

Public Speaking Arrangements Overview & Scrutiny Committees

Guidance & Information for members of the public who wish to speak at an Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny plays a vital role in service improvement, promoting the wellbeing of local communities and championing public concerns. Torfaen County Borough Council welcomes the active participation of its residents or those who work in Torfaen, whenever possible. The opportunity exists for members of the public to speak at any of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees in respect of an item of interest that features on an agenda.

Committee members receive written reports on the issue that is being considered by the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee. These reports are available to the public at least three working days before the day of the meeting and can be accessed [here](#).

Members of the public are encouraged to make an important contribution and act as an additional source of information and expertise for the committee to consider, which will ultimately aid the decision-making process.

To view further details on the committees, the dates of upcoming meetings and the items that will be considered at those meetings, please click [here](#).

To speak at a committee:

To be entitled to speak at a meeting you must either be a resident of Torfaen or work in Torfaen. In order to speak at an Overview & Scrutiny Meeting you must have submitted a written representation in relation to the relevant issue to the Scrutiny Team. This must be received by the team by 2 clear days before the meeting. (Any submission after this time will automatically be rejected.) The Chair of the committee holds the ultimate decision as to whether an application will be accepted or rejected.

Assistance on how to present questions is available upon request from the Scrutiny Team scrutiny@torfaen.gov.uk

Members of the public may request participation by submitting **one** question or providing evidence/ information in relation to the issue being scrutinised, at least two clear days

before the meeting to scrutiny@torfaen.gov.uk Alternatively they can use the form provided on the Council's website <https://getinvolved.torfaen.gov.uk/request-to-speak-at-overview-scrutiny> or ask their ward Councillor to forward the request to the Scrutiny Team on their behalf.

Where a person is invited to participate in a scrutiny committee meeting following a submission, an initial telephone call will be made to enquire whether the person is able to attend the meeting in person, online or by written submission and to clarify the meeting process.

Due to time constraints of meetings, only 2 people would be able to speak on any one item. If more than one person contacts us to make representations or to pose a question, a spokesperson must be chosen to speak on behalf of the collective.

In order for members to consider any points made by public speakers, they must provide any supporting information/documentation in advance and upon registering to speak. No additional information/documentation may be produced at the meeting itself. Should speakers wish to produce visual aids by way of a PowerPoint presentation, then these slides must also be provided in advance of the meeting. Information or supporting documents may be sent directly to committee members and the Scrutiny Officer before the start of the meeting. There is a list of committee members on our website.

Members of the public have 2 options when requesting to speak at a scrutiny meeting:

1. Asking a Question:

- The question must relate to the item on the agenda.
- The Chair will reject a question (giving notice of rejection) if:
 - It is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility, or which affects Torfaen; or
 - It is defamatory, frivolous or offensive; or
 - It requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- The Committee will answer questions in the order it receives them.
- Only one question per person, per meeting is permitted.
- Questions must be posed as set out in the request. The question cannot be changed or offer further information.
- Where a question is posed in person, a supplementary question is permitted. The supplementary question must relate to the original question or the reply.
- In the instance of non-attendance at the meeting, the Chair may:
 - ask the question on the submitter's behalf; or
 - ask for a written reply; or
 - decide not to deal with the question.
- There is no discussion on public questions, unless the Chair decides otherwise.
- The Chair's ruling on procedures for responding to questions is final.

2. Providing Information/ Evidence:

- The information/evidence must relate to the item on the agenda.
- The Chair will reject information/ evidence (giving notice of rejection) if:
 - It is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility, or which affects Torfaen; or
 - It is defamatory, frivolous or offensive; or
 - It requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- The Committee will receive information in the order it receives the request.
- Only five minutes will be allotted per speaker providing information.
- Information/ evidence must be posed in line with the summary set out in the request form.
- Limit views to the advantages or disadvantages related to the remit of the report; highlighting how the proposals within the report may affect service delivery to specific groups of users.
- In the instance of non-attendance at the meeting, the Chair may:
 - Circulate a written statement on the submitter's behalf prior to the meeting (the Chair will not read this out during the course of the meeting);
 - Request a written response on behalf of the committee
- There is no discussion, or debate on public provided information/ evidence, unless the Chair decides otherwise, or members of the committee require clarification on any points made.
- The person providing information/ evidence is not permitted to make any further comment once the allotted 5mins have concluded, unless invited to do so by the Chair
- The Chair's ruling on procedures for responding to public contributions is final.

The meeting:

Please note meetings of Overview & Scrutiny Committee are held in public, they are open to the press and public and all documents are public. All meetings are webcast live.

Prior to the meeting starting, the participant should report to reception, no later than 15minutes before the start of the meeting, where the scrutiny support officer will collect and direct to the meeting room and facilitate introductions with the Chair of the committee

Speaking at the Meeting:

It is important that anyone wishing to speak at an Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting should do so in a responsible and respectful manner to maximise the benefit of their contribution.

The Chair will introduce participants to the committee when it is time to speak. Speakers will be brought to a seat at the table and shown how to use the microphone. Speakers will be permitted time to ask their question and a supplementary where necessary, or a maximum of 5 minutes where information/ evidence is being provided.

Members of the public must not abuse the privilege of participation with personal attacks on elected members, officers, other participants or members of the public. Speakers will be required to respond politely to any question from the Chair and elected members of the committee. Any speaker who makes a statement, which, in the opinion of the Chair, is defamatory, abusive or discriminatory, will be required to stop speaking and leave the meeting. The Committee will be advised to disregard such comments.

The committee, officers and/ or Executive Member will try to respond to questions or comments during the meeting, however, this may not always be possible. If not, you will be provided with a written answer using the contact details provided within ten working days.

The Chair will indicate when the allotted 5 minutes is up. Once the speaker has posed their points/ raised their question, the Chair may allow Councillors to ask questions to make clear any facts. Speakers must not enter into debate with the committee members. Participants will then be asked to return to seats in the public gallery. The committee will continue their scrutiny of the issue and make recommendations to the Executive.

Exemptions:

Public speaking will not be permitted on:

- Agenda items such as apologies for absence, declarations of interest and minutes
- Business on the agenda in respect of a resolution to exclude the press and public, due to the confidential nature of the business to be carried out

Contact us:

For any further guidance on participating in scrutiny or procedures at meetings, please contact:

Scrutiny Support Team
Torfaen County Borough Council
Civic Centre
Pontypool
NP4 6YB

Tel: 01495 766337

E-mail: scrutiny@torfaen.gov.uk