



**Comhairle Contae
Loch Garman
Wexford
County Council**

Strategic Policy Scheme 2019-2024

**Adopted by WCC at its meeting of 14th
February, 2020**

Wexford County Council Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2019-2024

Establishment of New SPC's

The statutory basis for SPCs is set out in Section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

At its Annual Meeting held on 14th June 2019, Wexford County Council agreed to set up a fifth SPC. (See SPC Structures below). The Council also appointed the 5 Chairs of the SPCs as follows:

Housing & Community SPC	Cllr. J. Sullivan
Transportation & Water Services SPC	Cllr. P. Breen
Economic Development & Enterprise SPC	Cllr. M. Whelan
Planning & Building Control SPC	Cllr. J. Hegarty
Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment SPC	Cllr. M. Farrell

Role of the Strategic Policy Committee (SPCs)

The Strategic Policy Committees bring together both elected members and people actively working with external social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to advise and assist in the formulation, development and review of policies related to council services.

SPCs prepare the groundwork for policies which are presented to, and then decided on by the local authority, including, as appropriate, at municipal district level. The Council is the decision making authority.

It is envisaged that each SPC will have an annual work programme, linked to the Council's Corporate Plan. The SPC will also have a role in the preparation of individual Service Delivery Plans and in setting out the related objectives, strategies, standards and performance indicators.

As set out in the Guidelines, the SPCs, will give consideration to the needs of people with disabilities in the formulation and development of relevant policies. In addition, the integration of sustainability principles to particular services, and the strategic monitoring of local authority services will form part SPCs brief.

A Director of Service will attend meetings and provide support to each SPC.

Role of Corporate Policy Group (CPG)

The Corporate Policy Group comprises the Cathaoirleach, the chairperson of each SPC and, where the municipal district is not already represented, a member of such municipal district.

The CPG provides a forum for policy issues which transcend the remit of individual SPCs and municipal districts. The role of the CPG is strategic - it links and coordinates the work of the SPCs. The Cathaoirleach reports to the full Council on the work of the CPG.

Besides its policy remit, the CPG has an active role in the preparation of the draft budget; it must be consulted in the preparation of the Corporate Plan and it will also determine whether a function will be discharged at the municipal district or local authority level, where reference in relation to this question is made to it by the Chief Executive.

The CPG is supported by the Chief Executive.

SPC Structures

The following is the SPC structure agreed by the Council at its meeting of 9th September 2019:

1 Housing & Community SPC

(Housing policy incorporating overall Housing Programme, various Social Housing options including Voluntary Housing, Shared Ownership; policy on Community Affairs, LCDC, Arts & Library, social inclusion, equality, sport and recreation, amenities; Fire and Emergency Services)

4 Seats: Trade Union Sector

Community/Voluntary Sector (Cultural) **(PPN Representative)**

Agriculture/Farming Sector

Social Inclusion Sector **(PPN Representative)**

2 Transportation & Water Services SPC

(Incorporating policy on Roads, Car-Parking, Taxi/Hackneys, Traffic Management, Public Lighting, Water & Sewerage Services, Cycling)

5 Seats: Trade Union Sector

Development/Construction Sector

Business/Commercial Sector

Social Inclusion Sector **(PPN Representative)**

Community/Voluntary Sector **(PPN Representative)**

3 Economic Development & Enterprise SPC

(Incorporating Economic Development, LEO, support for enterprise, Tourism policy, Urban and Rural Public Transport)

- 8 Seats:** Business/Commercial Sector (2)
Development/Construction Sector
Social Inclusion Sector (**PPN Representative**)
Agriculture/Farming Sector (Food Producers)
Environmental Sector (**PPN Representative**)
Community/Voluntary Sector (**PPN Representative**)
Trade Union Sector

4 Planning & Building Control SPC

(Incorporating policy on Physical Planning and Development, Planning Control and Forward Planning, Building Control, Agenda 21, Urban, Village and Rural Renewal Plans, Heritage/Conservation, Taking in Charge, Unfinished Estates)

- 3 Seats:** Development/Construction Sector
Agriculture/Farming Sector
Conservation Sector (An Taisce)

5 Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment SPC

(Incorporating policy on the environment and climate change, Air, Water and Litter Management and Waste Management)

- 7 Seats:** Business/Commercial Sector
Development/Construction Sector
Social Inclusion Sector (**PPN Representative**)
Agriculture/Farming Sector (Food Producers)
Environmental Sector (**PPN Representative**)
Community/Voluntary Sector (**PPN Representative**)
Trade Union Sector

Lobbying Act 2015 – Transparency Code

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 established by local authorities may have obligations under the Act.

A critical element of public policy formulation by the Strategic Policy Committees 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.

SPC Committee Size

The Guidelines indicate that each SPC must have a minimum total membership of 9 members. A minimum of 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. The sectors for representation on SPCs are as follows:

1. Agriculture/Farming (Rural Authorities)
2. Environmental/Conservation
3. Development/Construction
4. Business/Commercial
5. Trade Union
6. Community/Voluntary
7. Social Inclusion

The Guidelines propose that, at a minimum 6, and where appropriate, 7 of the above sectors should be represented in each local authority's SPC configuration.

Having regard to the Guidelines, each SPC will be formed as follows:

- Members nominated by Wexford County Council as set out in the June 2014 Guidelines
- SPC members nominated by sectoral interests are as set out in June 2014 Guidelines
- SPC members nominated by the PPN will be in accordance with the their own Election Policy, as ratified by Plenary.

Period of Appointment

The SPC chairs should hold office for a minimum of three years, which could be renewed by the Council. Subsequent chairs should be appointed from among the existing councillor members of the SPC.

Appointment of Councillors to SPCs

The Guidelines specify that the following principles should be applied in relation to the involvement of councillors in the SPC process:

- Every councillor should as a matter of equity and good practice have the opportunity to serve on an SPC. This will enable a councillor to develop further

expertise and experience of the particular service or services and to develop a degree of specialisation.

- Councillors may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.
- SPC membership for Councillors should be for the lifetime of the Council. A person ceasing to be a councilor would automatically cease membership of the SPC.
- A councillor should not serve on more than two SPCs insofar as possible, for reasons of equity and good practice and workload.
- SPC councillor membership should reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representation on the full council. It is also important that the SPC membership should, as far as is practical, be representative of each of the municipal districts in the local authority. It is important with the SPCs that all local authorities adopt and implement (and be clearly seen by the public to do so) an approach which ensures that the various political and other interests represented on the full council are treated fairly, and equitably represented in the SPC system.
- The allocation of SPC chairs should also reflect equitably the spread of elected representation on the council and should be, as far as is practical, representative of each of the municipal districts in the local authority.

However, where agreement in this regard is not possible, the group of SPC chairs to be appointed should technically be treated for appointment purposes as if it constituted a separate committee, to ensure an equitable spread of representation as SPC chairs.

The Local Government Act 2001 provides for a formal process of forming groups for appointments to SPCs whenever necessary.

Appointment of Sectoral Interests to SPCs

The Guidelines specify that the following principles should be respected in the selection of groups and associations for a particular sector **including those being facilitated by the national pillars.**

- Groups/associations should be active in the area or an area of the authority and have a county wide impact or, at a minimum, relevance in a locality or number of localities in the area.
- Groups/associations should be open to new members, hold AGMs and regular meetings, and should be broadly representative and accountable.
- Single interest groups should be eligible e.g. campaign groups focused on the disabled or elderly. Groups formed around specific single local issues should not be considered for inclusion in the sectors.
- Local Development Agencies represented at Strategy Group/LCDC level should not be represented on an SPC.

- It is desirable that sectoral nominees would retain membership of the SPC for the life of the Council.
- If there is a PPN vacancy to fill on any of its committees/structures, the local authority should notify the PPN Secretariat and ask that the representative(s) to fill these seats will be chosen by the PPN. The PPN will use their own Election Policy, ratified by Plenary, to nominate and elect its representatives.

The Election Policy is available on the Wexford PPN website (<http://wexfordppn.ie>), which highlights the means by which Wexford PPN nominates and elects its representatives.

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

Nomination Process

The County Council will select its own members.

The nomination of sectoral representatives is the sole responsibility of each particular sector. However, the Council may recommend that such nominees have broad knowledge or expertise of a particular nature.

In the case of three of the National Pillars (Farming, Business and Trade Unions), the Council will write to specified contact persons enclosing the adopted scheme and seek the nominations of those Pillars for the particular SPC, as outlined in the adopted scheme.

In the case of the Environmental National Pillar, nomination to the Environment Pillar should be through Wexford PPN. However, all PPN Members in the Environment Pillar must be pre-approved by the Environment National Pillar, as per National PPN User Guidelines.

In the case of the Environmental/Conservation/Community/Voluntary and Social Inclusion Sectors, the Council will write directly to the PPN enclosing the adopted scheme and request nominations.