



KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

Strategic Policy Committees

Scheme

2014-2019

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Background

The Government's *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* acknowledged that Corporate Policy Groups (CPG's) and Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) have achieved a measure of success in providing a focus for elected members to input into policy formation.

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

Following the local elections, it is necessary for each local authority to establish new Strategic Policy Committees in line with revised guidelines published by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in June 2014 entitled "Strategic Policy Committees: Guidelines for establishment and operation".

Strategic Policy Committees;-

- 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;
- Are tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of a local authority;
- Have one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committee's work.

Each local authority has established SPCs which bring together elected members and people actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to develop and review policies related to council services. Section 48(1A) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 requires that at least one of the SPC's to be established shall consider matters which relate to the economic development and enterprise support functions of the local authority.

Role and Objectives

The Strategic Policy Committee approach is designed to strengthen the policy development role of the members of Kildare County Council and to improve policy formulation. A clear focus on significant policy and strategic issues is fundamental to the SPC concept.

The objectives of the SPCs have been clearly defined in guidelines from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. These guidelines set out the process for the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees and in particular the following should be noted:

- The County Council is and remains the decision-making authority and it is the task of the SPCs, as committees of the council, to advise and assist the council in its work.
- While it is the task of SPCs to assist in formulation and development of policy, the final policy decisions will rest with the members of Kildare County Council.
- Within this context, the SPC system is intended to give Councillors and relevant sectoral interests an opportunity for full involvement in the policy making process from an early stage, when policy options are more fluid and open.
- In order for the SPC systems to operate satisfactorily much of the preliminary background work discussion and recommendation will need to be comprehensively conducted at SPC level for final consideration and ratification by the council.
- SPCs can provide advice and reports directly to the Council on any matter within their remit or other related issues, either on their own initiative or as decided upon by the Council as a whole.
- The SPCs will be represented by their Chair at Council meetings.

Strategic Policy Committees – Kildare County Council

The following Strategic Policy Committees will be established by Kildare County Council:

- Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning
- Transportation, Safety and Emergency Services
- Local Community and Cultural
- Housing
- Environmental Services and Water

Chairs designate of each Strategic Policy Committee have been appointed.

Formation of Strategic Policy Committees

- Each SPC should have as a minimum a total membership of nine.
- The SPC Chairs should hold office for a minimum period of three years, which can be renewed by the Council. Subsequent chairs should be appointed from among the existing councillor members of the SPC.
- Every councillor should, as a matter of equity and good practice, have the opportunity to serve on an SPC. SPC membership for councillors should be for the lifetime of the council. Councillors may not be appointed to represent sectoral interests.
- Each SPC to have at least one third of its membership from sectors relevant to the committee's remit.
- Each SPC will adopt a multi-annual work programme linked to the county council's corporate plan and updated regularly as necessary. The programme shall be agreed with the council's corporate policy group.
- 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 SPCs will meet as frequently as necessary and at least once every quarter.
- Full participation in meetings of the SPC should be confined to members of the SPC. Where policy matters of particular interest to other councillors or local interest groups arise, the SPC could meet with the relevant municipal district members or groups.

Guidelines for the Operation of Strategic Policy Committees

- SPC work programmes should be linked to the local authority's corporate plan and;
 - have deadlines
 - be closely targeted
 - avoid operational issues
 - prioritise outputs
 - not be so overloaded as to impede effective working.
- Committees should liaise with each other as necessary in order to secure integrated approaches to issues which come before them.
- In view of the important strategic role which SPCs have in the development and review of policy, consultation with relevant sectors and interests should be an ongoing part of the SPC process. This may be of additional significance where an SPC covers a number of services with limited opportunity for direct sectoral participation on the committee, or where it was not possible to accommodate fully the range of relevant interests. It is a matter for the SPC, taking account of the range of interests already represented, to decide on the appropriate consultative arrangements, subject to whatever guidelines might be issued by the council.
- Policy recommendations made by SPCs should be reviewed by the respective committees so that their success can be monitored.

Nomination Process

External representatives to be nominated by the following sectors:

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

The nomination process for the agricultural/farming 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 Public Participation Network [PPN] arrangements. The environmental/conservation, community/voluntary and social inclusion sectors will be determined on the basis of the local nomination process through the PPN.

Following adoption of the SPC Scheme nominations will be sought from the four national pillars. Nominations will be also be sought, through the Public Participation Network (PPN) for community/voluntary, social inclusion and environmental appointments as appropriate.

There are three electoral colleges within PPN:

- Environment
- Social Inclusion
- Community and Voluntary

To join the Environment Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability.

To join the Social Inclusion Electoral College an organisation's primary objectives and activities must focus on social inclusion/ social justice/ equality.

Organisations whose primary objectives are other than those listed above will be members of the Community and Voluntary Electoral College.

Sectoral Representatives

Decisions by local authorities will be informed and strengthened by more effective community/citizen engagement and increased public participation in local government.

The following factors will be considered in determining sectoral representation on and across each SPC:

- The need to foster economic and social development generally.
- A stated commitment to working towards gender balance and to encouraging as full as possible gender balance in representation from the sectors.
- The need to ensure a pro-active approach to having as many relevant sectors as possible across the SPC system.
- The need for balance between divergent interests.
- The need for a comprehensive audit of groups within the local authority area to facilitate the fullest possible consultation with each sector.
- The priority concerns of each sector and the appropriateness of the SPCs to these concerns.
- The relationship between the number of SPCs and the range of interests which can be represented.
- A commitment to the fostering of social inclusiveness and equality.
- A commitment to have a pro-active information strategy to inform the public on the renewal of local government.
- The desirability of facilitating relevant organisations to be part of the nominating constituencies.

In addition to the above Kildare County Council will also have regard to the following criteria:

- Groups/associations should be active in the area of the authority and, where possible, have a countywide remit.

- Whereas in some instances it may be appropriate to consider single interest groups [such as those campaigning on behalf of the elderly or disabled], groups formed around a specific local single issue will not be considered for inclusion.

Recommended Representation of Strategic Policy Committees Members and Sectoral Interests

Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning
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Chair	=	County Councillor	1
Members	=	County Councillors	7
Sectoral Interest	=	Business/Commercial Development/Construction Social Inclusion Environmental/Conservation	4

Transportation, Safety and Emergency Services
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Chair	=	County Councillor	1
Members	=	County Councillors	7
Sectoral Interest	=	Agriculture/Farming Business/Commercial Development/Construction Community/Voluntary	4

Local Community and Cultural

Chair	=	County Councillor	1
Members	=	County Councillors	7
Sectoral Interest	=	Environmental/Conservation Business/Commercial Community/Voluntary Social Inclusion	4

Housing

Chair	=	County Councillor	1
Members	=	County Councillors	7
Sectoral Interest	=	Development/Construction Community/Voluntary Trade Union Social Inclusion	4

Environmental Services and Water

Chair	=	County Councillor	1
Members	=	County Councillors	7
Sectoral Interest	=	Environmental/Conservation Business/Commercial Agriculture/Farming Community / Voluntary	4

Strategic Policy Committees

Indicative Areas of Responsibility

Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning
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- Preparation of the economic element of the Local Economic and Community Plan.
- Oversight by the elected members of the operation of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO).
- Review and monitoring of economic development policies and support for enterprise.
- Preparation of County Development Plan.
- Job Creation/Maintenance Policies.
- Policy linkage – I.D.A., Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Office and other local development initiatives.
- Regional spatial and economic strategies.
- Impact of national policies.
- Sustainable development issues.
- Urban, village and rural renewal plans.
- Tourism promotion/development.
- Heritage Protection and conservation.
- Linkages with other policy committees.

Transportation, Safety and Emergency Services

- Ongoing review of National/Regional/Local Policies – Roads.
- Policies relating to role of transportation system.
- Regional spatial and economic strategies.
- County-wide implementation policies.
- Rural/Urban transportation issues.
- Public Private Partnership arrangements.
- Role of public transport – road, rail, taxis etc.
- Traffic management policies
 - Cycle Lanes
 - Bus corridors
 - Park and ride measures
 - Car parking strategy
- Road Safety Issues.
- Major Emergency Management.
- Severe weather preparedness.
- Linkages with other policy committees.

Local Community and Cultural

- Engagement with preparation of the community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan.
- Civic leadership issues, with reference to Section 63 of Local Government Act 2001[as amended].
- Policy in relation to support for community-based organisations and community development.
- Policy in relation to interaction with national and national tidy town/pride of place groups and initiatives.
- Access to and promotion of sport and other-leisure activities and facilities.
- Access to and promotion of library services and the Arts.
- Council's responsibilities with regard to youth affairs and services to young people.
- Council's responsibilities with regard to age friendly county programme.
- Linkages with other policy committees.

Housing

- Review of social housing policies.
- Role of local authority housing/joint ventures/voluntary/private
- Integrated policies
 - Homelessness
 - Social Inclusiveness
 - Affordable Housing
 - Shared Ownership
- Housing Estates Management/Tenant Participation Policies.
- Housing design and construction policy.
- Traveller accommodation policy.
- Land acquisition policy.
- Quality of life issues – urban and rural.
- Linkages with other policies.

Environmental Services and Water

- Waste Management Strategies - Recycling
- Waste Minimisation
- Environmental Awareness Policies.
- Pollution Prevention Strategies - Water
- Air
- Litter
- Environmental sustainability issues and climate change.
- Agenda 21 initiatives – Environmental Forum.
- Consideration of EU control policies – Infrastructure/Environment.
- Infrastructural Services – including Urban/Rural and Rural Water Strategy.
- Linkages with other policy committees.

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