



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

DRAFT

**STRATEGIC POLICY
COMMITTEE SCHEME**

2024 – 2029

17th July 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

On foot of a commitment in the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future to mandate the establishment of a climate action SPC in each local authority, it was decided that it would be opportune to hold a general review of local authority SPCs. Previously, guidance had last been issued in respect of the establishment of SPCs and CPGs in 2014. A Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) was put in place to oversee, steer and guide the review; the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) was commissioned by the Department to carry out the review itself. The report contained recommendations aimed mainly at clarifying the existing guidelines, and expanding the scope of the guidance provided in order to make local authorities more aware of the possibilities available to them.

1.2 Organisation of Waterford City & County Council

The day to day delivery of services is the responsibility of the Chief Executive, Management Team and staff, while the 32 Elected Members representing the 3 Municipal Districts performs the Council's Democratic/Representational Role.

The functions and services of the Council are classified into eight service divisions as follows:

- A. Housing and Building***
- B. Road Transportation and Safety***
- C. Water Services***
- D. Development Management***
- E. Environmental Services***
- F. Recreation and Amenity***
- G. Agriculture, Food and the Marine***
- H. Miscellaneous Services***

Policies in relation to the above programme groups are formulated, considered and recommended by the five (5) Strategic Policy Committees to the Plenary Council.

2. CORPORATE POLICY GROUP (CPG)

2.1 CPG – Structure

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises the Mayor of the Plenary Council as its chair together with the chairs of each of the SPCs. The Membership needs to ensure that all three Municipal Districts are represented, if this is not the case the Mayor/Cathaoirleach of the district shall attend. The CPG is supported by the Chief Executive, the Director of Services and the Meetings Administrator.

2.2 CPG – Role

The statutory basis for Corporate Policy Groups (CPGs) is set out in section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by section 48 of the 2014 Act.

This provides that the CPG may:

- (a) advise and assist the elected council in the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy for the local authority and for that purpose propose arrangements for the consideration of policy matters and the organisation of related business by the elected council”, and
- (b) “make proposals for the allocation of business as between strategic policy committees and for the general coordination of such businesses”.¹

The CPG should:

- play an active role in the preparation of the draft budget
- be consulted in the preparation of the corporate plan
- determine whether a function will be discharged at a municipal district or authority level, where reference in relation to this question is made to it
- co-ordinate the work of the SPCs and monitor their work programmes
- request SPCs to consider particular policy issues where appropriate

2.3 Minutes of the CPG

The minutes of the CPG meetings will be circulated to all members of the local authority as a matter of course.

CPG meetings are held on a monthly basis, on the Wednesday the week before the Plenary Council meeting, unless otherwise decided.

3. ROLE OF STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES (SPCs)

3.1 Statutory Basis

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

As per Section 48(1) of the 2001 Act, local authorities are required to establish

“strategic policy committees 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 authority on those matters”.

3.2 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.

Section 48(1A) of the 2014 Act requires that at least one of the SPCs that is established shall consider matters which relate to the functions of the local authority in relation to economic development and enterprise support. Waterford City & County Council are proposing 5 SPCs;

1. Economic Development and Enterprise SPC
2. Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change SPC
3. Transportation and Infrastructure SPC
4. Housing, Community, Sport & Recreation SPC
5. Planning & Culture SPC

3.3 SPC Work Programme

Each SPC should adopt a multi-annual work programme linked to the local authority's Corporate Plan which may be updated as necessary.

The CPG should approve the work programmes of the SPCs and may, as appropriate recommend issues to be considered by the SPCs. A review of SPC work programmes should be carried out by the CPG in the third year of the local authority electoral term.

SPC members should be fully involved in the process of preparing the SPC work programmes, which should begin once the policy parameters of each SPC having been drawn up, the SPC scheme having been agreed, and the SPCs' membership having been determined.

Once a suitable draft work programme for an SPC has been prepared, it should be circulated to the SPC's membership for their observations, comments, and feedback. At least four weeks

should be allowed for SPC members to return responses on a draft work programme. Having considered any responses from SPC members, the work programme should be finalised and submitted to the CPG for approval.

3.4 SPC Meeting Procedures

Each SPC shall agree an annual work programme linked to the strategic policies in the Council's Corporate Plan, which should target policy / plan developments and include for such reviews as are considered appropriate.

The SPC chair and 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 calendar of SPC meetings should be agreed at the start of every year. Meetings of SPCs should generally be held a minimum of twice yearly at suitable times for all members. Greater frequency of meetings may be required depending on the demands of their work.

The SPC calendar should be structured in such a way as to fit in with policy making timeframes, including statutory timeframes, to allow SPCs to perform their role in supporting the plenary council's policy making.

SPC meetings should be conducted in a much less rigid and formal way than full council meetings in order to create an informal and collaborative atmosphere that would allow honest views and opinions on policy issues.

Each SPC meeting should include a reminder, at or near the beginning of the meeting as appropriate, of the ethical requirements placed on SPC members by section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001. When attendance is being noted at the start of the meeting, each of the SPC members should inform the meeting of any conflicts of interest arising from any agenda items.

Local authorities should ensure that documentation concerning SPC meetings is sent well in advance of the meetings, ideally four weeks in advance.

Minutes should include action points which assign responsibility to a specific party or parties in respect of each action.

Standing Orders for the running of SPC meetings will be in place.

3.5 SPC Meetings – Policy Support & Development

All SPC members should have the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the work programme. The work programme should be linked to the local authority's corporate plan.

Local Authorities should develop as practicably as possible the policy support role for SPCs. This could include making greater use of the research capacity within local authorities and also making greater use of external agencies such as the LGMA, third level institutions, NOAC, etc.

SPCs may also invite policy experts to attend meetings as guest speakers in order to provide perspectives on specific matters on the meeting agenda.

3.6 SPC Meetings - Training

Training and Development programmes will be considered for SPC member, including effective meeting skills for chairs.

SPC chairs report on SPC recommendations to the full council for approval.

SPC sectoral representatives should provide feedback to their nominating bodies on the work of the SPC.

Use of the Irish Language should be promoted within each of the SPCs.

4. SPC Framework

The factors to be taken into account in determining the overall framework of SPCs for a particular local authority include:

- the total number of elected members on the council;
- the range of sectoral and other interests to be represented, including facilitating a reasonable spread of interests;
- the desirability of allowing adequate opportunity for participation by councillors and sectoral interests;
- the organisational arrangement of service groupings within the authority and the remit envisaged for each SPC;
- the need to ensure that the organisational and financial resources of the particular local authority are not over-stretched; and
- integration with other meeting requirements and committee structures and ensuring streamlined procedures generally.

Regard must also be had to the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), including its membership and remit.

In light of the local authority's role across a range of public services delivered locally, SPCs should have a reasonably broad remit. While the remit will be anchored in the main local government services, it should not operate in a restrictive way but in the context of the wider local picture taking account of related public services and agencies and of local needs and of circumstances generally.

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.

Local authorities will also need to have regard to key corporate objectives identified as part of their SDPs process and reflected in their corporate plan, and, where necessary, to matching SPC structures and internal organisational arrangements in a way which supports the achievement of those objectives.

Economic Development and Enterprise SPC	
Councillors (8 members)	Sectoral Representative (6 members)
	Business (2 positions)
	Trade Union
	Education
	Environment
	Community & Voluntary

Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action SPC	
Councillors (8 members)	Sectoral Representative (5 members)
	Trade Union
	Farming
	Environment
	Social Inclusion
	Community & Voluntary

Transportation and Infrastructure SPC	
Councillors (7 members)	Sectoral Representative (5 members)
	Development/Construction (CIF)
	Business
	Environment
	Social Inclusion
	Community & Voluntary

Housing, Community, Sport & Recreation SPC	
Councillors (8 members)	Sectoral Representative (5 members)
	Development/Construction (CIF)
	Trade Union
	Environment
	Social Inclusion
	Community & Voluntary

Planning & Culture SPC	
Councillors (8 members)	Sectoral Representative (6 members)
	Development/Construction (CIF)
	Business
	Environment
	Arts
	Community & Voluntary
	Farming

Waterford City & County Council will seek nominations of the sectoral representatives under the pillars of farming, business, trade unions and environment from the national contact points of these key stakeholders as follows

Farming: Irish Farmers Association
 Business: Chambers Ireland
 Trade Unions: Irish Congress of Trade Unions
 Environment: Irish Environmental Network

Nominations for the social inclusion and community and voluntary sector will be sought from the PPN and for the Development and Construction sector from the Construction Industry Federation.

The following section sets out the details of the remit of each of the 5 SPC's.

Economic Development and Enterprise

- Tourism Strategy
- Economic development
- Enterprise support functions.
- Implementation and review of the economic elements of the LECP

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Roads
- Road Safety issues and Traffic Management
- Mobility Management
- Cycling Policy
- Pedestrian Facilities
- Parking
- Public Transport
- Rural Water Programme

Housing, Community, Sport and Recreation

- Housing Construction / Refurbishment Programme
- Homeless Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Estate Management
- Allocations / Transfers
- Accommodation Programme for Travelling People
- Community Development
- Rural Regeneration
- Fire Service

Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change

- 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

Planning & Culture SPC

- Conservation of Built Environment
- Urban Renewal & Town Centre Sustainability
- Land Activation/Vacant Site Levy/Derelict Sites
- Arts
- Libraries
- Heritage

Appendix 1 - Summary of Central Features of the SPC System

1. The role of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to formulate policy proposals, evaluate and report on policy implementation, for consideration and final decision by the full council.
2. A focus on the SPCs' policy-making and strategic role is fundamental to the SPC concept. In their work, SPCs are not concerned with individual representational or operational issues.
3. The SPC system presents councillors with a prime opportunity to become more involved in policy formulation. It provides a chance to review and optimise committee structures and related procedures, which demands a rationalisation of existing committees and standing procedures.
4. Each authority will have generally four SPCs, with the option of more in the largest authorities, if warranted.
5. Local authorities are statutorily required to have an SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise. All SPCs should consider climate action as a cross-cutting issue in their work programmes.
6. SPCs are to be chaired by one of the councillor members.
7. SPCs are to have a minimum total membership of nine.
8. At least one third of the members of each SPC are to be drawn from relevant sectoral interests; to provide relevant expertise and advice and allow for a range of inputs in the formulation of policy
9. Relevant organisations for each sector will be identified as early as possible, parallel with the drafting of the scheme.
10. Each sector will select its own nominee(s) via the PPN, where appropriate.
11. The CPG is to comprise the Mayor of the local authority, the SPC chairs and a representative of each municipal district, as needed, in accordance with section 133(1) of the 2001 Act. It is to be chaired by the Mayor. It will be supported by the Chief Executive.
12. The role of the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to coordinate the work of the SPCs and facilitate the flow of the outcome of the work of the SPCs to the council.
13. Area Committees can complement the SPC system in local authorities that do not have a municipal district. Local operational matters should be assigned to these area committees as the SPC system will not deal with local representational issues and operational issues.