

DRAFT TOOL: COMMUNITIES UNITE FOR PLAY/POWER AND PLAY

Making a council deputation

Deputations allow residents, representatives of local organisations or businesses to make written representations to their council on local issues and to present these in person at either a full council, cabinet or committee meeting. Making a deputation at a full council meeting is a good way to ensure that your issue is heard by all elected members (councillors) including those in the cabinet, and leader of the council.

What is a deputation?

A deputation is a written representation made to your council, on any topic that they have the power to act on. This includes playgrounds or play services which are provided and maintained by them. It is an opportunity to lobby about a shared concern and make a specific request for action. You will be given the opportunity to present your issue in person at a council meeting.

Full council meetings

The 'full council' includes each and every councillor who is elected to represent residents in the borough. Collectively they are responsible for setting the policy framework, agreeing the budget and spending plans, electing the leader and making constitutional and other important decisions. Full council meetings (or assemblies, as they are known in some boroughs) must be held in person and are open to the public. They provide a forum for debate on issues affecting the council and the local area.

Why make a deputation?

Targeting your play campaign at individual elected councillors – perhaps ward councillors representing the area where your playground is located, or cabinet members with portfolio responsibilities relating to play (for example children's services, housing and communities, parks, environment or leisure) can be an effective way of reaching those with the power and responsibility to make the changes you wish to see.

But by making a presentation to the whole council chamber, you ensure that all democratically elected members – and any attending members of the public – are also made aware of your campaign. You can often find interested members or potential champions for play from elected members with responsibilities in other policy areas. For example one group making a deputation to a London council found an unexpected ally in the chair of the

local development committee (which makes decisions about planning in the borough). Such allies can have connections and influence helpful to your campaign.

How do I submit a deputation?

The process differs from borough to borough, but you will find details outlined on your council website. It will often appear under a section entitled something like ‘council and democracy’ or ‘have your say’.

You will need to make your request in writing in advance of the meeting and then notified about whether you will be invited to present your case. You may be declined if there are too many other requests, or if the issue has been recently discussed.

What to expect at the meeting

Once your request is approved, you will be given details about how your deputation should be made and presented. This is likely to include a strict time limit for speaking. Councils also often place limits on how many people are permitted to attend with you and/or speak.

Councils are required to respond to your deputation. In some meetings, councillors may be given the opportunity to ask you further questions about your presentation.

Many council meetings are livestreamed and recorded. Two groups that have made deputations on play can be seen in action at the links below.

Deputations on play

- **Southwark/Kirby Estate:**

<https://youtu.be/KZ8hPeYoOQk?si=bmoaiwmFU0SLiOU0> (from 14 mins)

Kirby Estate residents were informed that they had additional funding confirmed and also secured a commitment from the council to audit the borough’s play offer.

- **Poor Play Newham:**

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=B6ub6GpL2xE> (starts at 56 mins)

The Newham group identified a new champion for play in the Chair of the local development committee and with London Play have been engaging with the council about developing an action plan for play.

Some council links

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/engagement-and-consultations/have-your-say/democracy-in-southwark/taking-a-deputation-to-a-council-meeting>

<https://hackney.gov.uk/speak-at-cabinet-or-full-council>

<https://www.newham.gov.uk/council/say-council-decisions>

<https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/councillors-and-democracy/councillors-committees-and-decisions/take-part-democratic-process>