



10<sup>th</sup> September, 2024.

**TO: AN CATHAOIRLEACH  
& EACH MEMBER OF KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**RE: DRAFT STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME 2024-2029**

Dear Councillor,

The statutory basis for Strategic Policy Committees [SPC'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 draft SPC Scheme was presented to Members and approved for consultation at the monthly meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2024.

The draft scheme was published in the Kilkenny People, placed on the Council's website and consult.kilkenny.ie and issued to all the Pillar Groups and the Public Participation Network [PPN] on the 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2024. A copy of the draft document was also made available to the public at our offices in County Hall and all Area Offices. The period for making submissions closed on Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2024 at 5.00 p.m.

Four submissions were received [*copies attached*] and the requests have been summarised in the attached Table with recommendation. The main points raised in the submissions are set out hereunder:

1. **Kilkenny Public Participation Network [PPN]**  
Requesting enhancement of the opportunities and participation of sectoral investment and seeking an additional representative on the Committees as follows:  
**SPC 1:** Community & Voluntary and Social Inclusion Representation  
**SPC 2:** Community & Voluntary and Environmental/Conservation Representation  
**SPC 4:** Social Inclusion and Environmental Conservation Representation  
**SPC 5:** Environmental/Conservation Representation
2. **An Taisce**  
Requesting enhancement of the operation of the SPC Scheme and seeking that Environment/Conservation Representative be on SPC 2 instead of SPC 3.
3. **Conradh na Gaeilge**  
Seeking a SPC of its own or the inclusion of the Irish language in the objectives and title of a Strategic Policy Committee
4. **The Nore Conversation Circle**  
Seeking a SPC with responsibility for the Council's policy towards the Irish language, and to include the Irish language specifically in the title and objectives of a Strategic Policy Committee and to establish an Irish language subcommittee under the responsibility of the same SPC

## **SUMMARY OF MANagements OBSERVATION ON SUBMISSIONS**

The statutory basis for the establishment of SPC's is enshrined in legislation. The guidelines issued by the Department recommended that one third of the membership is drawn from sectors relevant to the committee's work. The External Members should be actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies. The SPC's provide Elected Members with external views in the development and review of policy. The External Members are nominated by National Pillars e.g. IFA, Chambers Ireland etc. and PPN. The Council should actively encourage greater citizen engagement and participation with the SPC's from a wide range of groups such as young people, women and groups whose voices have not been well heard in the past.

The PPN facilitates the nominations of a number of External Members to represent the following:

- Community/Voluntary,
- Social Inclusion and
- Environmental/Conservation.

It is incumbent on all statutory bodies and agencies to have regard to National and European policies in the creation of policy and in particular on sustainable development and climate change.

**Having considered the four submissions received, the following amendments to the draft Scheme as published are being recommended for consideration by the Elected Members.**

A:     **SPC1:** No Change

B:     **SPC2:** Increase Non-Elected Members to 5 to allow representative from Environmental/Conservation [PPN].

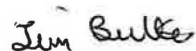
C:     **SPC3:** Remove Trade Union Representative

D:     **SPC4:** No Change

E:     **SPC5:** No Change

**Approval of Members is now required to the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029 to enable the appointment of Members to the relevant SPC as soon as possible.**

Signed:



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**Tim Butler,  
Director of Services**



**Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh**  
**Kilkenny County Council**

# **DRAFT**

# **STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

# **SCHEME**

**2024 - 2029**

**Adopted by Elected Members on \_\_\_\_\_**

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## DEFINITIONS

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>CPG:</b>  | <i>Corporate Policy Group</i>              |
| <b>SPC:</b>  | <i>Strategic Policy Committee</i>          |
| <b>AGM:</b>  | <i>Annual General Meeting</i>              |
| <b>LEO:</b>  | <i>Local Enterprise Office</i>             |
| <b>LECP:</b> | <i>Local Economic &amp; Community Plan</i> |



# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Present Organisation of Kilkenny County Council

Multiplicities of services and infrastructure are provided by Kilkenny County Council for a population of some 104,160 in an area covering 2,073 sq. kilometres.

The day to day delivery of services is the responsibility of the Chief Executive, Management Team and staff, while the 24 Elected Members representing the 4 Municipal Districts performs the Council's Democratic/Representational Role and Policy.

The functions and services of the Council are classified into eight service divisions as follows:

- A. Housing and Building**
- B. Road Transportation and Safety**
- C. Water Services**  
*[now under the Management and Responsibility of Uisce Éireann]*
- D. Development Management**
- E. Environmental Services**
- F. Recreation and Amenity**
- G. Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare**
- H. Miscellaneous Services/General**

Policies in relation to the above programme groups are formulated, considered and recommended by the five (5) Strategic Policy Committees to the Plenary Council.

## **2. CORPORATE POLICY GROUP (C.P.G.)**

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### **2.1 CPG – Structure**

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises the Cathaoirleach of the Council as its chair together with the chairs of each of the SPCs and the party whips. If this representation does not ensure that all four Municipal Districts are represented, the Municipal District which does not have a member on the Corporate Policy Group shall have the right to nominate one of its members to it.

The CPG links the work of the different SPCs, it acts as a sort of cabinet and provides a forum where policy positions affecting the whole Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. It is supported by the Chief Executive and the Director of Services.

### **2.2 CPG - Role**

The CPG, like an SPC, is a committee of the Council. Its task is to advise and assist the Council, with full decision-making authority remaining with the Council. The Cathaoirleach reports to the Council on the work of the CPG. In such context, it is a matter for each Council, in co-operation with the Chief Executive, to determine the range of responsibilities and tasks of the CPG.

The CPG should:

- play a key role in preparing the budget;
- 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;
- determine responsibility for discharge of reserved functions as between the municipal district level (or a specific municipal district) and the local authority, where the question consistency or avoidance of unnecessary duplication is referred to it by the Chief Executive;
- monitor the overall performance of a local authority;
- guide the preparation of the agenda for the monthly plenary council meeting. This involves the referral of items to be discussed at the Municipal District Meetings, where appropriate.
- deal with overall issues in relation to service delivery plans, customer service, value for money, etc., (individual SPCs would deal with such issues in their work insofar as their particular service remit was concerned);
- co-ordinate and approve the work programme of the SPC and monitor their work programmes;
- request SPCs to consider particular policy issues where appropriate;
- provide feedback to the SPCs on Council policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs.

### **2.3 Minutes of CPG meetings**

CPG Meetings are held on a monthly basis unless otherwise decided. Minutes of CPG meetings are provided to all Members of the local authority.

### **3. ROLE OF STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES (SPC.S)**

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**3.1** 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 Local Government Reform Act, 2014. Circular LG09/2024 dated 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2024, outlines the requirement for each Local Authority following the local elections to establish new Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) in line with revised guidelines published by the Department in June 2024 for Establishment and Operation of Corporate Policy Groups (CPGs) and Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs). The guidelines seek to ensure there is a clear understanding of the work of SPCs and includes guidance on incorporating climate action into SPC work groups. The Council has decided to include minor modifications to the configuration of the SPC committees.

**3.2** The role of the Strategic Policy Committees is to:

- 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;
- be tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of a local authority;
- have a minimum of one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committees' work.

Each Local Authority will establish SPCs which bring together both elected members, and people actively working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies to input, develop and review policies related to Council services. The SPCs will provide elected members with external views as they discharge their strategic role in the development of the local authority, including their policy development and oversight roles within the local authority. The elected representatives have a similar role to that of a board of directors. The SPC system will provide a better focus and enhanced capacity for involvement in policy formulation, review and evaluation with inbuilt assistance of relevant sectoral interests and the support of a Director of Services. SPCs prepare the groundwork for policies which are then decided on by the local authority, including as appropriate at municipal district level. The local sectoral interests, including the trade union, farming, environmental and community/voluntary sectors, along with the business community, will constitute at least one third of the membership of SPCs.

**3.3** The number of SPCs in a local authority will normally be 4 SPCs. In line with the requirements of section 48(1A) of the Local Government Act 2001, it is only the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise that is mandatory. In addition, each SPC is required to consider climate action and climate impacts as part of any and all policies that form part of its work programme.

**3.4** Each SPC shall adopt a multi annual work programme linked to the strategic policies in the Council's Corporate Plan, which should target policy/plan developments and include for such reviews as are considered appropriate.



Issues relating to communities, the environment and sustainable development are relevant to the work of each SPC.

SPCs are required to have regard to Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies proposed by the Regional Assembly.

The Council retains its function as the decision-making authority and makes the final decision on all matters of policy. It is the responsibility of the Strategic Policy Committees to provide advice and make recommendations on policy matters. The Chairperson of the SPC will report directly to the full Council.

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

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.

Meetings of SPCs will generally be open to the public and the media, unless a Committee shall decide otherwise by a majority of the membership present of that Committee.

The major advantage of the SPC system is that it involves the elected members and external representation in policy making from the earliest possible stage. The Strategic Policy Committees are not involved in the day to day operation of the Council, staff matters or other non-policy matters.

SPCs may request a public authority to attend a meeting of an SPC for the purpose of assisting it in developing policy in accordance Section 48(3A) of the 2001 Act (inserted by Section 41(d) of the 2014 Act).

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. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF SPC'S

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SPC's will be constituted in accordance with Section 48 of the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, and as set out in the attached Framework.

1. Chairpersons will be appointed for a minimum of 3 years.
2. Meetings of SPC's will normally be held on a quarterly basis; in any event, not less than 4 meetings of every SPC will take place annually.
3. Meetings shall be conducted in an informal but efficient manner at venues and times to be decided annually in advance by the committee.
4. SPC meeting documentation should ideally be circulated to SPC members at least 2 weeks in advance of meetings. Agenda and minutes should also be circulated to all other Councillors.
5. External nominees should be familiar with the subject area of their committees and generally constitute one third of membership.
6. Where agreement is reached on recommendations of an SPC to the full Council, the Chairperson of the SPC or his/her nominee shall present the recommendation to full Council.
7. The outcome of the Council considerations of the SPC's recommendation should likewise be reported back to the SPC.
8. The ethical requirement of Section 177 of Local Government Act 2001 shall apply to all members of SPC (*Disclosure by Member of pecuniary or any other beneficial interests*). The general conduct and behaviour of SPC members in carrying their role is an important yardstick by which the honesty, integrity, impartiality and performance of local government are judged and public trust maintained.

The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 (*the Act*) is designed to provide information to the public regarding who is lobbying whom and about what. Individuals and organisations who participate in Strategic Policy Committees established by local authorities may have obligations under this 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 Lobbying Act provides for an exception from the requirement to register. A Transparency Code was published by the Minister for 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. FRAMEWORK

5.1 The overall configuration of the Kilkenny Strategic Policy Committees are as follows:

| Strategic Policy Committee   | Elected Members  | Sectoral Representatives | Sector  |
|--|--|--------------------------|---|
| <b>SPC 1</b><br><br><b><i>Economic Development Enterprise Support and Tourism, Planning &amp; Development Policy</i></b> | David Fitzgerald [C]<br><br>&<br><br><b>4 Elected Members</b>  | 4                        | 1-Agriculture/Farming (IFA)<br>1- Development/Construction (CI)<br>1- Business/Commercial (CI)<br>1-Env./Conservation (PPN)                                 |
| <b>SPC 2</b><br><br><b><i>Transportation Policy Mobility Management &amp; Infrastructure</i></b>                         | Deirdre Cullen [C]<br><br>&<br><br><b>4 Elected Members</b>    | 4                        | 1-Agriculture/Farming (IFA)<br>1- Development/Construction (CI)<br>1-Social Inclusion (PPN)<br>1-Trade Union (ICTU)   |
| <b>SPC 3</b><br><br><b><i>Housing</i></b>  | Andrew McGuinness [C]<br><br>&<br><br><b>5 Elected Members</b> | 5                        | 1- Development/Construction (CI)<br>1-Env./Conservation (PPN)<br>1-Social Inclusion (PPN)<br>1- Community/Voluntary (PPN)<br>1-Trade Union (ICTU)           |
| <b>SPC 4</b><br><br><b><i>Climate Action, Energy &amp; Environmental Protection</i></b>                                  | Eugene McGuinness [C]<br><br>&<br><br><b>5 Elected Members</b> | 5                        | 1-Agriculture/Farming (IFA)<br>1- Development/Construction (CI)<br>1- Business/Commercial (CI)<br>1-Env./Conservation (PPN)<br>1- Community/Voluntary (PPN) |



| Strategic Policy Committee  | Elected Members   | Sectoral Representatives | Sector  |
|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| <b>SPC5</b><br><br><b><i>Community, Integration, Cultural, Heritage &amp; Fire Services</i></b> | John Brennan [C]<br><br>&<br><br><b>4 Elected Members</b> | 4                        | 1- <i>Business/Commercial (CI)</i><br>1- <i>Social Inclusion (PPN)</i><br>1- <i>Community/Voluntary (PPN)</i><br>1- <i>Trade Union (ICTU)</i> |

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\* C: Chairperson

## **5.2 Remit of Each SPC**

The following section sets out the details of the remit of each of the 5 SPC's.

### ***Economic Development, Enterprise Support and Tourism, Planning & Development Policy***

- Tourism Strategy and Twinning
- Economic Development
- Enterprise Support Functions.
- Implementation and Review of the Economic Elements of the LECP
- Planning and Development
- Conservation of Built Environment
- Urban & Village Renewal
- Town & Rural Regeneration
- Land Activation/Vacant Site Levy/Derelict Sites

### ***Transportation Policy / Mobility Management & Infrastructure***

- Roads
- Road Safety issues and Traffic Management
- Mobility Management
- Active Travel
- Pedestrian Facilities
- Parking
- Public Transport
- Water Services Investment Programme
- Rural Water Programme

### ***Housing***

- Housing Construction / Refurbishment Programme
- Homeless Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Housing Maintenance & Estate Management
- Allocations / Transfers
- Accommodation Programme for Travelling People

### ***Climate Action, Energy & Environment Protection***

- Climate Action
- Waste Management
- Flood Risk & Water Quality Management Plan
- Burial Grounds
- Building Control
- Energy Strategy/Standards
- Control of Animals
- Litter Management Plan
- Parks, Playgrounds & Open Spaces

### ***Community, Integration, Cultural, Heritage & Fire Services***

- Community Development
- Placemaking
- Arts & Culture
- Libraries
- Heritage
- Fire & Emergency Services
- Integration
- Social Inclusion



## 6. PRINCIPLES

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The following principles apply to:

### 6.1 Appointment of Kilkenny County Council Members

Each Member of Kilkenny County Council shall, as a matter of equity and good practice, serve on an SPC.

Council Members may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.

A person ceasing to be a Member shall automatically cease membership of the SPC.

Council Members shall not serve on more than two Strategic Policy Committees.

SPC Council membership shall reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representation on the full Council – as far as it is practical, each Strategic Policy Committee should have at least one member from each Municipal District. The Local Government (*Reorganisation*) Act 1985 (section 27) was designed to allow for a basic element of proportionality in appointments to committees etc.

The allocation of the SPC Chairs shall also reflect equitably the spread of elected representation on the County Council, including, as far as it is practical, be representative of each of the Municipal Districts in the Local Authority.

The Chairs of the SPC's shall be an Elected Member. The Chairs of the SPC will hold office for a minimum period of 3 years.

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 of Service to facilitate the smooth and effective operation of the Committee.

### 6.2 Appointment of Sectoral Interests

Groups/Associations shall be active in the local authority area, be broadly representative and accountable and should have a broad sectoral remit.

Groups/associations should be open to new members, hold AGMs and regular meetings.

Single interest groups should be eligible, e.g. campaign groups focused on the disabled or elderly. Single issue groups should be encouraged to affiliate with their relevant PPNs to ensure that they are represented.

Local Development Agencies represented at Strategy Group/LCDC Level shall not be represented on an SPC. Arrangements should be in place, however, to facilitate meaningful engagement and consultation with such Local Development Agencies as part of the policy-making process.

Each sector shall select its own nominee(s) via the PPN.

It is desirable that sectoral nominees would retain membership of the SPC 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 shall nominate a new representative.

**Note:** Sectoral interests are asked to bear in mind the objective of achieving a 40% gender balance in making the appointments, as well as a commitment to foster economic development, social inclusiveness and equality when selecting their representatives.

### **6.3 Expenses**

In general, any expenses arising for SPC Members would be met by the organisations the SPC Member is representing. However, those SPC members whose expenses cannot be met in that manner are entitled to be paid travel expenses for attendance at SPC meetings.

Kilkenny County Council will pay travel expenses to those sectoral members to facilitate their participation in the SPC process in accordance with Circular Letter's issued by Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

### **6.4 Training**

Kilkenny County Council will make provision for Induction Training and ongoing training of members of the SPC's, in addition to specific training e.g. effective meeting skills for SPC Chairs as far as budgetary constraints will allow.

### **6.5 Standing Orders**

Kilkenny County Council will adopt separate Standing Orders for SPC Meetings regulating the proceedings of the meetings of the SPC's. These will give necessary details to clarify to Members the workings of the SPC and SPC Meeting procedures.

### **6.6 Use of Irish Language**

Many Councils already promote the use of the Irish language in various facets of their work. This practice could be extended to SPCs.

Bain úsáid as an teanga atá again - as an obair a thagann an fhoghlaim.

## 7. NOMINATION PROCESS

Kilkenny County Council will advance the SPC Scheme with 5 Committees on the following basis:

- SPC 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Support and Tourism, Planning & Development Policy
- SPC 2: Transportation Policy / Mobility Management & Infrastructure
- SPC 3: Housing
- SPC 4: Climate Action, Energy & Environmental Protection
- SPC 5: Community, Integration, Cultural, Heritage & Fire Services

Number of Places for **Sectoral** Representation on SPCs is in accordance with Guidelines for establishment and operation issued by the Department in June 2024 is as follows:-

| SECTOR                   | NUMBER OF SPC PLACES |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Agriculture/Farming      | 3                    |
| Environment/Conservation | 3                    |
| Development/Construction | 4                    |
| Community/Voluntary      | 3                    |
| Business/Commercial      | 3                    |
| Trade Union              | 3                    |
| Social Inclusion         | 3                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>             | <b>22</b>            |

Kilkenny County Council will seek nominations of representatives of Agriculture/Farming, Business/Commercial, Trade Unions Pillars in accordance with national arrangements set out in circular LG 09/2024 dated 7th June, 2024.

Nominations will be sought from Construction Industry Federation (CIF) in relation to representatives from the Development/Construction Sector under the Business Pillar.

Kilkenny County Council will work with the Public Participation Network (PPN) to facilitate the selection of sectoral representatives for the Environment/Conservation, Social Inclusion and Community/Voluntary Sectors (*see Circular Letter CVSP 1/2014 of 10 April 2014*).

Groups/Associations/Organisations who wish to register their interest in participating in the SPC process should do so on the attached form (Appendix III).

Once the draft Scheme is adopted each sector will be circulated with same and given a period of 4 weeks from the date of agreement of this draft scheme to make nominations. The final designation of sectors to SPCs and the number of places on SPCs will rest with Kilkenny County Council. Nominations, including any subsequent changes thereto, are the sole responsibility of the sectors.

Kilkenny County Council will approve the new members of the Strategic Policy Committees on receipt of completed nominations by the October Council meeting or earlier where appropriate.



## **APPENDIX I**

### **Summary of Central Features of the SPC System**

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1. The role of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to formulate policy proposals, evaluate and report on policy implementation, for consideration and final decision by the full council.
2. 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.
3. The SPC system presents councillors with a prime opportunity to become more involved in policy formulation. It provides a chance to review and optimise committee structures and related procedures, which demands a rationalisation of existing committees and standing procedures.
4. Each authority will have generally four SPCs, with the option of more in larger authorities, if warranted.
5. Local authorities are statutorily required to have an SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise. All SPCs should consider climate action as a cross-cutting issue in their work programmes.
6. SPCs are to be chaired by one of the councillor members.
7. SPCs are to have a minimum total membership of nine.
8. At least one third of the members of each SPC are to be drawn from relevant sectoral interests; to provide relevant expertise and advice and allow for a range of inputs in the formulation of policy
9. Relevant organisations for each sector will be identified as early as possible, parallel with the drafting of the scheme.
10. Each sector will select its own nominee(s) via the PPN, where appropriate.
11. The CPG is to comprise the Cathaoirleach of the local authority, the SPC chairs and a representative of each municipal district, as needed, in accordance with section 133(1) of the 2001 Act. It is to be chaired by the Cathaoirleach. It will be supported by the Chief Executive.
12. The role of the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to coordinate the work of the SPCs and facilitate the flow of the outcome of the work of the SPCs to the council.



## APPENDIX II

### **NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

| PILLAR          | NAME & ADDRESS   | TELEPHONE &<br>E-MAIL   |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Farming         | Irish Farmers Association (IFA)<br>Irish Farm Centre Bluebell<br>Dublin 12                                     | <a href="mailto:info@ifa.ie">info@ifa.ie</a>  |
| Business        | Chambers Ireland<br>22-24 Lower Mount Street<br>Dublin 2   | <a href="mailto:info@chambers.ie">info@chambers.ie</a>                              |
| Trade<br>Unions | Deirdre Mannion<br>Irish Congress of Trade Unions<br>(ICTU)<br>Head Office<br>31-32 Parnell Square<br>Dublin 1 | 01 889 7726<br><a href="mailto:deirdre.mannion@ictu.ie">deirdre.mannion@ictu.ie</a> |
| Environment     | Irish Environmental Network<br>Macro Community Resource<br>Centre<br>1 Green Street<br>Dublin 7                | 01 878 0116<br><a href="mailto:office@ien.ie">office@ien.ie</a>                     |

## APPENDIX III

### ***Kilkenny COUNTY COUNCIL*** ***APPLICATION FORM FOR NOMINATION TO*** ***STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES***

Name of Applicant Body: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Establishment: \_\_\_\_\_

State Aims and Purpose of your Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

With which Sector would you most readily identify your organisation:  
(tick one only please)

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Agriculture/Farming      |  |
| Environment/Conservation |  |
| Development/Construction |  |
| Business/Commercial      |  |
| Trade Union              |  |
| Community/Voluntary      |  |
| Social Inclusion         |  |

Name & Address of Person to Whom Correspondence is to be sent:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

How often does your Organisation Hold Meetings? \_\_\_\_\_

Date of your last AGM: \_\_\_\_\_

State your Total Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

### **NAMES OF OFFICERS**

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

Please specify the type of Strategic Policy Committee on which your organisation seeks representation:

First Preference: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Preference: \_\_\_\_\_

*[While every effort will be made to accommodate preferences, final decisions will ultimately rest with Kilkenny County Council, having regard to the likely degree of interest, the limited number of S.P.C. places available and the need to have a balanced constituency for each S.P.C.]*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**SECRETARY**

*Completed Application Form must be returned to the Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services, Kilkenny County Council, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny or emailed to [corporate@kilkennycoco.ie](mailto:corporate@kilkennycoco.ie) by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2024.*

| TOPIC  |           | DETAILS OF SUBMISSION   | RECOMMENDATIONS   |
|--|-----------|---|---|
|  |           | SUGGESTIONS   |   |
| Seats and Representation                       | PPN       | <p>Increase the number of Elected Councillors on each SPC.<br/>Additional representation on the following S.P.C.s:<br/>S.P.C. 1: Community and Voluntary representation and social inclusion representation.<br/>S.P.C. 2: Community and Voluntary representation and environmental/conservation representation.<br/>S.P.C. 4: Social inclusion representation and environmental/conservation representation.<br/>S.P.C. 5: Environmental/Conservation representation.</p>  | <p>Guidance recommends each Elected Councillor be on one SPC where possible. This is in place in Kilkenny with three members doubling up on two SPC's</p>   |
| Annual Workplan                                | An Taisce | <p>Given the brief of the Housing SPC and the standards set in planning legislation there is little need for an Environmental representative on it.<br/>Environmental Pillar could make a much more important contribution to the Transport &amp; Mobility SPC.</p>   | <p>Guidance recommends 33% of membership drawn from relevant sectors. KCC has in excess of 44% on all SPC's. It is not possible to increase the non-elected membership of the SPC's</p>   |
| Encouraging real and active participation      | PPN       | <p>An agreed set term workplan to be devised for each committee setting out core aims, actions and policy areas and plan should be available on Council's website with updates and evidence of outcomes.<br/>Develop an agreed "Code of Conduct/Operating Protocol" that sets out minimum standards and expectations to ensure meaningful engagement with committee representatives.</p>  | <p>Noted</p>  |
| Managing Expectations                          | PPN       | <p>Create a diagram that explains the system of decision-making in the Council and how the SPCs, LCDC and other committees connect into this.<br/>Create a user-friendly handbook on SPC committees for members.<br/>Deliver some sort of induction/training session to all committee members to fully understand the nature of the committee and where it fits in the long-term vision for the County.<br/>Have available case studies of where committees have been successful in informing change for the better.<br/>Set an agreed (with all Members) timeline for distribution of Agenda and Minutes (including any additional required reading).<br/>Work with the PPN to define an agreement for how information will be distributed, including the development of summary documents and ensuring that there are no unexplained acronyms or references.<br/>Agendas and relevant information to be circulated at least 4 weeks in advance of the meeting instead of 2 weeks.</p> | <p>The structure will be considered and linked to Corporate Plan and detailed to individual SPC's. The other matters will be addressed by the individual SPC. The Department Guidelines detail the day-to-day operation of the committees</p>   |
| Timing and nature of Information Dissemination | PPN       | <p>Early access to hard and soft copies of all documents to be discussed at S.P.C.s be provided in advance to Kilkenny PPN Staff and Representatives.<br/>Minutes and membership updates to be made available on local authority website, via the Council's Communications Officer, and in an accessible easy read format.</p>  | <p>This information is detailed in the Standing orders for the SPC's. Policy and agenda items are set out by the individual SPC's in consultation with the CPG<br/>Noted. This is not a matter for the SPC Scheme and is addressed in the Standing Orders for SPC's which will be presented for adoption by each Committee at its first meeting</p>   |
| Scheduling and contributing to meetings        | PPN       | <p>PPN representatives receive an invitation to contribute to the agenda of each meeting before it is circulated.<br/>Annual meeting schedule of S.P.C.s be issued to staff working on behalf of the network as soon as dates are available.<br/>Agreed dates will not be changed during the year unless agreed by all the S.P.C. members or alternatively to elect an S.P.C. Vice Chair.<br/>PPN staff receive the minutes from the previous meeting and agenda and meeting documentation at least 4 weeks in advance of the meeting date, not 2 weeks, and that for an item to be included on the agenda it must be submitted 6 weeks before the meeting date.</p>  | <p>Noted<br/>Noted. This is not a matter for the SPC Scheme and is addressed in the Standing Orders for SPC's which will be presented for adoption by each Committee at its first meeting<br/>This matter will be addressed by the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services<br/>Noted. This matter will be addressed by the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services<br/>Noted. This is not a matter for the SPC Scheme and is addressed in the Standing Orders for SPC's which will be presented for adoption by each Committee at its first meeting</p> |



| TOPIC  |     | DETAILS OF SUBMISSION  | RECOMMENDATIONS   |
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| Agreed Statement of Outcomes                 | PPN | <b>SUGGESTIONS</b><br>An agreed statement of outcomes and actions will be adopted by the membership at the conclusion of each meeting and statement will be circulated to all members within one-two weeks of the meeting having taken place.<br>Induction to S.P.C.s, including Terms of Reference and the processes and procedures.<br>Briefings on relevant policy, including the reform of local government.<br>Workshops on the policy remit of S.P.C.s, and how S.P.C.s relate to LCDC and other Committees.<br>Briefing on the requirements of the Transparency Code. | Noted. This matter will be addressed by the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services   |
|  |     |  | Noted this will be addressed as required  |
| Training                                     | PPN | Hold some meetings outside of normal working hours, including evening times, to accommodate volunteers.<br><br>Offer remote access to meetings.  | Noted. This matter will be addressed and considered by the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services and the appointed committees.<br>Noted. This matter will be addressed and considered by the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services and the appointed committees if not already in place |
|  |     |  | Noted. This matter will be addressed and considered by the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services and the appointed committees if not already in place   |
| Recognising and acknowledging representation | PPN | The title PPN Representative (and where appropriate the college they are from) is put against the names of all reps on any written documentation and publicity involving committees.   | Noted. This matter will be addressed and considered by the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services and the appointed committees if not already in place   |
|  |     | Chairpersons welcoming committee members and giving members of the committee the opportunity to introduce themselves as a standard procedure.  | Noted. This matter will be addressed and considered by the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services and the appointed committees if not already in place   |
| Enhancing Relationships                      | PPN | An informal meeting between the chairperson and Kilkenny PPN representatives before they attend their first meeting to discuss the committee.  | Noted. This is not a matter for the SPC Scheme and is addressed in the Standing Orders for SPC's which will be presented for adoption by each Committee at its first meeting  |
|  |     | Chairpersons briefly outlining procedure and protocols that will be followed during the meeting to all new members.<br>Use plain English and accessible language whenever possible, for example in documents and presentations. If acronyms are being used provide a list explaining what they mean.   | The Standing Orders for SPC's which will be presented for adoption by each Committee at its first meeting and will address this matter  |
|  |     | A specific liaison person in the local authority for PPN representatives to contact with any questions relating to the committees. The liaison could meet new representatives before the first meeting and talk through procedures.  | Noted   |
|  |     | A guaranteed response to any questions addressed to the liaison within an agreed time.   | This will be the Director of Service supporting the SPC or their nominee  |
|  |     | Feedback on why a representative's attempt to input into S.P.C. was unsuccessful.  | This is a matter for the Chair of each SPC and the relevant Director of Services<br>Noted This is a matter for each SPC Chair and relevant Director of Services and not relevant to the SPC Scheme.   |
|  | PPN | Regular opportunities for committee members to give feedback and suggest improvements on how the committees are working, for example once a year.  | Noted not relevant to the SPC Scheme and details in the SPC Standing Orders and guidelines.   |
|  |     |  | Input for all SPC members is welcomed and considered. To note guidelines on matters to be considered by SPC's are detailed in the Corporate Policy Group and Strategic Policy Group Guidelines June 2024.   |
|  |     | PPN business as a regular item on the Agenda.  | This is a matter to be considered by each SPC in accordance with the Corporate Policy Group and Strategic Policy Group Guidelines June 2024.  |
|  |     | PPN representative being given the opportunity to make a presentation on their own area of expertise as it relates to strategic policy.  |   |
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| TOPIC   |                    | DETAILS OF SUBMISSION  | RECOMMENDATIONS   |
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| Enhancing Opportunities for Sectoral Representatives              | An Taisce          | Changing the style of minuting S.P.C. meetings to more clearly reflect discussion.   | Noted. This is a matter for each SPC Chair and relevant Director of Services and not for the SPC Scheme   |
|   |                    | S.P.C. chairpersons making it clear at the meeting what information is confidential and what can be shared and when items on agenda are for information purposes only or when engagement and input is required.  | Noted. This is a matter for each SPC Chair and relevant Director of Services and not for the SPC Scheme   |
|   |                    | The agenda for each SPC meeting set out clearly the policies to be addressed in each meeting.  | Agenda is detailed in the Standing Orders for SPC's   |
|   |                    | Meetings take the form of discussions rather than mere presentations of what the County Council is doing as has been the form to date. Sectoral representatives should have a platform to actively engage in development of future policies or reviews of existing policies. The Draft Scheme claims there is an emphasis on committee members being involved in policy making from the earliest possible stage. This has clearly not been happening, and meetings have just been a platform for Council information sessions. The current method of recording SPC meetings is inadequate. The minutes taken do not record the contributions of the committee members. It is desirable to have meaningful online minutes that let the Public know about what their representatives are advising.<br>The report of the SPC chairperson to Council should be made available to SPC members.<br>We note that the online provision of minutes is not kept up to date, the most recent SPC agenda and minutes are from 2022. Also membership of SPCs is not kept up to date. We recommend regular updates and provision of links to this from the PPN e-newsletter. | Noted. This is a matter for each SPC Chair and relevant Director of Services and not for the SPC Scheme. Guidance on matters to be considered by each SPC are detailed in the Corporate Policy Group and Strategic Policy Group Guidelines June 2024.<br>Noted and will be considered. This is not a matter for the SPC Scheme and is addressed in the Standing Orders for SPC's which will be presented for adoption by each Committee at it's first meeting<br>Noted.                             |
| Corporate Policy Group<br>National Key Stakeholders<br>Principles | PPN                | Meetings of SPCs will generally be open to the public and media. We would like more information on how this will be communicated and accommodated. Commitment to ensure that S.P.C. members and S.P.C.s receive timely updates from the Corporate Policy Group.  | Noted. This is not a matter for the SPC Scheme and is addressed in the Standing Orders for SPC's which will be presented for adoption by each Committee at it's first meeting   |
|   |                    | Include Fáilte Ireland and their National Inclusion Team in the table of National contacts of key stakeholders.  | Noted   |
|   |                    | Ensure that all venues used for council meetings are fully disability and wheelchair accessible.   | Noted   |
| Promotion of Irish Language                                       | Conradh na Gaeilge | Establishment of an Irish Language Committee within the local authority as a Strategic Policy Committee (CBS)<br>A Strategic Policy Committee of its own. The CBS will be tasked with developing recommendations and a strategy for the promotion of the Irish language in the local authority and in the community in the functional area of the local authority.   | Whilst fully supportive of the the Irish Language and the obligations on Public bodies, it is not a core service of Local Authorities. It is a cross service and operational requirememnt that will need to be addressed by all public bodies. KCC will continue to promote and encourage the Irish language through its Irish language Scheme and publications. Matters pertaining to the Irish Language will be considered under SPC 5: Community,Integration, Cultural, Heritage & Fire Services |
|   |                    | or<br>Inclusion of the Irish language in the objectives and title of a Strategic Policy Committee  | as above<br>as above  |

| TOPIC |                              | DETAILS OF SUBMISSION  | RECOMMENDATIONS  |
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|       |                              | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUGGESTIONS</b></p> <p>(CBS) and the immediate establishment of an Irish language subcommittee under the remit of the same CBS. It will be the duty of this sub-committee to formulate a strategy and recommendations for the furtherance of the promotion of Irish in the local authority and in the community in the area of the local authority's remit and to forward them to the CBS.</p> <p>Particular SPC were identified with responsibility for the Council's policy towards the Irish language.</p> <p>To include the Irish language specifically in the title and objectives of a Strategic Policy Committee and to establish immediately an Irish language subcommittee under the responsibility of the same SPC.</p> <p>To include the 'Irish speaking community' specifically as a sector in the list of sectors from which the representatives for the various SPCs come (including: agriculture/farming, education, commerce/business)</p> | <p>as above</p> <p>as above</p> <p>as above</p> <p>Nominations are considered and proposed through the PPN. Such groups should register with the PPN if not already in place</p> |
|       | The Nore Conversation Circle |  |  |





### Submission: Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme

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| <b>Date:</b>                        | August 2024   |
| <b>Contact for this submission:</b> | Coordinator, Kilkenny PPN <a href="mailto:ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie">ppnkilkenny@kilkennycoco.ie</a>  |
| <b>Contributions:</b>               | Secretariat and PPN members   |
| <b>Context:</b>                     | <p>Setup as a result of Local Government reform in 2014, Kilkenny Public Participation Network (PPN) is an independent network of Community, Environment and Social Inclusion organisations, working to build a better county for the community of Kilkenny. The PPN is managed by voluntary Secretariat which reports to PPN members through the Plenary.</p> <p>Kilkenny PPN has 446 member and associate member organisations. These members are based across County Kilkenny. The PPN is the prescribed body to nominate Community, Environment and Social Inclusion representation onto various Council Structures, including SPCs</p> |

#### Introduction

Kilkenny PPN welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the new Strategic Policy Scheme.

Kilkenny PPN is committed to providing high quality community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental representation on Kilkenny County Council Strategic Policy Committees. The PPN is committed to providing on-going support to PPN

Representatives who sit on Kilkenny County Council Structures. This includes on-going training, the servicing and development of PPN Linkage Groups, policy development, and so on.

Kilkenny PPN has circulated the Kilkenny County Council SPC Scheme to all our groups encouraging them to engage with the process. This submission was drafted, circulated to all members and includes the feedback submitted by member groups, the Secretariat and PPN Representatives.

We hope that Kilkenny County Council finds this submission useful, that it considers suggestions put forward carefully and that the majority if not all of the suggestions are implemented in the new SPC Scheme. We look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

| Item                                    | Issue/background   | Core Responsibility                   | PPN Recommended Actions for consideration  |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Seats and representation on SPCs</b> | <p>The number of elected councillors (and sectoral interests) on SPCs have been reduced significantly in County Kilkenny compared to the other Counties in Ireland where the number of elected councillors (and sectoral interests) have remained more or less the same or have been increased. This proposed development in County Kilkenny reduces the diversity of voices involved in local policy &amp; decision making. We note that the number of councillors on SPCs in Kilkenny have been reduced from 36 to 27</p> <p>PPN's are statutory bodies born out of the Local Government Reform Act in 2014 with the aim to increase public participation and engagement in local policy and decision making.</p> <p>PPN Representatives strive to ensure that the needs of the community section are prioritised within local policy processes</p> <p>KPPN represents almost 450 Community &amp; Voluntary, Social Inclusion and Environmental groups within Kilkenny City and County, with its membership continuing to grow monthly. With a</p> | Elected members and Corporate Service | <p>We recommend keeping the larger number of members (elected councillors and sectoral interests) in each SPC so as to ensure that the community engagement through the PPN can be effective.</p> <p>Given the broad scope of SPC1, it is essential that Kilkenny PPN's representation is maintained, not reduced. Representatives from the Community &amp; Voluntary and Social Inclusion pillars are necessary to ensure comprehensive and inclusive policy development.</p> <p>Given the importance of SPC2, it is essential that Kilkenny PPN's representation is maintained, not reduced. Representatives from the Community &amp; Voluntary and Environmental pillars are necessary to ensure comprehensive and inclusive policy development.</p> <p>Given the current political landscape and the growing concerns of sustainability and climate action, it is increasingly important that Social Inclusion and Environmental considerations be integral to local policy-making. Therefore, at least one representative from each of the three PPN Electoral Colleges - Community &amp;</p> |



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| <p>conservative average of 50 members per community organisation/group, KPPN currently represents at least 22,500 individuals, the majority of whom are registered under the Community&amp;Voluntary Sector.</p> <p>One of the National government's important Strategic objectives is to engage marginalised communities and their representative bodies in local policy, planning and decision-making processes to ensure inclusivity and that no one is left behind. This objective aligns with the principles of participatory democracy and the empowerment of communities at the grassroots level.</p> <p>The proposed draft scheme for the Local Authorities Strategic Policy Committees 2024-2029 indicates a reduction in Kilkenny PPN's representation by 30%, from 13 seats in the previous SPC scheme (2019-2024) to 9 seats in the proposed SPC scheme.</p> <p>This reduction impacts various sectors as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Community &amp; Voluntary and Social Inclusion pillars are no longer represented on SPC1.</li> <li>• The Community &amp; Voluntary and Environmental pillars are no longer represented on SPC2.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to this, the proposed SPC scheme lacks any representation from the Social Inclusion pillar on SPC4 and representation from the Environmental pillar on SPC5.</p> | <p>Voluntary, Social Inclusion, and Environment - should be allocated to each SPC to ensure balanced and informed decision-making.</p> <p>In the Council's draft (Point 3.3) it says "<i>each SPC is required to consider climate action and climate impacts as part of any and all policies that form part of its work programme</i>". With no environmental representative on some SPCs it's difficult to see how this can be achieved. It would seem particularly important for Transport (SPC2).</p> <p>We would recommend to have a second representation from the PPN Environment/Conservation pillar on SPC 4 Climate Action as this SPC is intended to advocate environmental progress.</p> <p>The positions for Sectoral Representation are vital for the inclusion of the community voice and expertise voices on the SPCs. Where seats for Sectoral Representatives cannot be filled, the seats should remain unfilled until a Representative is available. It is imperative that positions for Sectoral Representatives are not removed or reassigned if they are not able to be filled. The option for inclusion of these Representatives must always remain.</p> <p><u>In summary:</u> Kilkenny PPN recommend increasing the number of elected councillors on each SPC and is seeking additional representation as follows:</p> <p>SPC 1: Community &amp; Voluntary Representation and Social Inclusion Representation</p> <p>SPC 2: Community &amp; Voluntary Representation and Environment/Conservation Representation</p> <p>SPC 4: Social Inclusion Representation and Environmental/Conservation Representation</p> <p>SPC 5: Environment/Conservation Representation</p> |
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| <b>Annual Workplan</b>                                | In order to give clear direction to representatives on their committee role, what is to be achieved and how success of the committee is measured there needs to be a focused workplan for the term of the SPC containing strategic goals and objectives  | Committee Chair and AO   | An agreed set term workplan to be devised for each committee setting out core aims, actions and policy areas.<br><br>The workplan should be available on the Kilkenny Council's website with updates and evidence of outcomes.   |
| <b>Encouraging real and active participation</b>      | In order for the PPN to continue to attract community representatives to key committees we need to be able to assure volunteers that giving up their time is worthwhile.   | Corporate Service, informed by committee members and previous SPC submissions by the PPN network | To develop an agreed 'code of Conduct / operating protocol' that sets out minimum standards and expectations to ensure meaningful engagement with committee representatives.   |
| <b>Managing expectations</b>                          | It is especially important to community volunteers that they have a clear understanding to impart to the bodies they represent about what they can achieve on their behalf. It needs to be clear to all members of the committee what they can realistically expect SPCs to achieve, for example in relation to how national policy may impact local policy.   | Corporate Services<br><br>Support from PPN staff   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a diagram that explains the system of decision-making in the Council and how the SPCs, LCDC and other committees connect into this.</li> <li>• Create a user-friendly handbook on SPC committees for members.</li> <li>• Deliver some sort of induction/training session to all committee members to fully understand the nature of the committee and where it fits in the long-term vision for the county.</li> <li>• Have available case studies of where committees have been successful in informing change for the better</li> </ul>                        |
| <b>Timing and Nature of Information Dissemination</b> | <p>Often committee members are sent lengthy, jargon filled documents at very short notice that are too onerous for volunteers to wade through and understand, never mind consult and engage with the rest of community on.</p> <p>One of the key functions of a PPN representative on an SPC is to gather and represent the views of PPN members.</p> <p>Therefore it is important that documentation that will be discussed and deliberated on in an SPC meeting is shared with PPN representatives</p> | Elected members, Administrative officers of SPCs and other committees                            | <p>Set an agreed (with all members) timeline for distribution of agenda and minutes (including any additional required reading)</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council work with the PPN to define an agreement for how information will be distributed, including the development of summary documents and ensuring that there are no unexplained acronyms or references.</p> <p>The PPN would request agendas and relevant information be circulated at least <b>4 weeks</b> in advance of the meeting, not 2. This will give time for Reps to discuss with their group and pillar in preparation for the meeting.</p> |

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|  | <p>in a timely manner that allows them to:</p> <p>a) prepare for the meetings and to consult with the members of their nominating bodies in order to create the best foundation for meaningful debate.</p> <p>b) submit requests for information and items for the future workplan based on the engagement with the linkage groups. The current minimum of 2 weeks is not enough time for this.</p> |     | <p>In line with the following 'Local Authorities facilitate access to a library of relevant thematic documents focused on groups and committees that the Network are represented on' (Circular Letter CVSP 7/2019 Department of Rural &amp; Community Development) that early access to hard and soft copies of all documents to be discussed at SPCs be made provided in advance to Kilkenny PPN Staff and Representatives.</p> <p>In the interests of transparency minutes should be available on the local authority's website, via the KCC Communications Officer, and in an accessible easy read format. The last time minutes were uploaded on the KK CoCo website was in 2022. Membership information should also be updated when changes occur, for instance when a new PPN Rep has been elected on an SPC.</p>   |
| <b>Scheduling and contributing to meetings</b> | <p>It is important that PPN representatives are given equal opportunity to have community priorities reflected on meeting agendas.</p>  | AOs | <p>That Kilkenny PPN representatives receive an invitation to contribute to the agenda of each meeting before it is circulated.</p> <p>That Kilkenny PPN staff working on behalf of the network, will receive an annual schedule of SPCs as soon as dates are available.</p> <p>That these agreed dates will not be changed during the year unless agreed by all the SPC members or alternatively to elect a SPC vice chair. This will prevent the need to reschedule already agreed SPC approved meeting dates. These dates are used to organise other rep group meetings. The movement of SPC meetings has an impact on PPN communications.</p> <p>That Kilkenny PPN staff will receive the minutes from the previous meeting and agenda and meeting documentation at least <b>4 weeks</b> in advance of the meeting date, not 2 weeks, and that for an item to be included on the agenda it must be submitted 6 weeks before the meeting date. This is necessary to enable Kilkenny PPN staff to work with their representatives and member groups on Kilkenny's PPN's contribution to each meeting.</p> |



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| <b>Agreed Statement of outcomes</b> | Committees such as SPCs usually meet on a quarterly basis and, as such, a considerable period of time will pass until the minutes of the meeting are approved for circulation. This does not allow for PPN reps to fulfil their representative commitments and accurately report back to the community.  | AOs, Chair, Minute taker               | <p>At the conclusion of each SPC meeting an agreed statement of outcomes and actions will be adopted by the membership and that this statement will be recorded by the administrator or minute taker and circulated to all SPC members within one-two weeks of the meeting having taken place, if not agreed at the end of each meeting.</p> <p>This statement of outcomes and actions must not replace the minutes but rather be complementary to them and facilitate the ongoing work between meetings. This would help to provide clarity in terms of the actions agreed at SPC meetings, while ensuring appropriate follow-up after discussions and a greater sense of continuity between meetings.</p> |
| <b>Training</b>                     | <p>Training in relation to SPCs should be made available equally to all members of the SPC including external members. This will promote mutual understanding, better relationships, and a stronger SPC body which will lead to good decision making, better policies and greater benefits for the county.</p> <p>Training in advance of the first meetings of the SPCs on the role of the SPCs, meeting skills and policy creation processes, would be an essential foundation on which to build their success.</p> | Relevant KCC AO supported by PPN staff | <p>Provision of robust and sustained training to include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction to SPCs, including Terms of reference and the processes and procedures of the SPCs.</li> <li>• Briefings on relevant policy, including the reform of Local Government</li> <li>• Workshops on the policy remit of SPCs, and how SPCs relate to LCDC and other Committees.</li> <li>• Briefing on the requirements of the Transparency Code.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Timing and hosting meetings</b>  | <p>As stated, Co Kilkenny PPN is a network of community and voluntary groups. The majority of these groups are volunteer run and led. Co Kilkenny PPN seeks representatives from these groups to fill community &amp; voluntary, environmental and social inclusion seats on the SPC committees. Many of these volunteers are employed during the day. There is no financial cover for them in missing work and it is unfair to expect them to lose their income or interfere with their holiday allowances.</p>     | CE / Corporate Services                | <p>For KCC to consider holding some meetings outside of normal working hours, including evening times, to accommodate volunteers and show them that their time is valued, in line with the recommendations in the IPA report on a review of SPCs, page 54,</p> <p>For KCC to offer remote access to meetings to allow reps to continue to attend without having to take large portions of their day to account for travel.</p>  |



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| <b>Recognising and acknowledging PPN representation</b> | Some PPN representatives are well known in their own field in Kilkenny and would liaise with many organisations and individuals as part of the everyday working and personal life. It is important that all committee members recognise that PPN representatives sit at decision making tables to represent the collective community and the PPN in general, not themselves or their specific sector.  | AOs<br>Corporate Services<br>Committee Chairs | That the title PPN Representative (and where appropriate the college they are from) is put against the names of all reps on any written documentation and publicity involving committees. This concept should also be discussed in any training programme.   |
| <b>Enhancing Relationships</b>                          | <p>The attitude and abilities of the chairperson play an important part in how PPN representatives experience their role on the various committees, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling respected by and equal to other members of the committee</li> <li>• Having an opportunity to share their experience and knowledge.</li> <li>• Feeling that their expertise and knowledge is used.</li> <li>• Knowing that their time, as volunteers, is valued.</li> </ul> <p>PPN representatives are often coming into a culture and environment they are not familiar with. A positive atmosphere in the room makes members want to keep engaging with it.</p> | Chairs  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairpersons welcoming committee members and giving members of the committee the opportunity to introduce themselves as a standard procedure.</li> <li>• An informal meeting between the chairperson and Kilkenny PPN representatives before they attend their first meeting to discuss the committee.</li> <li>• Chairpersons briefly outlining procedures and protocols that will be followed during the meeting to all new members.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Enhancing Opportunities for PPN Representatives</b>  | <p>Clarity is needed regarding the ways in which PPN representatives can input into the work of the committees and the procedures, rules and processes for doing so.</p> <p>PPN representatives want be able to give of their best on committees. They feel they are being listened to and are contributing when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their comments are minuted</li> <li>• Their input is discussed</li> <li>• They receive feedback</li> <li>• They can see a result or outcome to their input.</li> </ul>  | AO<br>Committee Chairs                        | <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use plain English and accessible language whenever possible, for example in documents and presentations. If acronyms are being used provide a list explaining what the acronyms mean.</li> <li>• A specific liaison person in the local authority for PPN representatives to contact with any questions relating to the committees. The liaison could meet new representatives before the first meeting and talk through key procedures.</li> <li>• A guaranteed response to any questions addressed to the liaison within an agreed time.</li> </ul> |

|                                  |  |                                       |   |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
|                                  | <p>When PPN representatives make suggestions or recommendations into pieces of work it is essential that they are given feedback with regard to how these suggestions are being considered and whether action is being taken on them. Whether suggestions are taken on board or not, an explanation of why their suggestion has not been included is essential. This is so they feel their time on the committee is not wasted and will also mean in their accountability to the community they are able to give informed feedback.</p> <p>Presentations and updates frequently appear on committee agendas. Though informative, they can relate to matters that have already been decided elsewhere, with little opportunity for meaningful input or decision making by committee members. PPN members need to be told when agenda items are for information purposes or when engagement and input is required so they can priorities and streamline their engagement with the community.</p> |                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback, for example from the chairperson, on why a representative's attempt to input into the SPC was unsuccessful.</li> <li>• Regular opportunities for committee members to give feedback and suggest improvements on how the committees are working, for example once a year.</li> <li>• PPN business as a regular item on the agenda.</li> <li>• PPN representatives being given the opportunity to make a presentation on their own area of expertise as it relates to strategic policy.</li> <li>• Changing the style of minuting SPC meetings to more clearly reflect what is discussed.</li> <li>• SPC chairpersons making it clear at the SPC meeting what information is confidential and what can be shared. Clarity given to PPN members when items on the agenda for SPCs are for information purposes only with matters already decided or when engagement and input is required.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Corporate Policy Group</b>    | <p>Kilkenny PPN requests that as part of the draft scheme for SPCs a commitment is included to ensure that SPC members and SPCs receive timely updates from the Corporate Policy Group.</p>  | <p>AO with responsibility for CPG</p> | <p>That a system is developed to give PPN representatives on the SPCs insight into updates from the CPG.</p> <p>Up to date CPG minutes and/or draft minutes be circulated to all SPCs as part of their notice of meeting package along with the agenda and SPC minutes. We request that each SPC and each member of it should receive the minutes of all Corporate Policy Group Meetings that have taken place since the previous SPC meeting</p>   |
| <b>National Key stakeholders</b> |  |                                       | <p>To include Failte Ireland and their National Inclusion Team in the table of National contacts of key stakeholders (Appendix II)</p>  |
| <b>Principals</b>                |  |                                       | <p>Ensure that all venues used for council meetings are fully disability and wheelchair accessible.</p>   |

## **An Taisce's Observations on the Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029**

Mary T Brennan, An Taisce, Kilkenny Association

An Taisce welcomes the proposal to continue with five Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs). We note that the Environmental Pillar will only be represented on three committees but are pleased that the work of all the SPCs will include guidance on incorporating climate action into the policies dealt with.

Given the brief of the Housing SPC and the standards set in planning legislation there is little need for an Environmental representative on it. It is not clear if there is additional scope to address energy conservation, residential emissions of greenhouse gases, parking issues and provision of biodiverse community spaces. We believe the Environmental Pillar could make a much more important contribution to the Transport & Mobility SPC.

As stated in the Draft, the main purpose of the SPC scheme is to give sectoral interests an input in assisting and advising the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy. We think that the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) of Kilkenny County Council should give careful consideration to this purpose. The experience of Environmental Pillar Representatives is that the format and reporting of SPC meetings are not suited to achieving the stated objectives. We recommend that:

- The agenda for each SPC meeting set out clearly the policies to be addressed in each meeting.
- Meetings take the form of discussions rather than mere presentations of what the County Council is doing as has been the form to date. Sectoral representatives should have a platform to actively engage in development of future policies or reviews of existing policies. The Draft Scheme claims there is an emphasis on committee members being involved in policy making from the earliest possible stage. This has clearly not been happening, and meetings have just been a platform for Council information sessions.
- The current method of recording SPC meetings is inadequate. The minutes taken do not record the contributions of the committee members. It is desirable to have meaningful online minutes that let the Public know about what their representatives are advising.
- The report of the SPC chairperson to Council should be made available to SPC members.
- We note that the online provision of minutes is not kept up to date, the most recent SPC agenda and minutes are from 2022. Also membership of SPCs is not kept up to date. We recommend regular updates and provision of links to this from the PPN e-newsletter.

We support the proposal to circulate documents to committee members at least two weeks in advance of meetings as this allows time for Representatives to liaise with their Pillars.

We note that meetings of SPCs will generally be open to the public and media. We would like more information on how this will be communicated and accommodated.





**Conradh na Gaeilge's Submission**

**for**

**Kilkenny County Council**

**on its**

**Draft Strategic Policy Scheme 2024-2029**

**August 2024**

## BACKGROUND

Conradh na Gaeilge welcomes the opportunity to make this submission regarding Kilkenny County Council's draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2024-2029.

Conradh na Gaeilge is the democratic forum for the Irish-speaking community and the organisation works on behalf of the language throughout Ireland and around the globe. The aim of the organisation is to revive the Irish language as the common language in Ireland. Since its foundation on 31 July 1893, the members of Conradh na Gaeilge have been actively promoting the Irish language in every aspect of life in the country, from legal and educational affairs to the development of Irish language media and services.

Foras na Gaeilge, the entire island body, has chosen Conradh na Gaeilge to promote the Irish language as one of the six lead-organisations that have funded the development of the Irish language on the island of Ireland. Primarily, Conradh na Gaeilge has been chosen to address language protection, representation and awareness raising regarding Irish. Conradh na Gaeilge has 180 branches and many individual members, and all the members of the Conradh are working tirelessly to promote the use of the Irish language in their own areas.

More information on the Conradh is available at [www.cnag.ie](http://www.cnag.ie).

## BACKGROUND AND OBLIGATIONS

- Kilkenny County Council has a vital role to play in providing/facilitating services through the medium of Irish, (e.g. in sport, housing development, community development, etc.) for this community and for people, of course, who would be interested in learning and using Irish further.
  - In an independent survey conducted by Ireland Thinks in 2024, more than three out of five people indicated that they would like to have more opportunities to use Irish
  - With the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 now in place, the following additional duties on local authorities are to be carried out in relation to the Irish language:
    - 20% of the Council's advertising to be in Irish
    - recruitment target 2030: 20% of people recruited to the Council by the end of 2030 will be proficient in both Irish and English Council Marketing to come under the Languages Act
    - Bodies used by the Council to provide services for the community on behalf of the Council to come under the Languages Act Additionally
- ☐ 15 out of 24 newly elected councillors have pledged to support Conradh na Gaeilge's commitments ahead of the local elections. For more information, please refer to [Gaelvóta](http://Gaelvóta) at [cnag.ie](http://cnag.ie).

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES

In relation to Kilkenny County Council's recommendation to the Strategic Policy Committees 2024-2029, we recommend that one of the options below be chosen:

- ☐ Establishment of an Irish Language Committee within the local authority as a Strategic Policy Committee (CBS)  
A Strategic Policy Committee of its own. The CBS will be tasked with developing recommendations and a strategy

for the promotion of the Irish language in the local authority and in the community in the functional area of the local authority.

- The CBS itself should have at least one representative from the community involved in the promotion of Irish in the local authority's functional area as well as ensuring that the language has a voice from the Irish language community in the Council's areas. (we are happy to assist the local authority in accessing these members).

or

- ☐ Inclusion of the Irish language in the objectives and title of a Strategic Policy Committee (CBS) and the immediate establishment of an Irish language subcommittee under the remit of the same CBS. It will

be the duty of this sub-committee to formulate a strategy and recommendations for the furtherance of the promotion of Irish in the local authority and in the community in the area of the local authority's remit and to forward them to the CBS. If this option is chosen, the CBS itself should have at least one representative from the community involved in the promotion of Irish in the local authority's functional area as well as ensuring that the language has a voice from the Irish language community in the Council's areas. (we are happy to assist the local authority in accessing these members). It is recommended that the following persons be represented on the Irish language subcommittee:

- Councillors
- Representatives from the community involved in the promotion of Irish in the local authority's functional area (we are happy to assist the local authority in accessing these members).
- Staff to provide appropriate support to the sub-committee like any other CBS

For information, there are a number of other Councils to include the Irish language or the Gaeltacht in their CBS system (including South Dublin County Council, Meath County Council, Dublin City Council and Kerry County Council).

The Irish Language in Kilkenny County Council 2024-2029: Strategic Policy Committee on behalf of the Irish speaking Community

To whom it may concern,

This submission is being sent to the Council on behalf of The Nore Conversation Circle. We are a volunteer group of about twenty members living in Kilkenny. We are all convinced that language is extremely important to us when it comes to heritage, culture and identity. We have two meetings each week, in the Loughboy Library and the Home Rule Club. There are other circles being held in libraries across the county. We want to ensure that the Irish language is placed at the centre of Kilkenny County Council's agenda and it would be of great assistance if a particular SPC were identified with responsibility for the Council's policy towards the Irish language.

### **Submission from The Nore Conversation Circle**

Kilkenny County Council's area, according to the 2022 census, includes:

- 3,475 people with very good Irish
- 13,258 people with good Irish
- 919 people speaking Irish on a daily basis outside of the education system

It is worth taking into account:

- In an independent survey conducted by *Ireland Thinks* in 2024, more than three out of five people indicated that they would like to have more opportunities to use Irish

Kilkenny County Council has a vital role to play in providing/facilitating services through the medium of Irish, (e.g. in sport, housing development, community development, etc.) for this community and for people, of course, who would be interested in learning and using Irish further.

### **Recommendation**

1. **To include the Irish language specifically in the title and objectives of a Strategic Policy Committee and to establish immediately an Irish language subcommittee under the responsibility of the same SPC.**

A number of other Councils have already implemented this approach in their draft SPC scheme:

South Dublin County Council – Arts, Culture, Irish, Heritage and Libraries

Dublin City Council – SPC Community, Irish, Sport & Culture

Kerry County Council – Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht SPC

Meath County Council – Community & Cultural Development & Gaeltacht Affairs



It shall be the duty of this sub-committee to formulate a strategy and recommendations for the promotion of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht in the local authority and in the community in the functional area of the local authority, and to forward them to the SPC.

If this approach is chosen, the SPC itself should include at least one representative from the community involved in the promotion of the Irish language in the local authority's functional area as well as ensuring that the language is represented by its users in the Council's areas. From the feedback received by Conradh na Gaeilge before the Councillors who were contacted regarding the SPC, the public's participation in the consultation is the best way to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

**2. To include the 'Irish speaking community' specifically as a sector in the list of sectors from which the representatives for the various SPCs come (including: agriculture/farming, education, commerce/business)**

It is recommended that the following persons be represented on the Irish language subcommittee:

- Councillors
- Representatives from the community involved in the promotion of Irish in the local authority's functional area
- Staff to provide appropriate support to the sub-committee like any other SPC.