

Council meetings and workshops

A guide to attending and participating for the public

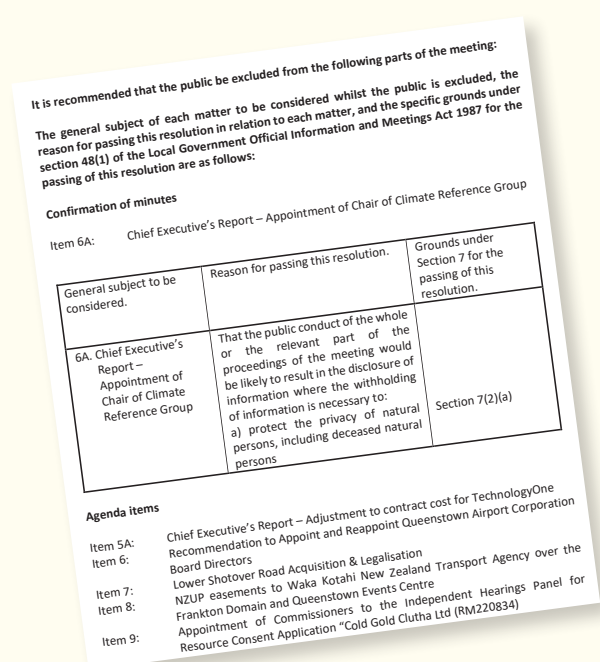
Formal meetings of Council, its Committees and the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board are, by default, conducted in public which means anyone can attend, participate, and understand why and how decisions are made by the elected members. The same is true for informal workshops and briefings to elected members. From time to time, it may be necessary to exclude the public from a meeting, workshop, or briefing, for example in the case of an ongoing legal matter, but there must be robust reasons to do this and the reason should be made clear to the public.

If you're thinking of coming along or are just keen to know more about how Council meetings work, you can find out more in this document.

Can I go to all meetings and workshops?

At QLDC, we're committed to open and transparent decision making to enable more effective public participation and promote accountability. Sometimes though there may be grounds to exclude the public, which may apply to the whole or part of a meeting or workshop. If this happens, you will be advised when it is time to leave by the meeting chair. Agendas for meetings and workshops are published two days in advance and these will also signal which items will be discussed or considered with the public excluded. You'll find agendas online at QLDC's website: www.qldc.govt.nz/your-council/council-documents/agendas-minutes, or can request them at our offices on 10 Gorge Road, Queenstown or 47 Ardmore Street, Wānaka.

The public can only be excluded when there are grounds to do so under sections 6 or 7 of legislation known as the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (or the LGOIMA). This Act says that councils may exclude the public from meetings where discussing a matter with the public present would likely result in the disclosure of information there would be good reason to withhold. This includes information private to an individual person, financial information subject to commercial negotiations, or information that may affect measures to protect the public health and safety. The reasons why the public are excluded will always be available on our website.



Are there ways I can participate in meetings?

Yes. Simply coming along or watching meetings online is a great way to stay informed and take an active interest in the business of Council and be an informed participant in making submissions, providing feedback, or just discussing hot topics with your friends and neighbours.

There are a few other ways you can actively take part in formal meetings.

PUBLIC FORUM

Public forum is a period of time set aside early in meetings where anyone can come along and bring topics that are important to them to the attention of the Council. You must take your subject to the appropriate decision-making body that has authority in that matter. For example, if you want to speak about the upkeep of a playground you would attend a Community & Services Committee meeting rather than the Planning & Strategy Committee.

If you want to speak in public forum you must register in advance, by filling in the registration form on the QLDC website: www.qldc.govt.nz/do-it-online/registrations/register-to-speak-at-public-forum.

For assistance registering or if you have any questions about public forum, you can email governance@qldc.govt.nz. On the day, you will be called up to the table by the meeting chair and have three minutes to speak. Please start by clearly stating your name, any organisation you represent, and the topic you are speaking to. If you have any notes or supporting documents, please hand these to a member of staff who will distribute them to elected members for you.

If you don't use your full three minutes, elected members may ask questions of clarification but please note public forum is not intended as an opportunity for you to question the elected members.

Is there anything I can't do in a public forum?

You're not able speak on a topic where you have taken part in a statutory process for engaging in submissions and evidence. This means that if you've participated in a defined submission and hearings process (such as District Plan changes) that involves Council or a third-party decision-maker, you may not discuss your submission in public forum.

The chair may also decline to let you speak or stop you speaking in the following circumstances:

- > if you're repeating views presented earlier in public forum
- > if you're criticising elected members or staff
- > if you're being repetitious, offensive or disrespectful
- > if you've previously spoken on the same issue
- > if the matter is subject to legal proceedings.

DEPUTATIONS

In contrast to public forum, deputations allow you or your organisation / group to make a formal presentation to a meeting and its members. You may be part of a group seeking endorsement or support for a community project or may wish to provide more detailed information on a matter of concern to your neighbourhood. Given this more formal approach, the time allowed for deputations is five minutes.

Deputations need to be approved in advance by the Chair to be included in the meeting agenda so please send your request to governance@qldc.govt.nz at least five working days in advance of the meeting. No more than two people can speak on behalf of your deputation and the same restrictions apply as they do for public forum.

PETITIONS

If you wish to present a formal request for action or change, then you can do this in the form or a petition.

Find out more about the terms of reference for Council's committees and the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board on the QLDC website: www.qldc.govt.nz/your-council/meetings-committees

A petition can be presented to Council, any of its Committees or the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board, as long as the topic falls within the terms of reference for that decision-making body.

Petitions must:

- > contain at least 20 signatures
- > be shorter than 150 words (not including signatures)
- > be sent to the Council's Chief Executive (via Council's governance team at governance@qldc.govt.nz or delivered to one of Council's offices) at least five working days in advance of the meeting.

You may also present your petition in English or te reo Māori. If you wish to speak to your petition at the meeting, you may do so and have a maximum of five minutes. If you don't wish to speak to it the Chair will present the petition speaking only to the petitioner's 150 (max) word statement and the number of signatures.

GENERAL RULES

Whether you are speaking in public forum, a formal deputation, or presenting a petition there are a few important things to remember.

- > After you have spoken you are welcome to stay and listen to the rest of the public parts of the meeting. You will be notified by the Chair if agenda items are to be addressed with the public excluded and asked to leave the room. Public excluded items usually happen at the end of the meeting and after all the public items have been dealt with.
- > These are the only times when the public can take part or speak. If you try to interrupt or disrupt the meeting at any time you may be asked to leave, and the meeting paused until you do so.
- > As meetings are open to the public, there may be media present. Members of the media may approach you with questions after you have spoken. It's up to you whether you respond to these questions or not.
- > Workshops and briefings are open to the public to attend, however there is no public forum, deputation, or petition opportunity in these sessions. You can attend but you may not actively participate in any discussion, take a photograph, or video/audio record the proceedings.
- > If you wish to video or take photographs during a formal open meeting, you must seek permission from the Chair before the meeting starts.

How do I know when meetings and workshops are being held?

Every year, Council adopts a meeting schedule, and this is published on our website. Meetings do get rescheduled from time to time so we publish an updated schedule every month. This monthly update will reflect changes since the annual schedule was published and should be the go to for the latest dates, times, and locations. This gets added to the same webpage and it's also published through local newspapers the Wānaka Sun, Otago Daily Times, and Mountain Scene. We also notify meetings a week ahead via our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/QLDCinfo

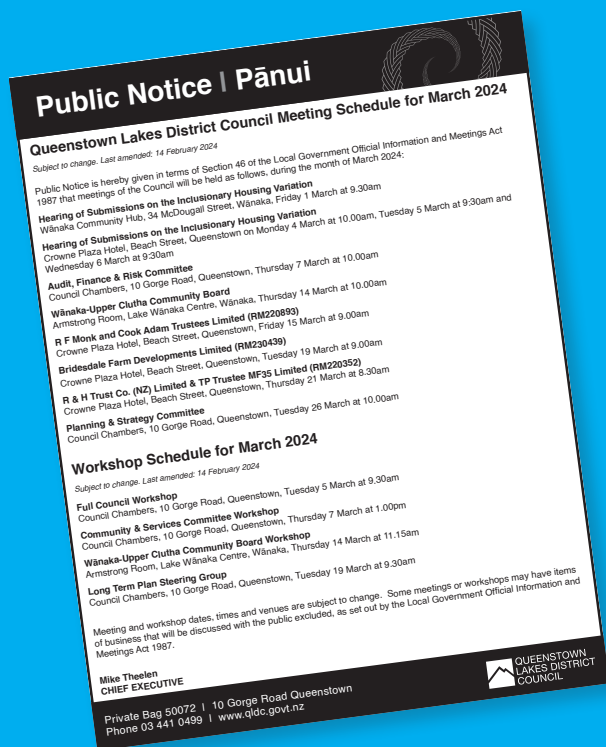
Schedules for meetings are posted here: www.qldc.govt.nz/your-council/meetings-committees/#meetingschedule

How can I find out what's on the agenda for a meeting or workshop?

Agendas are posted to our website two clear working days ahead of the day of the meeting. That means if a meeting is scheduled for a Thursday, you can see the agenda on our website the start of that week on the Monday, or if a workshop is on a Tuesday you will see the agenda published on the Thursday of the previous week. Agendas include a list of all the items being discussed and will include reports and materials with all the information that elected members use to provide direction or make a decision.

Agendas also show you the order in which items will be discussed or considered and whether there are items from which the public are excluded, and the reason why.

You can see all agendas as they are published (and past agendas and minutes) on the QLDC website: www.qldc.govt.nz/your-council/council-documents/agendas-minutes



Did you know?
Decisions can only be made at formal meetings, not workshops or briefings