



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME

2024 – 2029

DRAFT

July 2024 – version 1

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Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029

Introduction

In accordance with the provisions of Section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Council shall establish by resolution committees to be known as Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) to consider matters connected with the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy which relate to the functions of the local authority and to advise the Council on those matters.

CPG – Structure

The CPG comprises of:

1. the Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council as its chair;
2. the Chairperson of each of the Strategic Policy Committees, and
3. in the case of a municipal district without an SPC chair, a representative of the Municipal District concerned.

The CPG links the work of the different SPC's, acts as a sort of cabinet and provides a forum where policy positions affecting the whole Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. An Cathaoirleach will report to the Council on the work of the CPG.

CPG - Role

The CPG, like an SPC, is a committee of the Council.

Its 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 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 Budget and Corporate Plan;
- 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 a question of consistency or avoidance of unnecessary duplication is referred to it by the Chief Executive;
- Monitor the overall performance of a local authority, 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;

- Deal with overall issues in relation to service delivery plans, customer service, value for money, etc., (individual SPCs would deal with such issues in their work insofar as their particular service remit was concerned);
- Approve the work programmes of the SPCs and monitor their achievement;
- Co-ordinate the work of the SPCs;
- Request SPCs to consider particular policy issues; where appropriate; and
- Provide feedback to the SPCs on Council policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs.

Role and Objectives of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)

The Council is and remains the decision-making authority, and the task of the SPCs, as committees of the Council, is to advise and assist the Council in its work. While it is the task of each SPC to assist the Council in the formulation and development of policy, the final policy decisions rest ultimately with the full Council. The SPC system is intended to give Councillors and relevant sectoral interests an opportunity for full involvement in the policy-making process from early stages, when policy options are more fluid. A key role for SPCs will be to focus on strategic issues and in taking a strategic overview of relevant policy areas in the wider context. *Accordingly:*

- SPCs should adopt a multi-annual work programme linked to the local authority's Corporate Plan and update regularly as necessary.
- The SPCs will be represented by the SPC Chairperson at Council meetings.
- Each SPC's work will take account of the Council's overall corporate policy and objectives, comply with statutory provisions, integrate with statutory plans where relevant, and link realistically to financial resources and be responsive to sectoral consultations.
- The SPC may seek the attendance of public authorities at a meeting for the purpose of assisting in developing policy.
- The CPG should co-ordinate the work and monitor the work programmes of the SPCs.

- The SPCs play a crucial role in delivering of Sustainable Development Goals at local level. When considering and proposing policy all SPCs should identify how the proposed policy will impact on the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

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 formulations 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.

Structure - Strategic Policy Group

The SPC structure provides for the establishment of four SPCs as follows:

1. Housing & Integration Policy.
 2. Economic Development Planning and Regeneration Policy.
 3. Climate Action, Transport and Environment Policy.
 4. Community, Cultural and Emergency Service Policy.
- Each member of Offaly County Council to be a member of at least one SPC.
 - The SPCs will meet as frequently as necessary and at least once every quarter.
 - Each SPC to have at least one third of its membership from sectors relevant to the committee's remit.
 - Each committee will arrange its own business and proceedings (including the fixing of dates and times of meetings) subject to any, if necessary, amendment of the Council's Standing Orders.

- The full Council will appoint the Chairperson of each SPC from amongst the elected members appointed by the Council.
- The Chairperson of each SPC will hold office for a minimum period of three years which may be renewed by the Council.
- Generally, membership (both Councillors and representatives of sectoral interests) of SPC will be for the lifetime of the Council.
- Each SPC will prepare annually a draft work plan for the approval of the Council and will formally report on this work plan at least annually.

Sectoral Interests

The Scheme provides for Sectoral Interests to be represented as follows: -

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

The nomination process for representatives from the Agricultural/Farming; Business/Commercial; Development/Construction and Trade Union sectors will be facilitated and agreed by the National Social Partners Pillars for those sectors while the nomination for the Environment/Conservation representatives will be facilitated by the environmental pillar and the associated Environmental College under the Public Participation Network (PPN) arrangements.

The nomination process for the Environmental/Conservation Community/Voluntary and Social sectors will be determined on the basis of a local nomination process through the 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

SPC MEMBERSHIP

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Housing & Integration Policy 9 Members | | | |
|---|--|--|--|

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| Chairperson Designate | - | Councillor Noel Cribbin | 1 |
| Members | - | Councillors | 4 |
| Sectoral Interest | - | Business/Commercial, Development / Construction, | 1 |
| | | Voluntary/Community (PPN) | 2 |
| | | Social Inclusion (PPN) | 1 |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Economic Development Planning & Regeneration 12 Members | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| Chairperson Designate | - | Councillor Frank Moran | 1 |
| Members | - | Councillors | 6 |
| Sectoral Interest | - | Agriculture/Farming | 1 |
| | | Business/Commercial, Development / Construction | 1 |
| | | Community/Voluntary (PPN) | 1 |
| | | Environmental/Conservation (PPN) | 1 |
| | | Trade Union | 1 |

| |
|---|
| <p>Climate Action Transport and Environment Policy 10 Members</p> |
|---|

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Chairperson Designate | - | Councillor Oliver Bryant | 1 |
| Members | - | Councillors | 4 |
| Sectoral Interest | - | Agriculture/Farming | 1 |
| | | Business/Commercial | 1 |
| | | Development/Construction | 1 |
| | | Environmental/Conservation (PPN) | 1 |
| | | Trade Union | 1 |

| |
|---|
| <p>Community, Cultural and Emergency Service Policy 9 Members</p> |
|---|

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|---|
| Chairperson Designate | - | Councillor Sean O'Brien | 1 |
| Members | - | Members | 4 |
| Sectoral Interest | - | Agriculture/Farming | 1 |
| | | Environmental/Conservation | 1 |
| | | Social Inclusion (PPN) | 1 |
| | | Voluntary/Community (PPN) | 1 |

Training:

Offaly County Council will provide ongoing training and support for members of the SPCs to support them in their work:-

- Workshops on policy to cover the various areas within the remit of the Strategic Policy Committees.
- Briefings on the role and functions of local government and Strategic Policy Committees.
- Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 and Transparency Code.
- Standing Orders and the regulation of SPC meetings.

Process of Establishment of Strategic Policy Committees

Sequence of Events

Timescale

Draft Scheme to be considered by Council

July 2024

Council to seek nomination from National Pillars
and PPN

July 2024

Advise Council of nominations from the sectors to SPCs
and Council to adopt Scheme

September 2024

First meeting of Strategic Policy Committees

October 2024

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INDICATIVE LIST OF POLICY ISSUES

Housing & Integration Policy SPC

- Consideration of social housing policies including Rent and Allocation Schemes.
- Role of L.A. Housing/Voluntary/Private housing options.
- Homeless Policy and Supports
- Home ownership supports including housing loans and grants
- Housing Estate Management / Tenant Participation Polices /Anti-Social Behaviour
- Traveller Accommodation Policy (subject to provisions re. Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee)
- Migrant Integration

Economic Development Planning and Regeneration Policy SPC

- On-going review and monitoring of economic development policies and objectives, in particular the Offaly Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027 and any successor.
- On-going review and monitoring of County Development Plan policies
- Input into preparation of the Offaly Development Contribution Scheme 2025/6-2029/30.
- Preparation of the economic elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)
- The review of the implementation of the economic elements of the LECP
- Ongoing review of Local Enterprise Office activities and policies promoting enterprise development and entrepreneurship.
- Industrial Development Policies.

- Job Creation / Maintenance Policies
- Policy linkage – I.D.A., Enterprise Ireland, Solas, Fáilte Ireland and other local development initiatives.
- Tourism Promotion / Development.
- Impact of National and Regional Policies.
- Forward Planning – policy development and review.
- Heritage, Conservation and Biodiversity.
- Sustainable development issues
- Linkages with other policy committees.
- Review on an ongoing basis of overall strategy for rural development
- Just Transition – policy issues.
- Programme and policies on Urban and Rural Renewal, Regeneration, Town Centre First.

Climate Action Transport and Environment Policy SPC

- Climate Action Plan.
- Community Climate Action.
- Energy Management.
- Environmental and Climate Action Public Awareness and Education.
- Flood Resilience.
- Pollution Control Policy.
- Water Quality Management Plan.
- Waste Management Policy.
- Litter Management Policy.

- Environmental Enforcement.
- Rural Water Services and Capital Programme priorities.
- Burial Ground Provision and Maintenance.
- Animal Health and Food Protection Policy.
- Ongoing review of National / Regional / Local Roads Policies.

Policies relating to the role of transportation system:

- Social
- Economic
- Environment
- Employment.
- Rural / Urban Transportation issues.
- Active Travel and Greenway policy.
- Traffic Management Policies.
- Road Safety.
- Public Lighting Policy

Community, Cultural and Emergency Service Policy SPC

- Local and Community Development.
- Social Inclusion.
- Healthy Offaly.
- Age Friendly
- Sports Partnership
- Comhairle na nÓg
- Library Development Policies.

- Artistic and Cultural Policies.
- Major Emergency Management.
- Fire Prevention, Fire Protection and Fire Safety.
- Civil Defence
- Building Control.

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