• Graduate jobs down by two-thirds• Training jobs for young people as available jobs require 2-3 years of experience.	
--	--	--

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025-26

AGENDA DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)

NOTE: Original held by Scrutiny Team; all amendments/queries to Amit Alva Tel: 020 7525 0496

Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
Electronic Copy		Joseph Brown – Senior Cabinet Officer	
Members:		Euan Cadzow-Webb - Liberal Democrat Group Office	
Councillor Cassandra Brown (Chair) Councillor Rachel Bentley (Vice-Chair) Councillor Mohamed Deen Councillor Irina Von Wiese Councillor Margy Newens Councillor Youcef Hassaine Councillor Jon Hartley		Sarauniya Shehu- Cabinet Office Manager	
Education Representatives Martin Brecknell Alie Kallon Mannah Kargbo Claire Williams		Liam Reid- Cabinet Advisor	
Reserves Members Councillor Joseph Vambe Councillor Maggie Browning Councillor Sunny Lambe Councillor Jason Ochere Councillor Sam Foster Councillor Victor Chamberlain Councillor Adam Hood		Dated: November 2025	