

So You Want ...To Persuade Councillors?

20's Plenty for Us Briefing May 2020

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

Elected county or city councillors (in Unitary Local Authorities) have powers to set speed limits. Not MPs, district or parish councillors. Campaign targets are mainly the top (cabinet level) councillors. They have budget control/money. Officers eg highways employees do not set or update policy. Aim to update policy through councillors.

20's Plenty for Us

...making your place a better place to be

Your council has an existing 20mph policy. Read it online or ask democratic services for a copy. A revision is needed!

Who has power? A council leader is elected by a ballot of councillors in the party with the most seats (the ruling party /group). When there is no overall control, two parties often join a coalition (team up) to secure power (ie control over half of Council seats/meeting votes). Power comes from groups of Councillors agreeing to vote together – as a voting block. There are very few free votes when each Councillor makes their own choices. Votes are whipped into blocks to keep power and party discipline.

The leader appoints his or her cabinet (or executive). Being a cabinet member has financial benefits with larger responsibility allowances (better paid civic duties). Lesser posts with responsibility allowances are also decided mainly within the ruling group - e.g. Committee chairs - Planning, Scrutiny or appointments to outside statutory bodies eg police liaison. Councillors vie for favour with the leader to get promoted to the better status posts.

Policy within each party group is mainly decided at private group meetings by vote (though most Councillors will vote for what the leader has said they want since the best party roles depend on leader appointment and favour). Going to speak to the party group can work http://www.20splenty.org/campaigners_get_20mph_on_group_meetings_agendas

Whipping is where the private group meeting (of any party of elected Councillors) decision becomes party policy and all Councillors of that colour are required to vote together or lose their rights to be a party member (ousted from the group into being an independent). It's hard to get re-elected independently of the party machine of money for printing election materials, know how of an election representative to manage databases on voter expressed preferences, volunteers to eg deliver leaflets or canvass (ask voter intentions door to door/phone) and people to knock on doors to vote on the crucial election day. Few disobey a whip as responsibility allowances are lost and they are shamed!

It's efficient to target 20mph messages at, in this order

1. Cabinet member for transport
2. Leader and deputy leader
3. All other cabinet members (eg 8 of maybe 47 Councillors are those with actual power over Council budget spending) ideally with a tailored message as to how 20mph helps their portfolio area.
4. All backbench councillors in the ruling party are next who jointly vote on their overall policy (eg manifesto promises to enact or responses to major petitions or council motions put by the other parties).
5. Councillors of any other party who might win power at the next election.
6. The Director of Public Health has a duty of care to the public and own ring fenced budget. He or she isn't political but can't really spend on 20mph without the leader's agreement or cabinet member for transport.

Most Councillors won't know anything much about 20mph until it is explained. They may believe some myths. Engage with those with power (Cabinet principally) to try to find out which myths they might mistakenly think are truth and counter them in detail. Use the search button on www.20splenty.org to find the right briefings or see http://www.20splenty.org/20_questions_about_20_s_plenty

If you are working together in a county wide campaign delegate a few cabinet members to each campaigner. Aim to persuade that councillor with tailored messages to their cabinet portfolio eg adult social care. Keep track of who supports 20mph! More advice on updating policy is at http://www.20splenty.org/update_policy

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

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