

NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY

REPORT TITLE: HYBRID MEETINGS GUIDANCE

REPORT OF: MANAGING DIRECTOR

FOR SUBMISSION TO: AUTHORITY MEETING

DATE: 5 OCTOBER 2023

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

Since face-to face meetings restarted following the COVID-19 pandemic, Members have agreed a hybrid meetings procedure at the start of every Authority and committee meeting, whereby Standing Orders are to be interpreted in light of the guidance note. This report recommends amending Standing Orders so that the procedure applies automatically to all meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Authority is recommended to:

- A. Agree the revised hybrid meetings procedure set out in Appendix A; and
- B. Delegate authority to the Managing Director to update Standing Orders so that the hybrid meetings procedure applies automatically to all meetings unless disapplied by the meeting.

SIGNED:  Managing Director

DATE: 25 September 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Since face-to face meetings restarted following the COVID-19 pandemic, Members have agreed a hybrid meetings procedure at the start of every Authority and committee meeting, whereby Standing Orders are to be interpreted in light of the guidance note. This report recommends amending Standing Orders so that the procedure applies automatically to all meetings.

2. AMENDING STANDING ORDERS

- 2.1. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Members have become familiar with the practice of hybrid meetings, where Members of the Authority or committee in question are physically in attendance if they wish to count towards quorum and vote, but guests (including members who are not part of the Authority/committee) and officers are able to join the meeting remotely. Members will also be familiar with agreement being sought at the beginning of each meeting to apply these rules. It is suggested that, rather than seeking agreement at the beginning of each meeting, Standing Orders are amended so that this procedure applies automatically to all meetings.
- 2.2. While difficult to envisage the circumstances, it is suggested that the Chair of the meeting is able to seek to disapply the procedure at the start of a meeting subject to the agreement of the meeting – otherwise they apply should there be remote attendees. Attached (Appendix A) are the rules with minor recommended revisions for incorporation into Standing Orders with the following clause which states that the rules which are attached apply to all meeting replacing A.11.2 under A.11 Hybrid Meetings and Recording of Meetings:

The attached Guidance on Hybrid Meetings at Appendix 1 under Section A – Standing Orders for Meetings of the Authority applies to all meetings of the Authority and its committees unless it is disapplied by the meeting.

3. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The provision of a hybrid meetings facility, alongside the live webcast of meetings, enables the press and public to attend meetings of the Authority via different routes, enhancing accessibility.
- 3.2. The hybrid meetings facility has live captions functionality for remote meetings for deaf/hard of hearing participants, which users can independently turn on; guidance on how to do so will be provided. The Authority cannot accept any liability for the accuracy of these live captions.

4. COMMENTS OF THE LEGAL ADVISER

- 4.1. The Legal Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments to add.

5. COMMENTS OF THE FINANCIAL ADVISER

- 5.1. The Financial Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments to add.

List of documents used:

No documents required to be listed.

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APPENDIX A GUIDANCE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

North London Waste Authority

Guidance on Hybrid Meetings

Hybrid Meetings are those held with some remote attendance but with the decision makers being physically present.

The following procedure shall be adopted in relation to the conduct of all meetings of the North London Waste Authority and its various committees within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972 and associated legislation. The Authority's Standing Orders, while still applying, are to be interpreted in light of this guidance note and adjusted accordingly.

North London Waste Authority meetings will be held in a meeting room as advertised on the published agenda, and members of the Authority wishing to participate will be required to be physically present in that meeting room. Except for in limited circumstances in which a resolution to exclude the press and public may be made, the press and public are by law permitted to attend these meetings. A live feed is also available at www.camden.gov.uk/webcast. Those seeking to attend a meeting to present a deputation or petition with the agreement of the Chair, whilst they have the right to attend in person, can also attend remotely. This guidance note sets out how such meetings will operate.

A. Attendance of Authority members remotely

1. For all Authority meetings, including committee meetings, Members of the Authority or committee may not participate in any way other than to be physically present in the meeting place. It is not appropriate for a Member of the Authority or a committee to take part in thean Authority or committee discussion remotely (and it is never lawful for a Member to purport to vote on an item remotely) and thus to potentially influence voting Members of the Authority/committee. Any Member not wishing to attend the meeting place, but wishing to watch the public part of the meeting, may do so at www.camden.gov.uk/webcast.

B. Method for conducting hybrid meetings

1. The law requires that Members of the Authority and its committees who wish to be counted as part of the quorum for the meeting and who wish to vote to be physically present at the place specified on the agenda for the meeting (the 'meeting place').
2. Other participants, such as councillors who are not members of the Authority or a particular committee, officers and deputees, may join the meeting remotely and this will be facilitated by the committee officer. Both those present in the meeting place and those joining remotely will be captured in the hybrid meeting video and on the live broadcast of the meeting.
3. The hybrid meeting will utiliseuse both the audio and video functionality so all remote participants¹ should be capable of being heard and seen by those physically present at the meeting place and by other remote participants, and vice versa.

¹ Remote participants are defined as: councillors who are not members of the Authority or a committee but who seek to address the meeting; officers advising the Authority or presenting reports; any external partners / third-parties invited to address or advise the Authority; and deputees.

4. It will not impact the lawfulness or otherwise of the meeting should a remote participant lose their connection or not be able to see the other participants for any part of the meeting, nor if they be cannot be seen by other participants and / or the public.
5. Unless a meeting is dealing with confidential items, it will be streamed to the public so that they may listen and watch (should video be available) but the public will not be able to participate unless section D below on deputations applies; these are meetings held in public via a digital connection, but are not public meetings. Therefore, other than with the permission of the Chair and as a depute, members of the public cannot participate.
6. The Chair will be provided with advice on procedure and meeting management by a committee officer and, for some meetings, a lawyer and other relevant officers. The committee officer will be physically present at the meeting place. Other officers may participate remotely.
7. Meetings will be streamed live as well as recorded, stored and uploaded to Camden Council's website. The Authority will aim to do this within 48 hours of the meeting finishing.
8. Minutes will be taken and published in the usual manner.
9. In line with existing procedure rules, the ruling of the Chair on a point of order and on the construction or application of this guidance, procedure rules and standing orders shall not be challenged during any meeting, including any decision of the Chair to ask for contributors to be muted.

C. Prior to the meeting

1. Agendas will be published on the NLWA [website](#) and via the modern.gov app for Members, and a public deposit copy will be available at the Camden Town Hall reception. Hard copies can be made available on request. Unless a matter is urgent, five clear working days will elapse from the publication of the agenda to the holding of the meeting. Authority members will, as usual, receive an automated email when the agenda is published online containing a link to the agenda.

D. At the meeting

1. The committee officer will open the remote meeting space 15 minutes before the meeting start time to allow remote participants to join promptly and check their audio / video feeds are working.
2. The usual rules as to numbers of Members to create a quorum will apply, and only physical presence in the meeting place of a voting member will count towards the quorum.
3. The meeting will, ~~as the first item of business on the agenda, note and agree the variations / interpretations of procedure rules as set out in this document. The meeting will then~~ follow the published agenda as normal and be conducted in accordance with the procedure rules set out in the Standing Orders as supplemented by this document.
4. Any non-Authority/committee Member participating remotely who declares an interest in any item of business which would normally require them to leave the room shall switch off their microphone and camera for the duration of the item so they cannot be heard or seen by the other participants. They should also refrain from sending any messages during the item or do anything that may be reasonably perceived as trying to influence

the debate. Any such action may be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct. The relevant Member will still be able to see and hear the discussion and at the end of the item may switch their camera and microphone back on. The committee officer may use their ability to remotely switch microphones on and off to assist in this process.

Debate

5. Authority members present in the meeting place will indicate their desire to speak in the customary way by raising their hand. Any officer joining remotely will indicate a wish to speak by ~~pressing 'Request to Speak'~~, submitting their name using the "chat" function on Teams (or equivalent function if another software package is used), and their participation will be at the discretion of the Chair.
6. When not speaking, participants will be asked to keep themselves muted. Officers may do this remotely to improve the audio quality of the meeting.

Interruptions to connections

7. If the audio feed of any remote participant cuts out during the meeting they will alert the relevant officer by email or other means.
8. Ordinarily the failure of the audio connection of a party joining the meeting remotely will not impact on the conduct of the meeting.

Deputations

9. Procedure rules with regard to deputations apply. Should the Chair agree to hear a deputation, the depute will be offered the opportunity to join the meeting remotely and issued with details on how to do this. Deputies will ordinarily need to provide an email address in order to join the meeting in this way.
10. Any person who would like to make a deputation, but cannot participate remotely due to technological reasons, or does not wish to do so, may attend the meeting place to give their deputation in person.
11. If the Chair is notified of a depute's audio feed failing during the item in which they have asked to address the Authority or Committee, then the Chair may adjourn the meeting for up to 15 minutes in order to re-establish the connection. Alternatively, the Chair may choose to move onto other items of business if considered appropriate, while the connection to the depute is re-established.
12. Each deputation attending remotely will be required to identify a single speaker and where the connection of another member of the deputation party is interrupted, the Chair will not ordinarily adjourn the meeting but will have the discretion to do so where considered appropriate.
13. At the point at which their deputation is to be heard, the depute should unmute their microphone so that they can address the meeting. Once the allotted time has expired they will be asked by the Chair to bring their remarks to a close and to mute their microphone. They may be asked to answer questions and to mute and unmute as required in order to do so.

Behaviour

14. The Chair will at their discretion be entitled to ask the committee officer to mute any remote contributors should they consider it appropriate. Should a remote participant become disruptive, the Chair will warn them and should that warning not result in a change of behaviour which is acceptable to the Chair then they shall, at their absolute discretion, be entitled to ask the committee officer to terminate the individual's participation in the meeting.

E. Confidential/Exempt Items

1. Should the meeting have confidential or exempt items on the agenda, the Chair will move the usual motion to move into private session.
2. The meeting shall then stand adjourned until the Chair is satisfied upon the advisement of the committee officer that the public live feed has paused and all remote participants not eligible to remain in this part of the meeting have been removed from the call.
3. When resolving to move back into public session, the meeting shall again adjourn until the Chair is satisfied, upon the advisement of the committee officer, that the public live feed has resumed and all eligible remote participants have had their audio / video feeds restored satisfactorily.

F. Equalities

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government (Access to Information Act) 1985 that the press and public have the right to attend meetings of the Authority, the press and public will be physically admitted up to a safe limit. Deputies will also have the option to participate remotely and observers have the opportunity to watch the live webcast.
2. The hybrid meetings facility has live captions functionality for remote meetings for the deaf / hard of hearing, which users can independently turn on; guidance on how to do so will be provided. The Authority cannot accept any liability for the accuracy of these live captions.
3. The Authority will consider any other requests for reasonable adjustments to be made in order to allow parties to be involved in Authority meetings as far as circumstances at the time of the meeting allows.
4. In addition the Authority will review and monitor the operation of its hybrid decision making and make adjustments when it considers it can further mitigate any adverse impact.

ENDS