

COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR

SCHEME FOR THE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES
2019 -2024



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

Adopted 9th September 2019

1.0 Introduction

Clare County Council with its range of responsibilities impacts on the lives of every person in County Clare. The Council has clear statutory and service obligations which it carries out on behalf of and for the benefit of the people of the County.

There are 28 councillors elected to Clare County Council from four Municipal Districts as set-out below. The Council formulates and adopts policy and is assisted and supported in this work by a number of Committees called Strategic Policy Committees. The executive of the Council i.e. the officials, in turn, implement the adopted policy.

Municipal District	No. of Members
Ennis	7
Killaloe	5
Shannon	7
West Clare	9

Table 1: Municipal District Membership

Following the local elections held in May 2019 it is necessary for each County and City Council to establish new S.P.C.'s in line with the revised guidelines published by the Department in June 2019.

Corporate Policy Group.

The Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.) consists of the Cathaoirleach of the Council who will chair the group together with the chair of each of the Strategic Policy Committees and a representative of any Municipal District not already on the C.P.G. This group will provide a forum for policy issues which transcend the remit of individual S.P.C.'s and which affect the Council as a whole.

The role of the C.P.G. is strategic and it links and co-ordinates the work of the different S.P.C.'s.

Strategic Policy Committees.

The statutory basis for S.P.C.'s is set out in Section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

The S.P.C.'s

- assist the council in the formulation, development and review of policy

- reflect the major functions or services of a local authority within the broader context;
- are tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of a local authority but generally would be four in number; and
- have one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committees' work.

Strategic Policy Committees (SPC) are structured around the main functions of Councils. They are made up of elected councillors and other representatives of the Social Partners and other Sectoral interests. Each SPC will be chaired by an elected councillor and will be supported by a Director of Services. The task of the SPC is to assist and advise the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy. The SPCs will not be concerned with individual representational or operational issues. Final policy decisions, however, will ultimately rest with the full Council acting as a body.

2.0 Operational Level

The Chief Executive and his staff are responsible for the operational activities of Clare County Council. They oversee the day to day management and administration of the services and functions of the organisation and operate within Government and Council policy and the legal framework governing local authorities.

2.1 Services

The services that Clare County Council provides to the people of County Clare are classified into eight Divisions

Division A	Housing and Building
Division B	Road Transportation and Safety
Division C	Water Services
Division D	Development Management
Division E	Environmental Services
Division F	Recreation and Amenity
Division G	Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare
Division H	Miscellaneous Services

3.0 Proposed Framework for the Strategic Policy Committees

Clare County Council propose to establish four Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs). Four Chairs designate were appointed to the committees following the Local Elections in May, 2019.

These are: **Councillors Pat McMahon, Pat Hayes, John Crowe and Gerry Flynn.**

The proposed breakdown of the S.P.C.'s to be established is set out in the table below.

<u>STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES</u>	
1	Economic Development
2	Physical Development
3	Rural Development
4	Social Development

Meetings of SPCs

SPCs will normally meet about 4 times yearly at suitable times for all SPC members and it will be a matter for each individual SPC to decide on times, dates etc. for their meetings.

Each individual SPC will at its inaugural meeting determine how matters relating to the conduct of meetings will be managed. It is recommended that the agenda together with the draft minutes of the previous meeting would issue at least two weeks in advance of SPC meetings.

Each SPC Agenda will include a standing item for Climate Change and Biodiversity.

If an SPC member misses 2 consecutive meetings without providing advance notice and reasonable cause of inability to attend their nominating organisation will be asked to de-select/re-affirm their nominee.

Media

Meetings of SPCs will generally be open to the Media, unless a Committee shall decide otherwise by a majority vote of the membership of that Committee.

3.1 Requirements of the Departmental Guidelines

General Guidelines

SPCs will prepare the groundwork for policies which will then be decided on by the County Council

- Each SPC must have one third (1/3) of the membership drawn from the sectoral interests
- SPCs are to have a minimum total membership of nine.
- SPC Membership for Councillors should be for the lifetime of the Council. A person ceasing to be a Councillor would automatically cease membership of the SPC
- SPC chairs should hold office for a minimum of three years which could be renewed by the Council
- The sectoral nominees will retain membership of the SPC for the life of the Council. Any vacancy arising will be filled on the nomination of the body of the member causing the vacancy.
- A Director of Services and other staff as necessary will attend meetings and provide support for each SPC
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will form part of the considerations in the formulation and development of policy across all SPCs.

Guidelines regarding Councillors

- Each Councillor to be a member of an SPC
- SPC Membership for Councillors should be for the lifetime of the Council
- SPC Membership should reflect the proportionality and the distribution of the elected representatives on the full council.
- Councillors may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.

Guidelines regarding Sectoral Interests

Sectoral Representatives for the SPCs will be drawn from the following sectors:

1. Agriculture/Farming

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

The nomination process will be facilitated and agreed by the National Pillars, in other words, the Business Pillar, the Trade Union Pillar, the Farming Pillar and the Environment Pillar.

The nomination process for the remaining sectors will be determined via the PPN structure on the basis of a local nomination process.

Due regard will be given to those groups or county wide organisation who have a specialist expertise in certain specific areas of interest.

Sectoral nominees should retain membership of the SPC for the life of the Council.

Each sector should select its own nominee.

State and Local Development Agencies are not included as nominating bodies to the sectors and should not be represented on the SPC.

Nominations from the Sectors should, insofar as possible, reflect an appropriate gender balance in line with Government Policy.

4.0 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.

5.0 Implementation and Support Measures

Clare County Council will provide ongoing training and support for members of the SPCs to support them in their work:

- Workshops on policy to cover the areas within the remit of the SPCs
- Briefings on the role and functions of local government
- Any other training deemed necessary by the Council

6.0 Process of Establishment of SPCs

Sequence of Events	Timescale
Draft Scheme discussed with CPG and approved by full Council	July 2019
Advertise/Publicise/Circulate Draft Scheme	July/August, 2019
Submissions deadline	late August 2019
Council to consider submissions on Draft Scheme	September, 2019
Adoption of scheme with/without amendments at Council Meeting	September Council Meeting
Council to write to National Pillars and PPN seeking Nominations	September, 2019
Nominations confirmed from each of the sectors at Council Meeting	October 2019
First meeting of SPCs	Late October, 2019

Tables

TABLE A
Strategic Policy Committees – Proposed Remit and Responsibilities

Economic Development	Physical Development	Rural Development	Social Development
<p>This SPC is responsible for all areas of policy concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development • Planning and Enterprise <p>The Economic SPC will lead the Biodiversity agenda and co-ordinate across all SPCs</p>	<p>This SPC is responsible for all areas of policy concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Environment • Water and Wastewater • Fire & Major Emergency Management <p>The Physical SPC will lead the Climate Change agenda and co-ordinate across all SPCs</p>	<p>This SPC is responsible for all areas of policy concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Development • Community • Tourism • Broadband, Digital, Information and Communications Technology. 	<p>This SPC is responsible for all areas of policy concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Arts and Culture • Sports and Recreation

Table B
Sectoral Representation on Each SPC

	Economic Development	Physical Development	Rural Development	Social Development
Sectors				
Representation				
Sectors	6	6	5	5
Councillors	7	7	7	7
Total:	13	13	12	12

Table C

Sectors	Economic Development	Physical Development	Rural Development	Social Development	Total
Agriculture / Farming	1	1	1		3
Environment/ Conservation	1	2	1		4
Development/ Construction	1	1		1	3
Business/Commercial	1		1	1	3
Trade Unions	1			1	2
Community / Voluntary		1	1	1	3
Social Inclusion	1	1	1	1	4
Total Sectors	6	6	5	5	22
Elected Members	7	7	7	7	28
Total SPC Membership	13	13	12	12	50