COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL CHAINNIGH
KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE (SPCS) GUIDELINES

2019 -2024

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What is a Strategic Policy Committee?

Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) are Local Authority Committees in City and County Councils, whose membership includes Elected Councillors; representatives of business, farming interests, environmental/conservation groups, trade unions and community and voluntary members.

Underpinning the SPC process is a desire to strengthen the electoral mandate within Local Government. It gives Councillors and relevant sectoral interests an opportunity for full involvement in the policy-making process from the earliest stages. However, while each SPC assists the Council in the formulation and development of policy, the final policy decisions rest ultimately with the full Council.

The SPC Framework

The SPC Framework reflects the major functions or services of a local authority within the broader context and is tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of a Local Authority.

In determining the overall framework for SPCs, the Council considers:

- How to provide adequate opportunity for participation by Councilors and sectoral interests in policymaking;
- The total number of Elected Members on the Council;
- The service groupings within the authority and the remit envisaged for each SPC;
- The range of sectoral and other interests to be represented; one third of its membership is generally drawn from sectors relevant to the Committee's work;
- The need to ensure that the organisational and financial resources of the particular local authority are not over-stretched; and,
- How to integrate with other meeting requirements and Committee structures to ensure efficient service delivery generally.

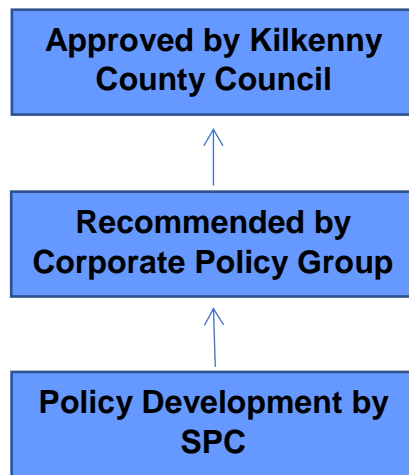## What does an SPC do and how does it work?

An SPC has no responsibility for routine operational matters such as the delivery of services.

As sub-committees of the Council, SPCs advise and assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy. If an SPC is operating successfully, much of the strategic thinking, preliminary and background work, discussion and recommendation can be completed at SPC level, before it is finally considered and ratified by the Council.

Accordingly:

Each SPC agrees its annual programme; this is linked to the strategic policies and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan. Additionally, it must comply with national and regional statutory provisions, integrate with statutory plans where relevant, and link realistically to financial resources.

- SPC Chairs report to the Council on individual Committee proceedings and discussions.
- Each SPC may decide on appropriate consultative arrangements, having regard to statutory provision, the interests already represented on the SPC, and any guidelines provided by the Council.

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SPC Membership

In accordance with legislative guidelines, the membership of the SPCs consists of two thirds Councillors and one third sectoral representatives. Each SPC member holds office for the lifetime of the Council (normally five years). A new SPC scheme is drawn up for each new Council term. It must be put on public display and the scheme is subsequently agreed by the Elected Members. Each Councillor must be a member of at least 1 SPC. If a Councillor member of an SPC ceases to be a Councillor, he/she automatically ceases to be a member of an SPC.

Sectoral Representation

Factors considered when reflecting sectoral representation on each SPC include:

- The need to foster economic and social development;
- Facilitating relevant organisations to be part of the nominating constituencies, while having as many sectors as possible represented across the SPC system;
- Ensuring balance between divergent interests;
- Demonstrating social inclusiveness and equality in sectoral representation;
- Achieving gender balance;
- Reflecting the priority concerns of each sector and the appropriateness of the SPC forum to articulate issues;
- Communicating a pro-active information strategy to promote the role of policymaking in local government.

The following sectors are currently represented on the SPCs:

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

Full list of Kilkenny County Council (KCC) SPC Members is provided at **Appendix I.**

Role of the SPC Chairperson

The Chairperson of each SPC is a Councillor, nominated by the County Council, and holds office for a minimum period of three years. SPC Chairpersons are nominated on the basis that they have an interest in the policy agenda of the SPCs and are prepared to provide leadership to their colleagues and sectoral representatives in the formulation of policy.

Subsequent Chairpersons may be appointed by the County Council from among the existing Councillor members of the SPC. If a Chairperson ceases to be a Councillor, he/she automatically ceases to be a member of the SPC.
At the time of a Local Election, in accordance with Section 17 of the Local Government Act 2001, the Chairperson of an SPC continues to hold office until the ordinary day of retirement of Members following the election (7 days after Polling Day).

The Chairperson of each SPC sits with the Council's Cathaoirleach on the Corporate Policy Group (CPG), which acts as a broader forum to coordinate and connect the work of the various SPCs. Draft policies from an SPC must be considered and recommended for approval by the CPG before being approved by the plenary Council.

SPC Chairpersons also have a close working relationship with the relevant Director of Services to facilitate the smooth and effective operation of the SPC.

The Chairperson of the SPC is responsible for overseeing and conducting the work of the Committee in a manner which ensures that the Committee operates fully in accordance with its terms of reference.

The SPC Chairperson's report is an agenda item for Plenary Council meetings.

Conflict of Interest

In carrying out their role, External members appointed to strategic policy committees should abide by the provisions of Part 15 of the 2001 Act, where relevant and the principles of the Code of Conduct. In particular, they should avoid any conflict of interest and are subject to the disclosure requirements concerning pecuniary and other beneficial interests.

Kilkenny County Council SPC's for 2019 - 2024

The SPCs for Kilkenny County Council are:

SPC 1: *Economic Development, Enterprise Support & Tourism, Planning & Development*

SPC 2: *Transportation Policy/Mobility Management & Water Services*

SPC 3: *Housing*

SPC 4: *Environment Protection, Climate Action & Energy*

SPC 5: *Community, Cultural & Fire Services*

SPC Proposed Work Programmes

Each SPC will agree a Work Programme.

Full details on the functions within each SPC is provided in Appendix II.

Preparing for SPC Membership

As part of their work on the SPC, members have an opportunity to learn more about the functions within the SPC remit. Training may be provided if required. Elements covered may include:

- Briefings on the role, functions and reform of local government;

- Briefings on various policy areas;

- Skills-orientated training, such as team building;

- Effective meeting skills for SPC Chairpersons.

Conduct at Meetings

Both SPC members and staff have the common interest of serving the community. Mutual respect and courtesy are core to our way of working and are essential to effective local government. They should be observed in all interactions and communications.

Travel expenses for sectoral representatives

In general, any travel expenses arising for an SPC member are met by the representative's organisation. However, in exceptional circumstances, where the nominating body is unable to pay such travel expenses the SPC member is entitled to claim travelling for attendance at SPC meeting at a similar rate to Elected Member of the Council.

Lobbying Act 2015

A critical element of public policy formulation, which is the role of the SPC is the availability of persons with expertise, skills and knowledge from persons outside of the public service. The work of SPC's is intended to contribute to quality and effectiveness of the policy formulation process in the public interest.

The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 provides for excepted communications between members of certain types of working groups, task forces, committees etc. The Act states that the following are excepted communications:

Section 5(5)(n) *"communications between members of a relevant body appointed by a Minister of the Government, or by a public service body, for the purpose of reviewing, assessing or analysing any issue of public policy with a view to reporting to the Minister of the Government or public service body on it"*

Section 5(6) defines relevant body as follows:

In subsection (5)(n) relevant body means a body (a) the members of which are appointed by a Minister of the Government or by a public service body and include one or more persons who are designated public officials and one or more persons who are neither public servants nor engaged for the purposes of a public service body, and (b) which conducts its activities in accordance with the Transparency Code.

Transparency Code

The SPC's are regarded as "relevant body" and have to meet the transparency criteria information on the SPC's which must be published on the website.

Section 5(7) of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 provides that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform shall prepare and publish a code, to be known as the "Transparency Code", which sets out how certain relevant public bodies, such as ministerial advisory groups, may conduct their activities in a transparent way. By adhering to the Transparency Code, communications within these bodies would meet the exemption from the requirement to register and report on lobbying activities.

Accordingly, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has prepared a Transparency Code.

For convenience, a copy of the Code is available to download here:

https://www.lobbying.ie/media/5986/2015-08-06-transparency-code-eng.pdf

APPENDIX I

- Kilkenny County Council SPC Membership -

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE	ELECTED MEMBERS	SECTORAL REPRESENTATIVE	SECTOR
SPC 1 *Economic Development Enterprise Support and Tourism, Planning & Development Policy*	John Coonan Michael Doyle Pat Fitzpatrick Ger Frisby **[C]** Michael McCarthy Eugene McGuinness Maria Dollard Patrick O'Neill	John Bambrick Marion Acreman Deirdre Shine Brian Hamilton Annette Jolly Paul Brophy Eileen Moyles	*1-Agriculture/Farming (IFA) 1-Development/Construction (CI) 1-Business/Commercial (CI) 1-Env./Conservation (PPN) 1-Social Inclusion (PPN) 1-Community/Voluntary (PPN) 1-Trade Union (ICTU)*
SPC 2 *Transportation Policy/ Mobility Management & Water Services*	Tomás Breathnach Peter Cleere Deirdre Cullen Fidelis Doherty Matt Doran **[C]** Michael Delaney Pat Dunphy Patrick O'Neill	Paul O'Brien Barry Lynch Gary Graham Alan Sullivan Eileen Ryan Gerard Ferris Ger Mooney	*1-Agriculture/Farming (IFA) 1-Development/Construction (CI) 1-Business/Commercial (CI) 1-Env./Conservation (PPN) 1-Social Inclusion (PPN) 1-Community/Voluntary (PPN) 1-Trade Union (ICTU)*
SPC 3 *Housing*	Eamon Aylward Martin Brett Pat Fitzpatrick Denis Hynes Joe Lyons Andrew McGuinness Eugene McGuinness Joe Malone **[C]**	Brian Dunlop Mags Morrissey Lisa Morris John Bourke Yvonne Moriarty	*1-Development/Construction (CI) 1-Env./Conservation (PPN) 1-Social Inclusion (PPN) 1-Community/Voluntary (PPN) 1-Trade Union (ICTU)*
SPC 4 *Environmental Protection, Climate Action & Energy*	Mary Hilda Cavanagh **[C]** Deirdre Cullen David Fitzgerald Denis Hynes Joe Lyons Maria Dollard	James Murphy John Hurley Laurence Conroy Shem Caulfield Noel O'Donoghue	*1-Agriculture/Farming (IFA) 1-Development/Construction (CI) 1-Business/Commercial (CI) 1-Env./Conservation (PPN) 1-Community/Voluntary (PPN)*
SPC5 *Community, Cultural & Fire Services*	Tomás Breathnach John Brennan **[C]** Martin Brett Peter Cleere John Coonan Pat Dunphy	Michael Rice Kathy Purcell Martin Brennan Denis Brophy Fergal Canton	*1-Agriculture/Farming (IFA) 1-Business/Commercial (CI) 1-Social Inclusion (PPN) 1-Community/Voluntary (PPN) 1-Trade Union (ICTU)*

*   *C: Chairperson*

Functional Areas of Each SPC

Economic Development, Enterprise Support and Tourism, Planning & Development Policy
- *Tourism Strategy and Twinning*
- *Economic development*
- *Enterprise support functions.*
- *Implementation and review of the economic elements of the LECP*
- *Planning and Development*
- *Conservation of Built Environment*
- *Urban Renewal & Town Centre Sustainability*
- *Land Activation/Vacant Site Levy/Derelict Sites*

Transportation Policy / Mobility Management & Water Services
- *Roads*
- *Road Safety issues and Traffic Management*
- *Mobility Management*
- *Cycling Policy*
- *Pedestrian Facilities*
- *Parking*
- *Public Transport*
- *Water Services Investment Programme*
- *Rural Water Programme*

Housing
- *Housing Construction / Refurbishment Programme*
- *Homeless Strategy*
- *Housing Strategy*
- *Estate Management*
- *Allocations / Transfers*
- *Accommodation Programme for Travelling People*

Environmental Protection, Climate Action & Energy
- *Waste Management*
- *Flood Risk & Water Quality Management Plan*
- *Climate Action*
- *Burial Grounds*
- *Building Control*
- *Energy Strategy/Standards*
- *Control of Animals*
- *Litter Management Plan*
- *Parks, Playgrounds & Open Spaces*

Community, Cultural & Fire Services
- *Community Development*
- *Rural Regeneration*
- *Arts*
- *Libraries*
- *Heritage*
- *Fire Service*