Tithe an Oireachtais
Houses of the Oireachtas

Making witness submissions and oral presentations to Committees of the Houses of the Oireachtas

Guidance Note for Witnesses

June 2026

Version 1.2

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Version control

Version	Date	Author	Details of changes
1.0			
1.1	July 2025	Committees' Secretariat	Updates to content and transition to accessible format
1.2	June 2026	ICT Unit/Committees' Secretariat	Updates re "Captcha" for externals accessing teams calls

Introduction

If you have been invited to give oral evidence at an Oireachtas committee meeting, this guidance note should be read together with the **Witness Protocol**. Most attendance at committee meetings is voluntary. If you have been compelled to attend a committee meeting, you should also read the **Guidelines for Witnesses on Compellability.** You should also note that if you are appearing before an Oireachtas Committee, you will be referred to as a "witness" and the information you share with the Committee will be called "evidence".

This document gives guidance on:

- making a written submission in advance of a meeting,
- what to expect at the meeting itself, and
- additional guidance if giving evidence remotely.

Why do committees want to talk to the public and stakeholders?

Oireachtas committees routinely invite interested persons or bodies to give evidence by way of written submission and oral presentation on any matter in the Committee's Work Programme (the list of issues it hopes to cover). These can include ministers, civil and public servants, representatives of non-governmental organisations, or other interest groups and individuals. Committees have a range of functions including scrutinising the operation of government departments, examining policy issues, and considering proposed legislation in detail before it becomes law. Making an oral presentation to an Oireachtas committee is a public process.

A committee may undertake a formal public consultation seeking submissions from a wide group of stakeholders and/or the public to allow for members to gain a thorough knowledge in the subject matter, or may seek submissions from specific groups or individuals, who would have detailed knowledge of the matter being examined, to assist and guide in their decision making. Formal public consultations are conducted through the Oireachtas website.

How does a committee decide who to invite to a meeting?

Invitations to give oral evidence at public meetings are issued by each committee based on the area of its work programme under consideration. Committees invite witnesses who they think will assist them in their work. In addition, committees receive many requests from interested parties for meetings. The committee must agree to such meetings and ensure that the topic is within remit and forms part of the work programme of the committee. Not all such requests can be accommodated.

Making a written submission in advance of attending a meeting

Do I need to make a written submission to a committee if appearing as a witness?

In advance of making an oral presentation to a committee, a witness will normally be asked to make a written submission if they have not already done so. This can provide an opportunity for the witness to brief the Committee and elaborate on issues which there may be limited time to discuss during a meeting.

Receiving such a submission in advance also gives committee members an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the matters on which a witness is to present and is likely to form the basis for members' questions during a meeting. It can contribute to a more meaningful and focussed discussion. This submission may be in addition to an Opening Statement (which is a requirement for witnesses appearing before a committee).

Do I need to send anything in advance?

If requested to attend a committee meeting as a witness, the letter of invitation may request a submission. This will normally comprise a **submission document** with briefing material, **an opening statement,** and a **covering email/letter**. It is important that you read the letter of invitation carefully.

If you have already submitted briefing material, the Committee may ask you to elaborate on specific areas or respond to certain questions.

Opening Statement

An opening statement is a statement read by a witness at the start of his/her engagement with the Committee before questioning and discussion with the witness begins. Submitting a written opening statement is a requirement before attending a committee. The statement normally draws attention to the key points in the witness's submission document. The letter of invitation will specify how long this should be but, if it does not, you should aim for a statement that is a maximum of 5 to 7 minutes when read. The guidance on making a written submission (see below) also applies to the opening statement.

Covering email/letter/written submission

A covering email/letter should accompany your opening statement and written submission (if you have been asked to, or chosen to, make one). In your covering email/letter, you should include any further contact details such as a mobile phone number and any reasonable accommodations required in relation to your attendance at a committee meeting, or any other general matters you may wish to draw attention to in advance of the Committee meeting. Keeping personal information in a separate covering letter facilitates the publishing of a submission document, should a committee decide to so, without revealing personal details. The covering letter should also include information on any parties accompanying you i.e. name, official titles, contact details, etc.

Tips on writing your submission document

Some tips to consider when completing a submission include:

- Keeping your submission concise and to the point, try not to include any unnecessary or superfluous material that does not relate directly to the topic.
- An executive summary of the main points made in the submission where your document is more than ten pages long.
- Avoiding arriving at conclusions or making recommendations without indicating the supporting facts or evidence.
- Any recommendations should be as specific as possible and summarise your recommendations at the end of your document.

- Links to the publications to which you are referring rather than sending them as attachments.
- Numbering your pages and paragraphs;
- Ensuring your submission is in MS Word format or searchable pdf format.

Important information on written submissions

- A brief introduction, for example, explaining your expertise.
- Your submission should be directly relevant to the topic on which you were invited to speak and as stated in your letter of invitation.
- The Committee cannot consider submissions which deal with cases relating to individuals.
- You should not criticise or make charges against any person(s) or entity, by name or in such a way as to make him, her, or it identifiable or otherwise include anything that might be regarded as damaging to the person's or entity's good name.
- You should be careful not to comment on matters currently before a court of law or matters in respect of which court proceedings are imminent. If you anticipate such issues arising, you should discuss with the committee's Clerk how this might affect what you can submit.
- Most committees engage with witnesses on public policy issues. The committee is not a forum for making personal representations or promoting a product, service, or business, and you should not attempt to do so.
- If your submission does not comply with the above criteria, you may be asked to revise it before it is circulated to the committee.
- The Committee will collect and process only the minimum personal data necessary for the purpose of fulfilling its remit. Witnesses should limit the inclusion of personal data in their submissions to what is strictly relevant to committee proceedings. Witnesses may also anonymise or redact personal information. A witness may contact the committee's Clerk regarding any data protection queries.

Sending your submission

- Your letter of invitation will specify how to send your submission. It should normally be sent in searchable PDF or Word document format to the committee's email address and for the attention of Clerk of the Committee.
- Submissions in other formats can be facilitated subject to communication and further guidance from the Clerk to the Committee.
- Submission deadlines given in the letter of invitation must be strictly observed, to allow committee members familiarise themselves with the content of the submissions before the meeting.

How your submission will be dealt with

- The Clerk of the Committee will circulate your submission to Members of the Committee in advance of your attendance at a committee meeting.
- You should expect to be questioned on the material supplied to the Committee during the meeting.
- **Any documents submitted to a committee may be published either, in whole or in part, if a committee decides to do so.** You should indicate clearly if there are any parts of your submission that you do not wish to be published.
- The Committee reserves the right not to accept your submission, and it is not obliged to publish any part of it.

Data protection

The Committee will process personal data provided by witnesses in compliance with data protection legislation. The operations of a parliament are a public process, and you should be aware that any documents submitted to a committee which include your identity and other personal information may be published. Details about how your personal data will be used, stored, shared, and published is available via the Oireachtas website link.

Making an oral presentation to an Oireachtas committee

The guidance below is practical guidance for those giving evidence at an Oireachtas committee meeting. It should be read together with the Witness Protocol.

Is the evidence I give at a committee meeting privileged?

Matters relating to parliamentary privilege are covered in your invitation letter and in the Witness Protocol.

Is there a dress code in Parliament?

The established practice is that members, staff, and visitors to the Houses of the Oireachtas should wear business attire, or similar clothing in keeping with the status of parliament. Please note that the wearing of emblems that can be regarded as political in nature is not permitted. See the link below for more information on Parliamentary decorum www.oireachtas.ie/en/procedure-guide-dail/rules-and-decorum/parliamentary-decorum/.

Are the committee rooms accessible?

The Oireachtas committee rooms are accessible. Please let the Committee Clerk know as soon as possible if there are any other facilities, assistance, or accommodations you require, for example Irish Sign Language (ISL), Read-a-loud technology, if you have an assistance dog, etc. The Houses of the Oireachtas have an Access Officer available in accordance with section 26(2) of the *Disability Act 2005*. See below for more information www.oireachtas.ie/en/working-in-parliament/inclusive-parliament/accessible-accommodations/.

Can I participate remotely?

If you are unable to attend in person, it may be possible to attend the meeting by video conference from your preferred location. You should contact the Clerk in relation to this.

Depending on the arrangements for a meeting, remote attendance may also be at the request of the Committee. Arrangements for remote participation will be explained to

you by the Clerk. General guidance on remote participation is given below. Note that giving evidence remotely may affect the level of privilege you have. This is outlined in the Witness Protocol and the letter of invitation. Feel free to contact the Clerk to discuss further.

What is the normal format for a committee meeting?

The focus of the session is on the Members of the Committee putting questions to you about the topic the Committee is examining, your written submission and/or opening statement.

Your opening statement, usually read at the beginning of the meeting, should summarise your written submission and highlight the main points. Questions will then be put to you by Members of the Committee. These questions are designed to seek further information, clarify aspects of your submission, and generally allow Members to gain insight into the subject matter being examined. During the meeting, it may be helpful to take a note of the various questions, so that you do not overlook any of the issues raised.

Members usually attend meetings in-person, though some may join using video conferencing software from their office. If this is the case, the video will be displayed on the large screens in the room and the small screens on the desks in front of you.

Each Member of the Committee is usually allocated a number of minutes (as indicated by the Committee Cathaoirleach/Chairperson) to engage in discussion with witnesses. Please always try to be concise in your replies and mindful of the time remaining for participants.

During the meeting are there any protocols you should follow?

When entering the committee room, go directly to the seats set aside for you, as directed by the committee staff. You should normally remain seated in your place until the session has been concluded by the Cathaoirleach or a break in proceedings is requested / authorised by the Cathaoirleach. If at any point you would like a break in proceedings, you should not hesitate to request this of the Cathaoirleach.

You should always follow the instructions of the Cathaoirleach, who may ask you to stop giving evidence if they deem your evidence to be outside of remit, is criticising or making charges against identifiable person(s) or entity(s), is making personal representations or promoting a product, service, or business, or is raising matters that are (or soon to be) before a court.

How do I address the members of a committee?

You should address the members by their titles i.e. Deputy X or Senator X. Office holders should be addressed by their title e.g. Cathaoirleach (Chairperson), Taoiseach, Tanáiste, Minister. In the committee rooms the names of the members, followed by (T.D.) to denote a Deputy and (S) to denote a Senator, are electronically displayed on the front of the desks.

Is there any presentation equipment available for use?

All the committee rooms have facilities for displaying videos and PowerPoint slides. If you wish to use these facilities, you must make a request to the Clerk at least one week in advance of your planned attendance at the meeting informing them of this and stating what the intended digital format to be used will be. Please also supply a copy of the presentation when submitting your opening statement to the Clerk.

There are some disadvantages to using presentational facilities that you should be aware of. The information contained in these types of presentations may be lost on those watching the meeting remotely (not present in the room). Also, only the spoken word forms part of the official record of the meeting and your presentation will not be included in the official report though if the Committee decides the presentation can be published on the committee's website.

Can I use any other electronic equipment?

Electronic devices such as tape recorders are not permitted. The use of mobile phones for calls is strictly prohibited, and in general, they should be switched off or

put on silent mode in the committee room when a committee is meeting. The taking of photographs within the building (including the committee room) is not permitted. Electronic devices which assist persons with disabilities can be permitted as long as they do not interfere with other equipment in the room.

How long will the meeting be, and will there be any breaks?

Committee meetings vary considerably in length. The length of the meeting depends on the item of business being considered and whether there is more than one group making a presentation, but meetings are generally two and a half hours or less.

Where your attendance for longer periods is required, the meeting may be suspended for an appropriate period (for example 15 minutes). You will not be questioned continuously for a period longer than two and a half hours unless your express consent is provided.

If a witness has indicated to the Clerk before their attendance date, that due to their personal circumstances, they will be unable to forego standard periods of questioning, the committee may schedule more frequent breaks.

It is possible, however, that a meeting may have to be interrupted to allow members to vote in Dáil Éireann. If this happens, the break will be for approximately 15 to 20 minutes though voting in some instances may take longer. Voting is an important part of a member's role, and it is not intended as a discourtesy to you if Members leave or the meeting is interrupted for this reason. The meeting will be resumed as soon as possible.

How can people observe a committee meeting?

Making an oral presentation to an Oireachtas committee is a public process. The meeting will generally be conducted in public unless specifically stated.

All public committee meetings can be viewed live or after the event on the Oireachtas website. The schedule of meetings can be accessed at www.oireachtas.ie/en/Committees/ and will indicate the venues in which public

meetings of committees are taking place. The “watch and read” panel in the centre of that page provides links to the live audio and video feed of each committee meeting.

Televised coverage of committee meetings held in public are broadcast within the Leinster House complex and are available for subsequent public broadcasting by RTÉ and TV3. Each week selected meetings are also broadcast live on Oireachtas TV, and all public committee meetings are replayed over the course of the week. For more information on where you can see Oireachtas proceedings and committee meetings on our Oireachtas TV page.

Persons who wish to view the proceedings of either House or a committee from within the parliamentary premises must be sponsored by a member of the Houses. That member will inform the Parliamentary Usher staff accordingly and your name will be placed on a list for access.

What do I do when the meeting has concluded?

If attending a meeting in person, the same protocol applies when leaving as when you are entering the committee room, (unless the meeting has formally adjourned). You should leave quietly, taking care not to interrupt ongoing business. Please return your security badge to the Usher at the desk on your way out of the building. Witnesses must exit the campus via Kildare Street Gate.

Can I get a copy of the meeting transcript?

The Official Record (transcript) of the meeting will normally be available on the committee’s web site within ten working days of the meeting.

Matters arising from the meeting

If there is any matter arising from the meeting that you wish to bring to the attention of the committee, you should contact the Clerk.

If you have agreed to forward additional material in response to a question, that material should be forwarded to the Clerk, as soon as possible, or as agreed during meeting, who will distribute it to all committee members.

If, following the meeting, you feel you have been adversely affected by a statement made during the course of the meeting, you should bring this to the attention of the Clerk. You should also consult www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/utterances-having-an-adverse-effect/.

Usáid na Gaeilge

Is beartas de chuid Sheirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais é fáilte a chur roimh úsáid na Gaeilge agus éascaíonn an tSeirbhís úsáid na Gaeilge leis an tSeirbhís. Más mian leatsa Gaeilge a úsáid, ná bíodh aon drogall ort é sin a chur in iúl dúinn.

If I have other questions, who do I contact?

If you have any questions regarding your appearance before the Committee, please ask the Clerk to the Committee or other staff member. Their contact details are included in the Invitation Letter.

Making an oral presentation to an Oireachtas Committee online

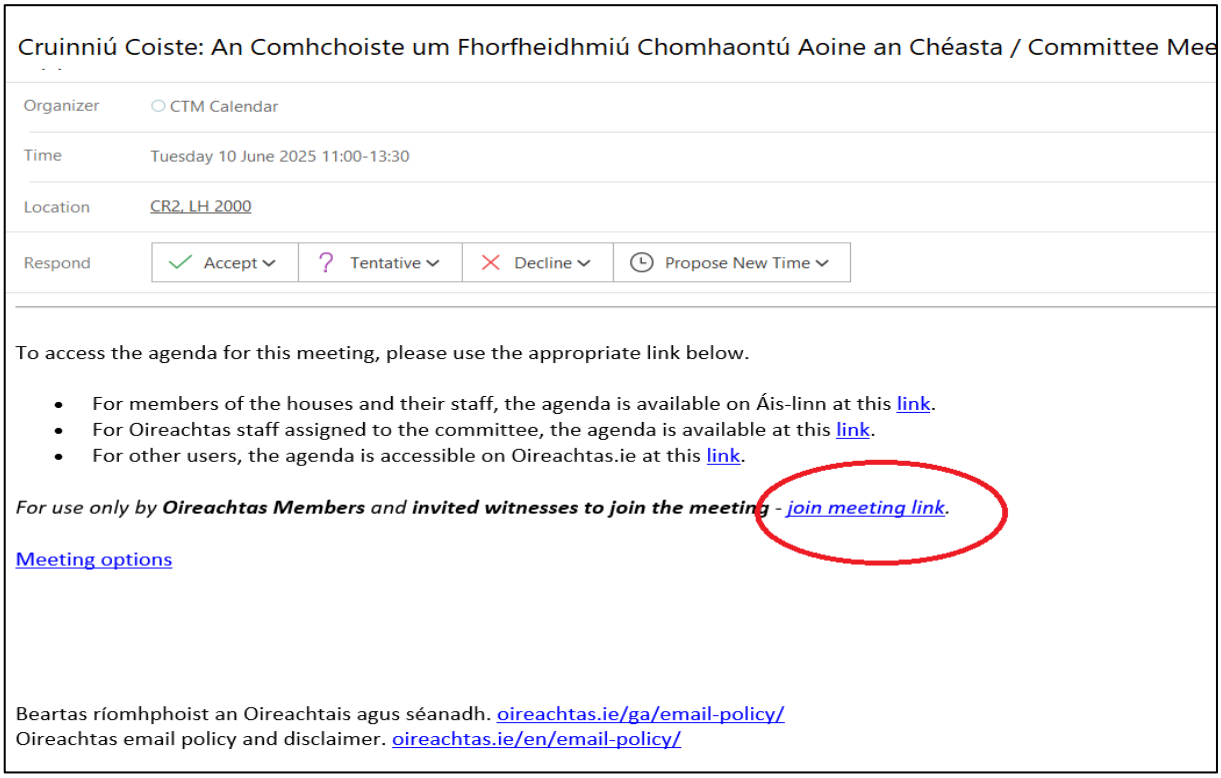
In some cases, witnesses can be asked to or request to give evidence remotely using video conferencing software. The Houses of the Oireachtas uses *Microsoft Teams* (MS Teams) as its video conferencing platform.

Before the meeting

You will be/have been asked to supply details of your contact or nominated contact to ensure that a full end-to-end technical test can be undertaken in the days before the meeting and for a contact number in case of any problems encountered during the meeting. Staff from the Committee will contact you to arrange a suitable time for this test once details have been received. You will receive an email inviting you to a virtual meeting to ensure that everything is in order. The email will contain a link that will allow you enter this preparatory meeting.

Connecting to the meeting

You will also receive an email inviting you to a virtual meeting in which the Committee is a participant. You will be asked to be available 15 minutes before you are due to appear before the Committee to ensure that the link is established, is working well and that both ends can clearly hear and see each other. Click the link in the email to join the meeting. This time will also afford you an opportunity to raise any questions you have about your participation.


Cruinniú Coiste: An Comhchoiste um Fhorfheidhmiú Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta / Committee Mee

Organizer CTM Calendar

Time Tuesday 10 June 2025 11:00-13:30

Location CR2, LH 2000

Respond Accept Tentative Decline Propose New Time

To access the agenda for this meeting, please use the appropriate link below.

- For members of the houses and their staff, the agenda is available on Áis-linn at this link.
- For Oireachtas staff assigned to the committee, the agenda is available at this link.
- For other users, the agenda is accessible on Oireachtas.ie at this link.

*For use only by **Oireachtas Members** and **invited witnesses to join the meeting** - join meeting link.*

Meeting options

Beartas ríomhphoist an Oireachtais agus séanadh. oireachtas.ie/ga/email-policy/
Oireachtas email policy and disclaimer. oireachtas.ie/en/email-policy/

Once you click the link you may be presented with a "Captcha" dialogue (*like the one below*):



Here you will need to **Verify you're a real person**, by entering the characters in the input box and then click the **Submit** button. Note if the captcha characters are not clear, you can click the **Refresh** button to get alternative characters. You also have the option to **Verify with audio instead** if you wish.

Once the preliminary checks have been completed, you may be asked to leave the meeting and rejoin. You will be held in a "virtual lobby" until such time as the Committee is ready to hear your evidence. The Cathaoirleach will invite you to join the meeting and make your opening statement.

What we and you will see and hear during the meeting

Your video feed from Microsoft Teams will be treated as an additional camera feed by our broadcasting system and will be visible, when selected by our broadcasting unit, on large display screens in the room in which the committee meeting is taking place.

A guide for best position, for broadcast, is that you are in the centre of the screen with the top of your head close to the top of the screen.

During the meeting, no placards or suchlike should be visible in the background. Best practice is to blur you background using the options available (accessed by clicking the three dots ...)

Before contributing at any point in the meeting, please ensure that your microphone is not muted by clicking on the microphone button as per the image below.



If during the meeting you think it necessary to intervene, please feel free to do so but be willing to accept the authority of the Cathaoirleach. If you wish to intervene but there is no immediate pressing need to do so, consider using the "raise your hand" feature by clicking on the icon.



If you do use the feature, please remember to lower your hand by clicking on the icon again (if it does not lower automatically) when you have completed your contribution.

Should the quality of the communication channel deteriorate so much that the Committee cannot hear or see you, or that you cannot hear or see the committee, the Cathaoirleach may ask you to take actions to resolve this or to log out and log back into the meeting. Committee staff will use the contact number to ensure that a communications link is established as quickly as possible.

You may also use the “chat” function by clicking on the dialog box as indicated in the image below and type a message draw the Committee staff attention to a difficulty during the meeting.



Post-meeting

You can click on the **Leave** button when your contribution or the meeting has ended.