



Scrutiny at MTCBC

Information on being a Witness

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council encourages the active participation of its citizens whenever possible and an opportunity exists for witnesses to provide evidence to a review being undertaken by either a Scrutiny Committee or a Task and Finish Group (*A Task & Finish Group is a smaller group of Councillors and Co-opted members set up to review a specific issue*).

Evidence provided by a witness on an issue which is due to be discussed at these meetings can make an important contribution and be an additional source of information for the Committee to consider, and ultimately aid the decision making process.

In the main, witnesses are likely to be representatives from recognised community networks and representative groups, the third or voluntary sector, and public sector agencies.

The following information is provided to ensure that, as far as possible, witnesses have a positive and stress-free experience, as in many instances this will be a new experience for those attending meetings to provide evidence.

The following information is intended for use by either internal or external witnesses:

- **Contacts** – this will be the Scrutiny Support Officer. Please use him/her as your point of contact.
- **Topic** – make sure you are clear of the topic and the areas that the Committee/Task and Finish Group would like you to address. If you are not sure ask the Scrutiny Support Officer.
- **Discussion** – discuss your contribution with the Scrutiny Support Officer in advance, especially if this is the first time you have given evidence to either a Scrutiny Committee or a Task and Finish Group.
- **Contribution** – be prepared to be asked for your opinions and views as well as to give factual information. If you are asked to provide written evidence, make this as simple and as concise as possible – if you are a Council Officer, remember that you are not presenting a committee report but providing information to help the Councillors conducting the review or investigation. Contributions put forward by witnesses may be summarised in the minutes of the meeting and / or appropriately recognised in the final report if necessary. Witnesses will be given the same right to speak, but not vote, at the meeting as a member of the committee.

- **Presentations** – if you have been asked, or have offered, to give a presentation in relation to your evidence let the Scrutiny Support Officer know what equipment you will need. Please e-mail your presentation to the Scrutiny Support Officer in advance of the meeting.
- **The meeting** – Members of the Committee/Task and Finish Group want to make sure participants feel free and able to attend and that you are able to contribute fully to the topic under review. Meetings of a Task and Finish Group tend to be less formal than meetings of a Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Support Officer will:

- Give witnesses as much notice as possible of the time, date and place of the meeting at which their evidence is to be taken.
- Inform witnesses of the purpose of the review.
- Provide witnesses with copies of reports, papers and background information where appropriate.
- Inform witnesses that the Overview and Scrutiny meeting is held in public, is open to the press and that all reports are public documents unless they contain exempt or confidential information.
- Inform witnesses that Task and Finish Groups are not generally public meetings, but the evidence submitted to them is available for public viewing.
- Inform external witnesses they have the right to decline to attend Overview & Scrutiny meetings, but they can submit written evidence instead.
- Arrange for the witnesses to be introduced to the Chair, prior to the start.
- Introduce witnesses to the Committee/Task and Finish Group.
- Ensure that all witnesses are treated with courtesy and respect.
- Ensure that any questions to witnesses are made in an orderly manner under the direction of the Chair and that Members ask questions relevant to the objectives of the review under consideration.
- Provide the review findings (when applicable) to all witnesses who request them.
- Remind external witnesses to check on the agenda for the venue at which the meeting will be held, usually in the Civic Centre at Castle Street in Merthyr Tydfil, and the start time you are required to arrive on the day. Start times can be found on the [Council's website](#), as times of meetings can vary.

How to contact us

Scrutiny Support Officer

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