

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA  
GAILLIMHE**

**STRATEGIC POLICY  
COMMITTEE SCHEME**



**Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council**

September 2019

Adopted 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019

## 1. Introduction

Galway is the largest county in Connacht covering over 6,000sq kms. The population of County Galway (excluding the City) in 2011 was 179,048. It is a progressive county with strong industrial, retail, service, tourism and social sectors.

Galway County Council is responsible for the planning, design and construction of important infrastructure such as roads and is the provider of important social and community support services such as housing, fire, libraries, burial grounds, arts and recreation facilities. It plays an important role in environmental conservation and management, physical planning and economic development.

There are **39** Councillors elected to Galway County Council from 5 Municipal Districts

Electoral area	Municipal District	No. of members
Athenry/Oranmore	Athenry	7
Ballinasloe	Ballinasloe	6
Conamara North	Conamara (North & South)	9
Conamara South		
Loughrea	Loughrea (incl. Gort/Kinvara)	10
Gort/Kinvara		
Tuam	Tuam	7

Table 1 Electoral Area/Municipal District membership

In accordance with the provisions of Section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by Section 41 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Council shall establish by resolution committees to be known as Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) 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 Council on those matters.

## 2. Role of the Strategic Policy Committee

The Council is, and remains, the decision-making authority, and the task of the SPCs is to advise and assist the Council in its work in the formulation, development and review of policy in relation to functions of a strategic nature reserved to the Elected Members of the County Council, subject to the relevant statutory framework.

While it is the task of each SPC to assist the Council in the formulation and development of policy, the final policy decisions rest ultimately with the full Council (Section 130 Local Government Act 2001 – 2014). 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 decision by the Council.

A key role for SPCs will be to focus on strategic issues and to take a strategic overview of relevant policy areas in the wider context. Accordingly:

- Each SPC will agree its annual programme, linked to the strategic policies in the Council's Corporate Plan.
- SPC chairs will report to the Council on the proceedings of the Committee.
- Each SPC's work will take account of 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.
- The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) should co-ordinate the work and monitor the work programmes of the SPCs.

### **3. Role of the Corporate Policy Group**

The CPG comprises of An Cathaoirleach, Chairpersons of the SPCs and in the case of a Municipal District that is without an SPC chair, a representative of the Municipal District concerned. The CPG will link 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.

It will also:

- 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;
- 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.
- Provide feedback to the SPCs on Council policy and views in areas relevant to the SPCs.

## 4. Strategic Policy Committee framework in Galway County Council

The Strategic Policy Committees framework in Galway County Council is set out in the following table together with some examples of typical policy issues that might be considered by the Strategic Policy Committees.

<b>Strategic Policy Committee</b>	<b>Typical Policy Issues</b>
<b>1. Housing</b>	Traveller Accommodation Programme Scheme of Letting Priorities /Allocations / Accessibility / Priority Housing Construction Programme Homeless Strategy Housing Strategy
<b>2. Economic Development and Enterprise</b>	Economic Development Enterprise Support Economic elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) Revitalisation of Towns Tourism Strategy
<b>3. Planning, Environment, Agriculture &amp; Emergency Services</b>	Development Plans Local Area Plans Development Control Waste Management Litter Management Plan Burial Grounds Fire and Emergency Planning
<b>4. Transportation &amp; Infrastructure</b>	Transportation Policy Marine Policy Road Safety Traffic Management Public Lighting Policy Local Improvement Schemes Water Quality Management Plan Rural Water Services
<b>5. Community &amp; Cultural Development</b>	Library Development Policies Cultural Policy and European Capital of Culture Legacy Arts Plan An Scéim Teanga Community elements of LECP Community Grants Schemes
<b>6. Climate Change &amp; Biodiversity</b>	Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Energy & Buildings Flood Resilience Nature Based Solutions Public Awareness and Education Coastal Erosion

Table 2 Strategic Policy Framework

## **5. Representation and Membership**

The membership of the Strategic Policy Committees is comprised of Councillors and Representatives from sectoral groups in the County of Galway. At least one third of the membership of each Strategic Policy Committee must be drawn from sectoral interests.

## **6. Councillor Representation**

Each Councillor will serve on one Strategic Policy Committee. Each of the 5 Municipal Districts will be represented on each of the 6 SPCs. Except as a result of changes arising from the appointment of new chairs, the Strategic Policy Committee membership for Councillors will be for the lifetime of the current council. As far as possible, Strategic Policy Committee Councillor-membership will reflect the geographical distribution of elected representation on the Council. Strategic Policy Committee Chairs will be members of the Council and are appointed for a minimum of three years.

## **7. Sectoral Representation**

In determining the Sectoral Representation on Strategic Policy Committees, regard will be had to the need for a spread of relevant interests, balance between divergent interests, greater social inclusion, gender balance and the relationship between the available Strategic Policy Committee positions and the range of interests that can be accommodated. Nominees must only be from Groups and Associations that are active and have a countywide impact or, at least, a relevance in a locality or number of localities. It will be expected that sectoral nominees will retain membership for the lifetime of the committee but where a nominee ceases to be a member for one reason, or another the relevant sector will nominate a new member. Sectoral representation will be drawn from the following sectors: -

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

## **8. The Nomination Process**

The nomination process for the farming and agricultural sector will be facilitated by the farming and agricultural organisations pillar, the business/ commercial and development/ construction sectors will be facilitated by the business and employers organisations pillar. The trade union

sector will be facilitated by the trade union pillar. The environmental / conservation, community / voluntary and social inclusion sectors will be selected through the Public Participation Network. (For national pillar contacts, see Appendix 2).

The sectors will be asked to bear in mind the objective of achieving a 40% gender balance in the making of appointments, as well as the need to foster social inclusiveness and equality when selecting their representatives.

The selected members should be representative of local organisations active in County Galway, because it is the local perspective of the representative pillars that the members would be expected to bring to the SPCs. Galway County Council will allow one month to the selection process by the national pillars.

Each sector will select its own nominee and Galway County Council will as far as possible facilitate the process of nomination. While every effort will be made to accommodate the preferences of groups or organisations, the final decision on assignment of organisation or sectors to each SPC will rest with the council. State and Local Development Agencies are not eligible as nominating bodies to the sectors for representation on SPC's.

## **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.

## 10a. Composition of Strategic Policy Committee

SPC	Councillors	Sectoral Representation	Committee Total
1. Housing	7	4	11
2. Economic Development and Enterprise	6	4	10
3. Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services	7	4	11
4. Transportation & Infrastructure	7	4	11
5. Community & Cultural Development	6	4	10
6. Climate Change & Biodiversity	6	4	10

Table 3 Composition of Strategic Policy Committee.

## 10b. Assignment of Sectoral Representatives

SPC	Sectoral Representative	Total
1. Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Development/Construction (1)</li> <li>• Business/Commercial (1)</li> <li>• Social Inclusion (1)</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>
2. Economic Development and Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Development/Construction (1)</li> <li>• Business/Commercial (1)</li> <li>• Trade union (1)</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>
3. Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Development/Construction (1)</li> <li>• Environment/Conservation (1)</li> <li>• Agricultural/Farming (1)</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>
4. Transportation & Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Agricultural/Farming (1)</li> <li>• Environment/Conservation (1)</li> <li>• Business/Commercial (1)</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>
5. Community & Cultural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Business/Commercial (1)</li> <li>• Development/Construction (1)</li> <li>• Social Inclusion (1)</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>
6. Climate Change & Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Voluntary (1)</li> <li>• Business/Commercial (1)</li> <li>• Environment/Conservation (1)</li> <li>• Agriculture/Farming (1)</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>

Table 4: Assignment of Sectoral Representation in each Strategic Policy Committee.

## **11. Circulation of Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme**

Following consideration by the Council of the Draft SPC Scheme (as amended) it will be forwarded for consideration to the PPN and to the appropriate national stakeholder pillars. A notice confirming that the draft was considered by the council will be published in a local newspaper and on Galway County Councils website. A minimum period of 4 weeks be provided for the making of submissions on the draft scheme.

## **12. Process for adoption of Strategic Policy Committee Scheme.**

Any submissions received during the public display period will be considered before the scheme is finally adopted by the Council. When approved, either with or without modification, the Scheme will be circulated to the National Pillars and the Public Participation Network and any other groups requesting a copy. After the adoption of the scheme a period of not less than one month will be allowed for the selection of representatives of the sectors to the various Strategic Policy Committees.





## APPENDIX 1

### National Contact Points of Key Stakeholders

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Name &amp; Address</b>	<b>Telephone and e-mail</b>
<b>Farming</b>	<b>Gerry Gunning</b>	<b>01-4500266</b>
	Irish Farmers Association (IFA) Irish Farm Centre Bluebell Dublin 12	<a href="mailto:gerrygunning@ifa.ie">gerrygunning@ifa.ie</a>
<b>Business</b>	<b>James Kiernan</b>	<b>01-4004300</b>
	Chambers Ireland 22-24 Lower Mount Street Dublin 2	<a href="mailto:James.kiernan@chambers.ie">James.kiernan@chambers.ie</a>
<b>Trade Unions</b>	<b>Fiona Dunne</b>	<b>01-8897777</b>
	Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Head Office 31-32 Parnell Square Dublin 1	<a href="mailto:fionadunne@onemovement.ie">fionadunne@onemovement.ie</a>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Michael Ewing</b>	<b>071-9667373</b>
	Environment Pillar - Coordinator Knockvicar Boyle Co Roscommon	<a href="mailto:michael@environmentalpillar.ie">michael@environmentalpillar.ie</a>