



3rd July, 2024.

To: The Mayor and Each Member of Limerick City and County Council

Re: Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

I attach herewith Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029 which has been prepared 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.

A resolution of the Council is now required to adopt the Draft Scheme. Following adoption of the Draft Scheme, it will be placed on public display for a period of one month. Any submissions received can be considered by the Corporate Policy Group before final adoption of the Scheme by the Council.

Is mise le meas,

Laura Flannery,
Senior Executive Officer,
Corporate Services, Governance and Customer Services.



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

Limerick City
& County Council

Strategic Policy Committee Scheme

2024 - 2029

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.*” Furthermore 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 the local authority in relation to economic development and enterprise support. All SPCs should consider climate as a cross-cutting issue in their work programmes. Limerick City and County Council, at its Annual Meeting on 21st June, 2024, appointed 5 Chairs of Strategic Policy Committees.

In accordance with Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, there is a requirement that Strategic Policy Committee:

- Meetings should normally be held four times yearly at suitable times for all SPC members, a calendar of meetings to be agreed
- Have an annual work programme which should be linked to the local authority’s Corporate Plan and Mayoral Programme and updated regularly as necessary
- Assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy for consideration and final decision by the full Council.
- Reflect the major functions or services of a local authority within a broader context
- Are tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of the local authority
- Have a minimum one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committees’ work
- SPC Chairs should hold office for a minimum of three years which could be renewed by the Council
- A Director of Service will attend meetings and provide support for each SPC

2. Role of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)

The 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 the formulation, development and review of policy. The remit of the SPCs is to deal only with policy matters and as such they are strategic in nature. They have no remit in relation to routine operational matters regarding the delivery of services. 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. There is a requirement on each SPC to have regard to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) prepared by the Regional Assembly. SPCs can provide advice and assistance to the Council in the preparation of individual Service Delivery Plans and in setting out the related objectives, strategies, standards and performance indicators.

3. Corporate Policy Group (CPG)

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises of :

- (a) the Mayor of Limerick (Chair);
- (b) the Príomh Chomhairleoir;
- (c) the Chairs of each of the Strategic Policy Committees;
- (d) in the case where a Municipal District is without an SPC chair, a representative of the District concerned.

Role of the CPG

- 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;
- determine whether a function will be discharged at the municipal district or authority level, where reference in relation to this question is made to it;
- monitor 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;
- coordinate the work of the SPCs;
- request SPCs to consider particular policy issues where appropriate;
- provide feedback to the SPCs on council policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs;
- Be consulted in the preparation of the Corporate Plan
- Advise and assist the Príomh Chomhairleoir in the setting of the agenda for Council meetings.

4. Strategic Policy Committees 2024-2029 – Structure & Membership

Five Strategic Policy Committees are proposed as follows:

- Home and Social Development
- Travel and Transportation
- Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning
- Community, Leisure and Culture
- Climate Action, Biodiversity and Environment

Each SPC shall consist of 16 Elected Members and 8 sectoral interest nominees except in the case of the Community, Leisure and Culture SPC whereby the sectoral interest nominees will be 10.

Each Councillor shall sit on 2 SPCs.

The Council appoint the Chairperson of each SPC. The Chairperson will hold office for a minimum period of 3 years and the overall spread of SPC Chairs must, in accordance with the guidelines, reflect the political representational spread on the full Council.

Membership of the SPCs (both Councillors and Sectoral Representatives) shall be for the lifetime of the Council. Casual vacancies which arise will be filled by the sector involved. Nominating bodies may also de-select their nominees.

Ethics

Part 15 (except sections 171, 175 and 178) of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended, applies to a member of a committee of a local authority.

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.

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.

Where pecuniary or other beneficial interest: A member is obliged to disclose to meeting chair or administrator, withdraw from the meeting while the matter is discussed/considered, take no part in discussion/consideration and refrain from voting on it, neither influence nor seek to influence decision.

Lobbying

The Standards in Public Office Commission has advised that the Regulation of Lobbying legislation is applicable to Strategic Policy Committees.

As outlined in their guidance available on www.lobbying.ie:

Individuals and organisations who participate in Strategic Policy Committees or Advisory Groups established by a public body may have obligations under the Regulation of Lobbying Act.

Where such a working group's membership comprises of at least one person who, for the purposes of the Act, is a DPO, 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 & Public Expenditure and Reform to

address exactly this situation. Communications between members of working groups about the work of the group would be exempt where the group in question complies with the Transparency Code.

If you are leading or participating in an advisory group, task force or Strategic Policy Committee, you need to be aware that in some cases the communications that take place within the group could be considered lobbying. You should check, therefore, that the group is adhering to the Transparency Code. Where a member of the group avails of the opportunity to speak to the DPO who is also a member about a separate relevant matter, that would not enjoy the exemption and may have to be registered.

<https://www.lobbying.ie/help-resources/guidance-notes/strategic-policy-committees-advisory-groups-and-the-regulation-of-lobbying/>

Sectoral Representation

The following Sectors will provide representation on SPC Committees, where appropriate:

- Agriculture / Farming;
- Environment / Conservation;
- Development / Construction;
- Business / Commercial;
- Trade Union;
- Community / Voluntary;
- Social inclusion;

Sectors to 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 Nomination Process

The nomination process for the Agricultural/Farming, Business/Commercial, Development/Construction and the Trade Union sectors will be facilitated by the National Pillars. (For national pillar contacts, see **Appendix 1**). The Environmental/ Conservation sector will be facilitated by the Environmental Pillar and the associated Environmental College under the Public Participation Network (PPN) arrangements.. Membership of this Electoral College will be validated by the environmental pillar. The Environmental / Conservation, Community / Voluntary and Social Inclusion sectors will be determined on the basis of the local nomination process through the PPN.

Member Organisations when joining the PPN must opt to be a part of one of three electoral colleges within the PPN:

- Environment
- Social Inclusion

- Community and Voluntary

To join the Environmental Electoral College under the PPN, 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.

MEMBERSHIP

The following are the proposed SPCs and Membership.

Strategic Policy Committee	Elected Members	Sectoral Interests
Home and Social Development	16	8
Travel and Transportation	16	8
Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning	16	8
Community, Leisure and Culture	16	10
Climate Action, Biodiversity and Environment	16	8
Total	80	42

SECTORAL REPRESENTATION ON STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES

Limerick City & County Council 2019	Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning	Climate Action, Biodiversity and Environment	Travel and Transportation	Home and Social Development	Community, Leisure and Culture
Agriculture / Farming	1	2	1		1
Environment / Conservation	1	2	1		1
Development / Construction	1		1	1	1

Business / Commercial	2	2	1	1	1
Trade Union			1	1	
Community / Voluntary	2	2	2	4	4
Social Inclusion	1		1	1	2
TOTAL	8	8	8	8	10

5. Adoption of SPC Scheme

Following adoption by Limerick City and County Council of the new SPC scheme, with or without amendment, nominations will be sought for representatives to the SPCs. In the case of the National Key Stakeholder Pillars (i.e. Business/Employers Pillar, Trade Union Pillar, Farming/Agricultural Pillar and Environmental Pillar), Limerick City and County Council will write to the contact persons enclosing the adopted scheme and seek the nominations of those pillars for their particular SPCs as outlined in the adopted scheme. In addition, the Local Authority will write to the national contact of the environmental sector seeking the validation of nominees to the Environment Electoral College under the PPN. Limerick City and County Council will also undertake a public consultation on the draft scheme.

With regard to the Community/Voluntary/Social Inclusion and Environmental/ Conservation Sectors, the Council will write to the PPN secretariat, enclosing a copy of the scheme and requesting selection of their representatives for the SPCs as set out in the adopted Scheme.

Appendix 1

National Contact Points of Key Stakeholders

Pillar	Name & Address	Telephone and e-mail
Farming	Irish Farmers Association (IFA) Irish Farm Centre Bluebell Dublin 12	info@ifa.ie
Business	Chambers Ireland 22-24 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2	info@chambers.ie
Trade Unions	Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Nerney's Court, Dublin 1	Deirdre.manion@ictu.ie
Environment	Environment Pillar –Coordinator Macro Community Resource Centre 1 Green St Dublin 7	office@ien.ie

