

Ensuring That Councillors Make Informed Decisions on 20mph

A 20's Plenty for Us Briefing June 2017

http://www.20splenty.org/informed_decisions

Councillors are elected people with powers to set road speed limits locally. They are busy and do not have expertise on transport, public health or duty of care, so often take officer advice. Ensuring they make informed decisions is key. Activists can aim to feed Councillors 'oven ready', easy to digest, evidence of popular support for 20mph. Bullet point facts and myth busting by email and phone before the vote is how to ensure a YES!

20's Plenty for Us

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Councillors are very short of time. Many work full time, have families and must attend committee meetings, do ward based case work (e.g. for residents), party work (e.g. newsletters, canvas, media work etc.) and they volunteer too (e.g. School Governor). Most are too busy to read detailed Council meeting agenda papers. They rely on advice from officers (Council employees). Problems particularly arise for campaigners when officers aim to 'manage expectations', e.g. when officers perceive each 20mph limit as a separate scheme which is an effort to scope, cost and install. Or when that Council's policies to date haven't favored wide area 20mph limits. It can be easier for officers to recommend a no! We advise campaigners to:

- 1) Demonstrate popular support for 20mph limits – e.g. with petition signatures (number of names depends on populations). Also ask permission to use the logos of supporting organisations on campaign materials.
- 2) Get friendly with the people with most power – e.g. Parish or Council Leader (elected Leader of the Ruling Political Group), Cabinet Member for Transport/Chair of the Local Transport Committee, Public Health Director and Police and Crime Commissioner. For instance, invite them to come to your streets and walk them with you, invite them to public meetings on 20mph limits. Ask their priorities and educate them on how 20mph limits help.
- 3) Persuade a friendly councillor to submit the petition to a relevant committee for discussion – e.g. maybe first a petitions committee before being on the agenda of a transport, scrutiny or full council meeting.
- 4) Get a list of the email and phone numbers of the Councillor committee members of the relevant meeting.
- 5) Read and analyse the agenda papers and officer comments as soon as published (usually 10-14 days before the meeting). If officers say no aim to critique their reasons in detail. Ask 20's Plenty for Us for support!
- 6) Email Councillors about a week before with why they should vote yes for 20mph limits, even if officers say no. Bullet point facts work. The points must relate to what the officers have said is the issue e.g. that it would open the flood gates to other villages requesting 20mph. An answer to this is that this surely shows how popular and necessary 20mph limits are and why elected people should back them widescale as elected people do the will of the people. Be as friendly as possible. Invite questions on anything they don't understand by email or by ringing you. Invite them to walk the streets again. Myth busters: www.20splenty.org/council_myths and www.20splenty.org/busting_the_20mph_limit_myths
- 7) Campaigners can ask their email/face book/twitter follower list of 20mph supporters (e.g. signatories to petitions) to please write to those committee members with emails, letters or phone calls of support. Give everyone the bullet point facts. Campaigners could offer a standard template to help, but it is probably more effective if the supporter email list put their own reasons and words as to why it matters to them and their family, ideally with personal stories.
- 8) A week before the meeting when 20mph decision is to be made, campaigners should register to speak. It is ideal if those with varied perspectives register e.g. a parent, disabled person, road casualty victim etc. Campaign leaders will have to ask their facebook or email list for help – telling supporters how to register with the email/telephone number of the committee secretary. What people say isn't as important as the strength of feeling and number of people coming forward. Councillors must feel sympathy with them. No need to agonise over the exact wording of the speech.
- 9) About 4 days before the meeting, ring those Councillors again and ask for a Yes promise. Canvass in a very friendly way. Invite them to come and walk the streets. Most Councillors decide in advance how they will vote.
- 10) On key votes (e.g. policy changes or big spending) there is a private pre-meeting of each party's Councillors. A party agreement is made on policy and voting in private. At the public meeting Councillors will follow the party policy as power results from block voting ie they are 'whipped to vote' as one voice, or face party discipline/penalisation.
- 11) Publicly thank all the Councillors who vote for 20mph! Communication is key. Good luck. Let us know what happened.

20's Plenty For Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in built up areas without physical calming.

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