



Comhairle Contae Loch Garman
Wexford County Council

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME

2024 - 2029

Adopted by Elected Members on 9th December 2024

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Acronyms

CPG: **Corporate Policy Group**

SPC: **Strategic Policy Committee**

LEO: **Local Enterprise Office**

LCDC: **Local Community Development Committee**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Wexford County Council

Wexford County Council provides a multiplicity of services for a population of some 163,919.

The day to day delivery of services is the responsibility of the Chief Executive, Management Team and staff, while the 34 Elected Members representing the 5 Municipal Districts performs the Council's democratic/representational role and policy formulation.

The functions and services of the Council are classified into eight service divisions as follows:

A. Housing and Building

B. Road Transportation and Safety

C. Water Services

[now under the management and responsibility of Uisce Éireann with the exception of the Rural Water Programme]

D. Development Management

E. Environmental Services

F. Recreation and Amenity

G. Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

H. Miscellaneous Services/General

Policies in relation to the above programme groups are formulated, considered and recommended by the six (6) Strategic Policy Committees to the Plenary Council.

2. CORPORATE POLICY GROUP (CPG)

2.1 CPG – Structure

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises the Cathaoirleach of the Council as its chair together with the chairs of each of the SPCs. If this representation does not ensure that all five Municipal Districts are represented, the Municipal District which does not have a member on the CPG shall have the right to nominate one of its members to it.

The CPG links the work of the different SPCs, it acts as a sort of cabinet and provides a forum where policy positions affecting the whole Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. It is supported by the Chief Executive and the Directors of Service.

2.2 CPG – Role

The CPG, like an SPC, is a committee of the Council. Its task is to advise and assist the Council, with full decision-making authority remaining with the Council. The Cathaoirleach reports to the Council on the work of the CPG. In such context, it is a matter for each Council, in co-operation with the Chief Executive, to determine the range of responsibilities and tasks of the CPG.

The CPG should:

- play a key role in preparing the budget.
- provide input to the full Council on any matter of general concern to the Council either on its own initiative or following a request from the Council.
- determine responsibility for discharge of reserved functions as between the municipal district level (or a specific municipal district) and the local authority, where the question of consistency or avoidance of unnecessary duplication is referred to it by the Chief Executive.
- monitor the overall performance of the local authority.
- guide the preparation of the agenda for the monthly plenary council meeting. This involves the referral of items to be discussed at the Municipal District Meetings, where appropriate.
- deal with overall issues in relation to service delivery plans, customer service, value for money, etc., (individual SPCs would deal with such issues in their work insofar as their particular service remit was concerned).
- co-ordinate and approve the work programme of the SPCs and monitor their work programmes.
- request SPCs to consider particular policy issues where appropriate.
- provide feedback to the SPCs on Council policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs.

2.3 Minutes of CPG meetings

CPG Meetings are held on a monthly basis unless otherwise decided. Minutes of CPG meetings are provided to all Members of the local authority.

3. ROLE OF STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES (SPC's)

3.1 The statutory basis for Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) is set out in Section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014. Circular LG09/2024 dated 7th June, 2024, outlines the requirement for each Local Authority following the local elections to establish new Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) in line with revised guidelines published by the Department in June 2024 for Establishment and Operation of Corporate Policy Groups (CPG's) and Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's). The guidelines seek to ensure there is a clear understanding of the work of SPC's and includes guidance on incorporating climate action into SPC work groups.

3.2 The role of the Strategic Policy Committees is to:

- assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy.
- reflect the major functions or services of a local authority within the broader context.
- be tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of a local authority.
- have a minimum of one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committee's work.

Each Local Authority will establish SPC's which bring together both elected members, and people actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to input, develop and review policies related to Council services. The SPC's will provide elected members with external views as they discharge their strategic role, including their policy development and oversight roles within the local authority. The elected representatives have a similar role to that of a board of directors. The SPC system will provide a better focus and enhanced capacity for involvement in policy formulation, review and evaluation with inbuilt assistance of relevant sectoral interests and the support of a Director of Services. SPC's prepare the groundwork for policies which are then decided on by the local authority, including as appropriate at municipal district level. The local sectoral interests, including the trade union, farming, environmental and community/voluntary sectors, along with the business community, will constitute at least one third of the membership of SPC's.

3.3 In line with the requirements of section 48(1A) of the Local Government Act 2001, it is only the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise that is mandatory. In addition, each SPC is required to consider climate action and biodiversity action and climate and biodiversity impacts as part of any and all policies that form part of its work programme.

3.4 Each SPC shall adopt a multi annual work programme linked to the strategic policies in the Council's Corporate Plan, which should target policy/plan developments and include for such reviews as are considered appropriate.

Issues relating to communities, the environment and sustainable development are relevant to the work of each SPC.

SPCs are required to have regard to Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies proposed by the Regional Assembly.

The Council retains its function as the decision-making authority and makes the final decision on all matters of policy. It is the responsibility of the SPS's to provide advice and make recommendations on policy matters. The Chairperson of the SPC will report directly to the full Council.

SPCs will normally meet about 4 times yearly and it will be a matter for each individual SPC to decide on times, dates etc. for their meetings.

If an SPC member misses 2 consecutive meetings without providing advance notice and reasonable cause of inability to attend, their nominating organisation will be asked to de-select/re-affirm their nominee.

The major advantage of the SPC system is that it involves the elected members and external representation in policy making from the earliest possible stage. The SPC's are not involved in the day to day operation of the Council, staff matters or other non-policy matters.

SPC's may request a public authority to attend a meeting of an SPC for the purpose of assisting it in developing policy in accordance Section 48(3A) of the 2001 Act (inserted by Section 41(d) of the 2014 Act).

A request to a public authority to attend a meeting of a SPC should:

- set out the issue on which advice is being sought, including providing any policy papers of the local authority, or draft policy papers, and the linkages to the policy responsibility of the public authority and
- provide at least one month's notice, or shorter interval if mutually agreed.

The Act provides for the public authority to assist the SPC in the formulation of its policy by the SPC. The purpose of the provision is to give an additional resource in formulating policy and to strengthen linkages between local authorities and public bodies with wider responsibilities in the sectoral area in which the SPC operates. The invitation to attend at a meeting of an SPC cannot be used to query the public authority in the performance of its functions or duties.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF SPC'S

SPC's will be constituted in accordance with Section 48 of the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, and as set out in the attached Framework.

1. Chairpersons will be appointed for a minimum of 3 years.
2. Meetings of SPC's will normally be held on a quarterly basis; in any event, not less than 4 meetings of every SPC will take place annually.
3. Meetings shall be conducted in an informal but efficient manner at venues and times to be decided annually in advance by the committee.
4. SPC meeting documentation should ideally be circulated to SPC members at least 2 weeks in advance of meetings. Minutes should also be circulated to all other Councillors.
5. External nominees should be familiar with the subject area of their committees and generally constitute at least one third of membership.
6. Where agreement is reached on recommendations of an SPC to the full Council, the Chairperson of the SPC or his/her nominee shall present the recommendation to the full Council.
7. The outcome of the Council considerations of the SPC's recommendation should likewise be reported back to the SPC.
8. The ethical requirement of Section 177 of Local Government Act 2001 shall apply to all members of an SPC (*Disclosure by Member of pecuniary or any other beneficial interests*). The general conduct and behaviour of SPC members in carrying out their role is an important yardstick by which the honesty, integrity, impartiality and performance of local government are judged, and public trust maintained.

The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 (*the Act*) is designed to provide information to the public regarding who is lobbying whom and about what. Individuals and organisations who participate in SPC's established by local authorities may have obligations under this Act.

A critical element of public policy formulation by the SPC's is the availability to the local authorities of expertise, skills and knowledge from persons outside of the public service. Where membership of the Committee comprises of at least one person who, for the purposes of the Act is a Designated Public Official, it may be the case that communications within the group could be considered lobbying communications. The person making these communications may be required to register as a lobbyist and to submit a return of this communication to the Lobbying Register.

However, the Act provides for an exception from the requirement to register in such cases once specified transparency criteria have been put in place. A transparency code was published by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform to address this situation. Communications between members of Strategic Policy Committee about the work of the Committee would be exempt where the group in question complies with the Transparency Code.

5. FRAMEWORK

5.1 The overall configuration of the Wexford Strategic Policy Committees are as follows:

Strategic Policy Committee	Elected Members	Sectoral Representatives	Sector
SPC 1 <i>Economic Development & Enterprise</i>	Chairperson & Minimum of 8 Elected Members	8	1 Agriculture/Farming Sector (Food Producers) 2 Business/Commercial Sector 1 Community/Voluntary Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Development/Construction Sector 1 Environmental Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Social Inclusion Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Trade Union Sector
SPC 2 <i>Transportation & Water Services</i>	Chairperson & Minimum of 6 Elected Members	6	1 Business/Commercial Sector 1 Community/Voluntary Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Development/Construction Sector 1 Environmental Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Social Inclusion Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Trade Union Sector
SPC 3 <i>Housing</i>	Chairperson & Minimum of 7 Elected Members	5	1 Community/Voluntary Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Development/Construction Sector 1 Environmental Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Social Inclusion Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Trade Union Sector
SPC 4 <i>Community & Rural Affairs</i>	Chairperson & Minimum of 5 Elected Members	5	1 Agriculture/Farming Sector 1 Community/Voluntary Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Environmental Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Social Inclusion Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Trade Union Sector

Strategic Policy Committee	Elected Members	Sectoral Representatives	Sector
SPC 5 <i>Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity</i>	Chairperson & Minimum of 8 Elected Members	8	1 Agriculture/Farming Sector (Food Producers) 1 Business/Commercial Sector 1 Community/Voluntary Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Development/Construction Sector 2 Environmental Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Social Inclusion Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Trade Union Sector
SPC 6 <i>Planning & Building Control</i>	Chairperson & Minimum of 6 Elected Members	7	1 Agriculture/Farming Sector 1 Business/Commercial Sector 1 Conservation Sector (An Taisce) 1 Development/Construction Sector 1 Environmental Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Social Inclusion Sector (PPN Representative) 1 Trade Union Sector

Note: SPC Council membership shall reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representation on the full Council – as far as it is practical, each Strategic Policy Committee should have at least one member from each Municipal District.

5.2 Remit of Each SPC

The following section sets out in broad details the remit of each of the 6 SPC's.

Economic Development & Enterprise

- Economic Development
- LEO
- Support for enterprise
- Tourism policy

Transportation & Water Services

- Roads
- Car-Parking
- Traffic Management
- Public Lighting
- Active Travel
- Rural Water Programme
- Fire & Emergency Services

Housing

- Housing Construction / Refurbishment Programme
- Homeless Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Housing Maintenance & Estate Management
- Allocations / Transfers
- Traveller Accommodation Programme
- Voluntary Housing

Community & Rural Affairs

- Policy on Community Affairs
- LCDC
- Arts
- Library
- Social inclusion
- Equality
- Sport and recreation
- Amenities
- Burial Grounds

Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity

- Climate Action Plan
- Waste Management
- Flood Risk & Water Quality Management Plan
- Energy Strategy/Standards
- Control of Animals
- Litter Management Plan

Planning & Building Control

- Physical Planning and Development
- Planning Control and Forward Planning
- Building Control
- Urban, Village and Rural Renewal Plans
- Heritage/Conservation
- Taking in Charge

6. PRINCIPLES

The following principles apply to:

6.1 Appointment of Wexford County Council Members

Each Member of Wexford County Council shall, as a matter of equity and good practice, serve on an SPC.

Council Members may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.

A person ceasing to be a Member shall automatically cease membership of the SPC.

Council Members shall not serve on more than two Strategic Policy Committees.

SPC Council membership shall reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representation on the full Council – as far as it is practical, each Strategic Policy Committee should have at least one member from each Municipal District. The Local Government (*Reorganisation*) Act 1985 (section 27) was designed to allow for a basic element of proportionality in appointments to committees etc.

The allocation of the SPC Chairs shall also reflect equitably the spread of elected representation on the County Council, including, as far as it is practical, be representative of each of the Municipal Districts in the Local Authority.

The Chairs of the SPC's shall be an Elected Member. The Chairs of the SPC will hold office for a minimum period of 3 years.

Chairpersons should be selected on the basis that they have an interest in the work of the SPCs and are aware of their role in providing leadership and working with the relevant Director of Service to facilitate the smooth and effective operation of the Committee.

6.2 Appointment of Sectoral Interests

Groups/Associations shall be active in the local authority area, be broadly representative and accountable and should have a broad sectoral remit.

Groups/associations should be open to new members, hold AGMs and regular meetings.

Single interest groups should be eligible, e.g. campaign groups focused on the disabled or elderly. Single issue groups should be encouraged to affiliate with their relevant PPNs to ensure that they are represented.

Local Development Agencies represented at Strategy Group/LCDC Level shall not be represented on an SPC. Arrangements should be in place, however, to facilitate meaningful engagement and consultation with such Local Development Agencies as part of the policy-making process.

Each sector shall select its own nominee(s) via the PPN.

It is desirable that sectoral nominees retain membership of the SPC for the life of the Council. It is open to each nominating sector to deselect its nominee, if felt necessary, and to notify the Council accordingly whereupon the person would cease to be a member. In such cases the relevant sector shall nominate a new representative.

Note: Sectoral interests are asked to bear in mind the objective of achieving a 40% gender balance in making the appointments, as well as a commitment to foster economic development, social inclusiveness and equality when selecting their representatives.

6.3 Expenses

In general, any expenses arising for SPC Members would be met by the organisations the SPC Member is representing. However, those SPC members whose expenses cannot be met in that manner are entitled to be paid travel expenses for attendance at SPC meetings.

Wexford County Council will pay travel expenses to those sectoral members to facilitate their participation in the SPC process in accordance with Circular Letter's issued by Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

6.4 Training

Wexford County Council will make provision for Induction Training and ongoing training of members of the SPC's, in addition to specific training e.g. effective meeting skills for SPC Chairs as far as budgetary constraints will allow.

6.5 Standing Orders

Wexford County Council will adopt separate Standing Orders for SPC Meetings regulating the proceedings of the meetings of the SPC's. These will give necessary details to clarify to Members the workings of the SPC and SPC Meeting procedures.

6.6 Use of Irish Language

Many Councils already promote the use of the Irish language in various facets of their work. Where practicable and possible this should be extended to SPCs.

Bain úsáid as an teanga atá again - as an obair a thagann an fhoghlaim.

7. NOMINATION PROCESS

Wexford County Council will advance the SPC Scheme with 6 Committees on the following basis:

- 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

Number of Places for Sectoral Representation on SPCs is in accordance with Guidelines for establishment and operation issued by the Department in June 2024 is as follows:-

SECTOR	NUMBER OF SPC PLACES
Agriculture/Farming	4
Environment/Conservation	8
Development/Construction	5
Community/Voluntary	5
Business/Commercial	5
Trade Union	6
Social Inclusion	6
TOTAL	39

Wexford County Council will seek nominations of representatives of Agriculture/Farming, Business/Commercial, Trade Unions Pillars in accordance with national arrangements set out in circular LG 09/2024 dated 7th June, 2024.

Nominations will be sought from Construction Industry Federation (CIF) in relation to representatives from the Development/Construction Sector under the Business Pillar.

Wexford County Council will work with the Public Participation Network (PPN) to facilitate the selection of sectoral representatives for the Environment/Conservation, Social Inclusion and Community/Voluntary Sectors (*see Circular Letter CVSP 1/2014 of 10 April 2014*).

Groups/Associations/Organisations who wish to register their interest in participating in the SPC process should do so on the attached form (Appendix III).

Once the draft Scheme is adopted each sector will be circulated with same and given a period of 4 weeks from the date of agreement of this draft scheme to make nominations. The final designation of sectors to SPCs and the number of places on SPCs will rest with Wexford County Council. Nominations, including any subsequent changes thereto, are the sole responsibility of the sectors.

Wexford County Council will approve the new members of the Strategic Policy Committees on receipt of completed nominations at the earliest possible plenary meeting.

APPENDIX I

Summary of Central Features of the SPC System

1. The role of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to formulate policy proposals, evaluate and report on policy implementation, for consideration and final decision by the full council.
2. A focus on the SPC's policy-making and strategic role is fundamental to the SPC concept. In their work, SPC's are not concerned with individual representational or operational issues.
3. The SPC system presents councillors with a prime opportunity to become more involved in policy formulation. It provides a chance to review and optimise committee structures and related procedures, which demands a rationalisation of existing committees and standing procedures.
4. Each authority will generally have four SPC's, with the option of more in larger authorities, if warranted.
5. Local authorities are statutorily required to have an SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise. All SPC's should consider climate action and biodiversity action as cross-cutting issues in their work programmes.
6. SPC's are to be chaired by one of the councillor members.
7. SPC's are to have a minimum total membership of nine.
8. At least one third of the members of each SPC are to be drawn from relevant sectoral interests; to provide relevant expertise and advice and allow for a range of inputs in the formulation of policy

9. Relevant organisations for each sector will be identified as early as possible, parallel with the drafting of the scheme.
10. Each sector will select its own nominee(s) via the PPN, where appropriate.
11. The CPG is to comprise the Cathaoirleach of the local authority, the SPC chairs and a representative of each municipal district, as needed, in accordance with section 133(1) of the 2001 Act. It is to be chaired by the Cathaoirleach. It will be supported by the Chief Executive.
12. The role of the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to coordinate the work of the SPC's and facilitate the flow of the outcome of the work of the SPC's to the council.

APPENDIX II

NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

PILLAR	NAME & ADDRESS	TELEPHONE & E-MAIL
Farming	Irish Farmers Association (IFA) Irish Farm Centre Bluebell Dublin 12	info@ifa.ie
Business	Chambers Ireland 22-24 Lower Mount Street Dublin 2	info@chambers.ie
Trade Unions	Deirdre Mannion Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Head Office 31-32 Parnell Square Dublin 1	01 889 7726 deirdre.mannion@ictu.ie
Environment	Irish Environmental Network Macro Community Resource Centre 1 Green Street Dublin 7	01 878 0116 office@ien.ie

APPENDIX III

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL APPLICATION FORM FOR NOMINATION TO STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES

Name of Applicant Body: _____

Address: _____

Date of Establishment: _____

State Aims and Purpose of your Organisation _____

With which Sector would you most readily identify your organisation:
(tick one only please)

Agriculture/Farming	
Environment/Conservation	
Development/Construction	
Business/Commercial	
Trade Union	
Community/Voluntary	
Social Inclusion	

Name & Address of Person to Whom Correspondence is to be sent:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No.: _____

How often does your Organisation Hold Meetings? _____

Date of your last AGM: _____

State your Total Membership: _____

NAMES OF OFFICERS

Chairman: _____

Treasurer: _____

Secretary: _____

Please specify the type of Strategic Policy Committee on which your organisation seeks representation:

First Preference: _____

Second Preference: _____

[While every effort will be made to accommodate preferences, final decisions will ultimately rest with Wexford County Council, having regard to the likely degree of interest, the limited number of S.P.C. places available and the need to have a balanced constituency for each S.P.C.]

Signed: _____
SECRETARY

Completed Application Form must be returned to the Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services, Wexford County Council, County Hall, Carricklawn, Wexford or e-mailed to zoe.power@wexfordcoco.ie