COMHAIRLE CONTAE MHUINEACHÁIN
MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME

2024 - 2029

Adopted by members at September 2024 Meeting of Monaghan County Council

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.

This scheme also takes into account and is prepared in line with the Department *Guidelines for the establishment and operation of Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees.*

Role of the Strategic Policy Group

The Council is, and remains, the decision making authority, and the task of the SPCs is to advise and assist the Council in its work in the formulation, development and review of policy in relation to functions of a strategic nature reserved to the elected members of the County Council, subject to the relevant statutory framework.

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 (Section 130 Local Government Act 2001 – 2014). 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. Therefore, much of the preliminary and background work, discussion and recommendation should be completed at SPC level for final consideration and ratification by the Council.

The success of the SPCs is crucially dependent on the active involvement of councillors and on a positive mindset from all involved – councillors, sectoral representatives, Chief Executives, directors and staff. The work of the SPC Chair and Director of Services is of critical importance.

The Strategic Policy Committees will:

- assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy
- reflect the major functions or services of a local authority within the broader context
- be tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of a local authority but generally be four in number
- have one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committees' work and
- meet at least four times per annum – venues and times to be agreed.

The representational structure on each SPC is designed to bring together both elected members and people actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to develop and review policies related to council services. The SPCs thus 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. The elected representatives have a similar role to that of a board of directors. The SPC system provides them with a better focus and enhanced capacity for involvement in policy formulation, review and evaluation with inbuilt assistance of relevant sectoral interests and the support of a Director of Services. SPCs prepare the groundwork for policies which are then decided on by the local authority, including as appropriate at municipal district level. Accordingly, local sectoral interests, including the trade union, farming, environmental and community/voluntary sectors, along with the business community, constitute one third of the membership of SPCs.
The SPC chair and the 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 Strategic Role

SPCs have a major role in assisting and advising the council in relation to functions of a strategic statutory nature, i.e. policy to mirror the functions of a local authority, e.g. preparation of a development plan. They also have a function in other, non statutory policy fields, such as urban, village and rural renewal plans, policy related to the development of work programmes and the establishment of priorities for particular services; consideration of the needs of people with disabilities in the formulation and implementation of relevant policies; integration of sustainability principles to particular services, and in the strategic monitoring of local authority services. The SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise also has specific functions in relation to economic development and support for enterprise.

In addition, each SPC is required to consider climate action and climate impacts as part of any and all policies that form part of its work programme. Again, 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 while considering policies.

The Irish Language will be a cross-cutting theme across all 5 SPCs. The Council will promote the use of the Irish language in the work of all SPCs.

Linkage with Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises the

- Cathaoirleach of the Council as its chair
- The Chairs of each of the SPC's

The role of the CPG is strategic and it links and co-ordinates the work of the different SPCs. The Cathaoirleach reports to the full Council on the work of the CPG, and should also report to the Council on the work (including proposals) of the SPCs on a quarterly basis (although this may be more frequent depending on circumstances). The Chairs of each SPC report back to their Committees similarly, as do the representatives of each municipal district to their fellow municipal district members. The CPG is supported by the Chief Executive. The CPG does not act as conduit between the council and the SPCs as this could cause the CPG to act as an

additional bureaucratic layer or bottleneck and lead to unnecessary delays. The CPG is represented at meetings of the Council by the Cathaoirleach.

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 formulation 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.

Proposed Structure for S.P.C.'s 2024 - 2029

There will be five S.P.C.'s established within the county, as follows –

(i) SPC for Housing

(ii) SPC for Transport

(iii) SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise

(iv) SPC for Environment and Climate Change

(v) SPC for Tourism, Rural & Community Development; An Ghaeilge & Cultural Services

Councillor Representation

Each councillor will serve on not more than two SPCs. Each of the three Municipal Districts will be represented on the five SPCs. Except as a result of changes arising from the appointment of new chairs, the Strategic Policy Committee membership for Councillors will be for the lifetime of the current Council. As far as possible, Strategic Policy Committee Councillor-membership will reflect the geographical distribution of elected representation on

the Council. Strategic Policy Committee Chairs will be members of the Council and are appointed for a minimum of three years.

Sectoral Representation

In determining the sectoral representation on the Strategic Policy Committees, regard will be had to the need for a spread of relevant interests, balance between divergent interests, greater social inclusion, gender balance and the relationship between the available Strategic Policy Committee positions and the range of interests that can be accommodated. Nominees must only be from groups and associations that are active and have a countywide impact or, at least, a relevance in a locality or number of localities. It will be expected that sectoral nominees will retain membership for the lifetime of the committee but where a nominee ceases to be a member for one reason or another the relevant sector will nominate a new member. Sectoral representation will be drawn from the following sectors:-

1. Agriculture/Farming
2. Environmental/Conservation
3. Development /Construction
4. Business /Commercial
5. Trade Union
6. Community /Voluntary /Social Inclusion

1. The Agriculture/Farming sector is represented on the SPC's arising from the implications for rural policy change at EU and national level and the spatial impact associated with this change.

2. The Environmental/Conservation sector is represented due to the fact the local authorities are primary instruments for the implementation of EU and national policy in the environment, conservation and cultural sectors.

3. The Business/Commercial sector is represented on the SPC's due to the relevance of much of local authority activity to this sector and to the level of local government resources generated from that sector.

4. The Development/Construction sector is represented due to the impact of physical planning policy on the sector and due to the need to relate long term infrastructural development for which local authorities have major responsibility to on-going developments and thinking in the sector.

5. The Trade Union sector is represented on the SPC's due to their long standing contribution to the national policy process and their extensive representation at local level.

6. The Community/Voluntary/Social Inclusion sector is represented on the SPC's due to the need to recognise community participation voluntarism as key to the long term development of communities.

Proposed SPC Configuration

Strategic Policy Committee	County Council Members	Sectoral Representatives	Total
Housing	6	6	12
Transport	6	6	12
Economic Development & Enterprise	6	6	12
Environment & Climate Action	6	6	12
Tourism, Rural & Community Development; An Ghaeilge and Cultural Services	6	6	12

An outline of the proposed membership of each S.P.C. is set out below:

SPC for Housing (12 Members)

Six - Elected Members Monaghan County Council
One - Development/Construction
One - Business/Commercial
One - PPN Environmental Electoral College
Two - PPN Community and Voluntary Electoral College
One - PPN Social Inclusion Electoral College

SPC for Transport (12 Members)

Six - Elected Members Monaghan County Council
Two - Business/Commercial
One - Trade Union
One - PPN Environmental Electoral College
One PPN Community and Voluntary Electoral College
One PPN Social Inclusion Electoral College

SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise (12 Members)

Six - Elected Members Monaghan County Council
Two - Business/Commercial

One - Development/Construction
One - Agriculture/Farming
One - PPN Environmental Electoral College
One - PPN Community and Voluntary Electoral College or Social Inclusion Electoral College

SPC for Environment & Climate Action (12 Members)

Six - Elected Members Monaghan County Council
One - Agriculture/Farming
One - Federation of Group Water Schemes
One - Business/Commercial
One - PPN Environmental Electoral College
One - PPN Community and Voluntary Electoral College
One - PPN Social Inclusion Electoral College

SPC for Tourism, Rural & Community Development; An Ghaeilge & Cultural Services (12 Members)

Six - Elected Members Monaghan County Council
Two - Business/Commercial (Tourism/Hospitality Sector)
One - PPN Environmental Electoral College
Two - PPN Community and Voluntary Electoral College (one of these members to be actively involved in Irish language)
One - PPN Social Inclusion Electoral College

The Nomination Process

The nomination process for the farming and agricultural sector will be facilitated by the farming and agricultural organisations pillar. The business/commercial and development/ construction sectors will be facilitated by the business and employers organisations pillar. The trade union sector will be facilitated by the trade union pillar. The environmental/ conservation sector will be facilitated by the Environmental pillar and the associated Environmental College under the PPN arrangements. The community, voluntary and social inclusion sectors will be selected through the Monaghan Public Participation Network.

The sectors will be asked to bear in mind the objective of achieving a 40% gender balance 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 County Monaghan and have a county wide impact or have a relevance in a locality or number of localities in the area. It is the local perspective of the representative pillars that the members would be expected to bring to the SPCs. Monaghan County Council will allow one month for the selection process by the national pillars.

Each sector will select its own nominee and Monaghan County Council will as far as possible facilitate the process of nomination. While every effort will be made to accommodate the preferences of groups or organisations, the final decision on assignment of organisation or

sectors to each SPC will rest with the Council. State and Local Development Agencies are not eligible as nominating bodies to the sectors for representation on SPC's.

The Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons of the S.P.C.s will be elected by the full Council. The SPC Chairs should hold office for a minimum period of three years which can be renewed by the Council. Subsequent election of Chairpersons/Vice Chairpersons will be held at the annual meeting and these will be appointed from the existing elected members of the S.P.C.

Should the Chairperson of an S.P.C. be elected as Cathaoirleach of the Council at the annual meeting between 2024 and 2029, the Vice Chairperson of that particular S.P.C. shall preside as acting Chairperson until the next election of a Chairperson by the full Council.

Training

Monaghan Co Co will provide mandatory induction and on-going training of members of the SPCs, in addition to specific training for SPC Chairs in relation to their role on the Committee.

Expenses Incurred by Members

In general, any travel expenses arising for an SPC member would be met by the organisation that the SPC member represents. However, in exceptional circumstances, where the nominating body is unable to pay such travel expenses, the member would be entitled to claim travel for attendance at SPC meetings, at the rate applicable to elected members of the Council.

Consideration of Draft Scheme

Following consideration by the Council the Draft Scheme will be forwarded for consideration to the Public Participation Network and to the appropriate national stakeholder pillars. A notice to the effect that the Council has considered the draft scheme and that it is available for public consultation will be published on the Council's website www.monaghan.ie and in a local newspaper. Closing date for submissions from the public will be the **16 August 2024**.

Adoption of SPC Scheme

Following receipt of submissions on the Draft scheme, the Chief Executive, with the Cathaoirleach and the Chairs of the SPCs will consider the submissions and make 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.
Upon adoption of the scheme the Council will invite nominations from the various sectors to be submitted within a period of one month.