

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029



STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME 2024-2029

1. Introduction

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, the Council shall establish by resolution committees to be known as Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) 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 Council on those matters.

2. Role of the Strategic Policy Committee

The Council is, and remains, the decision-making authority, and the task of the SPCs is to advise and assist the Council in its work in the formulation, development and review of policy in relation to functions of a strategic nature reserved to the Elected Members of the County Council, subject to the relevant statutory framework.

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 (Section 130 Local Government Act 2001 – 2014). 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, 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 importance of each SPC having an agreed annual or multi-annual work programme is emphasized. Having a work programme aids in the clarity around the role of the SPC for members and gives clear direction for their efforts; it also aids in ensuring accountability and transparency in goal setting and progress achieved.

A key role for SPCs will be to focus on strategic issues and in taking a strategic overview of relevant policy areas in the wider context. Accordingly:

- Each SPC will agree its multi-annual programme of work, linked to the strategic policies in the Council's Corporate Plan and submit the programme to the Corporate Policy Group for approval. The CPG may as appropriate recommend issues to be considered by the SPCs.
- SPC chairs will report to the Council on the proceedings of the Committee.
- Each SPC's work will take account of the Council's overall corporate policy and objectives, comply with statutory provisions, integrate with statutory plans where relevant, and link realistically to financial resources.
- Each SPC may decide on appropriate consultative arrangements, having regard to statutory provision, the interests already represented on the SPC, and any guidelines provided by the Council.
- Each SPC shall inform itself of all national, regional and local policies related to its area of work.
- The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) should co-ordinate the work and monitor the work programmes of the SPCs.

3. Assistance from Public Authorities

Section 48(3A) of the 2001 Act (inserted by Section 41(d) of the 2014 Act) empowers an SPC to seek the attendance of public authorities at a meeting for the purpose of assisting it in developing policy.

A request to a public authority to attend a meeting of a SPC should:

- set out the issue on which advice is being sought, including providing any policy papers of the local authority, or draft policy papers, and the linkages to the policy responsibility of the public authority and
- provide at least one month's notice, or shorter interval if mutually agreed.

The Act provides for the public authority to assist the SPC in the formulation of its policy by the SPC. The purpose of the provision is to give an additional resource in formulating policy and to strengthen linkages between local authorities and public bodies with wider responsibilities in the sectoral area in which the SPC operates. The invitation to attend at a meeting of an SPC cannot be used to query the public authority in the performance of its functions or duties.

4. Role of the Corporate Policy Group

The CPG comprises An Cathaoirleach and the Chairpersons of the SPCs and will be attended by the Chief Executive and his/her nominees. The role of the CPG is strategic, and it links and co-ordinates the work of the different SPCs. Acting as a link between the SPC's and full council, the CPG will be a forum where policy positions affecting the whole Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. An Cathaoirleach will report to the Council on the work of the CPG.

5. Lobbying Act 2015 – Transparency Code

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.

6. Proposed Number of SPC's

In accordance with statutory departmental guidelines the number of SPCs in a local authority will generally be 4 SPCs including the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise. On foot of a commitment in the *Programme for Government – Our Shared Future* there is a mandate for the establishment of a Climate Action SPC in each local authority. In accordance with the guidelines local circumstances may warrant additional SPCs in the larger local authorities. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council had 6 SPCs.

In determining the number of SPCs the Council has taken the following factors into account in determining the overall framework of SPCs:

- Section 48 Local Government Act 2001 as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.
- DHPLG Circular LG07/2014 – Guidelines for Establishment and Operation of Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees.
- 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 council are not over-stretched.
- The expanding population of the county and the increase in demand for quality services from the council.
- Integration with other meeting requirements and committee structures and ensuring streamlined procedures generally.
- Local Community Development Committee (membership and remit).

Having regard to the above factors the number of SPC's for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council will increase to 7. The remit of the 7 SPC's as outlined will cover all services with the Council.

7. Policy Configuration and Functions

Having regard to the foregoing Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council will have 7 Strategic Policy Committees, and will be configured as follows:

- Housing
- Community, Culture, Integration and Public Engagement
- Planning
- Economic Development, Enterprise and Marine
- Environment and Transportation
- Climate Action
- Finance

The Chairpersons of the SPCs will report direct to the County Council.

8. Strategic Policy Committee Functions

The following section sets out details on the functions of each of the 7 SPCs.

Housing

Accommodation Programme for Travelling People
Allocations / Accessibility & Disability / Priority/ Transfers
Models of Delivery/Housing Construction / Refurbishment Programme
Affordable/Social Housing
Homeless Strategy
Housing Strategy
Estate Management

Community, Culture, Integration and Public Engagement

Young People & Ageing
Arts
Culture
Community Development
Heritage
Libraries
Social Inclusion
Equality, Inclusion & Diversity
Integration
Health & Wellbeing
Sports participation and facilities
Community Engagement
Citizen Engagement/Awareness and Education
Promotion of the Irish Language

Planning

Planning and Development including:

- Building Control and taking in Charge of Estates
- Forward Planning – Plans and Guidelines
- Urban Design and Renewal
- Conservation of Built Environment
- Sustainable Development

Economic Development, Enterprise and Marine

Tourism, Accessible Tourism and Twinning
Economic development
Enterprise support functions.
Public Awareness and Education
Preparation of the economic elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP),
Implementation and review of the economic elements of the LECP
Oversight of the operation of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO).
Village Renewal
Town Centre Development
Economic Sustainability
Dún Laoghaire Harbour

Environment & Transportation

Waste Management
Litter Management Plan
Water Quality Management Plan
Fire Service
Burial Grounds
Control of Animals
Open Spaces and Parks
Trees, Flora and Fauna
Cycling policy
Smart Transportation Solutions
Accessible Friendly Streets and Footpaths
Environmental Traffic Planning and Placemaking
Pedestrian Facilities
Parking
Public Transport issues
Roads
Road Safety issues and Traffic Management

Public Awareness and Education
Marine, including coastal issues
Emergency Planning
Flood Resilience
Coastal Protection

Climate Action

Climate Action Plan
Energy & Buildings
Nature Based Solutions/Biodiversity
Public Awareness and Education
Circular Economy
District Heating
Retrofitting
Active/Sustainable Travel
LED Lighting
Bio Fuels & Electric Vehicles

Finance

Transparency and accountability in expenditure and resourcing.
Debt collection.
Securing quality of service and value for money.
Sustainable local government funding.
Governance.

9. Chairpersons

The Chairperson of each SPC will be a Councillor, nominated by the County Council, and in accordance with the guidelines will hold office for a minimum period of three years, which may be extended by the County Council.

Subsequent Chairpersons will be appointed by the County Council from among the existing Councillor members of the SPC. If a Chairperson ceases to be a Councillor, he or she will automatically cease to be a member of the SPC.

The Chairperson of an SPC at the time of a Local Election will continue to hold office until the ordinary day of retirement of Members following the election, in accordance with Section 17 of the Local Government Act 2001.

Chairpersons should be selected on the basis that they have an interest in the work of the SPCs and are aware of their role in providing leadership and working with the relevant Director to facilitate the smooth and effective operation of the Committee.

As per DHPLG Circular LG11/2024, the remuneration for Chairpersons will be €6,000 per annum.

10. Membership

In accordance with the provisions of the legislation and guidelines the membership of the SPCs will consist of two thirds Councillors and one third sectoral representatives. Each SPC should have as a minimum a total membership of nine. The following shall apply in relation to the membership of SPCs:

- Each Councillor will be a member of a minimum of 2 SPCs.
- Every member of an SPC will hold office for the lifetime of the Council (normally five years).

- If a Councillor member of an SPC ceases to be a Councillor, he or she will also automatically cease to be a member of an SPC.
- Each nominating sector is entitled to deselect its nominees as required.
- A sector may be represented on more than one SPC

The following factors will be taken into consideration in determining sectoral representation on and across each SPC in the draft Scheme:

- The need to foster economic and social development generally.
- A stated commitment to working towards gender balance and to encouraging as fully 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.
- Consultation with the PPN (Public Participation Network) ensuring the fullest possible consultation with all sectors represented on the PPN.
- 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.

SPC Configuration

The following Sectors will be represented on the SPCs:

- Environmental / Conservation
- Development / Construction
- Business / Commercial
- Trade Union
- Community/Voluntary
- Social Inclusion
- Comhairle Na nÓg
- Promotion of the Irish Language

Having regard to the foregoing the proposed membership of the SPCs is set out in the following table:

	Councillors	Sectoral Representatives	Total Membership
Economic Development, Enterprise & Marine	12	6 as follows: 1 Tourism Sector 1 Environment/Conservation 2 Business/Commercial 1 Trade Union 1 Social Inclusion	18
Environment & Transportation	10	5 as follows: 1 Environment/Conservation 1 Development/Construction 1 Business/Commercial 1 Community/Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion	15

Community, Culture, Integration & Public Engagement	12	6 as follows: 1 Business/Commercial 1 Environment/Conservation 2 Community/Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion 1 Promotion of Irish Language	18
Housing	12	6 as follows: 1 Environment/Conservation 1 Development/Construction 1 Business/Commercial 1 Trade Union 1 Community/Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion	18
Planning	12	6 as follows: 1 Environment/Conservation 2 Development/Construction 1 Business/Commercial 1 Community/Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion	18
Climate Action	12	6 as follows: 1 Environment/Conservation 1 Development/Construction 1 Business/Commercial 1 Community/Voluntary 2 Comhairle na nÓg	18
Finance	10	5 as follows: 1 Environment/Conservation 1 Development/Construction 1 Business/Commercial 1 Community/Voluntary 1 Social Inclusion	15

11. Nomination process for Sectoral Representatives

The nomination process for the national pillar organisations will be as follows:

- The agricultural/ farming sector will be facilitated by the farming and agricultural organisations pillar,
- The business/ commercial, tourism 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.

With regard to the:

- Environmental / Conservation sector
- Community / voluntary sector and
- Social inclusion sector

Nominations will be determined on the basis of the local nomination process through the Public Participation Network (PPN). Member Organisations when joining the PPN at a county level must opt to be a part of one of three electoral colleges within the 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. Membership of this Electoral College will be validated by the environmental pillar at a national level.

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.

The Council will provide sufficient time, information and facilities to the PPN, if required, to enable the nomination of representatives. Following the adoption of the SPC Scheme by the Council, each Sector will be given 6 weeks in which to provide details of their nominations to the Council.

The following principles should be respected by each sector in the selection of groups and associations for their particular sector including those being facilitated by the national pillars.

- Groups/associations should be active in the area or an area of the authority and have a county wide impact or, at a minimum, relevance in a locality or number of localities in the area.
- Groups/associations should be open to new members, hold AGMs and regular meetings, and should be broadly representative and accountable.
- Single interest groups should be eligible, e.g. campaign groups focused on the disabled or elderly. Single issue groups should not be considered for inclusion in the sectors.
- State and Local Development Agencies should not be included as nominating bodies to the sectors and should not be represented on an SPC. However, sectors may nominate persons from a local development agency to sit on an SPC.

12. Knowledge/Expertise Required by Sectoral Representatives Review

The nomination of sectoral representatives is the sole responsibility of each particular sector. However, the Council recommends that some nominee(s) to specific SPCs have broad knowledge (or expertise) in the following areas:

Agriculture / Farming

No Reps

Environment / Conservation

Economic Development, Enterprise & Marine SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise in environment/marine.

Environment & Transportation SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to cycling and pedestrian issues and/or to environment traffic planning and placemaking.

Community, Culture, Integration & Public Engagement SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to environment/heritage.

Housing SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to the environment.

Planning SPC (1) – 1 representative with experience/expertise in relation to conservation of the built environment, and/or experience of energy standards.

Climate Action SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise in climate change.

Finance SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise in environment/conservation.

Development / Construction

Environment & Transportation SPC (1) – 1 representative with experience/expertise in relation to road safety issues, and/or public transport issues.

Housing SPC (1) – 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to Social Housing.

Planning SPC (2) – 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to the Construction Industry and 1 representative from a professional organisation with expertise/experience in relation to Physical Planning.

Climate Action SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to energy issues and standards.

Finance SPC (1) – 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to the Construction Industry.

Business / Commercial

Economic Development, & Enterprise & Marine SPC (3) – 1 representative with experience/expertise of entrepreneurship, 1 representative with experience/expertise in any of retail/ commercial/ manufacturing sectors and 1 representative from the tourism sector.

Environment & Transportation SPC (1) - 1 representative with experience/expertise in business.

Community, Culture, Integration & Public Engagement SPC (1) - 1 representative with experience/expertise in creative/culture enterprise.

Housing SPC (1) – 1 representative with expertise/experience in architecture and the design of social housing.

Planning SPC (1) - 1 representative from a professional organisation with experience in urban design/renewal.

Climate Action SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to Climate Change.

Finance SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to Finance.

Trade Union

Economic Development, & Enterprise & Marine SPC (1)

Housing SPC (1)

Community/Voluntary

Environment & Transportation SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise in environment/conservation.

Community, Culture, Integration & Public Engagement SPC (3) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to community development, 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to children and young person's issues and 1 representative with expertise in the promotion of the Irish language.

Housing SPC (1)- 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to community development.

Planning SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to community development.

Climate Action SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to the Climate Change

Finance SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to community development.

Social Inclusion

Economic Development, Enterprise & Marine SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to social enterprise.

Environment & Transportation SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to disability issues.

Community, Culture, Integration & Public Engagement SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to ageing issues and/or disability issues.

Housing SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to disability issues and/or traveller issues.

Planning SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to disability issues.

Finance SPC (1) - 1 representative with expertise/experience in relation to social inclusion issues.

13. Meetings

Each SPC will meet at least three times each year, with a schedule of meetings to be agreed by each SPC at the start of each year.

Arrangements for the conducting of the meetings are set out in the councils standing orders.

14. Training

As part of the development of a Training Programme for Councillors the Council will include provision for training for all SPC members in relation to the following:

- Workshops on policy to cover the various areas within the remit of the SPCs particularly in respect of climate action.
- Briefings on the role and functions of the Strategic Policy Committees.
- Legal and ethical responsibilities of SPC members, including but not limited to GDPR, Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 and Transparency Code, etc.
- Standing Orders and the regulating of SPC meetings.
- Effective meeting skills for SPC Chairs.

15. 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.

16. Circulation of Draft Scheme

Following consideration by the Council of the Draft Scheme (as amended) will be forwarded for consideration to the PPN and to the appropriate national stakeholder pillars. A notice to the effect that the Council has considered the draft scheme and that the Council has issued the draft scheme for consultation will be published in the local newspaper and on the DLR website. Copies of the draft will be circulated on request and copies will be available in public offices. A period of 1 month from date of publication of notice will be given for the making of submissions on the draft scheme.

17. Adoption of Scheme

Following receipt and consideration of submissions, the draft scheme will go to the Council. The council will then adopt the revised scheme as presented or amended for the implementation of the SPC Scheme.

While every effort will be made to accommodate preferences of organisations, final assignment of SPC places will rest with the Council.