



Submission to:

Kildare County Council

Draft Strategic Policy Scheme 2019-2024

Submitted by:

Kildare Public Participation Network

27th November 2019

Kildare Public Participation Network

County Kildare Public Participation Network (PPN) was established in July 2014 under the directive of the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government and in accordance with legislation in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (Section 46).

Kildare Public Participation Network is an independent organisation that acts as the main link through which local authorities connect with the social inclusion, community and voluntary and environmental pillars in a process to facilitate communities to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system.

County Kildare PPN has 940 diverse member groups. PPN representatives serve as a voice for the community on structures including: the Local Community Development Committee; Economic Development Enterprise & Planning Strategic Policy Committee; Environmental Services & Water Strategic Policy Committee; Local Community & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee; Housing Strategic Policy Committee; Transportation, Safety & Emergency Services Committee; Joint Policing Committee and Co. Kildare Heritage Forum. PPN Representatives strive to ensure that the needs of the community sector is prioritised within local policy processes.

For this submission, Kildare PPN invited all of its member groups to a workshop on the 14th of November 2019 to consult with its members on the Kildare County Council Draft SPC Scheme 2019-2024, to gather recommendations and comments that form the basis of this submission.

Kildare PPN also gathered observations and suggestions by e-mail from PPN members for inclusion in this submission.

Kildare Public Participation (Kildare PPN) welcome the opportunity to make a submission to Kildare County Council on the Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2019-2024. Outlined below are the proposed recommendations for the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2019-2024 made on behalf of Kildare Public Participation Network. Please note: Paragraph numbers and italics reference the Draft SPC Scheme 2019-2024 document.

2.9 SPC Meetings and Procedures

'Documentation and agendas will be issued well in advance of scheduled meetings'

Kildare PPN propose that the agenda and minutes of previous meetings are issued at least 4 weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting to allow for the PPN Representatives to consult with their Linkage Groups. Kildare PPN also propose that the PPN coordinator is included on the mailing list to facilitate the Linkage group meetings.

Meetings of SPC's will normally be held on a quarterly basis or as often as is deemed necessary. Meetings shall be conducted in an informal but efficient manner at venues and times to be decided annually in advance by the committee.

Many of the Kildare PPN representatives that sit on SPC's have daytime jobs, this means they have to take time off work to attend SPC meetings that are held during the day and receive no financial relief for loss of earnings. Kildare PPN urge that this is taken into consideration when scheduling meetings and ask that consideration be given to hold at least 2 meetings of each SPC in the evening time to facilitate volunteers that work during the day.

3.3 Agenda and Minutes of CPG Meetings

The agendas and minutes of meetings, when adopted, will be posted to the Members Information Portal as a matter of course

Kildare PPN propose that when the minutes are ratified, they are uploaded to the Kildare County Council website in a timely manner. In line with this proposal, the Department of Rural and Community Development consider it appropriate *"that Local Authorities facilitate access to a library of relevant thematic documents focused on groups and committees that the Network are represented on"* (CVSP 7/2019 Department of Rural and Community Development).

4.0 Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 – Transparency Code

Kildare PPN welcome the addition of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 to the SPC Scheme 2019-2024.

5.2 SPC Configuration and Functions

Having regard to the foregoing, and following agreement at Corporate Policy Group, it is proposed that Kildare County Council will have 6 Strategic Policy Committees which will be configured as follows:

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

Kildare PPN welcome the addition of a Climate Action SPC and propose that it's remit should include Biodiversity. A Report of the Joint Committee on Climate Action Climate Change: states '*Climate change considerations should be addressed across all local authority plans, policies and activities including their existing Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) and a dedicated new Climate Change SPC for climate action*' (March 2019).

6.2 Formation of Strategic Policy Committees

(see point corresponding to 9.0)

7 Training

As part of the development of a Training Programme for Councillors, the council will include provision for training for all SPC members.

Kildare PPN welcome the provision of training for SPC representatives to ensure the representatives fulfil their roles to the best possible standard, and suggest that the programme include an induction pack for all representatives, Terms of Reference, expenses procedure, communications protocols, an overview of relevant policies, code of conduct and briefing on the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 etc. The Department of Rural and Community Development state it is appropriate "*that Local Authorities provide Training Supports that may be required for Representatives to enable them build their capacity for the role of PPN Representative*" (CVSP 7/2019 Department of Rural and Community Development). Kildare PPN feel this provision would result in better quality outcomes for the Strategic Policy Committees.

8.0 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

Kildare PPN propose that each SPC is responsible for reimbursing PPN representatives with travel subsistence and expenses. The Department of Rural and Community Development state that it would be considered appropriate *“that Local Authorities set aside resources for participation on key decision-making committees to cover travel and subsistence expenses for PPN representatives”* (CVSP 7/2019 Department of Rural and Community Development).

9.0 Recommended Representation of Strategic Policy Committees – Members and Sectoral Interests

To ensure full representation and participation from the community, Kildare PPN propose that each of the three pillars of the PPN (Social Inclusion, Community & Voluntary and Environmental) are represented and have seats on each of the Strategic Policy Committees.

Kildare PPN propose that all PPN representatives on SPC’s have equal status to the statutory members on the SPC’s. Circular letter from the Department of Rural and Community Development states *“the Local Authorities agree to and adopt a Protocol for all communities/decision making committees with PPN representatives which will enable the representatives to engage appropriately”* (CVSP 7/2019 Dept. of Rural and Community Development). To enable PPN representatives to fulfil their role and for SPC’s to fully benefit from the community and voluntary expertise at the table, PPN representatives need to have an equal status to statutory members of the SPC’s, allowing them to submit items to the agenda and have voting rights. This should be clearly stated in the SPC scheme.

Additional comments and recommendations:

Work Plan

As the work plan is a vital document that shapes the work of the SPC’s, Kildare PPN propose that all members of each SPC, including the PPN representatives are given the opportunity to contribute to the work plan. When the workplan is ratified, it should be made available for the public the view, along with reports updating the progress of the workplan.

It is also proposed that the work plans contain milestones and tangible goals.