



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Galway County Council Strategic Policy Committee Standing Orders



Document Control

Action	Owner	Date
Standing Orders revised by:	Corporate Services	25/09/2025
Adopted By	CPG	17/11/2025
Adopted By	Elected Members	24/11/2025

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1. Role and Structure

The Chairperson and Council members of Strategic Policy Committees shall reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representation on the Council.

SPCs consider matters connected with the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy which relate to the functions of the SPC and the Local Authority and to advise the Authority on those matters. In relation to the policy making process much of the preliminary and background work, discussion and recommendation, as appropriate, should be completed at SPC level for final consideration and ratification by the council. It is not the function of the SPC to deal with individual representational or operational matters. Final policy decisions will rest with the Full Council.

2. SPC Membership and Attendance

The Strategic Policy Committees shall be appointed as soon as possible after a local election and those appointed shall hold office for the period of the life of the Council appointing them. Each of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) shall consist of Councillors, sectoral interests nominated by the Sectoral Pillars and members of the Public Participation Network (PPN), in accordance with the relevant guidelines and adopted SPC Scheme.

Any SPC member who resigns or is otherwise disqualified from membership of a Strategic Policy Committee under the provisions of the LG Act 2001, as amended by the LG Reform Act 2014 shall be replaced as soon as possible, by resolution of the council. This provision will apply to both elected and non-elected members.

The attendance of substitute Council Elected members of Strategic Policy Committee Meetings shall not be permitted, except in the case of long term (enforced) absence with the approval of Council.

Where any member of the SPC Committee is absent, without apology, for consecutive meetings, the Meetings Administrator to the SPC, will write to the member and request the attendance of that member at the next meeting. If there remains no subsequent attendance or satisfactory response, then in the case of the Council elected member, that member shall be deemed disqualified by the Chairperson of the relevant SPC. In the case of a member nominated by a Sectoral Pillar, the Chairperson of the relevant SPC may formally request a replacement from the nominating Sectoral Pillar. The nominating Sectoral Pillar concerned may deselect their existing member and nominate another person in his/her place.

3. Meeting Schedule and Annual Work Programme

Each Strategic Policy Committee shall meet as often as required, and at least four times a year, to deal with the business assigned to it. A schedule of proposed Meetings will be agreed on an annual calendar year cycle reflecting the work programme for the SPC, cognisant of policy-making timeframes.

The SPC shall, where practicable, agree its annual work programme during Quarter 4 of each calendar year. It would be drafted based on a proposal by the executive. The SPC Work Programmes will follow an agreed format. It is suggested that this format would establish a programme of topics to be addressed in each of the four SPC meetings during the year under each of the headings as appropriate: policy formulation; policy development; policy monitoring; and policy review.

The Chairperson of the Committee may decide to hold a Special Meeting. A Special Meeting of the Committee can also be called on submission of a request to the Chairperson signed by any four members (Elected or external members) of the Committee.

SPC meetings will be held at a time as agreed by the SPC members.

4. Management of Meetings

- a) All Standing Orders in place are applicable to in person meetings, hybrid meetings and remote meetings
- b) Members should notify the SPC Meetings Administrator in order to participate remotely in a hybrid meeting no later than 1 clear day prior to the meeting.
- c) Any member participating in a SPC meeting remotely must, when they are speaking, be able to be heard (and seen, where practicable) by all other members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and see, where practicable) those other members participating.
- d) No cameras of any kind or sound recording equipment other than for the purposes of the Councils own recording of meetings may be used at SPC meetings of the Council without the prior approval of the SPC.
- e) The SPC Meetings Administrator may keep electronic recordings of the meeting for the purpose of ensuring accuracy.
- f) The Chairperson of the SPC will at the outset, and at any reconvening of a hybrid or remote SPC meeting, call a roll call of participating members and ensure that they can hear and, where practicable, see those in attendance. Any member participating remotely should also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that they can hear and, where practicable, see the proceedings.

- g) Members should immediately inform the SPC Meetings Administrator or a designated staff member if they lose connection in accordance with provisions on connectivity within the agreed standing orders as reasonably practical.
- h) The attendance of members at the SPC meeting will be recorded by the SPC Meetings Administrator.
- i) The normal quorum requirements for SPC meetings as set out in Standing Orders will also apply to a remote or hybrid SPC meeting. Members attending in person and remotely will together constitute a quorum.
- j) In the event of any apparent failure of the online connection, the Chairperson should immediately determine if the SPC meeting is still quorate. If there is no quorum, then the SPC meeting shall adjourn for a period specified by the Chairperson, to allow the connection to be re-established.
- k) If the connection cannot be re-established, thus leading to the SPC meeting not being quorate, the meeting should not continue and stands adjourned. If the connection is successfully re-established, then the SPC meeting can continue from the point where it stopped being quorate.

5. Notice of Meetings

It is recommended that at a minimum seven days' notice will be given to SPC members for ordinary meetings of an SPC. In the case of a Special Meeting of an SPC, at least three clear days' notice will be given to SPC members.

The agenda should be circulated at a minimum seven days in advance of a meeting to allow sectoral representatives an opportunity to consult within their sector in relation to same. Meeting documentation should in so far as practical should also issue at least seven working days in advance.

6. Submission of Items for Agenda

Each Member may submit agenda items relevant to the business of the SPC. The Chair shall have the final decision on matters for consideration at the SPC meeting.

Agenda items must be submitted to the SPC Meetings Administrator at least 2 weeks before the SPC meeting.

The agenda for the subsequent SPC meeting would be a final item on the agenda of each SPC meeting to enable some discussion. Items for the agenda of SPC meetings could be submitted by members for consideration in advance of the SPC meeting.

This would be supplemented by the Chairperson and Meetings Administrator

responsible for the meeting enabling some online discussion of the agenda with interested members prior to finalising a draft agenda, if required.

Where a Notice of Motion is referred to the SPC by the Meetings Administrator or by a Municipal District, the proposer of the motion shall be entitled to attend such meeting to put forward and debate the motion. The Member shall not have voting rights at the Committee meeting, save where he/she is already a Member of such committee.

7. Quorum

The quorum for a meeting of an SPC is one-fourth of the total number of members of the SPC plus one or, where one-fourth of such total number is not a whole number; the quorum is the next highest whole number plus one.

If a quorum is not present within 15 minutes after the time fixed for the meeting [or at any time during the meeting], the meeting shall stand adjourned to a day to be named by the Chairperson.

8. Chairperson

The Council shall appoint a Chairperson to each of the Strategic Policy Committees from among the members of the Council to hold office for the term of the Council. Any change required to the SPC Chairperson, in line with Standing Orders, shall require approval of Council by resolution at a Council Meeting.

At a Meeting of the Committee, the Chairperson shall preside. If the Chairperson is absent, then the members of the Committee shall choose a member to preside as Acting Chairperson. Should the Chairperson arrive during the progress of the meeting he/she shall take the Chair.

9. Order of Business

The business of the Meeting shall be confined to policy issues and the order of business shall be:

- Confirmation of minutes
- Matters Arising
- Consideration of policy position papers/reports prepared for the SPC on policy formulation; policy development; policy monitoring; and policy review.
- Correspondence
- Agenda Items for next SPC meeting
- Any other business

Recommendations of the SPC shall be submitted to the Corporate Policy Group firstly and then Plenary Council if appropriate, for consideration and presented by the Chairperson of the SPC.

10. Minutes

The Minutes of all SPC meetings shall contain particulars of the names of the persons present, apologies received, together with particulars of all decisions arrived at or recommendations made.

The Minutes of every SPC meeting shall be signed by the Chairperson or acting Chairperson following confirmation by the Committee.

Items to be raised under Confirmation of Minutes "Matters Arising" shall be confined to the accuracy of the minutes.

Minutes are a record of decisions taken and high-level matters for noting and follow up.

11. Duration of Meeting

Meetings shall commence at the appointed time and conclude within two hours unless otherwise agreed by the SPC.

12. Rules of Debate

(i) Each member of the SPC shall have the right to speak on any Agenda item.

(ii) The Committee shall, as far as possible, arrive at all decisions and recommendations by consensus.

(iii) Meetings shall be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership.

(iv) The ruling of the Chairperson on any issues or order or debate shall be final.

(v) Matters for discussion shall relate to policy or strategy and not to individual cases.

13. Confidential Material

Certain matters which may arise for discussion by the Strategic Policy Committee may be confidential and it shall be a matter for the meeting to declare that confidentiality be maintained on the issue.

It shall be the responsibility of each member of an SPC to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

14. Business not reached

When at a meeting of the SPC the whole business set down for such meeting has not been reached, such business shall be set down to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee, save that any item included in such business may be withdrawn by the person who submitted the item.

15. Votes and Decisions

The SPC shall, as far as possible, arrive at all decisions and recommendations by consensus. Voting, if required, may be by a show of hands or by roll call vote. The Chair shall have a casting vote, if required.

16. Attendance of Public and Media

Strategic Policy Committee meetings are intended exclusively for committee members. Access by non-members, including representatives of the public or media, is not permitted.

17. Disclosure of Pecuniary or Other Beneficial Interests

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

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

Where an SPC member has actual knowledge that a matter is likely to arise at a meeting at which that SPC member will not be present and which, if she or he were present, a disclosure would be required to be made under (i) above, that SPC member shall, in advance of such meeting, make such disclosure in writing and furnish it to the Ethics Registrar and the Chairperson of the SPC.

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

18. Suspension Of Standing Orders

Standing Orders may at any time, by consent of the majority of the membership of the Committee in attendance, be suspended on a proposal made for the purpose of any relevant business. Prior notice of any such proposal shall be given to the Chairperson, before the meeting, if possible.

19. Interpretation of Standing Orders

The Chairperson's ruling on any question of the Standing Orders shall be final.

20. Amending Standing Orders

A Strategic Policy Committee can recommend an amendment to or review of Standing Orders for consideration and decision by the Corporate Policy Group. The proposed amendment must have the agreement of the majority, of the total membership of the Committee.

21. Regulation of Lobbying:

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 or Advisory Groups established by a public body may have obligations under the Act. Further information is available at www.lobbying.ie



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