

The Rt Hon. the Lord Udny-Lister,
The House of Lords

Sir Paul Beresford
(via email)

23 March 2026

Dear Lord Udny-Lister and Sir Paul Beresford,

Thank you for your email of 15 February 2026 regarding statements made by Wandsworth Council that it had “frozen Council Tax for residents for the fourth consecutive year.” You highlight that this claim has been disseminated across multiple communication channels, including a council news piece¹, a web page², on social media³, and in local promotional leaflets.

Data and communications produced by local authorities and councils are not within the statutory remit of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), as they do not constitute official statistics. However, we have considered your concerns on an advisory basis against the Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis⁴, which are part of the Code of Practice for Statistics. Councils are not required to follow these standards but we strongly encourage them to do so.

The Standards for Public Use focus on whether the presentation of numerical information presented in the public domain supports public understanding. A good test is to consider how a reasonable person would interpret the statement being made and ensure that this is not likely to be misleading in the absence of additional information.

In this context, we conclude that the term ‘frozen’ is likely to be understood as the total council tax bill staying the same rather than seeing an increase. While the council website provides the necessary detail on how the adult social care precept affects the overall council tax bill⁵, this important context is mostly lacking from the examples that you shared with us. While some of the examples do refer to ‘the main element’ of council tax being frozen, they are not clear that residents’ council tax bills will still rise significantly due to other local authority charges. This does not meet the *Supporting understanding* standard within the Standards for Public Use and has the potential to mislead those whose council tax bills are affected.

¹<https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/news/news-february-2026/council-tax-freeze-for-the-fourth-year-in-a-row/>

²<https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/freeze/>


³https://x.com/cllrsimonhogg/status/2022265077793960346?s=46&t=DIFjnVs1K4-w_U4x3G-bEw

⁴<https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/standards-of-the-code-of-practice/standards-for-the-public-use-of-statistics-data-and-wider-analysis-with-required-practices/>

⁵<https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-bands-and-charges/>

Public confidence is best enabled when people can trust, verify and understand what they hear. We encourage all public bodies to ensure statistics, data and wider analysis are communicated transparently, and with integrity, clarity and accuracy. As such, we will be writing to Wandsworth Council to ask them to ensure that they support public understanding and, as the Code states, 'take proactive steps to prevent or minimise the risk of misinterpretation or misuse' of data related to its council tax announcements in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Penny Young
Interim Chair