



Wexford County Council

Strategic Policy Committee

Standing Orders

ADOPTED BY THE CORPORATE POLICY GROUP ON 7TH
APRIL 2025

Document Control

Action	Owner	Date
Standing Orders revised by:	Corporate Services	04/04/2025
Adopted By	CPG	07/04/2025

Table of Contents

1. Establishment	4
2. SPC Formulation & Functions.....	4
3. Membership	4
4. Arrangements for Meetings	5
5. Notice of Meetings	6
6. Quorum	6
7. Chairperson	6
8. Order of Business	7
9. Minutes	7
10. Duration of Meeting.....	7
11. Rules of Debate.....	7
12. Confidential Material	8
13. Business not reached	8
14. Deputations.....	9
15. Submission of Items for Agenda	9
16. Votes and Decisions	9
17. Attendance of Public and Media.....	9
18. Disclosure of Pecuniary or Other Beneficial Interests	9
19. Recommendations	10
20. Support Structures	10
21. Suspension Of Standing Orders	10
22. Remote Meetings	10
23. Interpretation of Standing Orders	11
24. Amending Standing Orders.....	11
25. Regulation of Lobbying.....	12

1. Establishment

Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) of the Council shall be constituted in accordance with the Councils adopted SPC Scheme. The statutory basis for Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) is set out in section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by section 41 of the 2014 Act. These Standing Orders have been prepared in accordance with the Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage revised Guidelines for the Establishment & Operation of Strategic Policy Committees issued in June 2024.

The six Strategic Policy Committees of Wexford County Council are:

- SPC 1: Economic Development & Enterprise
- SPC 2: Transportation & Water Services
- SPC 3: Housing
- SPC 4: Community & Rural Affairs
- SPC 5: Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity
- SPC 6: Planning & Building Control

2. SPC Formulation & Functions

- (a) The Chairperson and Council members of Strategic Policy Committees shall reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representation on the Council.
- (b) SPCs consider matters connected with the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy which relate to the functions of the SPC and the Local Authority and to advise the Authority on those matters. In relation to the policy making process much of the preliminary and background work, discussion and recommendation, as appropriate, should be completed at SPC level for final consideration and ratification by the council. It is not the function of the SPC to deal with operational matters.

3. Membership

- (a) The Strategic Policy Committees shall be appointed as soon as possible after a local election and those appointed shall hold office for the period of the life of the Council appointing them.
- (b) Each of the above Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) shall consist of Councillors, sectoral interests nominated by the Sectoral Pillars and members of the Public Participation Network (PPN), in accordance with the relevant guidelines and adopted SPC Scheme.
- (c) Any SPC member who resigns or is otherwise disqualified from membership of a Strategic Policy Committee under the provisions of the LG Act 2001, as amended by the LG Reform Act 2014 shall be replaced as soon as possible, by resolution

of the Council. This provision will apply to both elected and non-elected members.

- (d) Each Councillor will be a member of a maximum of 2 SPCs.
- (e) The attendance of substitute Council Elected members of Strategic Policy Committee Meetings shall not be permitted, except in the case of long term (enforced) absence with the approval of Council.
- (f) Where any member of the Committee is absent, without apology, for 3 consecutive meetings, the Secretary to the SPC, will write to the member and request the attendance of that member at the next meeting. If there remains no subsequent attendance or satisfactory response, then that member shall be deemed disqualified and any consequential filling of that vacancy arising shall then be filled in accordance with Standing Orders.
- (g) Each nominating Pillar shall be entitled to deselect any of its nominees and in this event the nominee shall cease to be a member of the Committee. In the event that person is so deselected, the sector/subsector so concerned may nominate another person in his/her place.

4. Arrangements for Meetings

- (a) Each Strategic Policy Committee shall meet as often as required, and at least four times a year, to deal with the business assigned to it. A schedule of proposed Meetings will be agreed on an annual calendar year cycle reflecting the work programme for the SPC, cognisant of policy-making timeframes
- (b) Each SPC should agree a multi-annual work programme linked to the Council's Corporate Plan. SPC members are to be involved in the process of preparing the SPC Work Programme. SPC membership shall have at least four weeks to comment on the draft Work Programme, where possible. Having considered any responses from SPC members, the work programme shall be finalised and submitted to the CPG for approval. The Work Programme will be reviewed by the Corporate Policy Group in year 3 of the Council term.

The annual work programme for the SPC would be agreed at the first meeting of the year for the SPC, where possible. It would be drafted based on a proposal by the executive. The SPC Work Programmes will follow an agreed format. It is suggested that this format would establish a programme of topics to be addressed in each of the four SPC meetings during the year under each of the headings as appropriate: policy formulation; policy development; policy monitoring; and policy review.

- (c) The Chairperson of the Committee may decide to hold a Special Meeting. A Special Meeting of the Committee can also be called on submission of a request to the Chairperson signed by any four members (Elected or external members) of the Committee.
- (d) SPC meetings will be held at suitable times for the majority of SPC members.

5. Notice of Meetings

- (a) It is recommended that at a minimum seven days' notice will be given to SPC members for ordinary meetings of an SPC. In the case of a Special Meeting of an SPC, at least three clear days' notice will be given to SPC members.
- (b) The agenda should be circulated at a minimum seven days in advance of a meeting to allow sectoral representatives an opportunity to consult within their sector in relation to same. Meeting documentation should in so far as practical should also issue at least seven working days in advance.

If documents are not issued 7 days in advance where a decision is required, they shall not be accepted for consideration at that meeting, unless a motion to accept them at that meeting is proposed and accepted by all members. (i.e. updates/presentations to be accepted). Lack of receipt of documentation by any member or members of the committee shall not affect the validity of the meeting.

6. Quorum

- (a) The quorum for a meeting of an SPC is one-fourth of the total number of members of the SPC plus one or, where one-fourth of such total number is not a whole number; the quorum is the next highest whole number plus one.
- (b) If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes after the time fixed for the meeting [or at any time during the meeting], the meeting shall stand adjourned to a day to be named by the Cathaoirleach.

7. Chairperson

- (a) The Council shall appoint a Chairperson to each of the Strategic Policy Committees from among the members of the Council to hold office for the term of the Council. Any change required to the SPC Chairperson, in line with Standing Orders, shall require approval of Council by resolution at a Council Meeting.
- (b) At a Meeting of the Committee, the Chairperson shall preside. If the Chairperson is absent, then the members of the Committee shall choose a member to preside as Acting Chairperson. Should the Chairperson arrive during the progress of the meeting he/she shall take the Chair.

8. Order of Business

- (a) The business of the Meeting shall be confined to policy issues and the order of business shall be:
 - Conflict of Interest
 - Confirmation of minutes
 - Matters Arising
 - Business submitted by the Chairperson/all members of SPC/Officials
 - Notices of Motion referred from Municipal Districts Meetings and Plenary Council Meetings

- Consideration of Reports of Officials
- Items agreed by Committee Members for inclusion on Agenda for next meeting
- Agenda Items for next SPC meeting
- Any other business

The Agenda for each Meeting shall be made available to all Councillors via One Advanced (Decision Time).

- (b) Recommendations of the Committee shall be submitted to the Corporate Policy Group firstly and then Plenary Council if appropriate, for consideration and presented by the Chairperson of the Committee.

9. Minutes

- (a) The Minutes of all committee meetings shall contain particulars of the names of the persons present, apologies received, together with particulars of all decisions arrived at or recommendations made.
- (b) The Minutes of every committee meeting shall be signed by the Chairperson or acting Chairperson following confirmation by the Committee.
- (c) Items to be raised under Confirmation of Minutes “Matters Arising” shall be confined to the accuracy of the minutes.
- (d) Minutes are a record of decisions taken and high level matters for noting and follow up.

10. Duration of Meeting

- (a) Meetings shall commence at the appointed time and conclude within two hours.

11. Rules of Debate

- (a) Each member of the Committee shall have the right to speak on any Agenda item.
- (b) The Committee shall, as far as possible, arrive at all decisions and recommendations by consensus.
- (c) Meetings shall be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership.
- (d) The ruling of the Chairperson on any issues or order or debate shall be final.
- (e) Matters for discussion shall relate to policy or strategy and not to individual cases.
- (f) A Member while speaking shall address himself/herself to the Chairperson.

- (g) No Member shall speak for more than 3 minutes on any one issue without the consent of the Chairperson, which shall be given only where the question under discussion is of exceptional importance.
- (h) While a Member is speaking, he/she shall not be interrupted except on a point of order. A point of order shall relate only to an alleged breach of a Standing Order or statutory provision and the Member shall specify the Standing Order or statutory provision and the way in which he/she considers it has been broken.
- (i) When 2 or more Members indicate at the same time that they wish to speak, the Member called upon by the Chairperson shall have precedence.
- (j) When, during a debate, the Chairperson speaks, any Member then addressing the Committee shall cease and no Member shall again speak until the Chairperson has concluded.
- (k) No Member shall use offensive language or make personal remarks at the meeting.
- (l) No Member of the Committee shall leave the meeting without first having indicated to the Chairperson his/her desire to withdraw.
- (m) The agenda of the SPC is dedicated to discussion on the agreed topics in a manner that is both informal and collaborative but productive in reaching an agreement on a conclusion
- (n) No cameras of any kind or sound recording or communication equipment may be used at Meetings of the SPC without the prior approval of the SPC Members.
- (o) The active use of mobile phones shall not be permitted at SPC Meetings.

12. Confidential Material

- (a) Certain matters which may arise for discussion by the Strategic Policy Committee may be confidential and it shall be a matter for the meeting to declare that confidentiality be maintained on the issue.
- (b) It shall be the responsibility of each member of a Committee to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

13. Business not reached

- (a) When at a meeting of the Committee the whole business set down for such meeting has not been reached, such business shall be set down to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee, save that any item included in such business may be withdrawn by the person who submitted the item.

14. Deputations

A request to receive a Deputation at a Meeting of the Committee shall be made in writing to the SPC Secretary and shall include:

- (i) The name of the group or organisation and its role or purpose
- (ii) Contact details
- (iii) The issue or topic on which the deputation wishes to address the Meeting

15. Submission of Items for Agenda

Each Member may submit agenda items relevant to the business of the SPC. The Chair shall have the final decision on matters for consideration at the SPC meeting. Agenda items must be submitted to the SPC Secretary at least 2 weeks before the SPC meeting.

No less than 3 weeks in advance of an SPC meeting the Administrator(s) and/or Chairperson of each SPC shall contact all members of that SPC requesting items for addition to the next SPC Meeting Agenda.

The agenda for the subsequent SPC meeting would be a final item on the agenda of each SPC meeting to enable some discussion. Items for the agenda of SPC meetings could be submitted by members for consideration in advance of the SPC meeting. This would be supplemented by the chair and administrator responsible for the meeting enabling some online discussion of the agenda with interested members prior to finalising a draft agenda, if required.

Where a Notice of Motion is referred to the SPC by the Meetings Administrator or by a Municipal District, the proposer of the motion shall be entitled to attend such meeting to put forward and debate the motion. The Member shall not have voting rights at the Committee meeting, save where he/she is already a Member of such committee.

16. Votes and Decisions

The Committee shall, as far as possible, arrive at all decisions and recommendations by consensus. Voting, if required, may be by a show of hands or by roll call vote. The Chair shall have a casting vote, if required.

17. Attendance of Public and Media

Strategic Policy Committee meetings are intended exclusively for committee members. Access by non-members, including representatives of the public or media, is not permitted.

18. Disclosure of Pecuniary or Other Beneficial Interests

- (a) Where a matter is listed for discussion or otherwise arises at a meeting and an SPC member present at the meeting has actual knowledge that she or he or a connected person (as referred to in Local Government Act 2001, Section 166)

has a pecuniary or other beneficial interest in, or which is material to that matter, that SPC member shall;

- (i) disclose the nature of his or her interest, or the fact of a connected person's interest at the meeting before discussion or consideration of the matter commences;
 - (ii) withdraw from the meeting for so long as the matter is being discussed or considered;
 - (iii) take no part in the discussion or consideration of the matter and refrain from voting in relation to it;
- (b) Where an SPC member has actual knowledge that a matter is likely to arise at a meeting at which that SPC member will not be present and which, if she or he were present, a disclosure would be required to be made under (i) above, that SPC member shall, in advance of such meeting, make such disclosure in writing and furnish it to the Ethics Registrar and the Chairperson of the SPC.
- (c) The minutes of the meeting shall contain a record of any disclosure made under (a) or (b) above and any withdrawal from the meeting.

19. Recommendations

- (a) Recommendations/Reports of the committee shall be submitted for consideration to the Council by the Chairperson of the committee/meeting. The Report should reflect the issues considered by the Committee, the views expressed and the final recommendation(s), if any, of the Committee. Any recommendation reports will be reviewed by the CPG prior to Council meetings.

20. Support Structures

The Committee shall be entitled to establish Sub-Committees or Working Groups to examine specific policy issues.

21. Suspension Of Standing Orders

Standing Orders may at any time, by consent of the majority of the membership of the Committee in attendance, be suspended on a proposal made for the purpose of any relevant business. Prior notice of any such proposal shall be given to the Chairperson, before the meeting, if possible.

22. Remote Meetings

- (a) This section of the Standing Orders provides the means and guidance for the conduct of any remote meeting of the SPC in light of the designation of the Local Authority in the Civil Law and Criminal Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Section 29) (Local Authorities) (Designation) Order 2020 (S.I. No. 445 of 2020).
- (b) Remote Meetings of an SPC may, where the technology allows, be held at:

- The Council Chamber
 - An external venue used to accommodate meetings of the SPC
 - One or more Council buildings or rooms, linked remotely
 - A combination of the above to provide for physical and / or remote attendance by SPC members.
- (c) Members should notify the SPC Secretary in advance if they intend to attend the meeting remotely.
- (d) Any member participating in a meeting remotely must, when they are speaking, be able to be heard (and seen, where practicable) by all other members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and see, where practicable) those other members participating.
- (e) The Chairperson will at the outset, and at any reconvening of a meeting, call a roll call of participating members and ensure that they can hear and, where practicable, see those in attendance. Any member participating remotely should also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that they can hear and, where practicable, see the proceedings.
- (f) The attendance of those members at the meeting will be recorded by the SPC Secretary.
- (g) The normal quorum requirements will also apply to a remote/hybrid meeting. Members attending physically and remotely will together constitute a quorum.
- (h) Each member participating remotely has personal responsibility to ensure that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be either hearing or seeing consideration of such items, and / or recording the proceedings, in accordance with standing orders that apply.
- (i) Subject to compliance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), the SPC Secretary may facilitate the recording of the meeting for the purposes of taking minutes. However, this recording shall only be used for this purpose and will be deleted once the minutes are agreed.

23. Interpretation of Standing Orders

The Chairperson's ruling on any question of the Standing Orders shall be final.

24. Amending Standing Orders

A Strategic Policy Committee can recommend an amendment to or review of Standing Orders for consideration and decision by the Corporate Policy Group. The proposed amendment must have the agreement of the majority of the total membership of the Committee.

25. Regulation of Lobbying:

The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 (the Act) is designed to provide information to the public regarding who is lobbying whom about what. Individuals and organisations who participate in Strategic Policy Committees or Advisory Groups established by a public body may have obligations under the Act. Further information is available at www.lobbying.ie