



Tithe an Oireachtais Houses of the Oireachtas

Note: If you have been invited to attend a Committee meeting, this fact sheet should be read together with the [Witness Protocol](#). If you have been compelled to attend a Committee meeting as opposed to invited to attend you should also read the [Guidelines for Witnesses on Compellability](#).

GUIDANCE NOTE:

MAKING SUBMISSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS TO OIREACHTAS COMMITTEES

Why do Committees want to talk to the public ?

Most Oireachtas Committees have the power to invite interested persons or bodies to give evidence by way of oral presentation on any matter in its Work Programme. Over 1,000 witnesses appear before Committees on an annual basis. These can include Ministers, civil and public servants, representatives of non-Governmental organisations and other interest groups. It is through the Committees that much of the detailed work of the Oireachtas is conducted. Committees have a range of functions e.g. scrutinise the operation of Government Departments, examine policy issues and consider legislation in detail before it becomes law.

Why should you make a submission to a Committee?

The Committees provide an opportunity for the public to input directly into the work of the Oireachtas. Committee work informs the Members on the policy issues on a particular topic.

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

Committees receive many requests for meetings and they need to be sure that the topic is within remit and forms part of the Work Programme of the Committee before they agree to a meeting. If you believe you can contribute to the work of a Committee, the best approach is to send the Committee a written submission for consideration first. The Committee will then decide if an oral presentation is required. The purpose of an oral presentation is to enable you to clarify and expand on your written submission and to allow the Committee Members to ask questions and seek additional information.

Invitations to public meetings are issued by each Committee on the basis of the particular item or area of the Work Programme under consideration at the time.

Please be aware that making a writing submission does not guarantee an invitation to come before that Committee.

How do I contact a Committee?

Your point of contact with a Committee is the Clerk to the Committee (the Committee Clerk). The Committee Clerk is the main adviser to the Chairman and Members of the Committee. All documents and correspondence for the Committee should be addressed to the Committee Clerk. Individual Committee contact details

are available on the Oireachtas website. Here is the link to the Committees pages on the website: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/>

MAKING A WRITTEN SUBMISSION

How do I make a written submission?

Submissions should be addressed to the Committee Clerk (of the relevant Committee). Submissions may be sent by post or by email. Email is the preferred option and ideally should be an MS Word document and searchable pdf formats. It is our policy to acknowledge all submissions. If you do not receive an acknowledgement, you should contact the Committee Clerk, to confirm that the submission was received.

What information should I include?

As a general guideline, written submissions should consist of a separate document accompanied by a covering letter. Submissions should be presented concisely as possible. The submission should not include any personal details such as your name or contact details. Instead the separate covering letter should contain your name and contact details (telephone and postal address and, if available, an email address). If the submission is on behalf of an organisation, you should indicate your position in the organisation. Please note that we welcome submissions in Irish as well as English.

The main document should contain the following information:

- A brief introduction, for example, explaining your area of expertise;
- Any factual information that you have to offer from which the Committee might be able to draw conclusions, or which could be put to other parties for their views;
- Any recommendations for action by the Government or others which you would like the Committee to consider for inclusion in its report to the House (recommendations to the Committee should be as specific as possible and should be summarised at the end of the document); and
- An executive summary of the main points made in the submission.

Paragraphs and pages in your document should be numbered to assist the Committee.

Is there any restriction on what I can include?

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 Clerk how this might affect what you can submit.

You should not make comments or allegations of a personal nature.

The purpose of Committee meetings is to discuss public policy issues. The Committee is not a forum for promoting a particular product or business.

Making a submission is a public process

The Committee is not obliged to accept your document once it has been submitted, nor is it obliged to publish any or all of the submission if it has been accepted. However, parliamentary procedures are transparent and accessible to the wider public. Any submissions made to a Committee may be published, either as part of a Committee report, or separately. Publication can include posting of the submission on the website and in hard copy as part of a Committee report.

MAKING AN ORAL PRESENTATION

What happens if I am invited to a meeting of a Committee?

Having received and studied your written presentation, the Committee may decide that it needs to discuss the topic with you in more depth. The best way to do this will be in person at a public meeting of the Committee. Once the Committee decides that you will be invited to attend, the Committee Clerk will contact you to advise you of the date for your presentation. A confirmation letter will follow.

What happens if I can't come to a meeting, can I participate remotely?

You might not be able to attend for any number of reasons. Sometimes it will be possible to re-schedule the meeting, but sometimes it might not be possible. Where you are unable to attend in person (e.g. because of distance or work) it may be possible to hold the meeting by video conference. We will require advance notice to arrange this, so please consult the Committee Clerk as soon as possible in the process.

Do I need to send anything in advance?

Any presentation materials must be submitted to the Committee Clerk by the deadline agreed by the Committee and stated in the letter of invitation to allow for advance electronic circulation to Members. If possible, speaking notes and presentations should be in MS word and searchable pdf formats. There is no guarantee that material, which has not been received within the specified advance period, will be used at the meeting.

If you are attending on behalf of an organisation, please also send the Committee Clerk the names and job titles of the people who will be attending the meeting. It is usually left to the organisation to decide which of its members or staff should be present. Whoever is nominated to attend should, however, be sufficiently familiar with the topic to brief the Committee fully and answer any questions.

I've never been in a Parliament before – is there a dress code?

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 political emblems is not permitted.

I've never been to the Houses of the Oireachtas before – where are they and how do I get in?

The Houses of the Oireachtas are located in Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 VW29. Public access to the Houses is permitted only via the Kildare Street Gate.

When you arrive at the Gate, you will be required to pass through a metal detecting arch and your bag will be x-rayed. You will then be directed by staff to LH2000 (the complex which houses the committee rooms). At that reception area you will be requested to print off (from a special kiosk) your identification badge which you should wear at all times. Please allow at least 30 minutes to complete these processes.

You will be directed to a waiting area outside the committee rooms. You should make yourself known to the Parliamentary Usher on duty there. If the Committee is in private session when you arrive, you will be asked to wait until such time as you are permitted to enter. If the meeting is in public session when you arrive, you may take a seat in the public gallery. Most Committees will take a very short break to allow witnesses or groups to change over.

Note: There is a waiting area just outside the Committee Rooms. There is a water dispenser in this location. You will notice on your way to the committee room area

that there is a small café where you can purchase tea/coffee and snacks. Any food stuffs purchased must be consumed in the café, do not bring drinks or food into the committee rooms or the waiting area outside it.

Taking Your Seat

Appended to this document are diagrams of the layout of each of the four Committee Rooms. The seating areas for witnesses are marked. Your name will be displayed on an electronic sign directly in front of your seat which is visible to the Members and can be seen on the broadcast feed of the meeting. Please do not sit in any other seat – your name is displayed to match that particular seat. You should remain seated in your place until your contribution to the meeting has concluded.

- Please turn off your mobile phone – putting it into air plane mode is not sufficient. If your mobile is not turned off it may interfere with the sound.
- There is a microphone at each seat. It will be switched off and on by an operator in the room. You should try to avoid knocking the table, or tapping it with fingers or pens, as the sound will be picked up by the microphones.

Are the Committee Rooms wheelchair accessible?

The Oireachtas Committee Rooms are fully accessible for wheelchair users. However, it would be helpful if you can let the Committee Clerk know as soon as possible if there are any other facilities or assistance you require.

If I wish to observe a Committee meeting what is the protocol?

Persons who wish to view the proceedings of either House or a Committee must be sponsored by Member. That Member will inform the Parliamentary Usher staff accordingly and your name will be placed on a list for access. However if you have been formally invited to attend a Committee meeting your name will already have been placed on an access list for that particular meeting.

What is the normal format for a Committee meeting?

The focus of the session is on the Committee putting questions to you, about your written submission. There is no need to read your full written submission as the Members will already have received it. Your opening remarks should be restricted to a short statement (not more than five minutes) summarising your written submission and highlighting the main points. Questions will then be put to you by Members of the Committee. These questions are designed to clarify aspects of your submission, to seek information relevant to the Committee's functions and to allow you to expand on any points made in your submission. It may be helpful to take a note of the various questions, so that you do not overlook any of the issues raised.

During the meeting are there any particular protocols I should follow?

When entering the Committee Room, go directly to the seats set aside for you, as directed by the Committee staff. You should remain seated in your place until the session has been concluded by the Chair.

How do I address the Members of the Committee?

You should address the Members by their titles i.e. Deputy X, Senator X etc. Office holders should be addressed by their title e.g. Chairman, Taoiseach, Tánaiste, 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

All of 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 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 at this time. This is to allow for virus checking of the media supplied as well as the circulation of the documents to the Committee Members. There are some disadvantages to using these facilities that you should be aware of when considering a request to use them. The information contained in these types of presentations may be lost on those watching the meeting remotely (not present in the room). Only the spoken word forms part of the official record of the meeting. Please be aware that your presentation will not be included in the official report which only includes the spoken word.

Can I use any other electronic equipment?

Only the equipment already installed may be used. In order to protect the sound and recording systems, other electronic devices such as pagers, mobile phones, laptop computers, tape recorders and radios, are not permitted. The use of mobile phones is strictly prohibited and they must be switched off (silent mode is not sufficient) in the Committee Rooms when a Committee is meeting.

Usáid 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.

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

Committee meetings generally last 2 hours, although some meetings may be shorter and some considerably longer. The length of the meeting depends on the item of business being considered and whether there is more than one group making a presentation. Meetings of 2 hours or less will usually not have a planned break.

It is possible, however, that a meeting may have to be interrupted to allow Members to vote in either Dáil Éireann or Seanad Éireann. If this happens, the break will be for approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Voting is an important part of a Member's role and it is not intended as a discourtesy to you if the meeting is interrupted for this reason. It will be resumed as soon as possible.

For a longer meeting, a break may be planned either to allow Members to attend specific proceedings, e.g. Leaders' Questions in the Dáil, or for a meal break.

Will the meeting be broadcast?

Making an oral presentation to an Oireachtas Committee is a public process. The meeting will be conducted in public. 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 the dedicated Parliamentary channel Oireachtas TV and all public Committee meetings are replayed over the course of the week. Oireachtas TV is currently available on Sky Channel 517, Virgin Media Channel 207, Eir Channel 509, Vodafone Channel 201 and Saorview Channel 22. Oireachtas TV is also available worldwide on www.Oireachtas.ie and the Oireachtas App.

A transcript will be published on the Committee website in due course. So, everything you say at the meeting will be publicly available.

Can I observe other presentations to the Committee?

If the public part of the meeting is already in progress when you arrive, you are welcome to observe proceedings from the public gallery before being called to make your own presentation. When the Committee is ready for you, the Committee staff will call you to the table. You may also return to the public gallery after your own contribution if you wish.

While seated in the public gallery you may not take notes or record the proceedings in any way. You should not interrupt the meeting by talking, clapping etc., and you should not try to communicate with Members of the Committee or other participants.

When the meeting is over

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 desk on your way out. Witnesses must exit the campus via Kildare Street Gate.

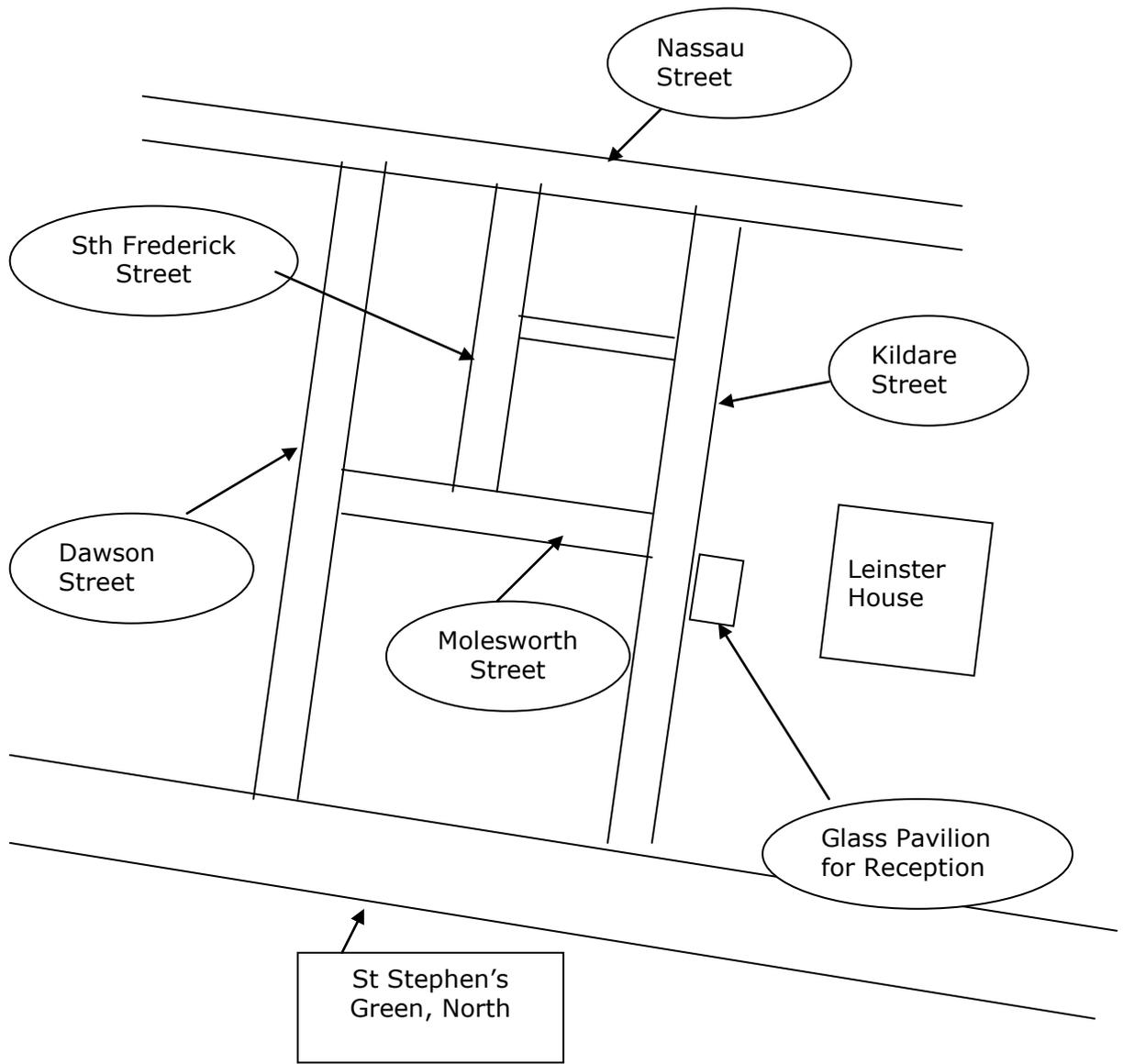
If you have agreed to forward additional material in response to a question, that material should be forwarded to the Committee Clerk, who will distribute it to all Committee Members.

Can I get a copy of the meeting transcript or the webcast or video?

The transcript of the meeting will be available on the Committee web site approximately 7-8 working days after the meeting.

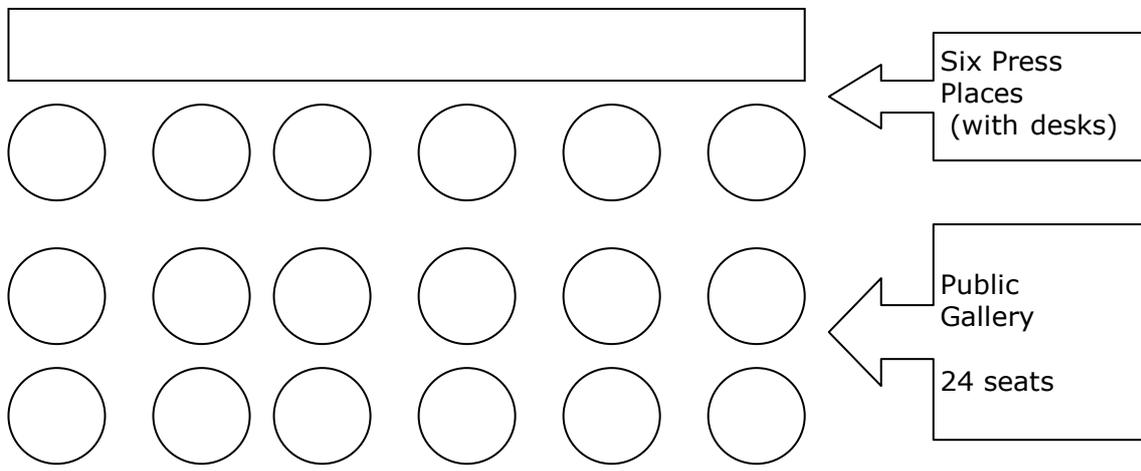
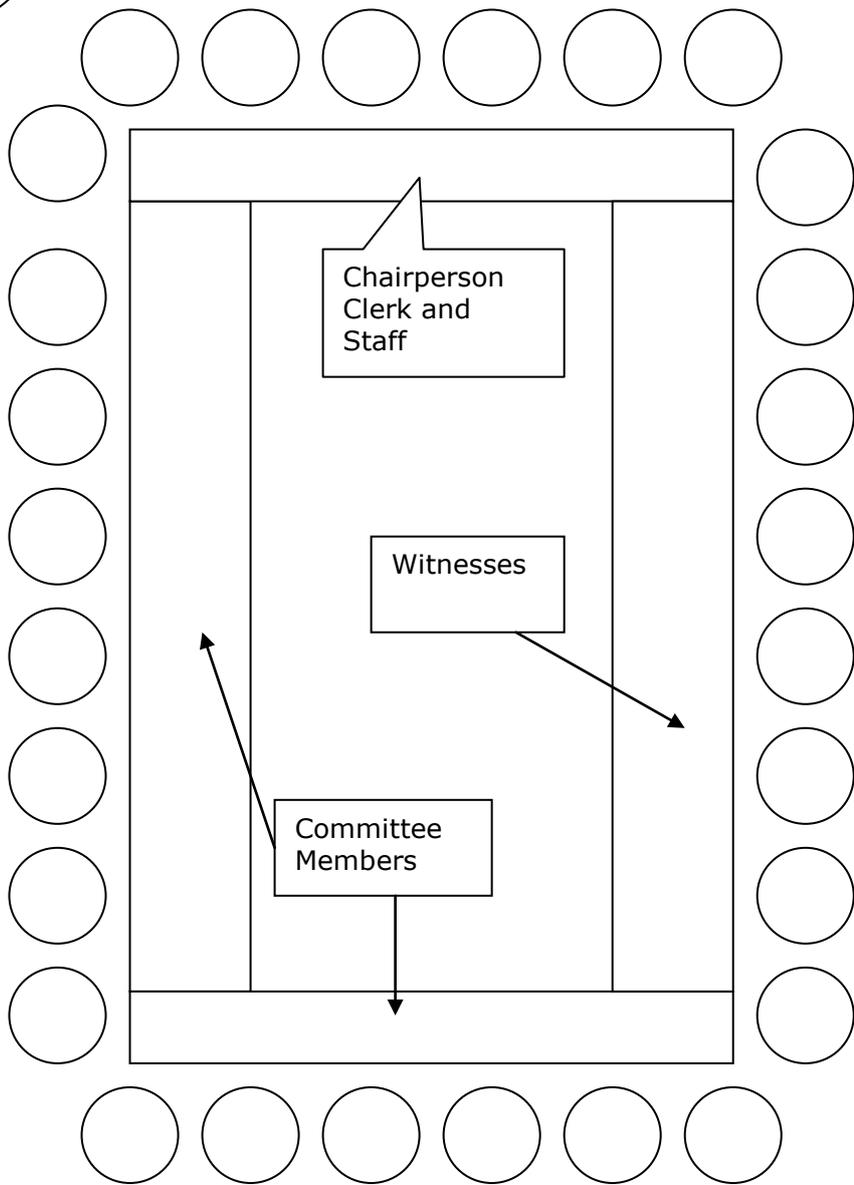
Parliamentary Privilege

Members of the Joint Committee have absolute privilege in respect of statements made in either House of the Oireachtas or before the Joint Committee. By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of the evidence that they are required to give to a Committee. If, in the course of Committee Proceedings, you are directed by the Joint Committee to cease giving evidence in relation to a particular matter and you continue to so do, you are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of your evidence. You are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and you are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, you should not criticise or make charges against a Member of either House of the Oireachtas, a person outside the House, or an official, by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.



Layout of Committee Room 1

Sound Booth



Layout of Committee Rooms 2, 3 and 4

