

**Comhairle Contae  
Fhine Gall**  
Fingal County  
Council



# Strategic Policy Committee Scheme

2024 – 2029

September 2024

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# 1. Introduction

The statutory basis for Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) is set out in the Local Government Act, 2001 (Section 48) as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, which provides that *"a Local Authority shall establish committees to be known as 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 advise the authority on those matters."*

The Strategic Policy Committees provides Councillors with a framework and opportunity to fulfil their role as overall policy makers for and within the local government system. It also develops opportunities for partnership with local and appropriate sectoral interests. The SPC process provides for better focus and enhanced capacity for involvement in policy formulation, review and evaluation.

In June 2024 the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published revised Guidelines for the establishment and operation of Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees. It summarises the central features of the SPC system as follows:

- The role of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to assist the Council in the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy and strategy.
- The SPC system presents councillors with an opportunity to become more involved in policy formulation.
- The SPC system should take account of the Council's overall corporate policy and objectives, integrate with statutory plans and link realistically to financial resources.
- Each authority will generally have four SPCs, but the number should be tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of the local authority, with the option of more in the largest authorities, if warranted.
- 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.
- All SPCs will integrate the overall wellbeing of communities across their work programmes.
- Each SPC will promote the use of the Irish language across their work programmes.
- SPCs are to be chaired by one of the councillor members.
- SPCs are to have a minimum total membership of nine.
- 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.
- Relevant organisations for each sector will be identified as early as possible, parallel with the drafting of the scheme.
- Each sector will select its own nominee(s) via the PPN, where appropriate.

- The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to comprise the Mayor of the local authority and the SPC chairs. It is to be chaired by the Mayor. It will be supported by the Chief Executive.
- The role of the 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.
- Area Committees can complement the SPC system. Local operational matters should be assigned to these area committees as the SPC system will not deal with local representational issues and operational issues.

## 2. Role of the Corporate Policy Group

The statutory basis for Corporate Policy Groups (CPGs) is set out in section 133 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".*

The membership of the CPG comprises of the Mayor and the chairpersons of each SPC and is supported by the Chief Executive. The CPG is a committee of the council, links the work of the SPCs and provides a forum where policy positions affecting the whole council can be agreed for submission to the full council. Its task is to advise and assist the council, with full decision-making authority remaining with the council. The Mayor reports to the full council on the work of the CPG.

The CPG will:

- play a key role in preparing the budget;
- provide input to the full council on any matter of general concern to the council either on its own initiative or following a request from the council;
- monitor the overall performance of a local authority, including in relation to matters of governance and oversight, in particular through consideration of reports of the Audit Committee, Local Government Auditor and National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC), and in accordance with the Local Government Code of Governance;
- deal with overall issues in relation to service delivery plans, customer service, value for money, etc., (individual SPCs would deal with such issues in their work insofar as their particular service remit was concerned);
- approve the work programmes of the SPCs and monitor their achievement;
- co-ordinate the work of the SPCs;
- request SPCs to consider particular policy issues; where appropriate; and

- provide feedback to the SPCs on council policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs.

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

### 3. Role of the Strategic Policy Committees

The statutory basis for Strategic Policy Committee's (SPC's) is set out in the Local Government Act, 2001 (Section 48) as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, which provides that *"a Local Authority shall establish committees to be known as 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 advise the authority on those matters."*

#### 3.1 SPCs and the Council

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 each SPC to assist the council in the formulation and development of policy, the final policy decisions rest ultimately with the full council.

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, if the SPC system operates satisfactorily, 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 work of the SPC chair and Director of Services is of critical importance and 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 Executive, Directors and staff – that are focused on the strategic role of SPCs.

#### 3.2 SPC Work Programme

Each SPC will 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.

Once a suitable draft work programme for an SPC has been prepared, it should be circulated to the SPC 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.

### 3.3 Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy

There is a requirement on each SPC to have regard to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) prepared by the Regional Assembly.

### 3.4 Commitment to Inclusive Community Engagement

Fingal County Council is committed to collaborative and inclusive processes in policy development and will have regard to available resources in developing consultation and engagement processes. The Council will ensure that a diverse range of views and interests are represented from other sectors to ensure that all SPC's are inclusive and effective.

### 3.5 SPCs and Service Delivery Plans (SDPs)

The development of Service Delivery Plans (SDPs) will facilitate the identification of objectives and preparation of strategies for individual services.

SPCs can provide advice and assistance to the council in the preparation of individual SDPs and in setting out the related objectives, strategies, standards and performance indicators.

In this context too, particular policy issues can be identified for special consideration and in-depth examination by the SPC. Such SDPs could set out statements of overall policy, focus on best practice issues, identify particular issues to be addressed and approaches taken, review overall performance of programmes, set out the future strategic direction for the service, address value for money (VFM) issues, effectiveness and efficiency etc. Responsibility for staffing matters is not altered by these arrangements.

More generally, the work of SPCs would take account of the council's overall corporate policy and objectives, integrate with statutory plans where relevant, link realistically to financial resources and be responsive to sectoral consultations.

## 4. SPC Meetings

### 4.1 SPC Meetings – Procedures

Procedures for SPC meetings are set out in the Fingal County Council Standing Orders. A calendar of SPC meetings should be agreed at the start of each year. Meetings of SPCs are generally held quarterly and at a minimum of twice yearly.

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

## 4.2 SPC Meetings – Linkage with the Council and Nominating Bodies

SPC chairs should introduce SPC recommendations for approval by the full council.

The SPCs sectoral representatives should provide feedback to their nominating organisations on the activities of the SPC.

Members of SPCs should be provided with automatic feedback on the outcome of the council's decisions on SPC recommendations.

## 4.3 SPC Meetings - Training

Training will be provided for SPC members as appropriate to their needs. These may include: -

- Workshops on policy to cover the various areas within the remit of the SPCs, particularly in respect of climate action;
- Briefings on public sector / local government reform programmes;
- Briefings on the role and functions of local government;
- Legal and ethical responsibilities of SPC members, including but not limited to GDPR, lobbying, etc.;
- Skills orientated training such as team building.
- Effective meeting skills for SPC Chairs

Fingal County Council will assess training needs through a consultative process with the Sectors generally and the SPC members specifically.

# 5. SPC's 2024 – 2029: Structure and Membership

## 5.1 Structure

The factors to be taken into account in determining the overall framework of SPCs for Fingal County Council 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.

Section 48(1A) of the 2001 Act, as inserted by Section 41(a) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, requires that at least one of the SPCs that is established shall be to consider matters which relate to the functions of a local authority in relation to economic development and enterprise support.

In addition, each SPC is required to consider climate action and climate impacts as 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. Climate action should be considered in its widest sense, to include biodiversity action, water quality action, sustainable land use, energy (source and usage), resource management, sustainable transport/mobility, air quality/emissions, soil quality, waste management, community action, etc., and other related issues .

The following are the seven Strategic Policy Committees proposed for Fingal County Council:-

- Housing
- Economic, Enterprise & Tourism Development
- Climate Action, Biodiversity & Environment
- Community, Sports and Culture
- Planning, Strategic Transport & Infrastructure Development
- Public Realm, Transportation/Mobility Management
- Marine & Coastal Management

## 5.2 SPC Remit

### **Climate Action, Biodiversity and the Environment**

- Fingal Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029
- Water Quality Management
- Recycling, Waste Minimisation and Management
- Control of Animals
- Tree Management Policy
- Biodiversity Policy

### **Community, Sports and Culture**

- Community Development and Inclusion



- Strengthen communities through participation, connectivity, inclusion and building capacity of community leaders
- Social Inclusion = Active Inclusion
- Gender Equality
- Oversight of Community elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)
- Fingal Libraries Development Plan 2024 – 2029
- Creative Ireland Programme
- Arts Plan 2019 – 2025
- Enhance and Protect the Heritage of the County
- Promotion of Irish Language
- Sports Activities
- Public Participation and Resident Engagement
- Focus on capabilities rather than disabilities
- Active Citizenship

## **Housing**

- Social & Affordable Housing delivery and supports
- Homeless Strategy
- Estate Management Strategy
- Traveller Accommodation Programme
- Housing Allocations
- Housing Architecture and Design
- Refurbishment & Retrofit Programme

## **Economic, Enterprise & Tourism**

- Economic Development Strategy
- Tourism Strategy
- Skills Strategy
- Food Strategy
- Enterprise Development & Local Enterprise Office (LEO)
- Oversight of Economic elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)
- Urban, Rural, Town and Village Regeneration

## **Planning, Strategic Transport and Infrastructure Development**

- Fingal Development Plan 2023 - 2029
- Development of New Strategic Infrastructure –
  - Strategic Greenway Infrastructure
  - Strategic Transport Routes
  - Recreational open space
- Building Control and Building Standards
- Planning and Development Urban Design
- Heritage
- Development Contribution Scheme

## **Public Realm, Transportation/Mobility Management**

Strategic management of all outdoor public spaces including –

- Road Maintenance and Management
- Road Safety
- Regional Parks and Open Space
- Playing Pitches
- Tree Management
- Beach Management
- Permeability & management of Pedestrian and Cycling Facilities
- Traffic Management
- Special Speed Limits
- Fleet Management & Electric vehicle
- Parking Management
- Burial Grounds
- Allotments
- Public Lighting
- Recycling Centres
- Bike Share, E-scooters (Bye Laws)
- Active Travel Programme Implementation

## **Marine and Coastal Management**

Project 2040 National Marine Planning Framework in terms of marine strategy as it relates to local authorities including:

- Harbours
- Coastal Recreation & Leisure
- Water Safety
- Blue Economy
- Coastal Erosion
- Bathing Water Quality
- Renewable Energy
- Flood Risk Management

### **5.3 Membership**

The Guidelines recommend that each of the Strategic Policy Committees will have two-thirds of its membership drawn from the elected representatives of the Council and that one-third of the membership be drawn from external sectoral groupings. While this general principle is respected the distribution of council membership is also reflective of potential workload. The Economic, Enterprise & Tourism Development, Housing, Marine & Coastal Management, Climate Action, Biodiversity & Environment, Community, Sports & Culture, Planning, Strategic Transport & Infrastructure Development and Public Realm, Transportation/Mobility Management SPC's will each have 6 elected members. The Chair of each SPC will be from among the Elected Members.

The Chairs of the SPC's, the Mayor and the Chief Executive will form the Corporate Policy Group.

There are seven overall sectors recommended in the guidelines which should, in general, be represented in each local authority SPC configuration. These are:

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

The allocation of membership for each committee is as follows:

<b>STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME 2024-2029</b>			
<b>Membership by committee</b>	<b>Elected Members</b>	<b>Sectoral Interest</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Housing</b>	8	4	12
<b>Economic, Enterprise &amp; Tourism Development</b>	7	3	10
<b>Climate Action, Biodiversity &amp; Environment</b>	6	3	9
<b>Community, Sports &amp; Culture</b>	6	3	9
<b>Planning, Strategic Transport &amp; Infrastructure Development</b>	6	3	9
<b>Public Realm, Transportation/Mobility Management</b>	6	3	9
<b>Marine &amp; Coastal Management</b>	6	3	9
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>67</b>

<b>Sectoral Nominees by Committee</b>	<b>Environment Pillar</b>	<b>Chambers/ Business</b>	<b>Social Inclusion</b>	<b>ICTU</b>	<b>IFA</b>	<b>PPN</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Housing</b>		1	1	1		1	4
<b>Economic, Enterprise &amp; Tourism Development</b>		1		1		1	3
<b>Climate Action, Biodiversity &amp; Environment</b>	1				1	1	3
<b>Community, Sport &amp; Culture</b>	1		1			1	3

Planning, Strategic Transport & Infrastructure Development	1	1				1	3
Public Realm, Transportation/ Mobility Management	1	1				1	3
Marine & Coastal Management	1			1		1	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>

Each Strategic Policy Committee Member will serve for the life of the Council. If a casual vacancy arises it will be filled by the sector involved. Nominating bodies may deselect their nominees. The national pillar nominees should be representative of local organisations active in the county as it is the local perspective of the national pillar that the members will be expected to bring.

#### 5.4 Nominations from Sectors to the Strategic Policy Committees

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, community / voluntary and social inclusion sectors will be determined on the basis of the local nomination process through the PPN;
- the environmental/conservation sector will be facilitated by the environmental pillar and the associated Environmental College under the PPN arrangements. To join the Environment Electoral College under the PPN, an organisation's primary objectives and activities must be environmental (i.e. ecological) protection and/or environmental sustainability. Membership of this Electoral College will be validated by the environmental pillar at a national level. (For national pillar contacts, see **Appendix 2**).

The responsibility for nominations is the sole responsibility of the sectors agreed in the Scheme. Each sector is also responsible for the putting in place of a structured feedback process between representatives and their nominating bodies.

While very effort will be made to accommodate preferences, the final decision as to the sectoral make-up of the SPC will rest with the Local Authority, and 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.

## 5.5 State Agencies / Local Development Companies

As per the Guidelines, State and Local Development Agencies are not included as nominating bodies to the sectors and should not be represented on an SPC. This includes the LCDC.

## 6. Lobbying Act 2015

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.

## 7. Ethics Framework

It is important for all members of committees to be aware of and understand the Ethics Framework for the local government sector which is set out in Part 15 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended). In particular the following:

### Section 168 of the Act

*In carrying out their functions under this or any other enactment, it is the duty of every member and every employee of a local authority and of every member of every committee to maintain proper standards of integrity, conduct and concern for the public interest.*

### Section 170 (1)

*An employee or a member of a local authority or of a committee of a local authority shall not seek, exact or accept from any person, other than from the local authority concerned, any remuneration, fee, reward or other favour for anything done or not done by virtue of his or her employment or office, and a code of conduct under section 169 may include guidance for the purposes of this subsection.*

### (2)

*Subsection (1) shall not be read so as to exclude the persons to whom that subsection relates from the application of the Prevention of Corruption Acts, 1889 to 1995, and any Act which is to be construed together as one with those Acts.*

Councillors and sectoral SPC members must disclose at an SPC meeting any pecuniary or other beneficial interest, (of which they have actual knowledge) they or a connected person have in, or material to, any matter with which the local authority is concerned in the discharge of its functions, and which comes before the meeting. The councillor / committee member must withdraw from the meeting after disclosure and must not vote or take part in any discussion or consideration of the matter or seek to in any other aspect influence the decision making of the Council.

Where a councillor or committee member has actual knowledge that a matter is going to arise at a meeting at which s/he will not be present, but if s/he were, a disclosure would be necessary, then in advance of the meeting s/he must make such disclosure in writing to the Ethics Registrar.

The foregoing statutory requirements must be observed at all times, and failure to do so is an offence under Section 181 of the 2001 Act. Analogous statutory requirements also apply to employees, and to external members of committees with the exception of the annual declaration in their case.

## APPENDIX 1      Registration forms for representation to nominating sectors for Strategic Policy Committees

Name of applicant body: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of establishment: \_\_\_\_\_

State aims and purpose of your organisation:

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With which sector would you most readily identify your organisation (one only please)

Agriculture/Farming ☐

Environment/Conservation/Culture ☐

Development/Construction ☐

Business/Commercial ☐

Trade Union ☐

Community/Voluntary/Disadvantaged ☐

Social inclusion

☐

Name and address of person to whom correspondence is to be sent:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No.: \_\_\_\_\_

How often does your organisation hold meetings?: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of your last AGM: \_\_\_\_\_

State your total membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Names  
of  
Officers

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please specify the type of Strategy Policy Committee on which your organisation seeks representation:

1<sup>st</sup> preference: \_\_\_\_\_



2<sup>nd</sup> preference: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Secretary, Applicant Body)

- **Please note that the above suggested registration form is for use in relation to local organisations and is not relevant to the National Pillars**
- **While every effort will be made to accommodate preferences, final decisions will ultimately rest with the local authority, having regard to the likely degree of interest, the limited number of SPC places available and the need to have a balanced constituency for each SPC**

## APPENDIX 2

## Sector Contact Details

Pillar	Name & Address	Telephone and e-mail
<b>Farming</b>	<b>Shane Whelan</b>	<b>01-4500266</b>
Irish Farmers Association Irish Farm Centre Bluebell Dublin 12		<a href="mailto:shanewhelan@ifa.ie">shanewhelan@ifa.ie</a>
<b>Business</b>	<b>Anthony Cooney</b>	<b>01-890 0977</b>
Fingal Chambers 2 The Green Dublin Airport Central Dublin Airport Swords Co Dublin		<a href="mailto:anthony@fingalchamber.ie">anthony@fingalchamber.ie</a>
<b>Trade Unions</b>	<b>Deirdre Mannion</b>	<b>01-8897777</b>
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Head Office 31-32 Parnell Square Dublin 1		<a href="mailto:deirdre.mannion@ictu.ie">deirdre.mannion@ictu.ie</a>
<b>Environment</b>		
Environment Pillar – Social Partnership Coordinator Knockvicar Boyle Co Roscommon		