



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

**Meath County Council**

**DRAFT**

**STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME**

**2019-2024**



**June 2019**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Meath County Council is the primary unit of Local Government in County Meath. The Council consists of 40 members who are directly elected by a system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. Elections are held every 5 years with the most recent election held on May 24, 2019.

The functions of Meath County Council are divided into reserved and executive functions. The former are discharged by the Elected Councillors and involve important matters of policy including the adoption of the annual budget, the borrowing of money, the making of development plans, bye-laws, adopting building programmes, etc. Executive functions performed by the Chief Executive include the employment of staff, property management, planning decisions and the day to day administration of the Council's affairs. The Chief Executive will from time to time delegate certain functions to senior staff. The Council is one of County Meath's largest employers currently employing over 750 people.

In keeping with the policy of broadening involvement in local government through participation by community and sectoral interests, Meath County Council has operated Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) since 2002. The statutory basis for such committees is set out in Section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by Section 41 of the 2014 Act. It is now proposed to re-establish such committees that will afford an opportunity to relevant external bodies to become involved in the formulation of policies affecting the future of County Meath.

### **1.2 Role of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)**

The role of the Strategic Policy Committees is to assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy and to reflect on the major functions or services of a local authority within the broader context. The SPCs will function as policy-centred committees, which can harness the experience of external bodies in the formulation of policy.

In accordance with Departmental guidance, there is a requirement that SPCs:

- Normally meet four times yearly at suitable times for all SPC Members, with a calendar of meetings to be agreed;
- Have an annual work programme which should be linked to the local authority's Corporate Plan and updated regularly as necessary;
- 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 committee's 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.

### **1.3 The Corporate Policy Group (CPG)**

The Council will also establish a Corporate Policy Group (CPG), which will comprise the Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council, the SPC chairs and where a Municipal District is not already represented, a member of such Municipal District. The CPG will be supported by the Chief Executive and Management Team. The role of the CPG in general is to monitor the overall performance of the Council, to coordinate the work of the SPCs, to monitor their work programmes and to act on behalf of the SPCs in contributing to the strategic process.

## **2. SPC FRAMEWORK 2019-2024**

### **2.1 Strategic Policy Committees and their Composition**

Meath County Council will establish 4 Strategic Policy Committees with the following remits:

**Planning, Economic Development and Enterprise**  
**Climate Action and Environment**  
**Transportation**  
**Housing, Community and Cultural Development**

Each SPC shall consist of 10 Elected Members and 5 sectoral interest nominees. Each Councillor shall sit on 1 SPC only.

The Council will appoint the Chairperson of each SPC who shall be ex-officio a member of that committee. 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.

The nominated preference of Councillors, as to which SPC they wish to serve on, will be accommodated in so far as practicable. In the event of any dispute and where agreement cannot otherwise be reached the final allocation of seats will be a matter for the Corporate Policy Group.

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

### **2.2 Sectoral Representation and Nomination**

The following sectors will provide representation on SPCs, where appropriate:

Agriculture / Farming  
Environment / Conservation  
Development / Construction  
Business / Commercial  
Trade Union

Community / Voluntary  
Social Inclusion

The nomination process for the Agricultural/Farming, Business/Commercial, Development/Construction and the Trade Union sectors will be facilitated by the National Pillars. (national pillar contacts in 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. The Environmental / Conservation, Community / Voluntary and Social Inclusion sectors will be determined on the basis of the local nomination process through the PPN in Meath. Member Organisations when joining the PPN must opt to be a part of one of three electoral colleges within the PPN: Environment; Social Inclusion; or Community and Voluntary.

In seeking nominations, sectors will 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.

	Strategic Policy Committee			
	Planning, Economic Development Enterprise	Climate Action and Environment	Transportation	Housing, Community, Culture Development
<b>Agriculture/ Farming</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Environment/ Conservation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Development/ Construction</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	
<b>Business/ Commercial</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Trade Union</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>Community/ Voluntary</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Social Inclusion</b>				<b>2</b>

### **3. SPC SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **3.1 Public Consultation Process**

The draft SPC Scheme, when approved by Meath County Council, will be placed on public display for a period of one month to allow for the making of submissions on the draft scheme.

#### **3.2 Adoption of SPC Scheme**

Following adoption by Meath County Council of this SPC scheme, with or without amendment, nominations will be sought for representatives to the SPCs.

The Council will seek preferences from the Elected Members.

In the case of the National Key Stakeholder Pillars (i.e. Business/Employers Pillar, Trade Union Pillar, Farming/Agricultural Pillar and Environmental Pillar), Meath 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 above.

In addition, the Council will write to the national contact of the environmental sector seeking the validation of nominees to the Environment Electoral College under the PPN. 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 this Scheme.

One month will be allowed for receipt of all nominations by Meath County Council.

#### **3.3 Principles for Appointing Members**

In appointing Council members, the following principles will apply:

- Each County Councillor will serve on 1 SPC at any one time.
- Councillors may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.
- SPC membership for Councillors will be for the lifetime of the Council. A member ceasing to be a Councillor would also cease membership of the SPC
- In the event of a Councillor resigning from an SPC the appointment of a replacement Councillor shall be decided by the full Council
- The proportionality of elected Councillors on each SPC will as far as is possible reflect that which prevails in the full Council.
- Each member will be asked to express a preference for the SPC on which they would like to serve. In the event that any particular SPC is oversubscribed and agreement cannot otherwise be reached the final allocation of seats will be a matter for the Council's Corporate Policy Group.

In appointing sectoral representatives, the following principles will apply:

- Groups / associations should be active within the county and have a countywide impact or at a minimum relevance within a locality or a number of localities in the area.
- Groups / associations should be open to new members, hold Annual General Meetings and regular meetings and should be broadly representative or accountable.
- Single interest groups may be considered e.g. groups focused on the disabled or the elderly. Groups formed around specific local issues will not be considered for inclusion in the sectors.
- Each Sector is responsible for its own nominees. However Meath County Council recommends that as far as possible each nominee should have broad knowledge or experience related to the SPC to which they have been nominated.
- It is desirable that sectoral nominees would retain membership for the life of the Council. It is open to each nominating sector to deselect its nominee if felt necessary and to notify the Council accordingly whereupon the person would cease to be a member. In such cases the relevant sector will nominate a new representative.
- Where a casual vacancy occurs it will likewise be filled by the relevant sector.
- While every effort will be made to accommodate preferences the final decision will rest with Meath County Council 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.

### **3.4 Standing Orders**

Standing Orders will be drafted to govern the operation of SPCs and following approval by the CPG shall be adopted by each SPC once approved.

Each SPC will be informed of the provisions of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015, specifically the Transparency Code, and how the work of the SPCs and their members will adhere, where necessary, to the Transparency Code.