



CO. MONAGHAN  
**PUBLIC**  
PARTICIPATION  
NETWORK

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Submission to the Public Consultation on  
Monaghan County Council

Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme  
2019 – 2024

By

County Monaghan Public Participation Network

October 2019

Monaghan Public Participation Network

Monaghan County Council

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**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019**

## Introduction

County Monaghan Public Participation Network (PPN) is a network of 520 community and voluntary, environmental and social inclusion groups from across County Monaghan. Each PPN has three pillars which organise the member groups in terms of their interests and activities. Monaghan PPN core function is to facilitate the formal participation by the community sector in Monaghan County Councils decision making structures.

The PPN is committed to providing high quality representation on Monaghan County Council decision making structures.

The PPN is also committed to providing ongoing support to PPN representatives who sit on Monaghan County Council structures which includes on-going training and continued support through a PPN Representatives network.

Monaghan PPN circulated the MCC Draft SPC Scheme to all our member groups encouraging them to engage with the process. A Special Representatives Network meeting was held to enable PPN representatives input into this submission.

This submission was drafted, circulated to all members and includes their feedback.



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The following recommendations are being proposed:

### **Structure of the Strategic Policy Committees**

The following are proposals from our PPN Representatives who used their experience serving on previous SPCs and other local authority committees to input into this submission:

**Climate Change and Environment:** Monaghan PPN welcome the addition of climate change to the SPC structure and will be happy to seek to fill the 3 representations required.

**Transport and Community:** Monaghan PPN are unsure of how community fits with Transport and are fearful that Community will get lost in such a big budget service such as Transport. Feedback from our members was that Community would fit better with Social and Cultural. Representatives who were on the Social, Cultural and Community SPC in the last term felt there was a great opportunity for them along with the Museum, Libraries, Arts office and Heritage to work together to provide strong community spirits that create equal opportunities for everyone.

The members also feel that the Sectoral Representation should be equal on all SPCs to that of County Council members and that each committee should have 12 members in Total.

**Economic Development and Enterprise Support:** Monaghan PPN are happy to fill the 3 representations required.

**Housing, Social and Cultural:** Taking the above into consideration, the PPN feel that Housing and Transport would be more appropriate.



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To summarise, Monaghan PPN would suggest the following structure is developed for the coming SPC 2019 – 2024 term:

SPC	No County Council Members	No Sectoral Members
Climate Change and Environment	6	6
Economic Development and Enterprise Support	6	6
Transport and Housing	6	6
Social, Cultural and Community	6	6

The PPN understands that these changes might not be possible and broadly accept the structures as outlined in the draft scheme.

The PPN are concerned that ‘Sport’ has not been identified within the remit of any SPC, and recommend this is included with Transport and Community.

The PPN would ask that an Environmental seat be allocated to Housing, Social and Cultural which would increase the Sectoral Representation to 6.

## **Lobbying Act 2015/Transparency Code**

The PPN are particularly interested in ensuring that a sentence be added specifically to the relevance of the Lobbying Act on community volunteers as some volunteers may be unfamiliar of the obligations for compliance with the requirements of the Lobbying Act 2015 on volunteers.

The PPN have also highlighted under our training section, that members receive training on these requirements.

## **Training Provision**

The PPN recommend the following training be provided to all SPC members:

1. Induction to SPCs, including terms of reference and the processes and procedures of the SPCs.
2. Briefings on relevant policy, including the reform of Local Government.
3. Standing Orders
4. Policy remit of SPCs and Council structures
5. Briefing on the requirements of the Transparency Code
6. Public Sector Duty

The PPN believe that this training would be of great support to the SPC members in fulfilling their respective roles and will result in mutual understanding, better relationships and a stronger SPC which will lead to better decision making and better policies.

## Effective Engagement

- Members of Monaghan PPN request that consideration be given to SPC members receiving the minutes and agendas 2 weeks prior to a meeting. Also, that SPC representatives have a clear process to follow to put items on the agenda for meetings.

This is particularly important for PPN representatives as they are there to represent the PPN as a whole, and it is important they have sufficient time to consult with the network ahead of meetings.

- County Monaghan PPN recognises the importance of each SPC having a focused Annual Workplan. We believe that all members of the SPC, including those from the external sectors should have an opportunity to use their areas of local knowledge and expertise to shape the workplan.

The PPN would appreciate that any progress reports developed from these workplans, be made available to the PPN so they can be published on the PPN website. It is important that the wider membership have the opportunity to see the input from its representatives on their respective committees.

- PPN Representatives on SPCs are all volunteers and are in full time employment. As such, we ask MCC to consider holding some SPC meetings outside of normal working hours to accommodate volunteers and show them that their time is valued.
- Contained within the Standing Orders, should be that mobile phones are put on silent during the meetings. Chairs of SPCs should ensure that this is regulated. The use of mobile phones can be very disruptive for everyone.



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- We understand that Monaghan County Council has adopted a paperless policy. The PPN request that paper copies of the agenda, minutes and other documentation is still made available to those members who have no access to stationery or printing equipment.

## Conclusion

We hope that Monaghan County Council finds this submission useful, that it considers the suggestions put forward carefully and that the majority, if not all, of the suggestions are implemented in the new SPC scheme. We look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

Kind Regards,

Leona Keenan,

PPN Resource Worker,

On behalf of Monaghan PPN





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*Putting Community at the Heart of Decision-Making*