



Comhairle Cathrach
na Gaillimhe
Galway City Council

Dréacht | Draft

Scéim na gCoistí um Beartais Straitéiseacha

Strategic Policy Committee Scheme

2024-2029



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1. Introduction

Galway City Council provide a wide range of services and facilities to the residents, visitors and organisations of Galway. Galway City Council have 18 Councillors who are elected from three local electoral areas.

Local Electoral Area	No. of Members
Galway City East	6
Galway City Central	6
Galway City West	6

Table 1. Local Electoral Area Membership

The Council is the decision-making authority, and it formulates and adopts policy (Section 130 Local Government Act 2001 – 2014). The Council is assisted and supported in this work by the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) and several Strategic Policy Committees (SPC). The Executive (officials) of the Council implement adopted policy.

Guidelines were published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DoHLGH) in June 2024 for the establishment and operation of Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Groups – Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees: Revised Guidelines for Establishment and Operation.

The role of the SPCs and the CPG is to formulate policy proposals, evaluate and report on policy implementation, for consideration and final decision by the full Council.

2. Role of Corporate Policy Group

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises the Mayor and the Chairpersons of the SPCs and is supported by the Chief Executive or his nominee(s). The role of the CPG is strategic, and it links the work of the different SPCs and provide a forum where policy positions affecting the whole Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. The Mayor reports to the Council on the work of the CPG.

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG):

- Play a key role in preparing the budget (subject to guidelines on the budgetary process).
- 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.
- Monitor the overall performance of the Council.
- Guide the preparation of the agenda for the monthly plenary council meeting. This involves the referral of items to be discussed at the Local Area Committee meetings for each of the three Electoral Wards.
- Deal with overall issues in relation to service delivery plans, customer service, value for money, etc., (individual SPCs will deal with such issues in their work insofar as their particular service remit is concerned).
- Co-ordinate the work of the SPCs and monitor their work programmes.
- Request SPCs to consider particular policy issues where appropriate; and
- Provide feedback to the SPCs on Council policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs.

Minutes of the CPG meetings are provided to all members of the local authority.

3. Strategic Policy Committees

The statutory basis for Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) is set out in section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by section 41 of the 2014 Act. Local authorities are required to establish “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 to advise the authority on those matters”. These Committees are set out below on page 7.

A focus on the SPCs’ policy-making and strategic role is fundamental to the SPC concept. In their work, SPCs are not concerned with individual representational or operational issues.

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. Review and monitoring are ongoing throughout the life of the policy so as to ensure that the aims and objectives of the policy are being achieved and the outcome matches the approach agreed in a policy.

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

- Each SPC agree its annual programme, linked to the strategic policies in the Galway City Council Corporate Plan.
- SPC Chairs report to the Council on the proceedings of the Committee.

- Each SPC's work will take into account 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; and
- The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) should co-ordinate the work and monitor the work programmes of the SPCs.

The addition of an annual review process can be considered by the Corporate Policy Group and its format developed and communicated to the SPC's in time for the development of the annual work plans of each SPC before year-end.

SPCs are structured around the main Directorate functions of Galway City Council. The Chief Executive delegates his executive functions to staff in accordance with the Local Government Acts. In this regard, he has established five directorates, each led by a Director of Service and are as follows:

- Social Development Directorate
- Operational Development Directorate
- Project Development Directorate
- Urban Development Directorate
- Corporate Development Directorate

Galway City Council will have 6 SPCs, and as there are currently 5 Directorates and 5 Directors of Service - two Directorates will share the sixth SPC, having regard to the requirements of the Local Government Act 2014. Each SPC is required to consider climate action and climate impacts as part of any and all policies that form part of its programme of work. While the remit of a particular SPC will be anchored in a particular service it should not operate in a restrictive way, but in the context of a wider overall picture and while taking into account related public services/agencies, local needs and circumstances more generally e.g. an environment SPC should have regard for transport issues and vice versa

4. Policy Configuration and Functions

Having regard to the foregoing, Galway City Council will have 6 Strategic Policy Committees, which will meet quarterly and will be configured as follows:

Social Development SPC Chair-ClIr Declan McDonnell	Operational Development SPC Chair-ClIr John Connolly	Project Development SPC Chair-ClIr Mike Cubbard
Urban Development SPC Chair-ClIr Donal Lyons	Corporate Development SPC Chair-ClIr Clodagh Higgins	Tourism Development SPC (Tourism, Arts, Culture & Community) Chair- ClIr Níall McNelis

Together with the Mayor, the Chairpersons of the SPCs form the Corporate Policy Group and report to the City Council.

5. Strategic Policy Committee Functions

The following section sets out details on the functions of each of the 6 SPCs

Name of SPC	Areas
SPC 1. Social Development	• Housing Services • Housing Capital • Housing Maintenance • Traveller Accommodation • Homelessness Services • Social Inclusion • Ukrainian Services • Integration
SPC 2. Operational Development	• Roads and Transportation Maintenance • Environment Services • Recreation and Amenity • Water Services • Community Centres • Fire and Emergency Shared Service
SPC 3. Project Development	• Project Management Office (PMO) & Capital Development • New HQ Development • City Hall site re-development • Active Travel • GCRR Development • Property Assets & Derelict Sites • Climate Change
SPC 4. Urban Development	• Placemaking • Forward Planning • Development Control • Architectural Services • Economic Development • Heritage & Conservation • LEO and Library Shared Service
SPC 5. Corporate Development	• Finance • Corporate Services • Corporate Governance • Communications & Marketing • ICT & Digital • Corporate Transformation • Change Management • Commercial Services
SPC 6: Tourism Development	• Tourism • Arts • Culture • Community

SPCs Requirements

Consideration that SPC should adhere to:

1. Obtain and consider advice and information received from the Chief Executive
2. Ensure early presentation of policy proposals.
3. Views of the SPC committee should be provided to the Director of Service for attention of the Chief Executive
4. Have regard to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Decision making of SPCs:

1. Committees can seek the attendance of public authorities to assist in developing policy.
2. SPCs can input into service delivery plans by identifying objectives and strategies for individual services
3. Consultation in developing and reviewing policy with sectors interests on an ongoing basis.

SPC Meetings

SPC Procedures for meetings:

1. A calendar of meetings should be agreed at the start of each year.
2. A calendar of meetings should fit policy-making timeframes.
3. Meetings should be conducted in a less formal way than full council meetings.
4. Members of SPCs should be surveyed on their views of the structure of the meetings.
5. Ethical requirements should be highlighted at the start of each meeting.
6. Agenda, minutes and documentation for a meeting should be provided well in advance
7. A key contact person will be provided for all SPC members.
8. Appropriate locations will be found to hold SPC meetings.

Policy Support and Development

Work programmes should be clear and accountable on the role of the SPC for members of the SPC. Contributions should be made by all members of the SPC in developing the work programme. When developing a work programme, the programme should be linked with the Corporate Plan of the local authority.

Input from the Director of Service of the local authority will be required when developing policy options. Policy options should be provided to the Chair of the SPC, and the options should be in clear and concise.

Local Authorities should, where practicable, provide a policy support role for the SPCs. Assisting the SPCs with policy research and providing SPCs with access to external agencies that could assist in developing policies of the SPC. Funding to hire external third parties may be provided by the local authority. Experts and guest speakers may be invited to attend SPC meetings. When experts and guest speaker attend SPC meetings, they should provide a perspective on a particular item that is on the SPC Agenda. Any experts or guest speakers are subject to ethics requirements.

Prior to finalising and bringing a completed policy to a SPC meeting, there should be a number of policy options be considered and each policy option should be reviewed by the members of the SPC. A consensus should be reached on the overall policy before it is submitted at a meeting of the SPC.

6. Chairpersons

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

Galway City Council, at its Annual meeting held on 21st June 2024, appointed the Chairperson Designate in respect of the six SPCs, namely, J. Connolly, M. Cubbard, C. Higgins, D. Lyons, D. McDonnell and N. McNelis. Subsequent Chairpersons will be appointed by the City 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.

7. Memberships

In accordance with the provisions of guidelines for the membership of the SPCs will consist of at least one-third sectoral representatives. The following shall apply in relation to the membership of SPCs

- Each Councillor will be a member of a minimum of 2 SPCs and some may be members of 3;
- 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.
- A sectoral representative may not be a member of more than one SPC.

The following factors were 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.
- The need for a comprehensive audit of groups within the local authority area to facilitate the fullest possible consultation with each sector.
- 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.
- A commitment to have a pro-active information strategy to inform the public on the renewal of local government.
- The desirability of facilitating relevant organisations to be part of the nominating constituencies.

SPC Configuration

Each SPC will have a total of 10 members, comprising 6 Elected Members and 4 Sectoral Representatives. Each SPC should have at least one Councillor from each Local Electoral Area. The following Sectors will be represented on relevant SPCs:

- Environment/Conservation/Culture
- Development/ Construction
- Business/Commercial
- Trade Union
- Community/Voluntary
- Social Inclusion

The proposed representation of the sectors on the Strategic Policy Committees is as follows:

SPC 1: Social Development	• Social Inclusion • Development / Construction • Business / Commercial • Culture
SPC 2: Operational Development	• Community/Voluntary • Business/Commercial • Environment/Conservation • Trade Union
SPC 3. Project Development	• Community /Voluntary • Development / Construction • Business / Commercial, and • Environment / Conservation
SPC. 4 Urban Development	• Environment / Conservation • Development / Construction • Community / Voluntary • Business / Commercial
SPC5. Corporate Development	• Business/Commercial • Social Inclusion • Trade Union • Community/Voluntary
SPC6: Tourism Development	• Development / Construction • Social Inclusion • Culture • Business/Commercial

8. Nomination Process for Sectoral Representatives

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

- The business/ commercial and development/ construction sectors will be facilitated by the business and employer's organisations pillar. Locally this should be invited through Galway Chamber and the local business networks.
- The trade union sector will be facilitated by the trade union pillar through Galway Trades Council.

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) / Galway City Community Network (GCCN). Member Organisations when joining the Galway City Community Network 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 1 month 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 city-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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Circulation of Draft Scheme

Following consideration by City Council of the Draft Scheme, it will be forwarded for consideration to the GCCN/PPN and to the appropriate national and local stakeholder

pillars. A notice to the effect that the Council considered the draft scheme and that the Council had issued the draft scheme for consultation will be published in a local newspaper and on www.galwaycity.ie website and through social media for 6 weeks from date of publication of notice for the making of submissions on the draft.

12. Adoption of Scheme

Following receipt of submissions, the draft scheme will be considered by City Council at its Ordinary Meeting to be held on 9th September 2024.



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