

Community Checklist for Deputations & FOI Requests

- *Melville Shadow Council – Public Participation Toolkit*
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1. Before You Begin

- **Clarify your purpose** – What outcome do you want?
 - **List your key points** – Aim for 3–5 clear messages.
 - **Gather supporting material** – Policies, minutes, correspondence, photos.
 - **Check accuracy** – Ensure dates, quotes, and references are correct.
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2. Preparing a Deputation

- **Structure**
 - **Introduction** – Your name, suburb, and the issue you are addressing.
 - **Key facts** – Stick to evidence, not speculation.
 - **Impact** – Explain how the issue affects you or the community.
 - **Request** – State the specific action you want Council to take.
 - **Strengthening Your Deputation**
 - Reference the Act:
“The Act prescribes the council must make its decisions on the basis of evidence, on the merits and in accordance with the law.”
 - Ask for **equal evidentiary treatment** if staff dismiss your points as “only opinion.”
 - Provide printed copies of your supporting documents.
 - Request that your materials be **tabled and recorded** in the minutes.
 - **Delivery Tips**
 - Speak slowly and clearly.
 - Stay factual and calm.
 - Return to your key points if interrupted.
 - End with a clear, specific request.
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3. Preparing an FOI Request

- **Drafting**

- Be **specific** – Identify documents by date range, subject, project, or officer.
 - Avoid broad terms like “all documents.”
 - Request **metadata**, drafts, attachments, and internal communications.
 - **Strengthening Your FOI**
 - Ask for the **reasoning** behind any refusal or redaction.
 - Request a **schedule of documents** (forces the City to list what exists).
 - Challenge “operational” labels by asking for the **delegation** that makes the matter operational.
 - **Record-Keeping**
 - Save all correspondence.
 - Track statutory deadlines.
 - Follow up politely but firmly if deadlines pass.
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4. Protect Yourself Against “Crimes of Participation”

Use this quick self-check before submitting:

- Have I provided **evidence**, not just opinion?
 - Have I asked the City to identify where **staff reports rely on interpretation**?
 - Have I documented all interactions?
 - Have I requested **measurable criteria** for any decision?
 - Have I avoided language that could be reframed as “unreasonable”?
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5. After You Submit

- **For deputations:** Confirm your documents were tabled and recorded.
 - **For FOIs:** Track deadlines and escalate to the Information Commissioner if needed.
 - **Share outcomes** with the community to strengthen transparency.
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- **Melville Shadow Council**

Promoting transparency, accountability, and informed community participation.