



City of Westminster

General Purposes Committee

Date: 24 February 2016

Classification: For General Release

Title: Audio Broadcasting of Council Meetings

Report of: Head of Committee and Governance Services

Wards Involved: Not Applicable

Financial Summary: There are no financial implications

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council welcomes the public filming or the use generally of transmitting meetings. This report proposes that, in furtherance of making Council meetings more accessible, that the audio recording of Council meetings which are already made be placed on the Council's website.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Council be recommended to approve the following revised Standing Order 46:
1. With the exception of those meetings referred to in Standing Order 46 (3), meetings of the Council, its Committees and their Sub-Committees will generally be recorded for the purposes of assisting with the recording of decisions. The sound recording of full Council meetings shall be placed on the Council's website for as such time as the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications shall consider appropriate. The recording of other meetings to be erased as soon as the minutes of the relevant meeting have been approved.

3. Background

- 3.1 Over the last few years the Council has, together with many other local authorities allowed the use of modern technologies to provide greater access to its meetings. This is also in keeping with the greater openness sought by the DCLG.

3.2 The public attendance at Council meetings including Cabinet, Committee and Sub-Committees is for the most part low which is in keeping with the trend nationally. As a further step towards transparency and making Council meetings accessible it is proposed to place the full audio recording of Council meetings on the Council's website. The number of people accessing this will be monitored by officers and the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications who will consider the length of time that the recording remains on the website given space constraints.

3.3 In order to assist the full Standing Order 46, as currently drafted, is reproduced below:

- (1) With the exception of those Meetings referred to in (3) below, meetings of the Council, its Committees and their Sub-Committees, the Cabinet and its Committees shall be sound recorded for the purposes of assisting with the recording of decisions. Such sound recording, which shall not be available to the press and public, to be erased as soon as the Minutes of the relevant meeting have been approved at a subsequent meeting.
- (2) The Chief Executive may authorise in exceptional cases the retention of the sound recording of any specific meeting if in his opinion, it would be useful in the conduct of the business of the City Council or otherwise be appropriate.
- (3) In circumstances where Standing Order 39(1) applies (ie where a meeting listed in that Standing Order has excluded the press and public) meetings will not normally be sound recorded.
- (4) The Chairman of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission, the Policy and Scrutiny Committees and Task Groups or Sub-Committees relating thereto shall have the discretion to dispense with the requirement to have particular meetings sound recorded where it is not appropriate or practical to do so.

3.4 Upon return to the Council House consideration will be given to webcasting Council meetings and a further report submitted.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the proposals in this report.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the report. Local authorities, by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972 may make Standing Orders in relation to its meetings.

5.2 Whilst the Council does not intend to place audio recordings of Committee and Sub-Committees on the website these are available upon request. However, once the minutes of the relevant meeting have been approved the recording of these meetings will generally be destroyed.

6. **Other Implications:** None.

**If you have any questions about this report, or wish to inspect one of the background papers, please contact Mick Steward: 7641 3134;
Email: msteward@westminster.gov.uk**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1972
BACKGROUND PAPERS - None**