

Procedure for holding COMARE meetings in open session

More information on attending COMARE meetings as an observer.

If you would like to attend a COMARE meeting as an observer please contact the secretariat for further information or complete an application form – available on the COMARE.GOV.UK [webpage](#).

Completed application forms should be sent to the secretariat.

COMARE Secretariat
c/o Public Health England
Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards
Chilton
Oxon OX11 0RQ
Email: comare@phe.gov.uk

Introduction to open session meetings

The purpose of Committee meetings being held in open session is to increase the 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 interest groups to present their views on a subject to the Committee. Observers attending the meeting are required to adhere to the COMARE Code of Conduct for Observers.

Information concerning the dates of forthcoming COMARE meetings is available at the relevant section of the [COMARE webpage on GOV.UK](#). Most COMARE meetings are held in London, usually in buildings where access to the meeting is controlled. The Secretariat will arrange permissions and escorts for observers. It is therefore essential that all observers are identified in advance.

Applications to attend a meeting as an observer

Those wishing to observe can apply to attend either all of a meeting or just for a specific subject. If you are interested in a specific subject please inform the secretariat, who will be able to tell you when we expect it to be discussed.

The application form asks whether you represent any group (e.g. manufacturers, trade associations, or groups with specific interests regarding 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 and by post. Responses to applications will be issued by post to ensure that a valid home or work postal address is obtained for proof of identity. The closing date for completed application forms to be received is five working days before the relevant meeting.

Numbers that may attend

The meeting rooms used by the Committee have space for a limited number of observers. The likely maximum is 6 for any one meeting depending on the room and location. Priority will be given to those observers who have an interest in a specific subject on the meeting agenda. Observers will then be invited to attend 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 Chair regarding the invitation 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.

Contributions from observers

Observers must not attempt to participate in the Committee's discussion.

If you wish to submit information that is pertinent to a topic the Committee is considering, you should send a brief (no more than 2 pages of A4) written submission to the secretariat at least 10 working days before the meeting. Submitted information should be relevant to the Committee's remit and work programme.

It should be noted that the Committee gives particular weight to peer-reviewed scientific studies. Material which contains commentary, personal opinions, and unsupported critiques of other committees and professional bodies is unlikely to be helpful to the Committee. Submitted information labelled as confidential cannot be considered because information presented to the Committee may be required to be released to third parties. The Chair will decide whether, when and how any submitted information will be considered by the Committee. The Chair's decision is final. If you have also applied to attend the meeting, the Chair may choose to invite you to provide more information and respond to questions during the meeting.

For further information, please refer to the Code of Conduct for Observers.

Media enquiries

Representatives of the media should contact the Press Office for the Department of Health and Social Care.

Reserved business and unpublished material

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. Such items will generally be discussed at the beginning or at the end of the agenda and observers will be requested to leave the meeting for those items.

Publication of agenda and minutes

The agenda will be published on the Committee webpage approximately 15 working days before the meeting and any items of reserved business will be identified. When an observer has spoken to the Committee, a record of key points made will be included in the minutes and the observer will be invited to comment on the draft of that section. The final decision on the wording of minutes will be made by the Committee. The minutes of the meeting will be published on the COMARE page on GOV.UK, following agreement by the Committee.

COMARE Code of Conduct for Observers

This Code of Conduct is based on the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees 2011¹.

Role of Observers

Observers are subject to the same level of confidentiality on meeting matters as members and assessors. This includes refraining from commenting on Committee business on social media.

When invited to attend meetings, observers and/or their organisations are required to respect the workings of the Committee. Observers and/or their organisations must not interfere in the input from meeting attendees or the work of the secretariat in any way which, in the view of the Chair, might hinder the work of the Committee before, during and after the meeting. Electronic recording equipment is prohibited and recording of COMARE meetings is not allowed.

Observers must not attempt to participate in the Committee's discussion. Observers may contribute verbally to the meeting only at the invitation of the Chair. This should be brief and the Chair will allocate the appropriate time.

Observers will be asked to leave a meeting when the Committee discusses items in reserved business (the consideration of material that isn't in the public domain). Such items will generally be discussed at the beginning or at the end of the agenda.

Failure to observe this Code of Conduct may lead to exclusion of observers and/or their organisations from the meeting and from future meetings of the Committee.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scientific-advisory-committees-code-of-practice>