



COMHAIRLE CONTAE  
CHEATHARLACH

---

CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

**CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

---

**STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME  
CORPORATE POLICY GROUP SCHEME**

**2024 – 2029**

---

*Adopted at Council Meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2024.*

## **1. Review of the existing SPC structures**

The Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) have met regularly since their inception and have dealt with various policy issues relating to the Council. Recommendations were agreed and presented to the full Council for approval by the relevant SPC Chairperson. Each SPC was facilitated by a Director of Service. The work of each SPC improved the efficiency of the Council due to the varied expertise of the members. Following the recent local 2024 elections and having regard to the provisions of national guidelines, it is necessary for Carlow County Council to review the SPC scheme.

### **1.1 Objectives & Structures of SPCs and CPGs**

The statutory basis for the 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. The structure affords both the elected members and local sectoral interests an opportunity to be more involved in policy formation in the spirit of partnership, for the benefit of the community.

The role of the SPCs is outlined in the following recent national guidelines: *Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees - Revised Guidelines for Establishment and Operation (June 2024)*

The Strategic Policy Committees will:

- Assist the Council in the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy which relate to the functions of the local authority and advise the authority on those matters.
- Reflect the major functions or services of the County Council within the broader context,
- Be tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of the Council but generally be four in number, and
- Have a minimum one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the Committees' work.

### **1.2 The Corporate Policy Group**

The statutory basis for the Corporate Policy Group is set out in Section 133 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended. The CPG links the work of the SPCs and provides a forum where policy positions impacting the Council can be agreed for submission of the full Council.

The CPG will:

- Comprise the Cathaoirleach of the Council and the Chairs of the SPCs. Where the Municipal District is not already represented, the Cathaoirleach of the MD or his or her nominee will also be included.
- Provide a forum for policy issues which transcend the remit of the individual SPCs.
- Be supported by the Chief Executive.
- Monitor the overall performance of the Council.

## **2. Carlow County Council**

Carlow County Council was established on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1899 under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898.

Carlow is divided into three local electoral areas represented as follows:

- Carlow -Seven Elected Members
- Tullow – Six Elected Members
- Muinebheag – Five Elected Members

## **2.1 Service Delivery by Carlow County Council**

Carlow County Council provides an extensive and diverse range of services which impact upon the County's economic, social, environmental, infrastructural, tourism, industrial and cultural activities. The Council is serviced by a large workforce including the Chief Executive, County Council staff and contractors. Carlow County Council delivers its services through Directorates.

## **2.2 Council Mission Statement**

Carlow County Council's Mission is to provide a quality local government service for the people of County Carlow, through the protection and enhancement of the environment and improvement in the quality of life.

# **3. Role of the Strategic Policy Committees**

## **3.1 SPCs and the Council**

The Council is and remains the decision-making authority and it is the task of the SPCs as Committees of the Council to advise and assist the Council in its work. While the task of each SPC includes assisting the Council in the formation and development of policy, the final policy decisions will rest ultimately with the full Council. The SPC system is intended to give Elected Members and relevant sectoral interests an opportunity for full involvement in the policy making process from the outset, when policy options are more fluid. Therefore, much of the preliminary and background work, discussions and recommendations should be completed at SPC level for final consideration and ratification by the Council.

## **3.2 A Strategic Role**

SPCs have a major role in assisting and advising the Council in relation to functions of a strategic statutory nature, including policy functions of a Local Authority, such as the preparation of a Development Plan, etc.

SPCs also have a role in other areas including:

- Non-statutory land use plans – urban frameworks, masterplans,
- Development of work programs and the priorities for particular services.
- Consideration of the needs of those with disabilities in relation to relevant policies.
- The integration of sustainability principles to particular services.
- The strategic monitoring of local authority services.

The SPC including Economic Development also has specific functions in relation to economic development and support for enterprise.

SPCs are to be involved from the preliminary phases of preparation of a policy and assist in matters such as the setting of overall parameters, identification of issues to be addressed and approaches to be taken. In so doing, SPCs may have meaningful involvement in what is presented to the full Council for decision.

## **3.3 Advice and Information from the Chief Executive**

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 132 and 136 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, the Chief Executive is required to advise and assist the SPC generally as regards the performance of the functions of the SPC, including when requested to do so by the SPC. Normally the SPC Chair will make arrangements with the relevant Director of Services to have this advice available for the relevant meeting of the SPC.

The SPC itself (or the Committee Chair, through the Director of Services), 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 should be made available to the SPC as soon as it becomes available to assist in ensuring the effective and efficient transaction of business of the SPC.

### **3.4 SPC Chairs**

The SPC Chairs have a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the CPG and SPCs. They are selected on the basis that they:

- Have an interest in the work of the SPC.
- Are fully aware of the leadership role of the SPC.
- Work with the relevant Director of Services.

SPC Chairs are appointed for a minimum period of 3 years.

### **3.5 Views of elected members**

In accordance with Section 147 (7) of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, the Chief Executive is required to have regard to the views of the Elected Members in the discharge of the executive functions of the Council including those views as expressed at a SPC meeting.

### **3.6 Requirement to have regard to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**

In accordance with Section 48 (3B) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, each SPC will be required to have regard to Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies prepared by the Regional Assemblies.

### **3.7 Assistance from public authorities**

Section 48 (3A) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, empowers an SPC to request 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 the 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 a shorter interval if mutually agreed.

The Act provides for the public authority to assist the SPC in the formulation of the policy of the SPC and to provide an additional resource to the elected members. In this regard, it should be noted that the invitation to attend at a meeting of the SPC cannot be used to query the public authority in the performance of its function or duties.

### **3.8 Service Delivery Plans**

The development of Service Delivery Plans will facilitate the identification of objectives and the preparation of strategies for individual services. SPCs can provide advice and assistance to the Council in the preparation of Annual Service Delivery Plans.

### **3.9 Consultation**

In view of the important strategic role which SPCs have in the development and review of policy, consultation with relevant sectors and interest should be an ongoing part of the SPC process. It is a matter for the SPC to decide on the appropriate consultative arrangements subject to any relevant guidelines issued by the local authority.

### **3.10 Meetings**

Subject to law and to Standing Orders or any decisions which may be made by Carlow County Council, each SPC will regulate its own business and proceedings (including the fixing of days and times of its meetings). A calendar of SPC meetings should be agreed at the start of the year. The absolute minimum number of meetings per year for any SPC is two meetings. In this context, each SPC will generally meet four times a year and more frequently if necessary. Meetings will be held at a suitable time for the SPC members.

Five SPC Committee Members will constitute a quorum.

A collective meeting of all members of SPCs may occur once per year either at the request of the Council or of the SPCs.

The meetings of the Strategic Policy committee shall be in-committee with agreed minutes, reports, press and media briefings released as appropriate.

The SPC chair and the relevant Director of Service should meet in advance of the SPC meeting to clarify the agenda and to agree on objectives and what are the expected outcomes.

A calendar of SPC meetings to be agreed at the commencement of the year.

The agenda and associated documentation should issue four weeks in advance of the meeting.

Draft minutes of SPC meetings should be issued within two weeks following the SPC meeting.

Each SPC member shall note the ethical requirements placed on SPC members by Section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001. When attendance is being noted at the start of the meeting, SPC members shall inform the meeting of any conflicts of interest arising from any agenda item.

## **4. Corporate Policy Group**

The Corporate Policy Group will comprise of the Cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council, as its chair, together with the chairs of each of the SPCs and a representative of each municipal district, as needed, in accordance with Section 133(1) of the 2001 Act (as amended) by section 48 of the 2014 Act. The Corporate Policy Group will link the work of the SPCs and provide a forum where policy decisions affecting the whole Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. The Corporate Policy Group will be supported by the Chief Executive. The CPG is represented at meetings of the council by the Cathaoirleach.

### **4.1 CPG – Structure**

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises the Cathaoirleach of the authority as its chair together with the chairs of each of the SPCs. Where the Municipal District is not already represented the Cathaoirleach of the Municipal District or his or her nominee will also be included. The CPG links the work of the SPCs and provides a forum where policy positions affecting the whole Council are agreed for submission to the full Council. It is supported by the Chief Executive and Directors of Services.

## **4.2 CPG – Role**

The CPG is a Committee of the Council. It acts as a link between the SPCs and the full Council. The CPG's task is to advise and assist the Council, with full decision-making authority remaining with the Council. The Cathaoirleach reports to the full Council on the work of the CPG in the same way that each SPC Chair reports back to their committee. It is a matter for the Council, in co-operation with the Chief Executive and officials, to determine the range of responsibilities and tasks for the Corporate Policy Group.

The role and functions of the Corporate Policy Group are contained in Section 133 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended and include, inter alia, the following:

- The Chief Executive shall prepare the Corporate Plan for the local authority in consultation with the Group,
- The Chief Executive shall consult with the Group in the preparation of the local authority's draft budget,
- Determine responsibility for the discharge of reserved functions 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, including in relation to oversight and governance,
- Deal with issues in relation to Service Delivery Plans, customer service, value for money etc.,
- Approve the work programmes of the SPCs,
- Co-ordinate the work of the SPCs and monitor their work programmes,
- Request SPCs to consider policy issues where appropriate, and
- Provide feedback to the SPCs on Council Policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs.

## **5. SPC Framework**

### **5.1 Relevant Factors**

The factors taken into account in determining the overall framework for Strategic Policy Committees in Carlow County Council were:

- The total number of elected members of the Council,
- The range of sectoral and other interests including facilitating a reasonable spread of interests, the desirability of allowing adequate opportunity for participation by members and sectoral interests,
- Organisational arrangement of service groupings within the Authority and the remit envisaged for each Strategic Policy Committee,
- The need to ensure that the organisational and financial resources of the Council are adequate to meet demands and
- A review and rationalisation of committee structures and the streamlining of procedures generally.

## 5.2 Number of SPCs

Having regard to the above and Carlow County Council's present organisational structures, the proposed number of SPCs is four, as follows: -

- **Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Finance and ICT**
- **Transportation, Environment, Emergency Services and Capital Projects**
- **Housing and Integration**
- **Community Development, Recreation, Amenity, Sports, Arts & Culture, Libraries, Museum, Heritage**

Areas of responsibility for the four SPCs are set out in the indicative list of SPCs outlined below:

### **Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Finance and ICT**

- Planning and Development Services
- Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) - Preparation of Economic Element of LECP, Implementation, Monitoring & Review
- Enterprise Supports
- Oversight of Operation of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO)
- Industrial Development and Promotion
- Employment Creation and Maintenance
- Festivals & Events
- Town Centre First
- Vacancy and Dereliction
- Town & Village Renewal
- Urban Regeneration
- Rural Regeneration
- European Funding Projects
- Tourism Development and Strategy
- Digital Strategy and Broadband

### **Transportation, Environment, Emergency Services and Capital Projects**

- Road Maintenance and General Road Improvements
- Strategic Road Improvement
- Road Safety
- Speed Limit Review
- Event Management
- Traffic Planning Management and Control
- Active Travel
- Public/Rural Transport
- Upgrading and improvement of Surface-water infrastructure
- Flood Relief/Protection
- Climate Action
- Energy Management
- Decarbonisation
- Circular Economy
- Environmental Protection
- Biodiversity and Green infrastructure

- Sustainable Development Goals
- Air/Noise/Water Quality
- Rural Water Provision
- Provision of Burial Grounds
- Waste Management
- Litter Management
- Control of Dogs
- Agricultural Compliance
- Transition of Water Services to Uisce Éireann
- Fire Service
- Building Control
- Civil Defence
- Major Emergency Management
- Special/Capital Projects and URDF

### **Housing and Integration**

- Social and Affordable Housing Delivery Programme
- Housing Allocation Scheme
- Traveller Accommodation Programme
- Homeless Strategy
- Estate Management
- Integration of New Communities
- Disability Strategy

### **Community Development, Recreation, Amenity, Sports, Arts & Culture Libraries, Museum, Heritage**

- Community Development Policies & Issues
- Parks, Natural Environment, Recreation & Play
- Sport including Local Sports Plan
- Public Participation
- Policies in relation to the promotion of County Library Services, Arts & Culture, County Museum, Heritage including, Library Development Plan, Creative Carlow, Arts Strategy, Heritage Plan etc.
- Social Integration
- Policies in relation to interaction with National Tidy Town/Pride of Place groups & initiatives
- Policies in relation to Youth Affairs Initiatives & Services to Young People
- Age Friendly County Programme & Healthy Carlow

### **5.3 SPC Remit and Configuration**

In light of the Council's role across a range of public services delivered locally, each SPC has a reasonably broad remit. Each SPC is required to consider climate change and climate impacts as part of any and all policies that form part of its work programme. Deliberations in this regard should operate in a cross-cutting manner and in the broader public policy context: any interrelationships with other policy domains should be taken into account when considering policies.



Climate Actions should be considered in its widest sense to include biodiversity action, water quality action, sustainable land use, energy (source and usage) resource management, sustainable transport/mobility, air quality/emissions, soil quality, waste management, community action etc. and any other related issues – reflecting the complex and integrated nature of climate action.

## **6. SPC Scheme**

### **6.1 Preparation of the Draft Scheme**

The scheme for the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees in Carlow has been prepared by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cathaoirleach and the Chairs designate of the SPCs, having regard to the guidelines issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Chairs designate selected at the Annual General Meeting of the current Council were as follows:

- Cllr. Andy Gladney
- Cllr. Michael Doran
- Cllr. Andrea Dalton
- Cllr. John Pender

### **6.2 SPC Configuration**

Carlow County Council recognises the importance of ensuring that the views of the sectors as represented by the National Pillars of the partnership process, the Public Participation Network (PPN) and other more local interests be sought to ensure that the process is as inclusive, transparent and effective as possible. Given this, the following factors were considered by Carlow County Council in determining sectoral representation on and across each SPC:

- The need to foster economic and social development generally,
- A stated commitment to working towards gender balance and to encourage 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 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,
- Commitment to the fostering of social inclusiveness and equality.
- 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 have a pro-active information strategy to inform the public of the renewal of local government.

- The desirability of facilitating relevant organisations to be part of the nominating constituencies.

External representatives will be nominated by the following sectors:

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

While the remit of the SPC will be anchored in the main Local Government services, it will not operate in a restrictive way but in the context of the wider picture, taking account of related public services and agencies and of local needs and of circumstances generally, e.g., an Environment SPC should have regard to transport issues and vice-versa.

### 6.3 Assignment of Sectoral Interests

The provisional assignment of sectoral interests for SPCs and the number of sectoral representations on the SPCs was decided taking into account inter-alia; the limited number of SPC places available and the need to have a balanced constituency for each SPC (see paragraph 6.2).

The provisional assignment of sectoral interest for each SPC is as follows:

<b>Strategic Policy Committee</b>	<b>No. of Elected Members</b>	<b>No. of Sectoral Members</b>	<b>Sectoral Representatives</b>	<b>Total Membership</b>
<b>Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Finance and ICT</b>	5	4	<b>Agriculture/Farming - 1 Development/Construction - 1 Environment/Conservation - 1 Business/Commercial - 1</b>	9
<b>Transportation, Environment, Emergency Services and Capital Projects</b>	4	4	<b>Agriculture/Farming - 1 Environmental/Conservation - 1 Business/Commercial - 1 Community/Voluntary - 1</b>	8
<b>Housing and Integration</b>	5	4	<b>Community/Voluntary - 1 Social Inclusion - 1 Development/Construction - 1 Environmental/Conservation - 1</b>	9
<b>Community</b>			<b>Community /Voluntary - 2</b>	

<b>Development, Recreation, Amenity, Sports, Arts &amp; Culture, Libraries, Museum, Heritage</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Trade Union - 1 Social Inclusion - 1</b>	<b>8</b>
--	----------	----------	---	----------

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of SPC places</b>
Agriculture/Farming	2
Environment/Conservation	3
Development/Construction	2
Business/Commercial	2
Trade Unions	1
Community/Voluntary	4
Social Inclusion	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

#### **6.4 The Nomination Process for Sectoral Representatives**

The nomination process will be as follows:

- The agricultural/farming sector will be facilitated by the farming and agricultural organisations' pillar.
- The environmental/conservation sector will be facilitated by the environmental pillar and the associated Environmental College under the PPN arrangements.
- The development/construction sectors will be facilitated by the business and employer's organisations' pillar.
- The business/commercial sectors will be facilitated by the business and employer's organisations' pillar.
- The trade union sector will be facilitated by the trade union pillar.
- The community/voluntary will be determined based on the local nomination process through the PPN (Public Participation Network).
- The social inclusion sectors will be determined based on the local nomination process through the PPN (Public Participation Network).

Where no agreement on nominations is forthcoming from such sectors, the matter will be determined by the Council by lot.

Individual sectoral nominees and sectoral organisations shall not be represented on more than one Committee.

The Council will provide sufficient time, information and facilities to the PPN, if required, to enable the nomination of representatives. Following the adoption of the SPC Scheme by the Council, each sector will be given 1 month in which to provide details of their nominations to the Council.

#### **6.5 Circulation of Draft Scheme**

Following the adoption of the draft scheme, Carlow County Council will forward same for consideration to the PPN and to the appropriate contact points of the key national stakeholder pillars. A notice to the effect that the Council has considered a draft Scheme and has issued same for consultation will also be published in the local media and on the Council's web site. A period of 1 month will be allowed for the making of submissions on the Scheme. Copies of the draft Scheme will be made available on request.

## **6.6 Adoption of Draft Scheme**

Following receipt of submissions on the Draft Scheme, the Chief Executive with the Cathaoirleach, the CPG and other representatives as appropriate, will consider the submissions and make any amendments to the Draft Scheme as deemed appropriate for submission to the Council for adoption. The Council will then adopt the Scheme as presented or amended as appropriate. While every effort will be made to accommodate the views and preferences of organisations as to the assignment of sectors to SPC's, and the number of representatives from each sector for each SPC, final designation of sectors and SPC places rests with the Council.

## **6.7 Receipt of Nominations from the National Pillars**

On adoption of the scheme, the Council will write to the appropriate bodies enclosing a copy of the adopted Scheme and seeking their nominations for their particular SPC as outlined in the adopted scheme. The exact mechanism for selecting nominees will be left to the appropriate bodies. However, the sectors will be asked to bear in mind the objective of achieving at least 40% male and 40% female in the making of appointments as well as the need to foster social inclusiveness and equality when selecting their representatives. Issues pertaining to nomination mechanism should be referred to that appropriate body. The selected members should, however, be representative of local organisations active in County Carlow in order that local issues would be represented on the SPC, and that the local perspective of the pillars would be brought to the SPC.

Carlow County Council will allow three weeks to enable the selection process of the national pillars.

## **6.8 Receipt of Nominations from other sectors**

With regard to the community / voluntary / social inclusion and environmental sectors, the Council will write to the Public Participation Network enclosing a copy of the adopted scheme and seeking their nominations. Carlow County Council will facilitate these organisations to meet each other, if necessary, to select their representatives for the SPCs. Carlow County Council will allow four weeks for the selection of representatives from this sector.

# **7. SPCs - The Participants**

## **7.1 General**

- Each SPC should have, as a minimum, a total membership of eight and should have, as a minimum, one third of its members drawn from sectoral interests.

- The Chairs of the SPCs should be appointed by the full Council from among the Elected Member appointees to the SPCs, i.e., the Chairs will be Council members.
- The formal appointment of sectoral interests to the SPC is a reserved function of the Council, normally providing for the appointment of the sectoral interests that have been nominated via the mechanism outlined above.
- SPC Chairs should hold office for a minimum period of three years, which should be renewed by the Council. Subsequent Chairs should be appointed from among the existing Elected Member members of the SPC.
- It is desirable that the sectoral nominee retain membership of the SPC for the life of the Council. Where a casual vacancy occurs, it should be filled by the relevant sector.
- Appointments in such circumstances remain the reserved function of members.
- The relevant Director of Services will attend meetings and provide support to the SPC. The Director will, subject to the Chief Executive's overall responsibility for staffing matters, work closely with the Committee and be entitled to speak and participate at meetings.
- Full participation in meetings of the SPCs should be confined to the members of the SPC. Where policy matters of particular interests to other Elected Members or local interest groups arise (e.g., proposals affecting a local area) the SPC may meet with the relevant municipal district members or groups.

## **7.2 Elected Members**

- Every Elected Member will, as a matter of equity and good practice, have an opportunity to serve on an SPC.
- Elected Members may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.
- SPC membership for Elected Members should be for the lifetime of the Council. A person ceasing to be an Elected Member would automatically cease membership of the SPC.
- An Elected Member should not serve on more than one SPC in so far as is possible.
- SPC Elected Member membership should reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representatives of the full Council and be representative, in so far as is practical, of each of the Municipal Districts in the local authority. The Local Government Act 2001 (Schedule 10, paragraph 18) was designed to allow for a basis element of proportionality in appointments to Committees. It is important with SPCs that Carlow County Council 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 on the SPC system.
- The total number of Elected Members appointed to a SPC is inclusive of the Chairperson.

## **7.3 Sectoral Representatives**

Carlow County Council recognises the wide range of interests at national, regional and local level throughout the country. The involvement of such groups in the SPC structure is a major resource to local government, will foster a higher degree of community relevance and local participation. It provides new and different streams of expertise and advice to the local authority.

- The following principles will be applied in respect of the selection of groups and associations for a particular sector including those being facilitated by the national pillars.

- Groups/Associations should be active within the area of Carlow County Council and have a countywide impact or, at a minimum, a relevance to a locality or number of localities in the area.
- Groups/Associations should be open to new members, hold A.G.M.s and regular meetings and should be broadly representative and accountable.
- Single interest groups may be considered, e.g., groups focused on the disabled or elderly. However, groups formed around specific single local issues should not be considered for inclusion in the sectors.
- Local Development Agencies represented at LCDC level should not be represented on an SPC. Clear communication between the SPCs and the Local Development Agencies should, however, be facilitated in order to keep both informed of their respective roles/activities. This communication can be facilitated by the C.P.G.
- The PPN should select its nominees following invitation to do so by Carlow County Council.

#### **7.4 State Agencies / Local Development Agencies**

State Agencies and Local Development Agencies will not be included as nominating bodies to the sectors and should not be represented on an SPC.

#### **7.5 Linking the work of SPCs with other areas.**

While Carlow County Council is conscious that SPCs are expected to be a key part of the local government structure, they are also expected to link with the operation of other groups. Practical steps will be put in place to encourage SPC links with the Full Council, the CPG, and Municipal Districts, the LCDC, Local Community Safety Partnerships and other agencies as appropriate.

- SPC Chairpersons should, where possible to introduce recommendations for approval by the full Council.
- Each sector should have a system in place to ensure structured feedback on the activities of the SPC to his or her nominating organisation PPN (as appropriate).
- There will be automatic feedback to the relevant SPC on whether or not the recommendations of an SPC were approved or not at full Council, and if not the reason for non-approval/amendment.

#### **7.6 Expenses incurred by members.**

In general, any expenses arising for an SPC member would be met by the organisations the SPC member is representing. However, in exceptional circumstances, those SPC members whose expenses could not be met in that manner would be entitled to travel expenses for attendance at SPC meetings at the applicable rate. In such circumstances, the expenses will be met by the local authority.

#### **7.7 Workflows**

Each SPC should adopt a multi-annual work programme along with annual work programmes as required. These work programmes are subject to the approval of the Corporate Policy Group. The Chair of the SPC is responsible for bringing the work programmes for adoption to the CPG. The Chair of the SPC is also responsible for bringing any finalised policy proposals

from the SPC to the CPG in the first instance and thereafter to the plenary Council for consideration. The Chair of the SPC is also responsible for providing feedback to the SPC on the approval processes for work programmes or policy initiatives. The work programmes should be linked to the Council's Corporate Plan.

## **8. Support Measures**

Each sector should put in place appropriate measures to enable a structured feedback process between sectoral representatives and their nominating sectors.

Carlow County Council will appoint a named senior official as a contact person in the relevant Directorships, who will be available for all SPC members to discuss SPC matters in between meetings.

### **8.1 Availability of Information**

Where relevant and in the spirit of Freedom of Information, appropriate information will be made publicly available. This includes making available minutes and reports processed by the SPCs. In instances where documentation is of a confidential nature, this will be specified as such.

### **8.2 Standing Orders and regulating of SPC meetings**

Standing Orders were previously adopted by the Council for SPCs. New Standing Orders may be adopted by the Council, following recommendations from each SPC.

### **8.3 Training**

Carlow County Council will provide on-going training for members of the SPCs and for support staff, where appropriate and where resources permit. Where appropriate, SPC members who attend training may be required to prepare a report for circulation to SPC members.

### **8.4 Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 – Transparency Code**

The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 is designed to provide information to the public regarding who may be lobbying whom and about what. Individuals and organisations who participate in Strategic Policy Committees established by the local authorities may have obligations under the Act.

A critical element of public policy formulation by the SPCs is the availability to local authorities of expertise, skills and knowledge from people 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 Register of Lobbying.

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 & Public Expenditure and Reform to address this situation.

Communications between members of an SPC about the work of the Committee would be exempt where the group complies with the Transparency Code and where the local authority that established the Committee publishes the following on its website:

- The Committee's Terms of Reference, i.e., the SPC Scheme
- Details of the membership of the Committee, and
- Agendas and minutes of meetings.

## **9. Summary of the Key Recommendations of the Review of the Operation of the Strategic Policy Committees**

- 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 ensure that documentation concerning SPC meetings is sent well in advance of the meetings.
- The agenda and minutes of SPC meetings should be circulated four weeks in advance of meetings.
- 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 greater use of external agencies such as the LGMA, Local Government Anti-Poverty Network, Institutions of Education, 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.
- 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.
- The SPCs sectoral representatives should provide feedback to their nominating organisations on the activities of the SPC.
- Members of SPCs should be provided with automatic feedback on the outcome of the Council's decisions on SPC recommendations.

## **10. Conclusion**

The process of formalising the Strategic policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029 involves the preparation of a Draft Scheme by the Carlow Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council and the Chairs designate of the SPCs.

The process takes into account the Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees - Revised Guidelines for Establishment and Operation (June 2024)

Following approval of the draft scheme by Council, it will be advertised and circulated for comment and consultation. Following consideration of any submissions made, and following recommendations from the CPG group of the Council, the Council may adopt the scheme with or without amendments.

When the scheme is adopted the nomination process commences. When the nomination process has been completed, the Council is advised of the nominations from the sectors to the SPCs.

Following the adoption of the proposed membership of the SPCs by the Council, the Strategic Policy Committees are established as soon as is practicable thereafter.

### **Appendix 1**

Copy of advertisement which will be published on **the 10<sup>th</sup> September** 2024.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **DRAFT STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Carlow County Council has considered and adopted a draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024 – 2029 which is now available for viewing at [www.carlow.ie](http://www.carlow.ie). A copy can also be obtained by contacting the Corporate Services, Carlow County Council at [corporate@carlowcoco.ie](mailto:corporate@carlowcoco.ie)

Submissions in writing on the draft Scheme should be forwarded to the undersigned no later than 12 noon on **10<sup>th</sup> October** 2024.

**Michael Rainey, Director of Services.**