



UNRESTRICTED MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET MONDAY, 2 MARCH 2026

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, HACKNEY TOWN HALL,
MARE STREET, LONDON, E8 1EA

Cabinet Members Present: **Mayor Caroline Woodley in the Chair**

Deputy Mayor Anntoinette Bramble (Vice-Chair), Cllr Robert Chapman, Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas, Cllr Christopher Kennedy, Deputy Mayor Guy Nicholson, Cllr Sam Pallis, Cllr Joe Walker, Cllr Sarah Young

Apologies: **Cllr Sade Etti, Sem Moema, Carole Williams**

Officers in Attendance: **Dawn Carter-McDonald - Chief Executive
Rickardo Hyatt - Group Director, Housing, Climate and Economy
Jacquie Burke - Group Director Children and Education
Sandra Farquharson, Director, HR and Organisational Development
Kieran Read - Director of Corporate Strategy and Transformation
Diane Benjamin - Director of Children's Social Work, Children's Social Care
Martin Bull - Governance Officer
Tessa Mitchell - Governance Services Team Leader**

Also in Attendance: **Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock**

1. Mayor's Opening Remarks

- 1.1 Mayor Woodley formally opened the meeting by extending congratulations to the Orthodox Jewish community on the occasion of Purim and offering Ramadan Mubarak to those observing the holy month. The Mayor expressed appreciation to local partners for their hospitality at recent Iftars and their dedication to the borough during this period of reflection.
- 1.2 The recent fire at Fellows Court was formally acknowledged, and gratitude was expressed to the London Fire Brigade, Cllr Fajana-Thomas, and Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Director

Environment and Climate Change for their rapid emergency response. The Mayor further commended the Haggerston Ward Cllrs and residents for their support of displaced neighbours. The Mayor concluded the opening remarks by offering congratulations to Cllr Sem Moema, Deputy Cabinet Member for Private Rented Sector and Housing Affordability on the birth of her daughter.

2. Apologies for Absence

2.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Etti, Cllr Moema and Cllr Williams.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. Urgent Unrestricted Business

4.1 There was no urgent unrestricted business for consideration.

5. Notice of Intention to Conduct Business in Private, Any Representations Received and the Response to Such Representations

5.1 No representations were received.

6. Questions/Deputations/Petitions

6.1 No questions from the public were received. Questions from Councillors were taken under the relevant agenda item.

7. Unrestricted Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Cabinet

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet held on 26 January 2026 was agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

8. Unrestricted Minutes of the Cabinet Procurement and Insourcing Committee

8.1 Cllr Chapman offered his observations on the important work of the Committee, referencing the commissioning of the children's home as a huge landmark for Hackney's Looked after Children and the renewal of "green vehicle fleet" grants.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet Procurement and Insourcing Meeting held on 5 January 2026 were noted.

9. F S526 2024/25 Overall Financial Position Report - December 2025

9.1 Mayor Woodley introduced the item, reporting a £600,000 reduction in forecast overspending, noting a downward trend across key departments like housing

and children's services. Increased government support has strengthened future financial planning, signaling a positive trajectory despite ongoing challenges.

- 9.2 Cllr Chapman introduced the report, attributing the small but significant budget improvement for 2025-26 to effective mitigation measures, urging continued focus on these strategies. He also highlighted a recommendation to accept a Section 75 partnership agreement with the Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, delegating fund dispersal to the Group Director of Finance.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To note the overall financial position of the Council as at December 2025 and in particular the overspend and the initiatives set out to mitigate this.**
- 2. To enter into a Section 75 Partnership Agreement with the Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to support transformation initiatives in City and Hackney.**
- 3. To delegate authority to the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources to disburse the funding in accordance with the Section 75 agreement in conjunction with the Group Director Children & Education.**

REASONS FOR DECISION

The reasons for the decision were included in the printed decisions, published on the 3 March 2026, and can be found [here](#).

10. F S532 2026/27 Budget and Council Tax Report

- 10.1 Mayor Woodley introduced the report, confirming a 25% increase in core spending power through 2028/29, secured via sustained lobbying. This funding allows for a balanced 2026/27 budget without depleting reserves or seeking emergency aid. Investment specifics will follow at the full Council meeting, on 4 March where the budget was due to be considered for approval. The Mayor thanked the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, his entire Finance team, the Chief Executive, Cllr Chapman, Scrutiny Panel Chair Cllr Gordon and Chair of the Audit Committee, Cllr Lynch.
- 10.2 Cllr Chapman noted that while the full Budget report will be debated at Council on Wednesday (4 March), Cabinet should acknowledge that this budget reflects the significant improvement in the Council's financial position and the quality of the budget the Council is now able to set. In his remarks, Cllr Chapman stated that the improvement is testament to the effective lobbying of the government by the Council, in partnership with other Central London Councils and the Labour Mayor. The budget aims to deliver a balanced financial plan for all residents, particularly for those who require the most support.

Question from Cllr Binnie-Lubbock:

What communications are planned related to this as part of the "proactive, multi-channel communications campaign to inform residents of the budget and Council Tax being approved at Full Council".

Summary response from Cllr Chapman

- 10.3 Cllr Chapman confirmed that following successful lobbying by London Labour councils and the final Local Government Finance Settlement and Fair Funding Review, the Council's financial position was stronger than previously forecast, eliminating the need for Exceptional Financial Support. The extra £97 million secured through 2028/29 firmly supported the Council's post-austerity financial strategy.
- 10.4 It was noted that the Council's improved financial position meant that communicating the risk to financial support was no longer a core communications priority.. Instead, the multi-channel budget campaign focused on assuring residents of the Council's stable finances balanced with an explanation of the ongoing budget pressures facing all councils.
- 10.5 The overall communications and engagement plan was guided by three key objectives:
- To raise awareness of key financial challenges and their impact on residents.
 - To increase understanding of budget challenges and how the Council was responding.
 - To improve sentiments towards the Council by celebrating achievements made despite financial pressures.
- 10.6 Communications would highlight that most of the budget addresses rising costs and increased frontline services, especially in adult/children's social care and homelessness prevention, to protect vulnerable residents. The Council will use videos, infographics, and case studies to balance explaining financial challenges with highlighting investment and achievements.
- 10.7 In response to a supplementary question, Cllr Chapman clarified that core spending consists of both government grants and Council Tax. A detailed breakdown would be provided to Cllr Binnie-Lubbock following the meeting.

Question from Cllr Binnie-Lubbock:

Will cuts to library programmes, stock and activities also be protected and will underserved communities be further engaged?

Summary response from Cllr Kennedy and Cllr Chapman

- 10.6 Cllr Kennedy emphasised that targeted lobbying with the Government had successfully secured the funding necessary to halt reductions in library hours, a move warmly received by Cllr Binnie-Lubbock. Referring to specific data in Appendix 5 paragraph 2.2.3.
- 10.7 Cllr Kennedy noted the refurbished Hackney Central Library and the children's Black Book Fair, reiterating the importance of libraries as inclusive community spaces. Mayor Woodley highlighted new art commissions: wallpaper created by

young people from Stormont House Special School and a Windrush Amplified Art Grant for a permanent mural by British artist, Jazz Grant.

- 10.8 In response to a supplementary question regarding further investment, Cllr Kennedy confirmed the Council's intent to transform libraries into multi-service hubs. The strategy involved expanding current provisions by collaborating with internal departments and external partners such as the wider health system to deliver a broader range of public services directly within library facilities.

Recorded Vote:

On a recorded vote there being: For (7): Mayor Caroline Woodley, Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Cllr Guy Nicholson, Cllr Robert Chapman, Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas OBE, Cllr Christopher Kennedy and Cllr Sarah Young.

Abstentions (0)

Not present in the Chamber (2): Cllr Sade Etti and Cllr Carole Williams.

The resolution was declared **CARRIED**

RESOLVED:

To make the following recommendations to Council for approval:

- 3.2.1** The report provided approval for the Council to bring forward into 2026/27 the Council's projected 2025/26 General Fund balance of £19.0m with the aim of increasing this to £22m - £24m over the medium-term period noting the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) projected 2025/26 balance of £13.5m with the aim of increasing to £16.8m by the end of March 2027
- 3.2.2** The directorate estimates and estimates for the General Finance Account items set out in Table 2 in Section 12 of this report, were noted and endorsed.
- 3.2.3** The budget being a financial exposition of the priorities set out within the Strategic Plan summarised, were noted.
- 3.2.4** It was noted that in line with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the Group Director Finance and Corporate Resources, was of the view that:

The General Fund balances which currently stand at £19.0m and the level of other reserves are adequate to meet the Council's financial needs for 2026/27 and that considering the economic uncertainty they should not fall below this level and that the aim is to increase these to £22m - £24m over the medium term.

This view takes account of the reserves included in the Council's latest published 2024/25 Accounts and the movements of those reserves since that date – which have been tracked through the Overall Financial Position (OFP) Reports, and the latest OFP projections. Note also, that the

projections in the HRA Budget to increase the balance to £16.8m by 31 March 2027. The HRA Business Plan sets out how the reserve levels will be built up over the next two financial years with the aim to be at 10% by the end of 2027/28.

The General Fund estimates are sufficiently robust to set a balanced budget for 2026/27. This takes into account the adequacy of the level of balances and reserves outlined above and the assurance gained from the comparisons of the 2025/26 budget with the projected spend identified in the December 2025 OFP. The overall level of the corporate contingency has been set at £2m.

- 3.2.5 The proposed General Fund fees and charges as set out in Appendix 7a & Appendix 7b (exempt) for implementation from 1 April 2026 were approved.
- 3.2.6 Confirmation that the Mayor, Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team would act to deliver the approved savings plans and develop robust savings plans to close the revised Medium Term Financial Plan budget gaps set out in Appendix 5 and deliver a year on year balanced position, taking into account the recommendation of the S151 Officer as set out in the Section 25 Statement (Appendix 12). Consideration given to building in increases to our revenue reserves to improve the financial resilience of the Council in the medium term.
- 3.2.7 The summary of the HRA Budget and Rent setting report proposed to Cabinet on 26 January 2026, was noted.
- 3.2.8 Authority was delegated to the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources to implement any virements required to allocate provision for demand and growth pressures set out in this report subject to the appropriate evidence base being provided.
- 3.2.9 The allocation of resources to the 2026/27 capital programme referred to in Section 20 and Appendix 6, were approved.
- 3.2.10 Approval for the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2026/27 (Appendix 10) was noted and agreed, with a maximum expenditure limit of £19.3m (2026/27), recognising that this approval does not constitute a commitment to utilise the strategy (paragraph 20.5 and Appendix 10).
- 3.2.11 Authority was delegated to the Section 151 Officer to authorise the implementation of the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy at the conclusion of the financial year, contingent upon a comprehensive assessment of the Council's overall financial position (paragraph 20.5 and Appendix 10).
- 3.2.12 The prudential indicators for Capital Expenditure:- the Capital Financing Requirement; the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt; the Affordability Prudential Indicators; and the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2026/27 as set out in Section 21 and Appendix 3, were noted and agreed.

3.2.13 Approval granted that the authorised limit for external debt of £1,241m agreed above for 2026/27 will be the statutory limit determined under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003. Further reassurance about the robustness of the budget is the confirmation that the Council's borrowings are within the boundaries of prudential guidelines.

3.2.14 It was acknowledged that at its meeting on 28 January 2026 the Cabinet agreed its Council Tax Base for the 2026/27 financial year as 80,163.35 in accordance with regulations made under section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The Council Tax Base is the total number of properties in each of the eight council tax bands A to H converted to an equivalent number of band D properties.

3.2.15 The Cabinet approved the following amounts to be now calculated for the year 2026/27 in accordance with Sections 31A to 36 of the Localism Act 2011.

The authority calculates the aggregate of: (in accordance with Section 31A (2) of the Act).

- (a) £1,371.155m being the expenditure which the authority estimates it will incur in the year in performing its functions and will be charged to a revenue account, other than a Business Improvement District (BID) Revenue Account, for the year in accordance with proper practices.**
- (b) £2m being such allowance as the authority estimates will be appropriate for contingencies in relation to amounts to be charged or credited to a revenue account for the year in accordance with proper practices.**
- (c) £nil being the financial reserves which the authority estimates it will be appropriate to raise in the year for meeting its estimated future expenditure.**
- (d) £nil being such financial reserves as are sufficient to meet so much of the amount estimated by the authority to be a revenue account deficit for any earlier financial year as has not already been provided for.**
- (e) £nil being the amount which it estimates will be transferred in the year from its general fund to its collection fund in accordance with section 97(4) of the 1988 Act, and**
- (f) £nil being the amount which it estimates will be transferred from its general fund to its collection fund pursuant to a direction under section 98(5) of the 1988 Act and charged to a revenue account for the year.**

3.2.16 The authority calculates the aggregate of: (in accordance with Section 31A (3) of the Act)

- (a) £1,245.957m being the income which it estimates will accrue to it in the year and which it will credit to a revenue account, other than a Business Improvement District (BID) Revenue Account, for the year in accordance with proper practices.
- (b) £2.962m being the amount which it estimates will be transferred in the year from its collection fund to its general fund in accordance with section 97(3) of the 1988 Act.
- (c) £nil being the amount which it estimates will be transferred from its collection fund to its general fund pursuant to a direction under section 98(4) of the 1988 Act and charged to a revenue account for the year.
- (d) £nil being the amount of the financial reserves which the authority estimates it will use in order to provide for the items mentioned in subsection (2) (a), (b), (e) and (f) above.

3.2.17 £124.236m being the amount by which the aggregate calculated under subsection (1) above exceeds that calculated under subsection (2) above, the authority calculates the amount equal to the difference; and the amount so calculated is its Council Tax Requirement for the year.

3.2.18 £124.236m being the amount at (3.2.17) divided by the amount (3.2.14) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with section 31A of the Act, £1,549.79 as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

3.2.19 That the Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2026/27 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

Valuation Bands Hackney

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£1,033. 19	£1,205. 39	£1,377. 59	£1,549. 79	£1,894. 19	£2,238. 59	£2,582. 98	£3,099. 58

3.2.20 It was noted that for 2026/27 the Greater London Authority has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below. These precepts are subject to the approval of the GLA Assembly at their meeting scheduled for 26 February.

Valuation Bands GLA

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£340.34	£397.06	£453.79	£510.51	£623.96	£737.40	£850.85	£1,021. 02

3.2.21 That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3.2.19 and 3.2.20 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for 2026/27 for each of the categories of dwellings as shown below.

Valuation Bands Combined Hackney/GLA

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£1,373. 53	£1,602. 45	£1,831. 38	£2,060. 30	£2,518. 15	£2,975. 99	£3,433. 83	£4,120. 60

3.2.22 Approval, subject to the decision of Members on recommendations 3.2.19 to 3.2.21, that Hackney's Council Tax requirement for 2026/27 be £124.236m which results in a Band D Council Tax of £1,549.79 for Hackney purposes and a total Band D Council Tax of £2,060.30 including the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept.

3.2.23 Approval, that in accordance with principles approved under section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and the new provisions included in the Localism Act 2011, the increase in the Council's Council Tax requirement for 2026/27 as shown at Appendix 8 is not excessive (5% or above) and therefore does not require the Council to hold a referendum.

3.2.24 Approval for the Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27, set out at Appendix 3.

3.2.25 Approval for the criteria for lending and the financial limits set out at Appendix 3.

3.2.26 Approval for the Minimum Revenue Provision statement setting out the method of calculation to be used, as set out in paragraphs 21.19-21.23 below.

3.3 Approval that, should it be necessary following the meeting of the GLA on 26 February 2026, the Group Director, Finance and Resources be authorised to update the content of this report for any changes to the GLA's band D Council Cax and related GLA Council Tax income, by way of a written addendum, for the approval of Full Council at its meeting on 4 March 2026.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The reasons for the decision were included in the printed decisions, published on the 3 March 2026, and can be found [here](#).

11. CED S490 Strategic Plan Annual Report 2026

- 11.1 Mayor Woodley presented the strategic plan, thanking staff and partners for delivering on its three core priorities. In Housing, the Mayor reported the Council delivered 972 social rent homes, nearing its 1,000-unit target while reducing damp and mould cases by 60% and implementing a new homelessness strategy under Awaab's Law. To combat Poverty, the 'Here to Help' scheme provided £6.4 million in crisis support alongside new school places for vulnerable children. Furthermore, Child and Family Support was bolstered through integrated hubs, adventure playgrounds, and youth services, supported by enhanced community engagement in the borough's parks and green spaces.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet noted the fourth and final annual update of the Strategic Plan Annual Report.

REASONS FOR DECISION

There were no decisions required as part of this report.

12. CED S627 People & Organisational Development Strategy

- 12.1 Mayor Woodley, on behalf of Cllr Williams, introduced the strategy as a roadmap for transformation that would ensure continued high-quality services, with a core focus on attracting and retaining top talent. She highlighted key commitments, including deepening anti-racist work led by the Chief Executive and closing the ethnicity, disability, and gender pay gaps, alongside support for staff well-being and progression for those with disabilities to create a more innovative and resilient council. Mayor Woodley concluded by thanking Cllr Williams, Sandra Farquharson and staff for their work on the strategy.

RESOLVED:

The Cabinet approved the Hackney's People and Organisational Development Strategy 2025-28 at Appendix 1.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The approval of this Strategy and our new values will allow Hackney to build a skilled, motivated and resilient workforce to support the ambitious transformation that the Council is currently undergoing.

13. Nomination for Appointment of Local Authority Governor - St Scholastica Catholic Primary School

- 13.1 Deputy Mayor Bramble introduced the report to nominate Davina Attara to the position of School Governor at St Scholastica Catholic Primary School, highlighting her commitment and long-standing service, having progressed from Vice-chair in March 2022 to Co-chair of the governing body. Deputy Bramble

acknowledged Ms. Attara's dedication to the local community and her deep understanding of the local context as someone born and raised in Hackney.

RESOLVED:

The Cabinet approved the nomination of Davina Attara to the position of School Governor at St Scholastica Catholic Primary School.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The reasons for the decision were included in the printed decisions, published on the 3 March 2026, and can be found [here](#).

14. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded during discussion of the remaining item on the agenda, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

15. Restricted Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Cabinet

15.1 **RESOLVED:** That the restricted minutes of the previous meeting of Cabinet held on 26 January 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record of proceedings

16. F S532 2026/27 Budget and Council Tax Report - Exempt Appendix

16.1 Members noted, without discussion, Exempt Appendix 7B.

17. Urgent Exempt Business

17.1 There were no new exempt items for consideration.

Duration of the meeting: 18:00 - 18:29