

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ❖ Background.
- ❖ Corporate Policy Group.
- ❖ Strategic Policy Committee.
  - Features of SPC System
  - Structure / Membership of SPC's
- ❖ Area Committees.
- ❖ Strategic Policy Committee Nomination Process
  - National Pillars.
  - Sectoral Interests
- ❖ Strategic Policy Committee – Notice of Meetings
- ❖ Process and Time frame for establishment of New Strategic Policy Committee.
- ❖ Appendix 1 - National Contact Persons.
- ❖ Appendix 11 - Typical Policies/Issues addressed by each SPC.
- ❖ Appendix 111 – Roscommon County Council Membership.
- ❖ Appendix IV - Summary of key recommendations of the review of the operation of S.P.C.'s – IPA – 2004.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The establishment of the Strategic Policy Committee Structure was a result of the four core principles of the 1996 White Paper – “Better Local Government – A Programme for Change” - which 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.

One of the main means for implementing this enhancement of local democracy is the establishment of a number of Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.’s) in each county and city council area.

The statutory basis for SPC’s is set out in Part 7 of the Local Government Act 2001. Following the local elections, it is necessary for each county and city council to establish new SPC’s in line with the Guidelines published by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government (DoEH&LG ) in August, 1999 entitled “Strategic Policy Committee – Guidelines for establishment and operation” These Guidelines were developed in consultation with a Working Group comprising of the National Pillars and the Partnership Process, the Business and Employers Pillar , the Community/Voluntary Pillar, three Local Authority Representative Associations, the Institute of Public Administration and officials from the Department.

In 1998, Roscommon County Council established four Strategic Policy Committees in the following areas –

- Housing, Social, Cultural and Community.
- Water Services and Environment.
- Planning and Development.
- Roads and Transportation.

In 2004, Roscommon County Council proposed to re-establish four Strategic Policy Committees as follows:-

- Housing, Social, Cultural, Community & Enterprise.
- Planning & Economic Development.
- Roads, Transportation and Infrastructure.
- Water Services & Environment.

In accordance with the Local Government Act, 2001 and Circulars issued by the DoEH&LG in particular Circular Letter LG10/09 and Circular Letter LG 12/09, a new Strategic Policy Committee Scheme will be considered by the Council

## **CORPORATE POLICY GROUP - (C.P.G.):**

The Chairs of each of the SPCs along with the Cathaoirleach form the Corporate Policy Group (CPG). The role of the CPG is to provide an input to the full Council on any matter of general concern to the Council, monitoring the overall performance of the Council, a key role in relation to the budget, customer services issues, coordinating and deciding on the work of the SPCs and recommending issues to be considered by them, developing their multi annual work programme, providing feedback to the Council on the work of the Strategic Policy Committees and developing and monitoring progress on the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Corporate Policy Group will meet as often as required and there will be a minimum of six meetings per annum. Each Director of Service will give a quarterly summary report on progress for their individual areas, while the Head of Finance will give a quarterly budget report.

## **Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.'s):**

S.P.C.'s. make available to Councillors as the key players, a framework and opportunity to fulfil to a far greater extent their role as overall policy makers. It also develops opportunities for partnership with local interests. The S.P.C. system provides Councillors 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. The success of the S.P.C.'s is crucially dependant on the active involvement of Councillors and on the positive mindset from all involved: Councillors, Sectoral Representatives, County Manager, Directors and staff.

In February 2009, the Department carried out a survey on the operation of S.P.C.'s and it highlighted the important contribution that the training of S.P.C. chairs, members and support staff can make to optimising the effectiveness of S.P.C.'s.

Overall, the general picture that emerged from the Survey was that –

- SPCs are operating reasonably well in relation to their policy discussion, formulation and development roles.
- The recommendations of the 2004 review are for the most part being applied (**refer to Appendix 1V**).
- SPCs are making a substantive and positive contribution to the work of local authorities.

The Department requests that:

- SPCs adopt a multi-annual work programme linked to the local authority's Corporate Plan and updated regularly as necessary.
- The CPG should decide the work programmes of the SPCs and recommend issues to be considered by the SPCs.

The Minister views the issues relating to the environment and sustainable development are relevant to the work of each S.P.C. and considers that the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) has a significant role to play in ensuring a harmonised approach in this context. In addition, the Minister requests that the County Development Board be kept informed of the SPC's work on environment / sustainable matters with particular reference to the work of SPC's on Planning / Development/ Environment / Transport.

### **Features of a Strategic Policy Committee System:**

1. The role of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) and the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) are 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 should not be concerned with individual representational or operational issues.
3. The SPC system presents Councillors with a prime opportunity to become more involved in policy formulation.
4. Each authority will have generally four SPC's with the option of more in the very largest authorities, if warranted.
5. SPC's are to be chaired by one of the Council members.
6. SPC's are to have a minimum total membership of nine.
7. A minimum of one-third of the members of each SPC are to be drawn from relevant sectoral interest; to provide relevant expertise and advice and allow for a range of inputs in the formulation of policy.
8. Each sector will select its own nominee(s).
9. The CPG is comprised of the Cathaoirleach of the local authority and the SPC chairs. It is to be chaired by the Cathaoirleach. It will be supported by the Manager.
10. Area Committees can complement the SPC system. Local operational matters should be assigned to the Area Committees as the SPC system will not deal with local representational issues and operational issues.

## **STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE WITHIN ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL:**

Roscommon County Council proposes to establish four Strategic Policy Committees as follows:

- 1) Housing, Social, Cultural and Community.
  - 2) Planning & Economic Development.
  - 3) Roads, Transportation and Emergency Services.
  - 4) Environment and Water Services.
- Membership of S.P.C.'s will comprise of County Councillors, two Boyle Town Councillors and representatives from sectoral groups in County Roscommon.
  - Each S.P.C. must have at least one-third of its membership drawn from sectoral interests.
  - Each Councillor on Roscommon County Council will be represented on a Strategic Policy Committee.
  - The Chairperson of the S.P.C.'s will be appointed by the full Council from among the Councillors appointees to the S.P.C. i.e. the Chairpersons will be members of Roscommon County Council.
  - Each S.P.C. Chair shall hold office for a minimum period of three years which can be renewed by the Council.
  - Overall spread of S.P.C. chairs must reflect the political representational spread on the full Council.
  - S.P.C. membership for Councillors shall be for the lifetime of the Council. A person ceasing to be a Councillor would automatically cease membership of the S.P.C.
  - A Councillor shall not serve on more than one S.P.C.
  - It is desirable that sectoral nominees retain membership of the S.P.C. for the life of the Council.
  - The Mayor of Roscommon County Council shall not be a Chair of an S.P.C. Should a chairperson of an S.P.C. be elected as Mayor, he/she shall resign the post of chair of the S.P.C.
  - Each S.P.C. shall submit to the Council Standing Orders governing meeting procedures.

**STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:**

S.P.C.	Councillors	Town Councillors	External Representation **	Total
Housing, Social, Cultural and Community	6	1	4	11
Planning and Economic Development	8		5	13
Roads, Transportation & Emergency Services	6	1	5	12
Environment and Water Services	6		4	10

**\*\* Assignment of External Representation under Sectoral Interests Section.**

The assignment of Sectoral Interests on each SPC

SPC	
<b>Housing, Social, Cultural and Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community / Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Disadvantaged (1)</li> <li>• Trade Unions (1)</li> <li>• Cultural (1)</li> </ul>
<b>Planning Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade Unions (1)</li> <li>• Business / Commercial (1)</li> <li>• Community / Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Environment (1)</li> <li>• Agriculture/ Farming (1)</li> </ul>
<b>Roads, Transportation and Emergency Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business / Commercial (1)</li> <li>• Development / Construction (1)</li> <li>• Agriculture / Farming (1)</li> <li>• Environment(1)</li> <li>• Community / Voluntary (1)</li> </ul>
<b>Environment and Water Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture / Farming (1)</li> <li>• Community / Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Business / Commercial (1)</li> <li>• Environment (1)</li> </ul>

## **AREA COMMITTEES:**

The S.P.C. approach is designed to strengthen the policy development role of Councillors and to improve policy formulation in general. At the same time, in Roscommon County Council, it is agreed that there was a clear need for an area/locally based dimension to the delivery of services. Area Committees are formed to remove the minor and detailed issues from the full Council and to enable day to day operational and representational issues to be handled at a more appropriate level. These include matters as area related roads, housing and traffic, deputations on particular local issues etc.

Roscommon County Council established Area Committees based on each electoral area. They are as follows:-

Athlone.  
Boyle.  
Castlerea.  
Roscommon.  
Strokestown.

The Area Committees meet twice a year and comprise of the Elected Members of the Electoral Area and the Mayor of Boyle Town Council for the Boyle Electoral Area Committee. The Committees will be serviced by a Director of Services/Head of Finance and an Administrative Officer (Meetings Administrator) and attended by relevant staff.

## **SPC NOMINATION PROCESS:**

On adoption of the S.P.C. Scheme, Roscommon County Council will seek nominations to the S.P.C.'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 S.P.C.'s as outlined in the adopted Scheme (**Refer to Appendix 1) for the national contact persons for the nomination of sectoral representation.**

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>NOMINATED BY NATIONAL PILLAR</b>
Agriculture/Farming	Farming & Agricultural Organisations Pillar.
Business/Commercial	Business & Employers Organisations Pillar.
Development/Construction	Business & Employers Organisations Pillar.
Trade Union	Trade Union Pillar
Environmental	Environmental Pillar (through Social Partnership Co-ordinator).
Community/Voluntary/Disadvantaged/Cultural	Local Nomination Process.

Nominations including any changes in the nominations are the sole responsibility of the sectors.

The above process is in accordance with the Guidelines issued by DoEH&LG in August, 1999 and Circular Letters LG10/09 and LG 12/09.

### **SECTORAL INTERESTS:**

A Minimum of one-third of each S.P.C. configuration is drawn from external sectoral groupings.

#### **Sectoral representation is drawn from the following sectors:-**

- Agriculture/Farming
- Environmental
- Conservation/Culture
- Development/Construction
- Business/Commercial
- Trade Union
- Community/Voluntary/Disadvantaged.

In determining sectoral representation on and across each S.P.C., the following factors are considered –

- The need to foster economic and social development.
- Gender balance.
- Need for balance between divergent interests.
- Foster social inclusiveness and equality

#### **The following principles should be applied in the selection process:**

- Groups/Associations should be active in the area of the local authority and have a county-wide remit.
- Groups should be open to new membership, should hold AGMs and regular meetings and should be broadly representative and accountable.
- Groups should have a fairly broad sectoral remit – i.e. single issue groups should be avoided.

### **RECEIPT OF NOMINATIONS FROM OTHER SECTORS:**

With regard to the Community/Voluntary/Disadvantaged/Cultural sectors, Roscommon County Council will make contact with these sectors through the Community Fora which will facilitate the selection of representation for the S.P.C.'s as set out in the adopted Scheme.

### **Strategic Policy Committee Meetings:**

- Each S.P.C. shall meet as often as required and at least four times a year to 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 S.P.C. This should include an Agenda and minutes of previous meeting and S.P.C. documentation listing the business to be transacted at the meeting.
- The quorum for meetings of the committee shall be 4 members one of which shall be a Council Member.
- 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 S.P.C. 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 S.P.C. 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 including Town Council members.
- Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with standing orders adopted by Roscommon County Council

**Process for the establishment of new Strategic Policy Committees –  
2009 Programme:**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
Draft Scheme to be considered and agreed by Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)	September, 2009
Draft Scheme forwarded to Council for consideration, amendment (if necessary) and adoption.	September, 2009.
Advertise/publicise Draft Scheme – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Circulate to Sectoral Representative/National Pillars.</li> <li>○ 4 weeks to make submissions.</li> </ul>	October, 2009.
Council Consider submissions on Draft Scheme and adopt Scheme with/without amendment	November, 2009.
Council write to contact persons in the National Pillars and Boyle Town Council enclosing the adopted S.P.C. Scheme and seeking nominations. Community & Enterprise Section of Roscommon County Council arrange for selection of nominees from the Community, Voluntary, Disadvantaged, Conservation/Cultural Sectors.	November, 2009.
Receive nominations for each of the sectors.	December, 2009.
Elected Members of Roscommon Council approve the appointment of sectoral members as nominated	December, 2009.
First meetings of Strategic Policy Committees.	January, 2010.

## APPENDIX I

### National Contact Persons

Pillar	Name & Address	Telephone and e-mail
<b>Farming</b>	<b>Gerry Gunning</b>	<b>01-4500266</b>
	<i>Irish Farmers Association (IFA)</i> Irish Farm Centre <u>Bluebell</u> Dublin 12	<a href="mailto:gerrygunning@ifa.ie">gerrygunning@ifa.ie</a>
<b>Business</b>	<b>John Hickey</b>	<b>01-4004300</b>
	Chambers Ireland 17 Merrion Square Dublin 2	<a href="mailto:john.hickey@chambers.ie">john.hickey@chambers.ie</a>
<b>Trade Unions</b>	<b>Fergus Whelan</b>	<b>01-8897777</b>
	Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) <i>Head Office</i> 31-32 Parnell Square Dublin 1	<a href="mailto:fergus.whelan@ictu.ie">fergus.whelan@ictu.ie</a>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Michael Ewing</b>	<b>071-9667373</b>
	Environment Pillar – Social Partnership Coordinator Knockvicar Boyle Co Roscommon	<a href="mailto:michael@ien.ie">michael@ien.ie</a>

## APPENDIX II

### Typical Issues addressed by each Strategic Policy Committee

#### Housing, Social, Cultural and Community

- Homeless Action Plan
- Disability Implementation Plan – Barcelona Declaration
- Community and Amenity Fund
- Travellers Accommodation Programme
- Casual Trading
- Social Inclusion
- Interagency Plan for Delivery of Services to Travellers
- Roscommon Intercultural Strategy
- Irish Language Scheme
- Affordable Housing Allocations Scheme
- Training Programme for SPC members
- Estate Management Plan
- Library Development Plan
- Sustainable Energy
- Disabled Person's Grant Scheme
- Play Policy
- Arts Plan 2009-2012

#### Planning and Development

- County Development Plan
- Development Contribution Scheme
- Local Area Plans
- Village Design Statements
- Strategic Environmental Assessments and Habitats Assessments
- Landscape Character Assessments
- Retail Strategy
- Heritage Plan
- Conservation Issues including Record of Protected Structures
- Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines
- Regional Planning Guidelines
- Development Management Guidelines and Standards
- Control of Quarries

### **Roads and Transportation and Infrastructure**

- Bye-laws for Development and Management of Cemeteries
- Road Maintenance and Improvement Policies
- Local Improvement Schemes
- Major Emergency Management
- Fire and Emergency Services
- Road Safety Issues

### **Water Services and Environment**

- River Basin Management Plans
- Noise Action Plans
- Advertising Signs Policy
- Refuse Collection Waiver Scheme
- Water Abstraction Orders
- Drinking Water Quality
- Bye-laws on Storage and Collection of Household waste
- Biodiversity Plan
- Litter Management Plan
- Water Pricing Policy
- Water Conservation
- Connaught Waste Management Plan
- Rural Water Programme
- Civic Amenity Sites and Landfills
- Environmental Sustainability Issues
- Environmental Awareness / Education
- Timber Procurement Policy
- Renewable Energy Projects
- Water Services Assessment of Needs
- Water Services Capital Investment Programme
- Wastewater Discharge Licensing
- Group Water Licensing

## APPENDIX III

### **Membership of Roscommon County Council - Total 26:**

In 2008 the Minister implemented the recommendations of the Report of the Electoral Area Boundary Committee.

In accordance with S.I. 509 of 2008 statutory effect was given to recommendations for Roscommon County Council's functional area.

They are as follows:

<b>Name of Electoral Area</b>	<b>Number of Members to be elected for each Electoral Area</b>
Athlone	6
Boyle	4
Castlerea	7
Roscommon	5
Strokestown	4

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **Summary of Key Recommendations of the Review of the Operation of the Strategic Policy Committee (Institute of Public Administration – 2004)**

- Each SPC should have an annual work programme and the work programme should be linked to the local authority's corporate plan.
- The SPC chair and relevant Director of Service should meet well in advance of an SPC meeting to clarify the agenda for the forthcoming meeting and to agree on objectives and what they would like as expected outcomes.
- A calendar of SPC meetings should be agreed at the start of each year. SPCs should normally be held about 4 times yearly at suitable times for all SPC members.
- SPC meetings should be conducted in a much less rigid and formal way than full council meetings in order to create an informal and collaborative atmosphere that would allow honest views and opinions on policy issues.
- The Local Authority should provide a key contact person (other than the Director of Service) for all SPC members and particularly for sectoral representatives to deal with SPC matters.
- Local Authorities should also consider the most appropriate locations for holding SPC meetings perhaps making greater use of community halls and centres.
- Local Authorities should ensure that documentation concerning SPC meetings is sent well in advance of the meetings. Four weeks has been suggested.
- The agenda and minutes of SPC meetings should also be circulated well in advance to all SPC members.
- 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 LGMSB, Local Government Anti-Poverty Network, 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.
- In general guidelines coming from the central Government Departments should be interpreted as guidelines rather than as a prescriptive set of instructions in order to allow

Local Authorities flexibility in determining and implementing plans and programmes locally.

- Different types of training programmes would be very valuable for SPC members. For example Policy development/research skills and facilitation skills would be very valuable for Directors of Service and their support staff. Effective meeting skills would be very useful for SPC chairs and training on policy areas (such as housing etc) would be significant for all SPC members.
- SPC chairs should introduce SPC recommendations for full approval by full council.
- SPC chairs, who are represented on the County/City Development Board (CDB), could provide a useful link between the needs identified by the SPCs and the activities of other public bodies in the area.
- SPC chairs should report back to SPC members on the activities of the CDB that affect their SPC.
- The SPCs sectoral representatives should provide feedback to their nominating organisations on the activities of the SPC.
- Town councils should be provided with appropriate feedback in relation to SPC matters.
- Members of SPCs should be provided with automatic feedback on the outcome of the council's decisions on SPC recommendations.