

How to have your say



A quick reference guide
to council meetings (This document last updated on: 21 Nov 2024)



How to have your say

Involving local people in decisions is the cornerstone of local democracy.

There are many ways you can contribute and get your voice heard at public meetings. This quick reference guide explains the council's different public meetings, what they are for, and how you can have your say.

There are guidelines for presenting a petition, statement, or question at a meeting and how you will get a response.

When you submit a petition, statement, or question, it is reviewed for relevancy then it is published online and sent to councillors.

During Full Council and policy committee meetings, 30 minutes are set aside for petitions, statements, and questions.

If you submit a statement or petition, a written reply will be provided to you within 10 working days of the meeting. If you submit a question, written responses will be published on the website within 10 working days.

Questions and statements to meetings will not be permitted if they are about topics or issues which are not within the council's areas of responsibility or which do not directly affect the city.

For those unable to attend the public meetings, we webcast some of them live and make the recording available after the meeting on our [YouTube channel](#).

Full Council

This table answers commonly asked questions about Full Council meetings.

Who attends?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All 70 councillors. Full Council meetings are held in public and chaired by the Lord Mayor.
What are the meetings for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Setting the budget and policy framework including the level of council tax.Appointing policy committees (who deal with the policy function), regulatory committees (e.g. development control committees), and other committees.Adopting byelaws, appointing Aldermen and giving Freedom of the City.Appointing the Lord Mayor at the Annual General Meeting in May.Receiving petitions, statements, and questions from members of the public who live or own a business in Bristol.
When do they happen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Full Council meets eight times a year.Usually, these meetings are held in the Council Chamber, City Hall. <p>Please see the following links for all council committee dates and the list of committees:</p> <p>BCC Calendar of Committees</p> <p>BCC Committee List</p>
Are they webcast?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Yes, on our YouTube channel

Full Council – how to have your say.

This table details the different ways you can have your voice heard at council meetings.

Item you can submit	Details	Deadlines	What happens at council meetings?	What happens after council meetings?
Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statements can be submitted on any topic.• One statement per person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12 noon, two working days before the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior to the meeting, statements are published online and sent to councillors.• 30 minutes are set aside for petitions, statements, and questions.• One minute is given to present a statement.• Statements are not discussed at the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statements are referred to the Leader of the Council or Chair of a Policy or Regulatory Committee for information and consideration.• A written reply is sent within 10 working days of the meeting if requested.
Petition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Petitions can be submitted on any topic.• One petition per person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12 noon, two working days before the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior to the meeting, petitions are published and sent to councillors.• One minute is given to present a petition.• Petitions will not be discussed at the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A written reply is provided to the lead petitioner within 10 working days of the meeting.

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Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions can be asked on any issue for which the Council has responsibility, or which directly affects the city.• A member of the public may ask a maximum of three questions and a maximum of two supplementary questions.• Questions should be addressed to the Leader of the Council or Chair of a Policy or Regulatory Committee for information and consideration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No later than 5pm, three clear working days before the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior to the meeting questions are published and sent to councillors.• 30 minutes are set aside for petitions, statements, and questions.• Replies to questions submitted are given verbally, and there is an opportunity to ask supplementary questions within the permitted time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written responses are published on the website within 10 working days.
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Policy Committees

This table answers commonly asked questions about policy committee meetings.

Who attends?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy committees are made up of councillors, reflecting the political proportionality of the council.• Policy committees each have a portfolio of services and responsibilities to oversee, the committees are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Strategy and Resources Policy Committee○ Adult Social Care Policy Committee○ Children and Young People Policy Committee○ Economy and Skills Policy Committee○ Environment and Sustainability Policy Committee○ Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee○ Public Health and Communities Policy Committee○ Transport and Connectivity Policy Committee• Responsibilities for each policy committee can be found here: Committee system guide (bristol.gov.uk)
What are the meetings for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making key decisions as notified in the policy committees' forward plans.
When do they happen?	<p>Please see the following links for all council committee dates and the list of committees:</p> <p>BCC Calendar of Committees</p> <p>BCC Committee List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings usually take place in the Council Chamber, City Hall.
Are they webcast?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Strategy and Resources Policy Committee meetings are streamed on our YouTube channel.

Policy Committees – how to have your say.

This table details the different ways you can have your voice heard at policy committee meetings.

Item you can submit	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meetings?	What happens after the meetings?
Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statements must be about the responsibilities of the policy committee.• One statement per person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12 noon, two working days before the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 30 minutes are set aside for petitions, statements, and questions.• The content of the statement is published on the website and made available to the committee in advance, noted, and taken into consideration when the item is debated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no discussion of the submissions, but the committee considers the issues as the item is debated.
Petition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Petitions must be about the responsibilities of the policy committee.• One petition per person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12 noon, two working days before the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One minute is given for lead petitioner to present the petition.• The content of the petition is published on the website and made available to the committee in advance, noted, and taken into consideration when the item is debated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no discussion of the submissions, but the committee considers the issues as the item is debated.

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Question

- Questions submitted must be about the responsibilities of the policy committee.
 - A member of the public may ask a maximum of three questions and a maximum of two supplementary questions.
 - No later than 5pm, three clear working days before the meeting.
 - 30 minutes are set aside for petitions, statements, and questions.
 - Replies to questions are provided in writing.
 - Written responses are published on the website.
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Development Control meetings.

This table answers commonly asked questions about Development Control meetings.

Who attends?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each committee is made up of councillors, reflecting the political proportionality of the council.
What are the meetings for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determining significant planning applications.
When do they happen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are two committees – Development Control A and Development Control B <p>Please see the following links for all council committee dates, the list of committees, and the Public Forum FAQs:</p> <p>BCC Calendar of Committees</p> <p>BCC Committee List</p> <p>Public Forum FAQs</p>
Are they webcast?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development Control meetings are streamed on our YouTube channel.

Development Control meetings – how to have your say.

This table details the different ways you can have your voice heard at Development Control meetings.

Item you can submit	Details	Deadlines	What happens at the meetings?	What happens after the meeting?
Statements and Petitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statements and petitions relating to planning applications to be determined at the meeting are received at the time the item is determined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 noon, two working days before the meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 minutes are set aside to deal with all petitions, statements, and questions. This may be extended for major applications. Petitions and statements are published and circulated to the committee in advance to be noted and considered as the item is debated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no discussion of the submissions, but the committee considers the issues as the item is debated.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions by members of the public or members of council may be asked of the chair of the committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No later than 5pm, three clear working days before the meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 minutes are set aside to deal with all petitions, statements, and questions. This may be extended for major applications. Questions are published and circulated to all members of the relevant committee in advance and replies are made available in the committee room one hour before the meeting. A supplementary question is permitted arising directly out of the original question or reply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions and answers are included in the minutes.

Further information

What's a statement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statements should be short and limited to no more than 1,000 words. Statements are circulated before the meeting and are read by Councillors prior to the start of the meeting.• You are invited to present your statement to the meeting. You should focus on the main points and avoid reading it out word for word.• Groups can nominate a representative to speak on their behalf.• All statements are compiled in the order they are received.• For copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce or publish newspaper or magazine articles attached to statements as supporting documentation.
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Council meetings – questions should be addressed to the Leader of the Council or Chair of a Policy or Regulatory Committee.• Committee meetings – questions are normally addressed to the Chair.
What happens to your personal information received with representations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By taking part in public forum business, it is assumed that your consent is given to the recording of your name and the details of your submission in the documents circulated to committee, which are made available at the meeting, and published on the website.• The information may also be placed in the official minute book as a public record and your name may be listed in the minutes.• Where appropriate, we will try to remove other personal details like contact details. However, you may wish to consider what your statement contains as we cannot guarantee that you won't be identified through other information contained therein.
Webcasting of meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Council, Strategy and Resources Policy Committees meetings, and Development Control meetings are streamed live on our YouTube channel.• The entire meeting is filmed (except where there are confidential or exempt items). The footage will be available for two years. <p>If you ask a question or make a representation, then you are likely to be filmed. It will be assumed that you have given your consent.</p>
Where to send your questions, statements, and petitions.	<p>For the Full Council meeting on 8th October please use: https://bristol.gov.uk/publicforum For Policy Committees - please send to policycommittees@bristol.gov.uk For Development Control and other committee meetings - please send to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk Start or sign a petition at https://bristol.gov.uk/petitions</p>