

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

Thursday 26 February 2026

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

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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: 18 February 2026



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Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

Thursday 26 February 2026
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 - 10
	To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2026.	

5.	CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW - CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE EMERGENCY, JOBS AND BUSINESS	11 - 28
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To receive a report from Councillor John Batteson on a holistic overview of key strategies and projects under the Cabinet member portfolio for Climate Emergency, Jobs & Business.

Including but not limited to:

- Targets for repairs in commercial units
- Council's policy for compensating businesses that lose trade & income due to damage affecting their ability to operate. e.g. leaks from above - often residential properties

6.	DRAFT SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS - EDUCATION AND LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMISSION	
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To discuss the draft recommendations to Cabinet from the commission for the 2025-26 year. *(To follow)*

7.	WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26	29 - 32
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To consider the work programme for the 2025-26 year.

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

Date: 18 February 2026



Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission held on Thursday 5 February 2026 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 Irina Von Wiese
 Councillor Margy Newens
 Alie Kallon (Co-opted Member)
 Mannah Kargbo (Co-opted Member)
 Claire Williams (Co-opted Member)

**OTHER
 MEMBERS
 PRESENT:**

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Co-opted member Martin Brecknell and Councillor Jon Hartley.

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 interest or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025 were approved as a correct record.

5. INTERVIEW WITH HATS REPRESENTATIVE - PRIVATE PROVIDER OF PATIENT HEALTH CARE, MENTAL HEALTH, HOME TO SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND).

The commission first heard from Dan Hardy, Director of Operations for Southeast London, representing HATS- home to school transport for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), delivered in Southwark.

Dan provided an overview of HATS' role and operations, highlighting the following key points:

- Service and operational context
 - HATS provides home-to-school transport for SEND pupils on behalf of Southwark Council, alongside patient transport and mental health transport for the NHS.
 - The home-to-school service is highly time-compressed, with most journeys taking place in a short morning and afternoon window, making the service more operationally pressured than patient transport which is spread across the day.
 - There is a national driver shortage. HATS has mitigated this by upskilled drivers with lower license categories, which has helped stabilise staffing over the last 12 months.
- Relationship with the council and management changes
 - HATS reported that Southwark officers are generally responsive to concerns.
 - A recent change in council management – a new lead officer (Susanna) – has led to better-defined processes and improved communication between HATS and the local authority, which has been well received by HATS staff.

- Complaint and communication improvements
 - HATS recognised that communication with parents and response times to complaints needed improvement.
 - Together with the council, HATS has introduced an internal key performance indicator (KPI) requiring a three-day response to complaints, unless a longer time is needed due to complex investigation (e.g. checking tracking or CCTV).
 - This has contributed to reduced parental anxiety and more timely feedback when concerns are raised.
- Technology – parent app, Cordic and AI-enabled CCTV
 - HATS has deployed a parent app that:
 - Allows parents to log in to see the location of the vehicle
 - Enables HATS to send messages to specific routes (e.g. delays, changes).
 - Some parents have found the app challenging to use. When issues are reported, HATS now calls parents back, talks through their experience and guides them through the process, leading to fewer repeat calls and lower call volumes.
 - HATS uses Cordic transport software; drivers use personal digital assistants (PDAs) to record pick-ups and “no pick-ups”. HATS is working on improved reporting so that attendance and absence data can be shared more systematically with the council.
 - Vehicles are being fitted with AI-enabled CCTV which:
 - Detects unsafe driver behaviour (e.g. using the PDA or phone while driving, speeding, aggressive driving) and sends alerts.
 - Enables faster, evidence-based investigations of incidents and complaints.
 - Automatically blurs children’s faces, so staff reviewing footage cannot identify individual children.
 - HATS acknowledged the system is expensive but concluded it “pays dividends” in safeguarding, investigations and staff management.
- Safeguarding, training and incident management
 - All staff working on home to school routes undergo DBS checks.

- Passenger assistants receive PATS (Passenger Assistant Training) plus safeguarding and first aid training. Drivers receive MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme) training, covering:
 - Vehicle safety checks
 - Safe driving
 - Securing wheelchairs and specialist equipment
 - Interactions with children and young people with SEND.
- For children with complex medical needs, staff receive additional training, for example in administering medications, using EpiPens, and other specific requirements.
- HATS aims to provide consistent drivers and PAs on each route, with staff annual leave usually taken outside term-time to minimise disruption.
- Dan described how staff manage challenging incidents on vehicles, such as:
 - Children removing clothing
 - Fighting between pupils
 - Spitting or other difficult behaviours.
- In such cases:
 - The driver must pull over safely if a child is unrestrained.
 - The PA attempts to de-escalate and distract the child, while preserving safety and dignity.
 - The driver contacts the HATS office, which liaises with the council; where necessary, parents may be asked to attend.
 - Physical intervention is avoided where possible and is left to staff judgement in situations of immediate risk.
- Route planning, journey length and absences
 - Southwark Council plans routes, which are then risk-assessed by HATS, especially where routes are new or complex.
 - The standard approach is for children to travel to and from school on the same route with the same crew, although there are anomalies (e.g. after-school clubs, respite placements).

- Standard journey-time limits are:
 - 45 minutes for younger children
 - 75 minutes for older pupils.
- If there is no answer at the door, this can significantly disrupt routes. HATS will:
 - Attempt to confirm the child's status (e.g. illness)
 - Notify the council
 - Record a "no pick-up" in the system via Cordic.
- Pricing arrangements vary between local authorities (e.g. route-based vs per-child charging). Dan was not able to give precise details for Southwark's model but noted that in some cases a child's absence may result in a reduced cost where a per-child element applies.
- Staffing, pay and ratios
 - For Southwark's home to school contract:
 - PSV-licensed drivers are paid £15.40 per hour.
 - Non-PSV drivers and passenger assistants are paid at London Living Wage.
 - As a default, there is one PA to a maximum of nine pupils on a vehicle.
 - Routes are risk-assessed: some may have a second PA, and in rare cases a single child with highly complex needs may be supported by two PAs.
- Family members on vehicles
 - HATS does not routinely allow family members to accompany children on vehicles because of:
 - Capacity constraints
 - DBS and safeguarding considerations
 - The need to be consistent between families.
 - However, individual cases can be considered in collaboration with the council.

- Travel assistance consultation and independent travel
 - Members noted that the council had launched a consultation on travel assistance for young people on the day of the meeting, including proposals to:
 - Promote public transport and independent travel where appropriate
 - Consider pick-up points instead of door-to-door collection.
 - Dan observed that:
 - Many children are eager to develop independence; parental anxiety is often the main barrier.
 - Travel training programmes need to communicate closely with parents and show positive outcomes for children.
 - Pick-up point models, piloted elsewhere, have been operationally feasible but unpopular with parents, and require clear leadership and communication.
- Cost, quality and contract management
 - The commission noted concerns about the balance between cost and quality in a privately operated service that was previously run in-house.
 - Dan reported that HATS has regular monthly contract meetings with the council and that value-for-money and quality are reviewed at least annually.

Commission discussion and conclusions

- Questioned HATS on staff vetting, training, pay and support given the complex behaviours they handle.
- Sought clarification on route design, journey length limits, attendance recording and charging models.
- Explored HATS' experience of independent travel training and parental concerns, noting the relevance for the council's travel assistance consultation.
- Raised broader concerns about how the council assures quality and safeguarding in a privately delivered service.

The commission noted:

- The operational improvements introduced by HATS and the council, including the three-day complaints KPI, the parent app and AI-enabled vehicle monitoring.
- The sensitivities for parents of SEND children and the importance of clear, timely communication and robust safeguarding.
- Recommendations to Cabinet are likely to include:
 - Ensuring that all staff working on Southwark’s home-to-school contract are paid at least London Living Wage, recognising the complexity and responsibility of the work.
 - Exploring whether joint procurement or purchasing frameworks with other boroughs could improve value for money without compromising quality.
 - Ensuring that the travel assistance consultation and subsequent policy incorporate learning from HATS’ experience, including:
 - The central importance of parental reassurance and communication in independent travel training
 - Careful piloting and evaluation of pick-up point models for SEND pupils.

The commission thanked Dan Hardy for his attendance and contribution.

6. UPDATE ON CHARLOTTE SHARMAN AND ST. MARY MAGDALENE PUPILS POST CLOSURES OF THE SCHOOLS.

The commission received a report and verbal update from Neil Gordon- Orr, Assistant Director for Education Access (Children and Adult Services), on the closure of Charlotte Sharman Foundation Primary School and St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School in August 2025, in the context of falling primary school rolls across Southwark and London.

Context and process

- Both schools closed after a lengthy, statutory process involving consultation and decision stages over approximately one year.
- Southwark, commonly in the many London boroughs, has experienced a significant decline in births and primary pupil numbers over the last decade, with London Councils recently publishing analysis showing similar pressures elsewhere.
- Across Southwark, eight primary schools have closed in the past five years,

some through closure and some via amalgamation with other schools.

Impact on pupils and parental choice

- The council recognises that school closure is disruptive for parents and pupils, and that as soon as closure becomes a realistic possibility some families seek to move their children early for certainty.
- To support families at Charlotte Sharman and St Mary Magdalene:
 - A dedicated admissions officer was assigned to each school to advise parents and help secure new places.
 - Open days were organised at neighbouring schools, many of which had vacancies and were keen to take additional pupils.
 - A preference exercise was run, similar to the normal admissions process. Of the 34 families who took part:
 - 26 secured their first-preference school
 - 5 secured their second-preference school
 - Only a small number did not obtain one of their top preferences and were supported to consider other options.
- The council provided £50 school uniform vouchers to each child moving school as a contribution towards uniform costs.

Special educational needs and vulnerable pupils

- Particular attention was paid to pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) or additional vulnerabilities:
 - EHCPs were reviewed to ensure new placements could meet their needs.
 - Sending and receiving schools worked together on transition planning, including sharing strategies and information and ensuring files transferred correctly.

Staffing

- Members asked about the impact on staff, including teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff, catering and crossing staff.
- Officers noted that while teachers might find it relatively straightforward to secure alternative employment due to national shortages, detailed data on individual staff outcomes were not available at the meeting and would need to be checked separately.

The commission explored the future use and ownership of the former school sites:

- Charlotte Sharman Foundation Primary School
 - As a foundation school, the land and buildings belong to the school's foundation (governing body).
 - On closure, the governing body is disbanded and the future of the site is determined by the Secretary of State for Education. In many cases, assets revert to the local authority, but this is subject to a formal decision.
 - A decision on the Charlotte Sharman site is still awaited.
- St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School
 - The land and buildings are owned by a church-related trust linked to the parish in Bermondsey, rather than directly by the Diocesan Board

of Education.

- The church is responsible for determining the future use of the site, but the council is in active discussion with church partners about possible educational or SEND-related uses.
- Officers emphasised that ownership arrangements are often complex, with mixed local authority and foundation/diocesan ownership, and that one learning from recent closures is the need to map site ownership and legal constraints early in any process.

Wider demographic trends and future risk

- Officers advised that although the sharp decline in births appears to be levelling off, there is no indication of a return to previous higher levels. Smaller cohorts are moving through primary and will increasingly affect secondary intakes.
- The commission noted that South Bank University Academy is consulting on a proposal to cease Year 7 admissions over time and operate only as a sixth-form, due to falling numbers. As an academy, this decision lies with the Department for Education.
- There are no current proposals for further primary closures in Southwark, but the underlying demographic challenge remains.

Housing and temporary accommodation

- Members raised concerns that families in temporary accommodation placed outside the borough or moved long distances may be contributing to falling rolls and attendance pressures at some schools.
- Officers acknowledged that housing issues impact individual families and schools but suggested the primary driver of falling rolls is the sustained reduction in births and wider trends in family size.

Keeping Education Strong and lessons learned

- Officers explained that the Keeping Education Strong strategy has provided a borough-wide framework to manage falling rolls through:
 - Reductions in Published Admission Numbers (PANs)
 - Amalgamations
 - Closures as a last resort.
- The commission heard that this has helped to protect the viability of remaining schools by reducing overcapacity and competition for pupils.
- Lessons identified from recent closures included:
 - The importance of assigning a dedicated admissions caseworker early.
 - Starting planning early for complex SEND cases, even before final closure decisions, while managing the risk of destabilising schools.
 - Early work to clarify land and asset ownership.

The commission noted the update and did not propose additional formal recommendations at this stage but agreed that these lessons should continue to inform any future decisions on school organisation.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

The Chair highlighted the following priorities for the final meeting:

- A Cabinet Member interview with Councillor John Batterson, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business covering:
 - A holistic overview of strategies and projects within the portfolio.
 - Repairs in commercial units, including:
 - Timeliness of repairs
 - Impact on businesses
 - Compensation
 - Specific issues such as leaks from residential properties above commercial premises.
 - An update on high streets works, town centre action plans and related East Street Market and town centre programmes, building on previous pre-decision scrutiny.
- To develop and agree draft recommendations to Cabinet from this year's scrutiny work, with the aim of submitting these before the pre-election period.

Meeting ended at 8:35 pm

CHAIR:

DATED:

Meeting Name:	Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission
Date:	26 February 2026
Report title:	Cabinet Member Interview - Local Economy and Property
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	NA
From:	Cllr John Batteson, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission note the contents of this report setting out the priorities of the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. This report responds to the request of the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission for the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business to provide an overview of progress of priorities and programmes as part of their portfolio.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

LOCAL ECONOMY

Southwark 2030 and Southwark Economic Strategy

3. The Council's Economic Strategy 2023-2030 sets a vision for a more inclusive local economy, with a focus on narrowing inequalities and raising prosperity across all parts of the borough. The strategy underpins the delivery of the Southwark 2030 theme of a strong and fair economy
4. The Council's Local Economy function works across the council and a substantial network of external partnerships to deliver the priorities set out in the strategy and the Council's Delivery Plan (CDP) for 2022-2026. A summary of this activity is set out below.

Employment

Supporting residents into employment

5. The CDP includes a target to support 2,500 Southwark residents from priority cohorts into work. This includes people with physical and mental health conditions, vulnerable young people (including SEND and care leavers) and people with caring responsibilities. As of Q3 25/26, a cumulative total of over 2,900 residents from priority cohorts have been supported into jobs during the Council Delivery Plan period, exceeding the overall four-year target.

Southwark Works

6. Southwark Works is the frontline council service for supporting Southwark residents into work. It is formed of a network of employment support providers directly contracted by the council, each delivering contracts targeting a variety of priority cohorts, including residents with disabilities, mental health barriers and learning difficulties, and the homeless. The programme supports individuals with multiple disadvantages to find and secure opportunities in the labour market. The service celebrated its 20th year in 2025.

Connect To Work

7. In 2024, the new Government took the decision to devolve employment support to local areas through Connect to Work (CTW). In response, the council has secured circa £8m from DWP to deliver CTW for five years, with the ambitious aim of supporting over 2,000 residents with at least half entering sustainable employment during this period.
8. The council's new CTW service is now fully integrated within the Southwark Works network. Funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), CTW provides a 'place then train' approach, working closely with health and disability services across the borough. Service delivery began in October 2025 through the council's in-house team, which supports unemployed residents who present at primary healthcare settings with employment support needs. In January 2026, additional commissioned providers joined the initiative, working alongside the Southwark Resource Centre, SLAM mental health services, and local voluntary and community sector organisations to broaden access and support even further.
9. The collaborative model underpinning CTW has already demonstrated positive impacts. For example, partnerships with GP services have enabled seamless referral pathways for residents, ensuring they receive both employment and health support. Through these strengthened collaborations, more residents are benefiting from coordinated support that addresses both employment barriers and broader health and wellbeing challenges.

Peckham Hub

10. The council expanded the programme's reach by launching a new public facing hub in Peckham in January 2026 as the base for the CTW offer. This accessible space complements the longstanding Southwark Works hub on Walworth Road.

Youth Guarantee Trailblazer

11. In August 2025, the council launched the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer through the Leaving Care service, establishing a comprehensive employability pathway for care experienced young people aged 17 to 25. This pathway includes a sequence of targeted activities such as structured council work placements, development of a career mentoring programme, and access to accredited functional skills certification courses delivered through the council's Adult Learning Service. The initiative aims to increase employment rates and enhance workplace skills among care experienced young people, supporting their long-term economic independence as well as the social benefits of employment.
12. To strengthen its corporate parenting responsibilities, the council is actively collaborating with its supply chain and the wider community, forming partnerships with local businesses to offer meaningful work experience and establishing mentoring networks to guide young people through their career journeys. These collaborative efforts are designed to broaden opportunities, foster inclusion, and ensure that care experienced young people receive the support and guidance necessary for successful transitions into the workforce.
13. The council is hoping to secure further funding in 2026 to continue this support offer in the Leaving Care service, with planned expansion to develop employability pathway for young people with Education, Health & Care (EHC) Plans aged 17 to 24.

Skills

Southwark Skills Partnership and Plan

14. The Southwark Skills Partnership led by the council includes local colleges, universities, training providers and employers working together to tackle local skills challenges and improve routes into jobs in key growth sectors. Members include Southwark College, LSBU and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).
15. The Southwark Skills Delivery Plan sets out a programme for delivering the shared priorities of the Southwark Skills Partnership until 2025. In summer 2025 the Skills Partnership began developing a new 4-year plan (2026-2030), that would build on success from the last two years while further responding to national and regional changes affecting skills.
16. The Skills Delivery Plan (SDP) has nine themes that align with broader council

ambitions, including a focus on key sectors of our economy. There are six sector-focused themes:

- Life sciences
- Digital
- Green
- Health and social care
- Creative and cultural
- Hospitality

And three cross-cutting themes:

- Apprenticeships
- Careers information, advice and guidance
- Essential skills

17. The refreshed Plan is expected to be formally adopted by the Southwark Skills Partnership in March 2026. Key deliverables from the Plan are set out below.

Sector-focused skills activity

Life Sciences

18. Local health partners together with Lambeth and Southwark Councils have come together to establish SC1 London, a health and life science district for South Central London. SC1 London will support the realisation of a burgeoning life sciences cluster in Southwark, driving improvements in health and wellbeing both locally and globally. The arrival of new businesses and employers, along with increased employment space through new development such as Snowsfields, offers a significant opportunity to create a high volume of good quality jobs in the borough.
19. In 2025, the SC1 London Board agreed to the Employment and Skills Action Plan, setting out activity to ensure jobs, training, and opportunities to build social capital are available to local residents. To initiate delivery of the action plan SC1 London, Southwark and Lambeth Councils have invested £200,000 over 2025-2027 to deliver:
- A work experience pilot for Southwark and Lambeth residents
 - An internship pilot for Southwark and Lambeth residents
 - Increased access to careers information on health and life science roles

Digital

20. As a strategic partner for the Peckham Digital Accelerator Zone (PDAZ), the council helped provide digital skills training to 200 young adults (aged 18-30) from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds in Southwark and South London.
21. While funding for the programme ended in Summer 2025, the Southwark Skills Partnership intends to use learning from the PDAZ to develop a comprehensive successor entry to digital careers programme for delivery over 2026-30.

Green

22. A Green New Deal for Southwark is a headline commitment of our Climate Change Action Plan, and the creation of 2,000 green jobs is a commitment within the CDP. We have surpassed this target with 4,837 green jobs created as at Q3 2025/26.
23. Delivery has been heavily partnership-led, reflecting shared priorities with colleges, universities, skills providers and employers.
24. Activity supporting the delivery green jobs and skills in Southwark includes:
 - With Lambeth and Lewisham councils, employing a shared post to lead and coordinate an approach to green skills across the three boroughs.
 - Support for the Green Skills Hub at LSBU as part of the Mayors Academy Programme, which has created new qualifications, apprenticeships and job outcomes and raised awareness of training pathways into new low-carbon jobs. Since 2022, 1,050 Southwark residents have received green skills training through the hub and 471 entered a job or apprenticeship in the green economy.
 - Embedding green jobs as a focus of our Southwark Works employer engagement activity.
 - Implementing a monitoring framework across council services working on carbon reduction programmes to promote opportunities for Southwark residents.
 - Feasibility and business case for additional local training facilities for low-carbon skills.
 - Securing additional funding resource to build capacity of local colleges to deliver green skills, including solar and heat pump installation and maintenance at Southwark College.

Southwark Construction Skills Centre

25. Since it opened in 2016, the SCSC has been hugely successful in supporting Southwark residents into construction related employment and apprenticeships. Originally based at Elephant Park, the SCSC relocated in July 2021 to Canada Water. A long term location for the SCSC is being explored.
26. The council has an MoU with British Land regarding the ongoing governance on the SCSC. A Board (chaired by the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs & Business) has oversight of the management and performance of the SCSC.
27. Some notable outputs and achievements from the SCSC to date (Q3 2025/26) include:
 - 7,743 Southwark residents trained
 - 2,615 jobs and apprenticeships for residents
 - 3,000 existing Southwark construction workers upskilled
 - 7,379 local school children engaged

Health and Social Care

28. In partnership with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust (GSTT), Southwark College and Southwark Works, the council has developed, trialed and mainstreamed a programme of support for unemployed residents to prepare them for roles within GSTT. The programme is delivered by Southwark Works and Southwark College. Learnings from the trial have been fed into a pan-London initiative, convened by the GLA's London Anchor Institutions' Network, to improve access to NHS jobs across the capital.
29. The council works closely with the South East London Integrated Care System's Health and Care Jobs Hub on initiatives such as the application support programme. The hub is part of the Mayor's Academies Programme and is funded for a two-year period until March 2025 to improve access to skills and employment opportunities for residents from the five-Borough region.
30. As part of Skills Delivery Plan 2026-2030, the Skills Partnership is further exploring ways to work with local social care providers to understand and better respond to their skills needs.

Creative and Cultural Skills

31. Following a co-production process with skills providers and local creative and cultural organisations, Southwark Council has appointed Rinova Ltd to act as a creative and culture skills co-ordinator for Southwark from January 2026.
32. The service will identify how access to the sector can be improved for Southwark residents, particularly those from communities significantly underrepresented in the industry. Rinova will work with creative and cultural employers and local organisations already working to diversity the arts and creative industries to join up existing pathways while building capacity and new opportunities, enabling more residents to access upskilling opportunities in the sector.

Hospitality Skills

33. In September 2024, we commissioned the Southwark Hospitality Skills Hub to address the skills shortages and gaps to employment opportunities in the hospitality industry.
34. Rinova are the contracted provider to deliver this 2-year pilot programme and have four main areas of delivery:
 - Engagement with young people (12-24)
 - Skills and training provision
 - Employer engagement
 - Job and opportunity brokerage
35. So far, 29 unemployed residents have secured jobs, 14 employees have progressed in their positions, and over 700 hours of soft skills training have been provided. Additionally, eleven schools have become part of the Hub network, allowing 210 students from these schools to explore hospitality as a career path.

The pilot program is set to conclude in August 2026.

Apprenticeships

36. The CDP commits to creating 2,000 new apprenticeships. As of Q3 2025/26, the Council delivered 2,079 apprenticeships, exceeding the four-year target.
37. Our apprenticeship programme consists of a range of active work-streams cutting across the Council, including:
 - Apprenticeship Levy - partnership with Workwhile to fund training costs for apprenticeships in Southwark SMEs from transferring unspent Southwark Council levy.
 - Southwark Council Apprenticeship scheme – we have a successful internal Council scheme supporting 261 people into apprenticeships across the council between April 2022 and December 2025.
 - Construction Skills Centre – the Centre has supported 333 construction apprenticeships since April 2022.
 - Section 106 delivery - we closely monitor our S106 obligations and generate a consistent number of apprenticeships, contributing 426 apprenticeships to our overall target at Q3 2025/26.
 - The Passmore Centre, developed in partnership with LSBU, supports Southwark residents into higher level apprenticeships and supports local employers to create apprenticeship opportunities. The Centre has contributed 863 local apprenticeships to our CDP target at Q3 2025/26.
38. However, the wider apprenticeship system is facing challenges, particularly with starts decreasing over the last few years. We anticipate that wider policy changes that came into effect at the end of 2025 will support renewed uptake of apprenticeships, these include:
 - Shorter minimum apprenticeship durations
 - Changes to end point assessments
 - Removal of mandatory level 2 maths and English requirements for adult apprentices
 - Withdrawal of levy funding for most level 7 apprenticeships for learners aged over 22.
 - Full government funding for apprenticeship training and assessment costs, for non-levy paying employers recruiting apprentices aged under 21 (under 24 for apprentices with an EHCP)
39. Locally we are developing activities to strengthen our apprenticeship pipeline through:
 - Creating more apprenticeships in local schools
 - Further embedding social value in major council contracts as part of our new Social Value Framework.

Paid Internships

40. The CDP set an objective to create 250 paid internships for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This initiative is aligned with the strategy approved

by Cabinet in 2019, and is delivered through three principal schemes: School, University, and Council.

- Schools: Delivered in partnership with Career Ready, this scheme provides sixth form students with access to mentoring, masterclasses, and paid summer internships at a range of employers.
- University Scheme: In collaboration with Gradcore Ltd, this scheme offers personalized career support to eligible university students and recent graduates, helping them develop key employability skills and secure paid internships and graduate jobs.
- Council Scheme: Established in 2019 and refreshed in 2025, the Council scheme ensures ongoing recruitment and development of young talent within the organisation.

41. In addition, a small number of internships have been created through council funding, including business support programs, Thriving High Street Fund projects, and social value commitments via council contracts.
42. Since 2022, the paid internship program has delivered a total of 253 paid internships for young people, exceeding the four-year CDP target.

Careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG)

43. Supporting careers advice for people of all ages has been a particular focus of the Southwark Skills Partnership. In 2025 the Partnership piloted enhanced careers advice at Southwark Works through a dedicated Career Advisor. Residents accessing Southwark Works responded well to the pilot which included one-to-one advice sessions and group sessions. The pilot has been mainstreamed until March 2026, and may continue in 2026/27, pending budgets.
44. Young people with SEND have been identified as experiencing gaps in CIAG locally. Working with local SEND schools, improvements to online information across council websites (The One Hub, Southwark Education and Business Alliance, and Local Offer) have been initiated, highlighting resources and information that SEND young people can access to gain careers information and guidance.
45. Insights from this learning are also being fed into a broader piece of work, led by colleagues from the council's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Team, to improve access to opportunities for young people with SEND.

Essential skills

46. Essential skills include foundational capabilities including maths, English (including ESOL), digital literacy, communication, problem-solving, and resilience. These skills are critical for employability and accessing formal learning and training.

47. Over 2023-25, the Southwark Skills Partnership mapped essential skills provision across the borough and developed an Essential Skills Directory that has been uploaded on Southwark Maps, to help residents locate essential skills provision near them.
48. Through the emerging Skill Delivery Plan, we will pilot alternative learning programmes, such as workplace learning, with a focus on supporting populations less likely to engage with the local offer. An AI upskilling offer to local in-work residents will also be developed.

Business Support

Business Engagement

49. Our monthly e-newsletter serves as our primary channel for engaging with local businesses, reaching an audience of more than 12,000 subscribers. Each edition features a specific theme and showcases how both the council and its partners assist the local business community.
50. The Town Centre team regularly organises and participates in face-to-face events and networking sessions. We also carry out engagement activities with partners in town centres and high streets, promoting SPF programmes directly to businesses through marketing and flyer distribution.
51. We are creating a Business Hub microsite to provide curated information and guidance (case studies, toolkits etc.), as well as links to support programs for our business community.

Southwark Pioneers Fund

52. The Southwark Pioneers Fund (SPF) is the council's flagship business support programme, developed to generate inclusive growth by supporting the creation or scale-up of micro commercial and social enterprises (including revenue-raising charities).
53. To meet the needs of our local economy, the SPF is split into four themes:
 - Start-up - support for start-ups and aspiring entrepreneurs.
 - Growth - support for later-stage enterprises focused on growth.
 - Green - support for enterprises to decarbonise and reduce their environmental impact.
 - Social and Community - support for social and community enterprises led by women or people from Black or minoritised backgrounds.
54. The Start-up and Growth programmes run from July 2022 to June 2026. Trampoline NH CIC delivers the Start-up Programme (Launchpad), helping individuals develop business ideas and early-stage start-ups. Hatch Enterprise manages the Growth Programme (Grow Your Enterprise), providing guidance and resources for established businesses to scale.

55. Phase one of the Green programme was conducted from April 2024 to February 2025, providing support to high street businesses in piloting circular economy business models aimed at addressing challenging consumption-based emissions. As a result, 28 businesses were supported and 16 businesses were awarded grants of £5,000 each to implement new circular initiatives within their operations.
56. The second phase of the Green programme is about to begin, with plans to help around 30 small businesses take significant steps to address climate change such as reducing carbon emissions, increasing resilience, and moving closer to the borough's goal of being carbon-neutral by 2030. Up to half of these businesses will be eligible for match-funded grants of up to £5,000 to support low-carbon projects. The 18-month programme will be run by Hatch Enterprise in collaboration with Zerobeas, a local sustainability consultancy.
57. The Social and Community Programme is run through the Local Access Programme (LAP), a partnership aiming to build a sustainable and inclusive social economy in Southwark. The LAP received a £900k grant from Access – the Foundation for Social Investment, with an additional £500k from the council, making a total budget of £1.4m to support social enterprises.
58. Besides supporting businesses, LAP has received a provisional allocation of £4.4 million (£1.85 million in grant capital and £2.625 million in repayable capital) from Access and Better Society Capital to invest in the social economy. Efforts are underway to ensure this funding is used effectively by creating a unique social investment product that isn't currently available in the market.
59. To support local businesses in accessing public and private sector contract opportunities within the borough, we launched the Supplier Readiness programme in October 2025. Run by Heart of the City and MSDUK, it provides free, structured training on procurement, pitching, and bid writing. Expert-led modules cover procurement basics, bidding strategies, Social Value, and Net Zero for SMEs. The second cohort begins in March 2026.
60. Building on from this, we have launched a Local Supplier Directory to raise the profile of local suppliers to council officers procuring goods and services. It supports delivery of Southwark 2030 commitments to support the use of local suppliers in procurement and commissioning.
61. Since 2022, SPF has supported more than 1,000 entrepreneurs and businesses, most of these from communities underrepresented in business. The Start-up and LAP programmes are structured to assist individuals seeking to establish their own enterprises.

Town Centres

62. Southwark's town centres programme aims to support our high streets to thrive by supporting local businesses and ensuring residents can access the amenities they need and want. The programme seeks to create high streets that are safe, clean, and healthy for people and the environment, aligning with the ambitions

set out in the council's Economic Strategy and the Streets for People Strategy. Our priorities include:

- Developing business networks to foster engagement and collaboration between businesses and the community.
- Supporting high street businesses through encouraging engagement with council programmes such as our enterprise support offer and the graffiti removal service.
- Supporting the recovery and growth of hospitality, night-time, and cultural economies, while addressing health and community safety concerns.
- Promoting safer high streets, including initiatives like the Women's Night Safety Charter and interventions to address local safety concerns such as knife crime.
- Encouraging businesses to transition to zero-pollution delivery vehicles, especially in areas with poor air quality.

Town Centre Action Plans

63. To address these needs, detailed Town Centre Action Plans (TCAPs) have been produced for Bermondsey, Camberwell, Canada Water, Elephant & Walworth, and Peckham. These plans consolidate all town centre work into accessible, professionally designed documents that outline developments, key challenges such as community safety and cleanliness, support for high street businesses, and upcoming events aimed at attracting visitors. TCAPs include actions led by both the council and external stakeholders.
64. Effective cross council working is essential, and a director-level officer group provides strategic oversight of all cross-council activities supporting high streets and town centres. Each town centre has a dedicated lead officer responsible for coordinating and delivering the TCAP, ensuring a place-based approach and streamlined engagement. These leads work closely with local forums, BIDs, and community groups, conducting direct engagement through walkabouts, pop-ups, and local events.

Thriving High Streets Fund (THSF)

65. The THSF was launched in response to the CDP commitment to promote thriving high streets, while supporting our town centres to adapt to a range of challenging economic factors such as the recovery from the pandemic and cost of living crisis.
66. Grants of up to £25k across three funding rounds seek to attract more people to Southwark's high streets and town centres, and to increase local spend. The Thriving High Streets Fund has supported a total of 34 projects, with £646,062 awarded since its inception in 2022. Round 3, the most recent round, funded 13 initiatives totaling £161,359.94, with projects due to complete in March 2026.

Living Wage

Southwark's Living Wage Unit

67. The Council Delivery Plan 2022-26 includes a commitment to double the number of accredited Living Wage Employers in Southwark. The target is to have 496 Living Wage Employers by March 2026.
68. As at Q4 2025/26, we are continuing to make progress with 453 accredited Living Wage Employers. Importantly, 7,100 employees have also received a pay rise as a direct result of Living Wage accreditation activity across the borough.
69. Southwark became the first recognised Living Wage Place in London in 2020 and successfully renewed this status in November 2023. Our next Living Wage Place renewal is due in March 2026, and preparatory work will begin shortly to ensure the borough continues to meet the required standards and demonstrate leadership in this area.
70. However, growth has not been without challenge. Businesses continue to express concerns about affordability, particularly following the most recent London Living Wage increase to £14.80 per hour in October 2025. In addition, some employers have indicated that, despite already paying the London Living Wage, they do not always see a clear additional benefit in obtaining or maintaining formal accreditation. As a result, there has been a continued need to focus not only on securing new accreditations but also on retention and re-engagement of existing Living Wage Employers to prevent lapses in accreditation.
71. Delivery of the programme continues to be led by the Living Wage Unit. Key strands of activity over the past year include:
 - Dedicated officer capacity to raise awareness of the Living Wage, provide tailored employer support, and proactively engage businesses across priority sectors.
 - Continued delivery of the Living Wage Grant Scheme, which has now supported 72 Southwark small and medium enterprises to overcome financial barriers and achieve Living Wage Employer accreditation.
 - Targeted business engagement delivered in partnership with Beanstalk, our lead generation partner, providing direct outreach to Southwark employers and resulting in 10 new Living Wage accreditations.
 - Ongoing support for the Southwark Living Wage Action Group, made up of 25 organisations who continue to own and deliver the Living Wage Place Action Plan and drive peer-led engagement across the borough.
 - Delivery of Living Wage Week promotional activity, including a series of collaborative events such as the South London Digital Living Wage Trail and a Pop-Up Performance in Potters Fields Park, celebrating accredited employers and raising public awareness.
 - Cross-council collaboration and policy development, including the launch of a new Social Value Framework with measures designed to secure

commitments from council contractors to become Living Wage accredited, alongside continued use of planning policy, S106, procurement and the Residential Care Charter to promote London Living Wage compliance.

72. In 2025, the Living Wage Unit secured two awards at the Living Wage Champion Awards, with Southwark Council winning Industry Champion, and James Reed, Senior Strategy Officer, winning national Advocate of the Year. This national recognition highlights Southwark's leadership and innovation in promoting the Living Wage.

PROPERTY

Background

73. The council owns a commercial property estate comprising retail, workshop, light industrial and office units, mostly held freehold. Most of the retail units are on Southwark housing estates, together with industrial estates purchased in the 1980s and investment holdings in the London Bridge area.

- Southwark's commercial estate consists of 1,104 leased interests, including:
- 48 retail parades such as East Street, The Blue (Southwark Park Road), Jamaica Road, Walworth Road and Camberwell Road.
- 450 lock-up shops (primarily under social rented homes, including new retail spaces being delivered through the new homes construction)
- 58 office units (including assets along Holyrood Street, Shand Street, Copper Row and Lafone Street, which are prime investments)
- 120 workshops and light industrial units. (such as Tower Workshops, a multistorey industrial estate, Pullens yards in Kennington and Astbury Road. Retail warehouses let to Curry's and B and M on Old Kent Road)
- VCS space with flexible leases and discounted rents ie Sojourner centre.
- 70 Telecom Aerials (mostly located on the roofs of HRA blocks)
- Miscellaneous assets (advertising sites, pubs, nurseries, surgeries, parking, restaurants, land, etc.)

Rental Income

74. Annual income from the commercial estate is projected at £25.5M pa for 2025–2026, up from £18M pa pre-Covid.
75. The split is 60% General Fund (comprising 287 leased interests), and 40% HRA (comprising 817 leased interests).
76. An increase to £27Mpa by 2028–2029 is projected due to rent rises and new properties coming into the commercial portfolio.

Estate / Lease Management

77. All commercial property assets, except one portfolio, are managed by the council's Property Team, mostly made up of Chartered Surveyors. The London

Bridge/Courage Yard portfolio is managed by external Chartered Surveyors overseen by our in-house team.

78. Lease management is actively focused on:
- Maximising rental income by promptly letting vacant units and negotiating lease renewals and rent reviews.
 - Restructuring leases to reduce arrears and provide longer income
 - Balancing rent increases with tenant sustainability to avoid voids
 - Ensuring units are fully compliant in terms of statutory requirements. (e.g. Energy performance, fire safety)
 - Vacant units let at best consideration by marketing through external agents to ensure wide exposure. Tenant selection is based on best bids subject to due diligence and acceptable uses.
 - Lease assignments (where tenants request to sell their leases) are dealt with in a timely manner and thorough due diligence is carried out on potential new tenants to avoid against future arrears problems.
 - Dealing with structural and external repairs and ensuring tenants comply with their contractual obligations to repair. Statutory compliance checks are carried out regularly to ensure the estate is safe and compliant and to avoid statutory fines for non-compliance.
 - Self-contained properties requiring significant repair or with inherent management issues are, on occasion, subject to disposal to produce a capital receipt and reduce ongoing liabilities.
 - Support council priorities like climate action, health equity, and economic renewal and London Living Wage.
 - Use commercial assets to support community and financial resilience.
 - Managing asset performance to identify underutilised properties for re-letting or disposal

Income Generated from Commercial Property

79. Although Southwark Council funds its services primarily through retained business rates, council tax, and government grants, the £25.5M income from the Commercial Portfolio, along with other revenue from fees and charges, is used to help finance the cost of delivering its services.
80. The income collected for the HRA contributes to the management and maintenance of council housing and temporary accommodation, and the General Fund income helps fund Children and Adults Social Care, Parks & Recreation and other regeneration and community initiatives.
81. As the commercial estate helps to fund frontline services, it is essential that property deals are generally at full open market rates to maximise income.

Affordable Workspace, VCS and Wider Community Benefits

82. An affordable workspace policy has been implemented, which will create more opportunities for local businesses, creatives and community organizations to thrive by securing genuinely affordable spaces.

83. Southwark's estate plays a vital role in supporting social value by providing space for charities and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations.
84. Through our commercial portfolio and in line with The Southwark 2030 strategy, we can help support local businesses to create fair employment for their workers and better economic opportunities for the wider community.

RENT ARREARS

Debt Recovery

85. Debt stood at £13.9m as of January 2026. It was £14.7M as of March 2025. The £13.9m included new billing of £2m in January 2026 and £3.9m in December 2025.
86. Almost £2.7m collected in month plus an additional £900k is currently held in the suspense account awaiting allocation.
87. A single case of debt, more than £2.5m, has been subject to litigation. The council received the independent expert's determination at the end of January with the full debt essentially requiring to be paid. This has been demanded.
88. On settlement of this debt, it is anticipated that the target of £11m debt at year end is achievable.
89. Reasons for this historic debt are as follows:
 - Covid pandemic, additional economic challenges, the cost-of-living crisis, geopolitical issues, increased running costs through higher utility bills and staff related costs have meant more tenants have struggled to maintain payments.
 - Bailiff enforcement action was suspended between 2020 to 2024
 - Increased billing in 2024 and 2025 for backdated events such as renewals and rent reviews which were suspended during Covid
 - No substantial write-offs were carried out until recently, as all avenues for debt recovery were pursued before any such action could be taken
 - Increased level of debt under agreed payment plans, shows as debt
 - A significant debt of more than £2.5m relates to just one case. An award has been made in the council's favor and payment is due.

Debt Action Plan

90. Earlier this year, a Debt Action Plan was agreed and signed off by the Strategic Director of Resources. The plan includes:
 - Billing collection rate target: 95% for 2025–2026
 - Historic debt reduction: £3.7M (£14.7M to £11M by March 2026)
 - Year-on-year debt reduction: £1.5M annually until 2029
 - Lease renewals expected to reduce debt by £1.2M annually

91. Key Actions:

- Increase payment plans from £1.4M to £2.5M
- Direct debit implementation by June 2026
- Bailiff action for arrears over 30 days
- Legal action for high-value cases
- Suspense account management to reduce unallocated payments
- Timely write off of unrecoverable debt
- Additional staffing to support debt recovery
- Focused debt collection targeting bailiff action on specific parades
- Tenant engagement to ensure consistent rent payments

LETTINGS

92. Generally, third party commercial agents' market and let our vacant properties. This has proved a success as agents are able to reach a wider market of potential tenants and are more suitably resourced to carry out viewings than an in-house lettings surveyor.
93. Additionally, their marketing reach is much more sophisticated than in-house resources such as the Southwark Website. The use of agents also ensures a more transparent letting process.

Voids

94. Void rates throughout the commercial estate are currently running at under 3%. Of the 650 commercial units owned by the council, only 13 are currently vacant (2.0%), and of these, 7 are under offer. (reducing the void rate on completion to 1.0%). A number of these voids are also undergoing refurbishment to meet the required EPC rating to be able to be let.

REPAIRS**Targets for repairs in commercial units**

95. Most of our commercial leases provide that tenants are responsible for all repairs and maintenance within their properties.
96. LBS landlord liabilities generally arise from leaks from housing stock above or, very rarely, where properties are stand-alone or have single storey flat roof extensions to the rear. The landlord is also responsible for blocked drainage issues, structural problems and damp. These issues are very rare.
97. For urgent matters, The Property Team ensures that where access can be gained, a reactive contractor attends within 24 hours. For less urgent issues, within 5 working days.
98. However, problems do occur where there is reliance on Housing Repairs due to gaining access for leaks from flats above commercial properties.

Council's policy for compensating businesses that lose trade & income due to damage affecting their ability to operate. e.g. leaks from above

99. Where damage is limited to small sums (under £5000) these claims would usually be dealt with by granting a rent-free period to the tenant. For more serious and costly damage, tenants would be asked to complete an insurance claim via the Council's blanket insurance provider. There is a specific commercial insurance policy for property.
100. Significant resources are spent dealing with leaks into commercial properties from upper floor Council flats and Housing communal walkways.
101. These leaks require interaction with our Housing colleagues so operatives or contractors can gain the necessary access into flats above commercial properties. In the event of such, tenants are required to complete compensation claims. In more serious cases rent-free periods have been granted.
102. The process for compensation follows several steps.
- Report of damage by the tenant
 - Call out of reactive contractor to repair immediate problem
 - Provision of evidence/report from tenant and contractor
 - Property manager initial assessment of size of claim, relevant evidence, cause etc
 - Site inspection as necessary
 - Decision as to compensation ie rent free period or insurance claim
 - Agree resolution with tenant and process any credits due

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark Economic Strategy 2023-30	Planning and Growth, 160 Tooley Street	Danny Edwards 020 7525 5105
Southwark Skills Delivery Plan 2023-25	Planning and Growth, 160 Tooley Street	Danny Edwards 020 7525 5105

AUDIT TRAIL

This section must be included in all reports.

Lead Officer	Danny Edwards, Assistant Director of Economy Mark Grant, Assistant Director of Property
Report Author	Danny Edwards, Assistant Director of Economy Mark Grant, Assistant Director of Property
Version	Final

Dated	04/02/2026	
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, Finance	No	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	17 Feb 2026	

Note: Consultation with other officers

If you have not consulted, or sought comments from the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and assurance or the Strategic Director of Finance, you must state this in the audit trail.

Meeting Name:	Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission
Date:	26 February 2026
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 26 February 2026 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 Climate Emergency, Jobs and 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.

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?CIId=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	18 February 2026	
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	18 February 2026	

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

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 Wolf, Employment and Skills Manager on the Connect to Work programme
5 February 2026	<p>Update on Charlotte Sharman and St. Mary Magdalene pupils post closures of the schools.</p>	To receive an update on Charlotte Sharman and St. Mary Magdalene pupils from Alasdair Smith, Director of Children’s Services.
	<p>Interview with a representative of HATS, private provider of Patient Healthcare, Mental Health, Home to Schools for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Transport Services and Private Passenger Hire Services</p>	To discuss areas of child safety, child welfare, complaints and working with Southwark council.

<p>26 February 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet Member Interview – Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business</p>	<p>To receive a report from Councillor John Batteson on a holistic overview of key strategies and projects under the Cabinet member portfolio for Climate Emergency, Jobs & Business.</p> <p>Including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets for repairs in commercial units • Council's policy for compensating businesses that lose trade & income due to damage affecting their ability to operate. e.g. leaks from above - often residential properties
	<p>Draft Scrutiny Recommendations – Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission</p>	<p>To discuss the draft recommendations to Cabinet from the commission for the 2025-26 year.</p>

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
<p>Electronic Copy</p> <p>Members:</p> <p>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</p> <p>Education Representatives</p> <p>Martin Brecknell Alie Kallon Mannah Kargbo Claire Williams</p> <p>Reserves Members</p> <p>Councillor Joseph Vambe Councillor Maggie Browning Councillor Sunny Lambe Councillor Jason Ochere Councillor Sam Foster Councillor Victor Chamberlain Councillor Adam Hood</p>		<p>Joseph Brown – Senior Cabinet Officer</p> <p>Caitlin Richardson - Liberal Democrat Group Office</p> <p>Sarauniya Shehu- Cabinet Office Manager</p> <p>Liam Reid- Cabinet Advisor</p> <p>Dated: February 2026</p>	