

A public guide to scrutiny

How can I get involved?

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S) is responsible for ensuring that the overview and scrutiny process is operating effectively and making a difference for local people. As such, the people of Cheltenham (public) have a role to play and are encouraged to get involved.

Attending meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

O&S will meet at least seven times a year and these meetings are open to the public; except where confidential (exempt) information is likely to be disclosed and the item(s) will be considered in private – this will be clearly set out on the agenda for the meeting in question, along with the reason why and these items will be marked 'Not for Publication'. Public participation at these meetings is at the discretion of the Chair.

Asking questions in advance of a meeting of O&S

Any person registered as a local government elector for the Borough of Cheltenham may ask written questions to the Chair about any matter falling within the O&S terms of reference (see the Council's constitution).

Notice of questions must be received no later than 12 noon on the fourth working day before the day of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and confirm whether or not the questioner intends to attend the meeting.

No person may submit more than two questions (including sub-questions) at any one meeting and no more than two questions (including sub-questions) may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

More information about public questions is contained within the Council's constitution, and on the [public questions guidance page](#).

Co-opted Members

Scrutiny task-groups will sometimes draw on the experience and knowledge of people in the community and organisations by co-opting them to help with a review and to enable local people to have an active input into the scrutiny process.

The scrutiny task-group is responsible for the appointment and selection of co-opted members depending on the expertise needed to assist the scrutiny process. Co-optees have no voting rights but their views and opinions will be considered by the task-group when agreeing the recommendations. Once co-opted onto a group co-optees are entitled to claim expenses (travel, parking, etc).

Witnesses

Witnesses are essential to the overview and scrutiny process as they provide opinions and specialised information which help enable informed decisions that can ultimately benefit the people of Cheltenham. Being a 'witness' simply means coming along to answer some questions and tell Councillors what you think about a particular issue. A Witness Charter has been produced to guide witnesses through the process.

Raise a topic with your Ward Councillor

If there is a topic that you feel scrutiny could add value to then you can raise this with your Ward Councillor who can in turn suggest it for inclusion on the O&S workplan.

Petitions

If you have submitted a petition it may be referred to O&S for consideration and as a petition organiser you would be invited to attend the meeting(s) and have your say. In addition, if you feel that the council has not dealt with your petition properly, you have the right to request that O&S review the steps that the council has taken.