

Procedure for holding COT meetings in open session

If you would like to attend a COT meeting as an observer please contact the secretariat for further information.

[See 'contact us' for details.](#)

Introduction to open meetings

The purpose of committee meetings being held in open session is to increase the visibility and transparency of the committee's work and to enable interested parties to hear the committee's discussions. The meetings are not intended to provide a forum for independent observers or pressure groups to present their views on a subject to the committee.

If an interested party wishes to submit information relevant to a topic for consideration by the committee, they are welcome to do so but it should be submitted in writing to the secretariat at least seven working days before the meeting. The Secretariat will discuss with the Chairman the most appropriate way to present the information to the committee and the Chairman's decision will be final.

Information concerning the dates of forthcoming COT meetings and topics are available at the relevant section of the website. Most COT meetings are held at Aviation House, where access to the building is controlled. Information concerning COC and COM meetings can be obtained through the relevant sections of the COC and COM internet sites. Most COC and COM meetings are held in Skipton House where access to the building is also controlled.

Applications to attend a meeting as an observer

Those wishing to observe can apply to attend either any forthcoming meeting or for a specific subject. If you are interested in a specific subject, the Secretariat will tell you when we expect it to be discussed and will contact you as soon as the

agenda is confirmed.

The application form asks whether you represent any group (eg manufacturers, trade associations, interest groups with specific concerns on public health or the environment). This information will be provided to committee members and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

We will accept enquiries by email or phone/fax. Applications will be dealt with by post to ensure that a valid postal address is obtained for proof of identity. The closing date for completed application forms to be received is one week before the relevant meeting.

Selection of observers

The Committee meeting rooms have space for a limited number of observers. The maximum is about 10 for any one meeting depending on location. Priority will be given to those observers who have an interest in a specific subject. Observers will then be selected in order of priority depending on specific interest(s) notified and the order of receipt of applications. In the event of oversubscription, the Secretariat will liaise with the Chairman regarding the selection of observers.

After the closing date for applications, the Secretariat will write to you with an invitation or an explanation if attendance at this meeting is not possible. The invitation will include all necessary information on Committee procedures and admission to the building.

Contribution from observers

Observers should not attempt to participate in the Committee's discussion. Observers who have submitted information to the Committee in advance of the meeting may be invited to provide further explanation or to make brief comments at the discretion of the Chairman. For further information, please refer to the Code of Conduct for observers.

Media enquiries

Representatives of the media should contact the relevant Press Office for the Food Standards Agency or Department of Health as appropriate.

Reserved business and unpublished data

Some information may not be in the public domain at the time of discussion. Whenever possible discussions will take place in open session but sometimes part or all of an item may need to be discussed in closed session as reserved business and observers will be requested to leave the meeting. Such items will generally be discussed at the beginning or end of the agenda.

Publication of agendas, papers, statements and minutes

The agenda will be published on our website about two weeks before the meeting and any items of reserved business will be identified. Papers will be published on the web, with the exception of annexes containing certain types of unpublished data. A record of key points made by observers will be included in the minutes and the final decision on the wording of the minutes will be made by the Committee.

The draft minutes will be published on our website about two weeks after the meeting. The draft minutes or statements (as Working Papers) of reserved business may need to be temporarily withheld in accordance with the Code of Practice on Openness, which is published in the COT/COC/COM Annual Report. The final version of minutes and statements will be published when agreed by the Committees.