



Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME 2024-2029

Version 1.3
Adopted November 2024

1.0 Introduction

Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) bring together both elected members, and people actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to develop and review policies related to the services provided by the Council.

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

Circular Letter LG 09/2024 dated 7th June 2024 from the Department of the Housing, Local Government & Heritage outlines the requirement for each County and City Council, following the local elections, to establish new SPC's in line with the revised guidelines published by the Department in June 2024 – '*Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees: Revised Guidelines for establishment and operation*'. It is now proposed to establish such committees to create avenues for the development of policies that will benefit all communities in Sligo over the period 2024 to 2029.

1.1 Role of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)

SPCs have a major role in assisting and advising the Council in relation to functions of a strategic statutory nature. They also have functions in other areas including the establishment of priorities for particular services. The SPC system is intended to give councillors and relevant sectoral interests an opportunity for full involvement in the policy-making process from the early stages, when policy options are more fluid. The SPCs provide elected members with external views as they discharge their strategic role in the development of the local authority, including their policy development and oversight roles within the local authority. While the role of each SPC is to assist the Council in the formulation and development of policy, the final policy decisions rest ultimately with the full Council.

In accordance with Revised Guidelines for Establishment and Operation of Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees, there is a requirement that SPCs:

- a) should meet a minimum of three times per year or more often if required, at suitable times for all SPC Members, with a calendar of meetings to be agreed;
- b) adopt a multi-annual work programme, linked to the local authority's Corporate Plan which may be updated regularly as necessary, to be approved by the CPG;
- c) agree an annual work programme in accordance with the multi-annual work programme;
- d) be tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of the local authority;
- e) have a minimum one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committee's work;
- f) SPC Chairs should hold office for a minimum of three years which could be renewed by the Council;
- g) A Director of Services will attend meetings and provide support for each SPC.

Each SPC is required to have regard to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) prepared by the Regional Assembly. Each SPC should also consider climate action and biodiversity action/impacts as part of any and all policies that form part of the work programme. SPCs can provide advice and assistance to the Council in the preparation of Annual Service Delivery Plans.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 132 and 136 of the 2001 Act as amended by the 2014 Act, the Chief Executive is required to advise and assist the SPC generally regarding the performance of the functions of 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. In addition, in accordance with Section 147 (7) of the 2001 Act as inserted by Section 54 of the 2014 Act, 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 as expressed at a meeting of an SPC.

Section 48(3A) of the 2001 Act (inserted by Section 41(d) of the 2014 Act) empowers an 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;
- provide at least one month's notice, or shorter interval if mutually agreed.

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

1.2 The Corporate Policy Group (CPG)

The statutory basis for Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is set out in Section 133 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by Section 48 of the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014. The CPG comprises:

- Cathaoirleach of the Council
- SPC Chairs, and
- in the case of a Municipal District without an SPC Chair, a representative from the Municipal District concerned.

The CPG is supported by the Chief Executive and the Management Team and links the work of the different SPCs to provide a forum where policy positions affecting the Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. The role of the CPG is to advise and assist the elected Council, with full decision-making authority remaining with the Council. It is a matter for the Council, in co-operation with the Chief Executive, to determine the range and responsibilities

and tasks of the CPG. The role of the CPG is strategic and it links and co-ordinates the work of the different SPCs.

The CPG should:

- a) play a key role in preparation of the annual budget and Corporate Plan;
- b) provide advice and assistance to the elected Council on matters of general concern to the Council either on its own initiative or following a request from the Council;
- c) determine responsibility for discharge of reserved functions as between the municipal district level (or a specific municipal district) and the local authority, where the question of consistency or avoidance of unnecessary duplication is referred to it by the Chief Executive;
- d) monitor the overall performance of the Council, including in relation to matters of governance and oversight, in particular through consideration of reports of the Audit Committee, Local Government Auditor and National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC), and in accordance with the Local Government Code of Governance;
- e) deals with overall issues in relation to service delivery plans, customer service, value for money etc.
- f) approve the work programmes of the SPCs and monitor their achievement;
- g) co-ordinate the work of the SPCs and monitor their work programmes;
- h) request SPCs to consider particular policy issues where appropriate.
- i) provide feedback to the SPCs on Council policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs.
- j) monitor the overall performance of the Local Authority

2.0 SPC Framework 2024-2029

2.1 Strategic Policy Committees and their Composition

The Guidelines identify factors taken into account when determining the overall framework of SPCs including:

- a) the total number of elected members on the Council;
- b) the range of sectoral and other interests to be represented, including facilitating a reasonable spread of interests;
- c) the desirability of allowing adequate opportunity for participation by councillors and sectoral interests
- d) the organisational arrangement of service groupings within the Council and the remit envisaged for each SPC;
- e) the need to ensure that the organisational and financial resources of the Council are not over-stretched;
- f) integration with other meeting requirements and committee structures and ensuring streamlined procedures generally
- g) the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), including its membership and remit.

The proposed Strategic Policy Committee structure for 2024 – 2029, and related Service areas, are:

Strategic Policy Committee	Related Service Areas
Housing & Governance	<i>Housing incl Tenancy Services, Housing Maintenance, Homelessness & Traveller Accommodation, Corporate Services, Human Resources, Health & Safety, Finance, Information Technology, Procurement, Motor Tax, Internal Audit</i>
Climate & Infrastructure	<i>Climate Action, Parks & Recreation, Coastal Protection, Flooding, Piers & Harbours, Circular Economy, Environment, Water Quality, Rural Water, Roads Operations, Emergency Services incl Fire Services, Building Control and Civil Defence</i>
Live Invest Visit	<i>Community, Community Safety Partnership, Integration, Culture, Library Service, Arts Service, Museum, Archives, Creative Ireland, Enterprise, LEO, Economic Development, LCDC/LAG/LEADER Programme, Tourism, Integration,</i>
Placemaking	<i>Planning Development & Enforcement, vacancy, dereliction & defective blocks, Heritage, Bio-diversity, UNESCO, Capital Programmes (Housing Delivery, Public Infrastructure, Town Regeneration)</i>

The remit of these Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) will extend in the main to policy matters relating to:

Housing & Governance

- a) Corporate Governance
- b) Finance
- c) Information Technology
- d) Procurement
- e) Motor Tax
- f) Internal Audit
- g) Health and Safety
- h) Human Resources

- i) Corporate Services incl Irish Language
- j) Homeless Strategy
- k) Estate Management Strategy
- l) Traveller Accommodation Programme
- m) Housing Allocations

Climate & Infrastructure

- a) Sligo Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 /(Climate Action)
- b) Water Quality Management
- c) Rural Water
- d) Recycling, Waste Minimisation and Management and National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy
- e) Litter Management
- f) Control of Animals
- g) Road Maintenance & Improvement
- h) Road Safety
- i) Active Travel
- j) Traffic Management
- k) Parking
- l) Speed Limits
- m) Fleet Management
- n) Burial Grounds
- o) Public Lighting
- p) Piers & Harbours incl Sligo Port
- q) Parks, Recreation & Leisure
- r) Water Safety
- s) Coastal Protection
- t) Bathing Water Quality
- u) Renewable Energy
- v) Flood Risk Management
- w) Casual Trading
- x) Emergency Services incl Fire Services
- y) Civil Defence
- z) Building Control & Building Standards

Live Invest Visit

- a) Community Development
- b) Oversight of community elements of Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) & LECP Economic Actions
- c) Sligo 2030 Strategy – One Voice, One Vision
- d) Social Inclusion
- e) Library Service

- f) Creative Ireland Programme
- g) PEACEPLUS Programme
- h) Arts Plan/Arts Service
- i) Culture, Museum & Archives
- j) Sports Activities
- k) Public Participation/Citizen Engagement
- l) Economic Development Strategy
- m) LCDC/LAG and LEADER Programme
- n) Tourism Strategy
- o) Enterprise Development & Local Enterprise Office (LEO)
- p) Community Safety Partnerships
- q) Integration

Placemaking

- a) County Development Plan 2023-2029
- b) Development of new strategic infrastructure
- c) Planning & Development & Enforcement
- d) Heritage
- e) Biodiversity
- f) UNESCO
- g) Dereliction & Vacancy & defective blocks
- h) Development Contribution Scheme
- i) Urban, Rural, Town & Village Regeneration
- j) Social & Affordable Housing delivery and supports
- k) Housing Architecture & Design
- l) Refurbishment & Retrofit Programme

SPC Membership

The Guidelines recommend that each SPC should have as a minimum a total membership of nine. Two-thirds of its membership is to be drawn from the elected representatives of the Council and one-third of the membership be drawn from external sectoral groupings. The appointment of sectoral interests to the SPC is a reserved function.

The chairs are appointed by the full Council for a minimum period of three years, which may be renewed by the Council, or they may hold the position for the lifetime of the Council.

Membership of the SPCs, both councillors and sectoral representatives, shall be for the lifetime of the Council. Casual vacancies which arise will be filled by the sector involved. Nominating bodies may also de-select their nominees. Attendance at meetings will be monitored and appropriate action may be recommended by the Corporate Policy Group to the Council if any committee member is repeatedly absent from meetings.

2.2 Councillor Representation

The principles set out in paragraph 7.2 of the '*Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees: Revised Guidelines for establishment and operation*' (June 2024) shall be applied in the selection of councillors to the SPC's:

- a) each member of Sligo County Council should, as a matter of equity and good practice be a member of at least one SPC.
- b) Councillors may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.
- c) SPC Membership for councillors should be for the lifetime of the Council.
- d) a person ceasing to be a councillor would automatically cease membership of the SPC
- e) a councillor should not serve on more than two SPCs insofar as possible for reasons of equity and good practice and workload.
- f) SPC councillor membership should reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representation on the full Council. It is also important that the SPC membership should, as far as it is practical, be representative of each of the municipal districts in the local authority.
- g) Sligo County Council respects the requirements for Gender Balance in relation to the formulation of the SPCs and in so far as possible will ensure that this occurs in the nomination of members of the Council to the SPCs.
- h) the allocation of SPC chairs should also reflect equitably the spread of elected representation on the Council, including, as far as it is practical, be representative of each of the municipal districts in the local authority.

2.3 Sectoral Representation and Nomination

Each SPC must have at least one third of its membership from external sectors relevant to the committee's remit. In accordance with the 2024 guidelines the following factors must be considered in determining sectoral representation on and across each SPC.

A minimum of 6 and where appropriate, 7 sectors should be represented on the SPCs. Configuration as follows:

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

The assignment of Elected Members and Sectoral representation to the **four SPC's** to be established is as follows:

	Housing & Governance	Climate & Infrastructure	Live Invest Visit	Placemaking
Agriculture / Farming		1		
Environmental / Conservation		1		1
Development / Construction				1
Business / Commercial			1	
Trade Union	1		1	
Community/Voluntary	1	1	1	1
Social Inclusion	1		1	
Summary				
Sectoral Reps (one third)	3	3	4	3
Elected Reps (two thirds)	6	6	8	6
Total SPC Membership	9	9	12	9

2.3.1 Nomination Process

- a) The nomination process for representatives from the Agricultural/Farming, sector will be facilitated by the farming and agricultural organisations pillar (Appendix 1).
- b) The business/commercial and development/construction sectors will be facilitated by the business and employers organisations pillar (Appendix 1).
- c) The Trade Union sector will be facilitated and agreed by the Trade Union Pillar (Appendix 1).
- d) The environmental/conservation sector will be facilitated by the environmental pillar and the associated Environmental College under the Public Participation Network (PPN) arrangements. (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) (Appendix 1).

- e) The environmental/conservation, community / voluntary and social inclusion sectors will be determined on the basis of the local nomination process through the PPN.

While a sector may be represented on more than one SPC, regard should be had to ensure that each sector has a minimum representation of one person across the range of SPCs established in the local authority. The final decision as to the sectoral make-up of each SPC rests with Sligo County Council.

The following principles are to apply in the nomination process:

- a) Groups/associations should be active in the area or an area of the authority and have a county wide impact or at a minimum a relevance in a locality or number of localities in the area.
- b) Groups/associations should be open to new members, hold AGMs and regular meetings, and should be broadly representative and accountable.
- c) Single interest groups should be eligible, e.g. campaign groups focused on the disabled or elderly. Single issue groups should be encouraged to affiliate with their relevant PPN's to ensure they are also represented.
- d) Local Development Agencies represented at Strategy Group/ LCDC level should not be represented on an SPC. Arrangements should be in place, however, to facilitate meaningful engagement and consultation with such Local Development Agencies as part of the policy-making process.
- e) Each sector should select its own nominee (s) via the PPN.
- f) State and Local Development Agencies should not be included as nominating bodies to the sectors and should not be represented on the SPC.
- g) Nominations from the sectors should, insofar as possible, reflect an appropriate gender balance.

3.0 SPC Scheme Implementation

3.1 Circulation of Draft Scheme

Following consideration by the Council, the Draft scheme (as amended) will be forwarded for consideration to the PPN and to the appropriate contact points of the key national stakeholder pillars (Appendix 1).

A notice to the effect that the Council has considered a draft scheme and has issued the draft scheme for consultation will be published in the local media and on the local authority's website. A minimum period of one month and up to a maximum of six weeks will be allowed for the making of submissions on the scheme.

3.2 Adoption of SPC Scheme

Following receipt of submissions on the Draft scheme, the Chief Executive, with the Cathaoirleach and the members of the Corporate Policy Group, will consider the submissions and propose any amendments to the draft scheme as deemed appropriate for submission to the Council. The Council will then adopt the revised scheme as presented or amended for the implementation of the SPC system. While every effort must be made to accommodate the views and preferences of organisations as to the assignment of sectors to SPCs, and the number of representatives from each sector for each SPC, final designation of sectors and SPC places will rest with the authority.

3.3 Receipt of Nominations from the National Pillars

On adoption of the scheme the Council will write to the contact persons of the National Key Stakeholder Pillars, (i.e. Business/Employers Pillar, Trade Union Pillar and Farming/Agricultural Pillar), enclosing the adopted scheme, seeking the nominations of the Pillars for their particular SPCs as outlined in the adopted scheme. The exact mechanism for selecting nominees will be left to the Business/Employers, Trade Union, and Farming/Agricultural pillars.

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. The selected members should be representative of local organisations active in the respective county or city, because it is the local perspective of the representative pillars that the members would be expected to bring to the SPCs. The Council will allow one month to enable the selection process by the national pillars. Any issues pertaining to the nomination mechanism used by these national pillars should be referred to the appropriate contact point. Furthermore, the Council will write to the national contact of the environmental sector seeking the validation of nominees to the Environment Electoral College under the PPN.

3.4 Receipt of Nominations from Other Sectors

With regard to the Community/Voluntary, Social Inclusion, and Environmental/Conservation Sectors, the Council will write to the PPN secretariat, enclosing a copy of the scheme and advising that it will facilitate these sectors' organisations to meet each other, if appropriate, to select their representatives for the SPCs as set out in the adopted scheme. The Council will allow one month for the selection of representatives from these three sectors.

4.0 Operation of SPCs

The 2024 Guidelines set out the following procedures in relation to operation of SPC meetings:

- a) A calendar of SPC meetings should be agreed at the start of each year.

SPCs will meet as frequently as necessary but as a minimum three times per year. Each SPC will arrange its own business and proceedings, including the fixing of dates, times and venues of meetings. Procedures for SPC meetings are set out in Sligo County Council's Standing Orders. When preparing for a meeting and choosing a location, the Council must ensure appropriate accessibility arrangements are in place. It is suggested that SPC meetings be conducted in a less formal way than full Council meetings in order to create an informal and collaborative atmosphere that would allow views and opinions on policy issues.

- b) The SPC Chair and relevant Director of Services 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.
- c) SPC meeting documentation will be circulated to SPC members well in advance of meetings, ideally 4 weeks in advance, and additionally, agenda and minutes should be circulated to SPC members and other councillors in a County Council area well in advance (agenda ideally 4 weeks in advance). Minutes should include action points which assign responsibility to a specific party or parties in respect of each action.
- d) The local authority should provide a key contact person (other than the Director of Services) for all SPC members and particularly for sectoral representatives to deal with SPC matters.
- e) The Chief Executive is required to advise and assist the SPC generally with regard to the performance of the functions of the SPC, including when requested to do so by the SPC members. Normally, where the views expressed at the SPC meeting require the particular attention of the Chief Executive, the SPC Chair will identify these for the Director of Services for onward transmission to the Chief Executive and other local authority staff as appropriate.
- f) Each SPC meeting should include a reminder at or near the beginning of the meeting as appropriate of the ethical requirements placed on SPC members by Section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001. SPC members should inform the meeting of any conflicts of interest arising from any of the agenda items. Each member of the SPC will be required to uphold the highest standards of ethics and should familiarise themselves with the provisions of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 and GDPR.
- g) Training programmes would be valuable for SPC members, and consideration of needs in this regard could be included in the Training and Development Programme for Councillors. Effective meeting skills would be useful for SPC chairs and training on policy areas would be significant for all SPC members.

- h) SPC Chairs should introduce SPC recommendations for full approval by the full Council
- i) The SPCs sectoral representatives should provide feedback to their nominating organisations on the activities of the SPC.
- j) Members of SPCs should be provided with automatic feedback on the outcome of the Council's decisions on SPC recommendations.
- k) Many Council's already promote the use of the Irish language in various facets of their work and this practice could be extended to SPCs. Bain úsáid as an teanga atá again – as an obair a thagann an fhoghlaim.
- l) In general, any travel expenses arising in respect of attendance at SPC meetings should be met by the nominating body. However, in exceptional circumstances, where the nominating body is unable to pay such travel expenses, the Council will provide for payment of travel expenses in respect of attendance at SPC meetings. Expenses will be paid in accordance with the agreed Civil Service Motor Travel Rates. Any member claiming expenses will be required to provide an indemnity to Sligo County Council on their motor car insurance policy along with a copy of their vehicle registration certificate

Appendix 1 - Contact Points for National Pillars

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