DRAFT
STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME
2019-2024

Adopted at Plenary Meeting on 22nd July 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Structure proposed to enhance local democracy by ensuring that local Communities and their representatives would have a say in the provision of local services and by strengthening the role of elected members.

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

The Government's *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* acknowledged that Corporate Policy Groups (CPGs) and Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) have achieved a measure of success in providing a focus for elected members to input into policy formation. The *Action Programme* also recognised enforcement is needed in order that the role of the Cathaoirleach and members, as leaders of their authority and the local community can be better delivered. Other than in matters of staffing, the elected members should have a more visible and effective role in policy setting and in the oversight of the executive actions of the local authority. The extent of changes proposed in the *Action Programme*, particularly the oversight and policy formation role of the elected members, local development/ local government alignment, location
of the local enterprise role in local government, enhancement of the economic development role of local government, establishment of the new sub-county arrangements and changes in configuration of senior management structures arising from the workforce planning process, all have potential implications for the system of SPCs and CPGs. Accordingly, the structure, role and operational mechanisms of the CPG and SPC have been reviewed and strengthened appropriately in the context of Implementation of the reform programme.

Following the Local Elections, it is necessary for each Local Authority to establish new SPC's in line with the Guidelines published by the Department in June 2014 entitled "Strategic Policy Committee – Guidelines for establishment and operation"

2. CORPORATE POLICY GROUP - (CPG)

2.1 CPG Structure

The statutory basis for Corporate Policy Groups (CPGs) is set out in S133 of The Local Government Act 2001, as amended by S48 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The CPG provides a forum for policy issues which transcend the remit of individual SPCs and Municipal Districts.

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises the Cathaoirleach of the authority as its together with the chairs of each of the SPC's and is attended by the Chief Executive and Directors of Services.

The CPG links the work of the different SPCs, acts as a 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.

The CPG is represented at the meetings of the Council by the Cathaoirleach.

2.2 The Role of the CPG

The CPG, like an SPC is a committee of the Council and Its task is to advise and assist the council, with full decision-making authority remaining with the council. 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 draft 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 consistency or avoidance of unnecessary duplication is referred to it by the Chief Executive;
- monitor the overall performance of a local authority;
- deal with overall issues in relation to service delivery plans, customer service, value for money, etc., (individual SPCs will deal with such issues in their work insofar as their particular service remit is concerned)
- co-ordinate the work 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.

Acting as a link between the SPCs and the full council, the CPG will

- have an active role in the preparation of the draft budget.
- It will also determine whether a function will be discharged at the municipal district or authority level, where reference in relation to this question is made to it.
- It must also be consulted in the preparation of the corporate plan.
- The Chief Executive also participates and supports the work of the CPG.
- The Chief Executive shall in consultation with the CPG and the Cathaoirleach review the membership of the Local Community Development Committee not less than every three years or upon instruction to do so by the Minister.
- The Chief Executive shall in consultation with the CPG agree arrangements with the relevant nominating bodies and structures for the rotation of (L.C.D.C.) members representing community and Voluntary, Social Inclusion, Environmental and local community interests.

2.3 Minutes of CPG Meetings

The Minutes of CPG meetings will be circulated to all members of the local authority as a matter of course.

3. THE ROLE OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

The statutory basis for Strategic Policy Committees is set out in section 48 of The Local Government Act 2001, as amended by section 41 of the 2014 Local Government Reform Act.

3.1 The SPC's 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; are tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of a local authority but generally be four in number; and have one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committees' work.

3.2 Each local authority has established SPCs which bring together both elected members, and individuals actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to develop and review policies related to council services. The SPCs thus provide elected members with external views as they discharge their strategic role within the local authority, 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 provides them with 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. SPCs prepare the groundwork for policies which are then decided on by the local authority, including as appropriate at municipal district level. Accordingly, local sectoral interests, including the trade union, farming, environmental and community/voluntary sectors, along with the business community, constitute one third of the membership of SPCs.

3.3 S 48 (1A) for the 2014 Act requires that at least one of the SPCs that is established shall be to consider matters which relate to the functions of the local authority in relation to economic development and enterprise support. Accordingly, Roscommon County Council shall form an SPC entitled the **"SPC for Economic Development**

and Enterprise (including Tourism, Culture and Libraries)". The functions of this SPC are to include the preparation of the economic elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), the implementation and review of the economic elements of the LECP and the oversight by the elected members of the operation of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO).

3.5 SPCs have a major role in assisting and advising the council in relation to functions of a strategic statutory nature, i.e. policy to mirror the functions of a local authority, e.g. preparation of a development plan. They also have a function in other, non-statutory policy fields, such as urban, village and rural renewal plans, policy related to the development of work programmes and the establishment of priorities for particular services; consideration of the needs of people with disabilities in the formulation and implementation of relevant policies; integration of sustainability principles to particular services, and in the strategic monitoring of local authority services. support for enterprise.

3.6 The SPC must have regard to the advice or assistance of the Chief Executive in the exercise of the performance of the functions of the SPC.The SPC itself, or the SPC chair, may also request the Chief Executive to provide all information that may be in the possession of the local authority, or which the Chief Executive is in a position to procure, related to the business of the SPC. The information sought should be made available to the members of the SPC as soon as it is available, to assist in ensuring the effective and efficient transaction of the business of the SPC.

3.7 When Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES), the intended successors to Regional Policy Guidelines, have been prepared by the Regional Assemblies, there is a requirement on each SPC to have regard to the RSES. This requirement is set out in section 48(3B) of the 2001 Act, as inserted by section 41of the 2014 Act.

- Each SPC should have an annual work programme and the work programme should be linked to the local authority's corporate plan.
- Directors of Service should undertake appropriate research on relevant policy options when SPC members are formulating policy. These options should be presented to the Chairs and members of SPCs in a clear, concise, and brief manner.
- Local Authorities should develop as practicable as possible the policy support Role for SPCs. This could include making greater use of the research capacity within local authorities and also making greater use of external agencies such as the LGMA, third level institutions etc.
- Once the SPC members have analysed all the potential policy options and avenues open to them and have come to a consensus conclusion the policy can be drafted for presentation at the next SPC meeting.

4. SPC CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson of each SPC will be a Councillor, nominated by the County Council, and will hold office for a minimum period of three years, which may be extended.

The SPC chairs have a pivotal role in ensuring the success of CPGs and SPCs. In that context, local authorities are asked to ensure that SPC Chairs are selected on the basis that –
- they have an interest in the work of the SPCs,
- they are fully aware of the leadership role of SPC Chairs, and
- they appreciate the need to work with the relevant Director of Service,
- to facilitate the smooth and effective operation of the SPCs and the CPG

5. TRAINING:
Training programmes would be valuable for SPC members, and consideration of needs in this regard could be included in the Training and Development Programme 2019-2024. Effective meeting skills would be useful for SPC chairs and training on policy areas would be significant for all SPC members. Policy development/ research skills and facilitation skills would be valuable for Directors of Service and their support staff.

6. USE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE:

Many councils already promote the use of the Irish language in various facets of their work. This practice could be extended to SPCs. Bain úsáid as an teanga atá againn - as an obair a thagann an fhoghlaim.

7. SPC FRAMEWORK

Relevant Factors

The factors to be taken into account in determining the overall framework of SPCs for a particular local authority will include:

- The total number of elected members on the council;
- The range of sectoral and other interests to be represented, including facilitating a reasonable spread of interests;
- The desirability of allowing adequate opportunity for participation by councillors and sectoral interests;
- The organisational arrangement of service groupings within the authority and the remit envisaged for each SPC;
- The need to ensure that the organisational and financial resources of the particular local authority are not over-stretched; and
- Integration with other meeting requirements and committee structures and ensuring streamlined procedures generally.

Regard must also be had to the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), including its membership and remit.

8. 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.

All agenda items, minutes of meetings and related matters will be available on the Roscommon County Council website for viewing.

9. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

The ethical requirement of Section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001 shall apply to all members of the SPCs (including non–elected members) i.e. Disclosure by a 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 is judged and public trust maintained.

10. ASSISTANCE FROM PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Section 48(3A) of the 2001 Act (inserted by section 41(d) of the 2014 Act) empowers a SPC to seek the attendance of public authorities at a meeting for the purpose of assisting it in developing policy. 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.

It is important to recognise that 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 provide an additional resource to the elected members in formulating policy and to strengthen linkages between local authorities and public bodies with wider
responsibilities in the sectoral area that 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.

Where a public authority indicates that it is unable to attend a meeting of a SPC, the SPC chair may report this fact to the local authority, providing the local authority with the public authority's reasons for not attending. There is no requirement to report non-attendance to the council, for instance where dialogue has established that the public authority cannot add value to the discussions of the SPC, or where there is agreement that attendance would be possible at a future date. If non-attendance is reported to the council, the council has the possibility (not a requirement) to report the failure to the relevant Minister.

11. STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

Each Strategic Policy Committee will focus attention on the development of policy in relation to the following functions

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENTERPRISE SUPPORT (INCLUDING TOURISM, CULTURE AND LIBRARIES)
> **Community & Enterprise**
- Irish Language Plan
- Arts Plan
- Social Inclusion Plan
- Play Policy

> **Tourism, Culture & Libraries**
- Tourism Plan
- Library Plan
- L.E.C.P. Plan

HOUSING, ICT AND RURAL WATER

Housing
- Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness
- Western Region Homeless Action Plan
- Housing First Implementation
- Provision of Homeless and Tenancy Support Services
- Settlement of Refugees and People with Status
- Housing Assessment and Allocations process for People with a Disability
- Traveller Accommodation Programme
- Designing Accessible Housing and Housing for Older People
- Social Housing Rent Scheme
- Tenant Purchase Scheme
- Mortgage to Rent Scheme
- Repossession of Local Authority Dwellings
- Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan Scheme

- ▪ Rental Property Inspections
- ▪ Provision of Affordable Housing
- ▪ Energy Efficiency Programmes
- ▪ Climate Change Adaptations
- ▪ Management of Land Assets

ICT:
- Digital Transformation

Rural Water:

- Rural Water
- Group Water Licencing

PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT, CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE

Planning:
- County Development Plan
- Development Plan
- Area Plans
- Retail Strategy;
- Housing Strategy;
- Transport Strategy;
- Renewable Energy Strategy;
- Record of Protected Structures;
- Landscape Character Assessment
- Development Contribution Scheme
- Local Area Plans
- Village Design Statements
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies
- Unfinished Housing Estates

Environment
- River Basin Management Plans/Water Framework Directive
- Noise Action Plans
- National Inspection Plan for Septic Tanks
- Advertising Signs Policy
- Bye-laws Presentation on Storage and Collection of Household waste
- Litter Management Plan
- Connacht Waste Management Plan
- Civic Amenity Sites and Landfills
- Environmental Sustainability Issues
- Environmental Awareness / Education
- Wastewater Discharge Licensing

Assets & Energy and Climate Change
- Climate Change/Renewable Energy Projects

Corporate & Governance
- Casual Trading

ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Roads & Transportation
- Bye-laws for Development and Management of Cemeteries
- Road Maintenance and Improvement Policies
- Local Improvement Schemes
- Road Safety Issues

Emergency Services
- Major Emergency Management
- Fire and Emergency Services

12. STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE WITHIN ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL:

12.1 Roscommon County Council proposes to establish four Strategic Policy Committees:

- Economic Development & Enterprise Support (including Tourism, Culture and Libraries)
- Housing and ICT and Rural Water
- Roads and Transportation and Emergency Services
- Planning, Environment, Corporate and Governance

12.2 Membership
- Membership of SPC's will comprise of County Councillors, and representatives from sectoral groups in County Roscommon.
- Each SPC must have at least one-third of its membership drawn from sectoral interests.
- Each Councillor of Roscommon County Council will be represented on two Strategic Policy Committees.
- The Chairperson of the SPC's will be appointed by the full Council from among the Councillors appointees to the SPC i.e. the Chairpersons will be members of Roscommon County Council.
- Each SPC Chair shall hold office for a minimum period of three years which can be renewed by the Council.
- Overall spread of SPC chairs must reflect the political representational spread on the full Council.
- SPC membership for Councillors shall be for the lifetime of the Council. A person ceasing to be a Councillor would automatically cease membership of the SPC.
- It is desirable that sectoral nominees retain membership of the SPC for the life of the Council.
- The Cathaoirleach of Roscommon County Council shall not be a Chair of an SPC should a chairperson of an SPC be elected as Cathaoirleach, he/she shall resign the post of chair of the SPC.
- Each SPC shall submit to the Council Standing Orders governing meeting procedures.
- A member of the LCDC is not eligible to be a member of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC.

12.3 Sectoral Representation

The following factors were taken into consideration in determining sectoral representation on and across each SPC in the draft scheme:

- The need to foster economic and social development generally;
- A stated commitment to working towards gender balance and to encouraging
  As full as possible gender balance in representation from the sectors;
- The need to ensure a pro-active approach to having as many relevant sectors as possible across the SPC system;
- The need for balance between divergent interests;
- The need for a comprehensive audit of groups within the local authority area to facilitate the fullest possible consultation with each sector;
- The priority concerns of each sector and the appropriateness of the SPCs to these concerns;

- The relationship between the number of SPCs and the range of interests which can be represented;
- A commitment to the fostering of social inclusiveness and equality;
- A commitment to have a pro-active information strategy to inform the public on the renewal of local government;
- the desirability of facilitating relevant organisations to be part of the nominating constituencies.

12.4   SPC Configuration
A minimum of one-third of each SPC configuration is drawn from external sectoral groupings. At a minimum six, and where appropriate, seven sectors should be represented in each local authority's SPC configuration. These are:

- Agriculture/Farming (Rural Authorities)
- Environmental/Conservation
- Development/Construction
- Business/Commercial
- Trade Union
- Community/Voluntary
- Social Inclusion.

Having regard to the foregoing the proposed membership of the SPCs is set out in the following table:

SPC	Councillors	Sectoral Representation	Total Membership
Economic Development and Enterprise Support (including Tourism, Culture and Libraries)	9	5 as follows: Business / Commercial (1) Community / Voluntary (1) Development/Construction (1) Environmental/Conservation (1) Agriculture/Farming(1)	14
Housing, ICT and Rural Water	9	5 as follows: Community/Voluntary (1) Social Inclusion (2) Trade Union (1) Development/Construction (1)	14
Roads, Transportation and Emergency Services	9	5 as follows: Business / Commercial (1) Development / Construction (1) Environmental/Conservation (1) Community/Voluntary (1) Agriculture/Farming (1)	14
Planning, Environment, Corporate and Governance	*9*	5 as follows: Agriculture / Farming (1) Community / Voluntary (1) Environmental/Conservation (1) Trade Union (1) Business/Commercial (1)	*14*

13. SPC NOMINATION PROCESS:

13.1   The Nomination Process:
The nomination process will be as follows:

- For the agricultural/ farming sector will be facilitated by the Farming and agricultural organisations pillar.
- The business/ commercial and Development / construction sectors will be facilitated by the business and employers Organisations pillar.
- The trade union sector will be facilitated by the trade union Pillar.
- The environmental / conservation sector will be facilitated by the Environmental pillar and the associated Environmental College under the PPN Arrangements.

With regard to the
- Environmental/conservation sector
- Community and Voluntary sector and
- Social Inclusion sector

Nominations will be determined on the basis of the local nomination process through the Public Participation Network (PPN). Member Organisations when joining the PPN at a county level must opt to be a part of one of three electoral colleges within the PPN:
- Environment
- Social Inclusion
- Community and Voluntary

To join the Environment Electoral College under the PPN, an organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability. Membership of this Electoral College will be validated by the environmental pillar at a national level.

To join the Social Inclusion Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must focus on social inclusion/ social justice/ equality.

Organisations whose primary objectives are other than those listed above will be members of the Community and Voluntary Electoral College.

On adoption of the Draft SPC Scheme, Roscommon County Council will commence the process of seeking nominations to the SPC's. In the case of four of the National Pillars under the National Partnership Process, the Council will write to the contact persons enclosing the adopted Scheme and seek the nominations of those pillars for their particular SPC's as outlined in the adopted Scheme**.**

The nomination process will include for each pillar or representative body to nominate an alternate nominee. In the event that the nominee does not attend three consecutive meetings of the SPC, the position will automatically default to the alternate nominee.

13.2   MEMBERSHIP OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL - TOTAL 18:

In accordance with Section 22 of The Local Government Reform Act 2014, each County Council consists of the number of members specified in parts 1, 2, and 3 respectively of Schedule 7.

They are as follows:

Name of Electoral Area	Number of Members to be elected for each Electoral Area
Athlone	6
Boyle	6
Roscommon	6

14. STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

- A calendar of SPC meetings should be agreed at the start of each year and held quarterly at suitable times for all SPC members and shall deal with the business assigned to it.
- A minimum of two weeks notice to attend a meeting shall be sent, delivered or e-mailed to each member of the SPC. This should include an Agenda and minutes of previous meeting and SPC documentation listing the business to be transacted at the meeting.
- The quorum for meetings of the committee shall be five members, two of which shall be Council Members.
- The Chair at every meeting of the Committee shall be taken within a quarter of an hour after the time appointed for the meeting, provided a quorum is present. If, after the expiration of thirty minutes after the time appointed for the meeting, a quorum shall not be present, the SPC shall rise and the meeting shall stand adjourned to a day to be then named by the Chair of the meeting and the names of the SPC members in attendance when the roll is called shall be recorded by the Meetings Administrator and shall for all purposes be deemed to have attended a duly convened meeting.
- The Committee shall, as far as possible, arrive at all decisions and recommendations by consensus.
- Every Committee Member attending a meeting of the Council shall sign his name in the attendance book, and such book shall be the official record of such attendance.
- The Chairperson shall submit a report on recommended policies of the Committee to the full Council for approval
- The agenda and the minutes of each Strategic Policy Committee meeting will be circulated to all elected members.
- Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with standing orders adopted by Roscommon County Council

Process for the establishment of new Strategic Policy Committees – 2019 - 2024 Programme:

ACTION	TIME FRAME
Draft Scheme to be considered and agreed by Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)	15th July 2019
Draft Scheme forwarded to Council for consideration, amendment (if necessary) and adoption.	**22nd** July 2019.
Advertise/publicise Draft Scheme – • Circulate to Sectoral Representative/National Pillars. • Circulate to PPN • Minimum period of One month and up to a maximum of 6 weeks to make submissions.	23rd July 2019 6th September 2019
Council write to contact persons in the National Key Stakeholder Pillars enclosing the draft SPC Scheme and seeking nominations for their particular SPC. The local authority will write to the national contact of the Environmental sector seeking the validation of nominees to the Environment Electoral College under the PPN. With regard to the Community / Voluntary / Social Inclusion and Environmental /Conservation Sectors, the local authority should write to the PPN secretariat, enclosing a copy of the draft scheme and will facilitate these sectors' organisations to meet each other, if appropriate, to select their representatives for the SPCs as set out in the draft scheme. Local authorities will allow one month for the selection of *representatives from these three sectors.*	29th July 2019 September 2019
Receive Expressions of Interest from Members as to membership of SPC	September 2019
Receive Nominations from the Sector	September 2019
Council Consider submissions on Draft Scheme and adopt Scheme with/without amendment	September Meeting 2019.
Elected Members of Roscommon Council approve the appointment of sectoral members as nominated	October Meeting 2019
Elected Members confirmed on each SPC	October Meeting 2019
First meetings of Strategic Policy Committees.	November/December 2019