



Public speaking at Scrutiny Committee meetings

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council welcomes and encourages the active participation of its citizens whenever possible and an opportunity exists for members of the public¹ to speak at Scrutiny Committee meetings on an item on the agenda.

The committee members will normally receive written reports on issues being discussed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting. These reports are available to the public on the [Council's website](#) at least three working days before the day of the meeting.

Request for Public Speaking at Committee Meetings

Any member of the public who wishes to speak on an agenda item for the meeting is asked to make a request in writing no later than 12.00 noon two working days before the meeting. Any request should be in writing either via email or letter to the Council's Democratic Services Team (details at end of guide) and provide the following details:-

- **Name, address and contact details** of the person making a comment or asking a question.
- **Details of the request to speak:** If you wish to ask a question, the full text of the question needs to be provided. If you wish to make a comment about a matter on the agenda, a list of the main points is required.

All questions and comments should be clear, concise and relevant to the agenda of the meeting. Only one question or comment may be allowed per speaker.

A request for public speaking might be refused if the questions or comments are defamatory, vexatious, discriminatory or contains offensive language. If a comment or question is not relevant to the agenda items of the meeting, it will not be allowed for public speaking. Also requests to speak cannot be accepted if they require the disclosure of confidential information.

The Day of the Meeting

Meetings of Scrutiny Committees are held in public, normally at the Civic Centre in Merthyr Tydfil. They are open to the press and public and all reports are public documents unless they contain exempt or confidential information. Details of the meeting can be found on the agenda document.

Prior to the start of the meeting you should introduce yourself to the Scrutiny Support Officer or the Committee Support Officer and he/she will introduce you to

¹ For the purposes of this guide a "member of the public" is defined simply as anyone who lives or works, or is affected by a decision made in the County Borough

the Chair. Please allow enough time for this to happen; aim to arrive about 15 minutes before the start of the meeting.

When do I speak?

Agenda items where there will be speakers from the public will normally be considered first and as such the order of the items on the agenda may be changed. In any case when the meeting reaches the agenda item, the Chair will ask you to speak.

You should behave appropriately for the nature of the meeting, show courtesy and respect to everyone present. You should not make any remarks, which are offensive, defamatory, insulting or discriminatory. The Chair will refuse to hear you if you behave improperly, offensively or try to prevent the committee from doing its work. The Chair will ensure that all speakers are treated with courtesy and respect.

How long have I got to speak?

The time limited to pose a question or make a comment will be **three minutes** for each speaker. You must cease speaking when so instructed by the Chair. Once you've spoken the Chair may allow committee members to ask you questions to make clear any facts. You must not enter into a debate with the Committee members.

If a speaker is still talking after three minutes the Chair will usually wait for them to finish their sentence and then will let them know that their time is up. We do not let speakers go over time to be fair to the other speakers. But in exceptional circumstances, the Chair may allow them more time.

What happens after I have spoken?

The committee will try to respond to questions or comments during the meeting. However this will not always be possible as the committee may not be best placed to respond to the question or comment. If not, you will be provided with a written answer using the contact details provided within ten working days.

Can I hand out supporting documents or use visual aids?

No you can't hand out supporting documents at the meeting or use visual aids (such as photographs or diagrams). You may send information direct to Councillors and the Scrutiny Support Officer before the start of the meeting. There is a list of Council Members on our website. Please do not send documents to us to hand out.

When can I leave the meeting?

You can leave the meeting at any time after you have spoken.

Exemptions

Public speaking will not be permitted on:

- Agenda items such as Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest.
- 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.
- The right to speak does not include the right to ask any questions of any Councillor, Co-opted member of the Committee, Officer of the Council, invited

attendees, or any other speaker.

Other ways to participate in scrutiny

In addition to the public speaking at a Scrutiny Committee meeting, there are other ways to make your views and opinions known: for example: speaking at meetings of the full Council or Cabinet.

In addition you may wish to suggest an item for the Scrutiny Committees to consider. This can be added to their work programme. Contact the Scrutiny Support Officer for full details. Alternatively you may wish to submit a suggestion electronically and this can be done on the scrutiny page of the Councils Internet site.

How to contact us

Scrutiny Support Officer
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Democratic Services Department
Civic Centre, Castle Street
MERTHYR TYDFIL
CF47 8AN

Tel: 01685 725464

E-mail: scrutiny@merthyr.gov.uk

Web Pages: <http://www.merthyr.gov.uk/council/councillors-and-committees/scrutiny-committees/>