



Meath County Council

Strategic Policy Committees

Standing Orders

2nd December 2024

Document Information

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Standing Orders for Meetings of Strategic Policy Committees

1. Introduction

The role of Strategic Policy Committees is to assist the Council in the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy. SPCs play a crucial role in ensuring that the major functions and services provided by the local authority are considered within a wider framework, thereby facilitating comprehensive and effective policy planning. The standing orders for Strategic Policy Committees shall apply together with the provisions of Section 48 of the Local Government Act, 2001 (as amended).

Meath County Council has established 6 Strategic Policy Committees as follows:

- Forward Planning and Development Management
- Climate Action, Environment and Emergency Services
- Transportation and Urban Regeneration
- Housing and Integration
- Community & Cultural Development and Gaeltacht Affairs
- Economic Development, Enterprise, Tourism, EU Affairs and Rural Regeneration

2. Remit and Configuration

The Strategic Policy Committees shall be constituted in accordance with the Meath County Council SPC Scheme, adopted by the Members of Meath County Council on September 2, 2024. Each SPC shall agree a Terms of Reference/Policy Remit for the Committee, to be reviewed after 3 years or sooner if required. Each Terms of Reference should include a requirement to consider climate action and climate impacts as part of any and all policies that form part of its work programme. In addition, the Economic Development, Enterprise, Tourism, EU Affairs and Rural Regeneration will include a consideration of the Rates Abatement Scheme in their Terms of Reference.

3. SPC Work Programme

- a) Each SPC should adopt a multi-annual work programme linked to the Meath County Council Corporate Plan and aligned to the Terms of Reference/Policy Remit. The CPG will approve the work programmes of SPCs and may, as appropriate, recommend issues to be considered by SPCs. A review of SPC work programmes should be carried out by the CPG in the third year of the local authority electoral term.

4. Arrangements for Meetings

- a) A calendar of SPC meetings should be agreed upon at the start of each year. Each SPC will meet as often as is required and a minimum of four ordinary meetings will be held each year, at a time and location to be decided by the Committee.
- b) Meetings shall commence at the appointed time and last an hour and a half. On the agreement of the committee members present, the duration can be extended to complete the business of the meeting up to a maximum of 30 minutes.

5. Notice of Meetings

- a) The SPC Chair, along with the relevant Director of Service will define the agenda for the upcoming meeting. Any member who wishes to add an item for discussion on the agenda must submit their request to the SPC Meetings Administrator at least four weeks before the meeting date. All items included on the agenda must pertain to the remit and terms of reference of the SPC.
- b) Notice and agenda of ordinary and special meetings of the SPC will be provided at least three clear days before the meeting date. Failure to deliver notice to any member or members of the Committee will not affect the validity of the meeting. Where possible, meeting documentation should be distributed four weeks before the meeting to give representatives ample time to review it. However, it is acknowledged that some documents may be circulated outside of this timeframe.

6. Quorum

The quorum for the Committee's meetings shall be one-fourth the total number of members of the SPC plus one or, where one-fourth of such total number is not a whole number, the quorum is the next highest whole number plus one. If a quorum is not present after 30 minutes from the agreed starting time of an ordinary meeting, the meeting shall be adjourned to a date to be determined by the Chairperson.

7. Chairperson

In accordance with the SPC Scheme adopted by the Council, the Chairperson shall be elected by the County Council and remain in office for a period of not less than 3 years. At a meeting of the Committee the Chairperson shall preside, if the Chairperson is absent from a meeting, the members of the Committee shall choose a member from among the Councillors to preside as acting Chairperson.

8. Order of Business

The SPC shall address only business that is specific and relevant to its remit. The order of business of Committee meeting shall be:

- Confirmation of minutes
- Matters arising from minutes
- Policy Issues submitted by Members for consideration
- Position Papers prepared for consideration by Committee
- Correspondence
- Any Other Business

9. Attendance at Meetings

- a) Any member of the Council may attend and speak at a meeting of a Strategic Policy Committee. The right to vote upon any question arising at a Committee meeting is confined to members of that Strategic Policy Committee.

- b) Attendance of substitute members will only be allowed by specific prior approval of the Committee.
- c) In the event of a member failing to attend at least two ordinary meetings of the Committee in any year, the nominating body shall be asked to review the matter.

10. Minutes

- a) Minutes of all committee meetings shall contain particulars of the names of the members present, apologies received together with particulars of all decisions arrived at or recommendations made.
- b) The Minutes of every committee meeting shall be signed by the Chairperson or the member presiding following confirmation by the Committee.

11. Rules of Debate

- a) Matters for discussion shall relate to policy or strategy and not to individual cases except as an example of policy or strategy issues.
- b) Each Member of the Committee shall have the right to speak on an issue and equality in making their views known.
- c) The Committee shall, as far as possible, arrive at all decisions and recommendations by consensus.
- d) Meetings will be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and inclusiveness.
- e) In a Committee, an amendment may be proposed without a seconder and a member may speak more than once to any question, but otherwise the Standing Orders of the Council, so far as they are conveniently applicable, shall govern all proceedings of Committees, and the member in the Chair at any meeting of a Committee shall determine questions of order.

12. Suspension of Standing Orders

- a) Standing Orders may at any time by consent of not less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the members present at the meeting of the Committee be suspended on a proposal made for the purpose of any specified business. Prior notice of any such proposal shall be given to the Chairperson.
- b) The Chairperson's ruling on any question of the Standing Orders shall be final.

13. Confidential Material

Certain matters which arise for discussion by the SPC may be confidential and it is a matter for the Chairperson to declare that confidentiality shall be maintained on the issue. It shall be the responsibility of each member of a Committee to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

14. Disclosure of Pecuniary or Other Beneficial Interests

Where a matter is listed for discussion or otherwise arises at a meeting and an SPC member present at the meeting has actual knowledge that she or he or a connected person (as referred to in Local Government Act 2001, Section 166) has a pecuniary or other beneficial interest in, or which is material to that matter, that SPC member shall:

- (i) disclose the nature of his or her interest, or the fact of a connected person's interest at the meeting before discussion or consideration of the matter commences;
- (ii) withdraw from the meeting for so long as the matter is being discussed or considered;
- (iii) take no part in the discussion of the matter and refrain from voting in relation to it.

A member of a Committee must declare any personal, business/trade or professional interest for which it is likely that attendance at a meeting or participation in a debate may reasonably constitute a conflict of interest.

Each Sectoral Member of the SPC will be provided with a copy of the Code of Conduct for Elected Members and be made aware of their obligations in relation to conflicts of interest.

The minutes of the meeting shall contain a record of any disclosure made above and any withdrawal from the meeting.

15. Recommendations

Recommendations of the Committee shall be submitted to the Corporate Policy Group for consideration and if agreed to the Council for approval and presented by the Chairperson of the Committee.

16. Support Structures

The Committee shall be entitled to establish sub-committees or working groups to examine particular policy issues within the remit of the respective SPC.

17. Attendance of the Public and Media

- a) The right of the public and representatives of the media to attend SPC meetings is subject to the following: Where the SPC Members are of the opinion that the absence of members of the public and representatives of the media from the whole or part of a particular Meeting is desirable because of the special nature of the Meeting or of an item of business to be considered at the Meeting or for other special reasons, the SPC Members may, by Resolution in respect of which at least one-half of the total number of Members vote in favour, decide to meet in Committee for the whole or part of the Meeting concerned. The Resolution in this instance shall indicate in a general way the reasons for the Resolution and those reasons shall be recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting.
- b) Members of the public and representatives of the media will occupy the parts of the meeting room allotted to their use.

- c) Members of the public shall be seated and maintain silence and observe any directions given by the Chairperson or by any employee in attendance. If a member of the public interrupts a Meeting at any time or endeavours, without the permission of the SPC Members, to address a Meeting, the Chairperson shall warn him or her and if the interruption continues shall order that person's removal.
- d) The SPC Members may, taking account of available space, limit the number of persons to be admitted to Meetings.
- e) No cameras of any kind or sound recording or communication equipment may be used at Meetings of the SPC without the prior approval of the Council.

18. Lobbying and Transparency

An SPC is a relevant body under Section 5 of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 and must comply with the Transparency Code. This includes publication of the following on the Council's website:

- Name of Chairperson of the SPC
- Names of Members together with details of their organisation
- Whether any non-public servant members were previously designated public officials
- Terms of reference of the Committee
- Agenda and the Minutes of each meeting;
- Other relevant information.

This information should be in a prominent place on the website and should be easily accessible. The Chairperson will include in a report to the Council a statement confirming a Committee's compliance with the Transparency Code.

The requirements of the Transparency Code also apply to any sub-groups of an SPC.