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# North Tipperary County Council

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## STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SCHEME

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2009 - 2014

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## **Introduction**

One of the key elements of the Better Local Government initiative, which was launched in 1996, was to enhance local democracy through the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs). In March 2000, North Tipperary County Council adopted its first Strategic Policy Scheme and the Committees commenced their business shortly afterwards. The formation and role of the SPCs were subsequently embedded in the Local Government system with the implementation of Section 48 of the Local Government Act 2001. Following a review a new Strategic Policy Committee Scheme was adopted by the Council at its meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004. New Strategic Policy Committees must be established following the local elections in June 2009 and for this purpose a review of the SPC Scheme has been undertaken and a new Scheme has been drafted.

## **Composition and Role of SPCs**

There are four SPCs in North Tipperary County Council. Each SPC is comprised of elected Councillors and sectoral (or non-elected) representatives. Each SPC has its own Chairperson (who must be a Member of the Council and is appointed by the Council) and is supported by a Director of Services (a full time official of the Council) and his/her staff. The SPCs meet on a regular basis, as is necessitated by the workload allocated to them.

The role of the SPCs is to formulate, develop and review policies for their respective areas of responsibility. However, 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 SPCs to provide advice and make recommendations on policy matters through the Chairperson of the SPC to the full Council.

It should be noted that while the policy formulation role is central to each SPC, they do not have a role in respect of the day to day operation of the Council or other non-policy matters.

## **Corporate Policy Group**

The Better Local Government initiative also established a Corporate Policy Group (CPG) for each Local Authority. This Group is comprised of the Mayor who is Chair of the Group and the Chairs of each of the SPCs. The CPG is supported by the County Manager and the County Management Team. The CPG links the work of the different SPCs, acting as a sort of Cabinet and providing a forum where policy positions affecting the whole Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. It also considers the draft annual budgets. However, as with the SPC, the full decision-making authority remains with the Council. The Members of the CPG also represent the County Council on the County Development Board. The CPG usually meets on a monthly basis, prior to the Council meeting.

# **The Present Organisation of North Tipperary County Council**

## **Role:**

North Tipperary County Council is a progressive multi-purpose body providing an extensive range of services in its area. In 2008, some €139 million was spent delivering services and providing infrastructure to enhance the quality of life of all the citizens of the County. As the primary unit of local government, the Council plays an active role in the economic, commercial, social and cultural development of the County and its people. The Council operates at two levels – a democratic/ representational level and an operational level.

## **Democratic/Representational Level:**

The democratic/representational role of the Organisation is performed directly by the Elected Members of the Council, of which there are 21 elected from the four Electoral Areas of the County. The Council adopts the policy framework within which the County Manager, Management Team and Staff operate.

## **Operational Level:**

The County Manager, the Management Team and Staff carry out the operational role of the Council and are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the services and functions of the Council.

## **Services:**

The functions and services of the Council are classified into eight programme groups, a broad outline of which is set out hereunder:

### **1. Housing and Building**

Assessment of housing needs; management and provision of local authority housing; facilitating the provision of voluntary housing; assistance to persons housing themselves or improving their houses; provision of traveller accommodation; meeting accommodation needs of the homeless, administering the Rental Accommodation Scheme, enforcement of certain housing standards and controls for private rented housing and promotion of social inclusion measures.

### **2. Road Transportation and Safety**

Road upkeep and improvement to meet economic and social needs; public lighting; traffic management; safety education; registration and taxation of vehicles and licensing of drivers.

### **3. Water Supply and Sewerage**

Provision and maintenance of quality water supply and sewerage schemes to meet economic and social needs; assistance towards the provision of piped water supplies and/or sewerage facilities.

### **4. Development Incentives and Controls**

Physical planning policy including County Development Plans, County Heritage Plans, County Retail Strategy; control of new development and building; promotion of industrial,

commercial and community development, enterprise support, supporting partnership/joint projects.

**5. Environmental Protection**

Waste collection and disposal; burial grounds; civil defence; safety of structures and places; fire protection; elimination of dereliction; pollution control, public awareness and community based initiatives.

**6. Recreation and Amenity**

Swimming pools; libraries; parks; open spaces; recreation play and sport; art activities; conservation and improvement of amenities, community initiatives.

**7. Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare**

Operation of the higher education grants scheme; veterinary services and other services of a social and community nature.

**8. General**

Corporate management; local elections, register of electors, consumer protection.

Policies in relation to the above programme groups are formulated, considered and recommended by the four Strategic Policy Committees details of which are set out hereunder.

**PROPOSED FRAMEWORK**

North Tipperary County Council, at its Annual Meeting held on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2009, decided to establish four Strategic Policy Committees and appointed Cllr. Jonathan Meaney, Cllr. Eddie Moran, Cllr. Michael Smith and Cllr. Pauline Coonan as the Chairs Designate of the Committees.

The following requirements are based on Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 1999 together with recommendations furnished by the Department in June 2004 and June 2009.

**General**

- Each SPC must have as a minimum one third of its membership drawn from sectoral interests.
- Chairpersons will be appointed for a minimum period of 3 years which can be renewed by the Council and ordinary members will normally be appointed for a period of 5 years.
- Meetings of SPCs will normally be held on a quarterly basis. A calendar of meetings should be agreed at the start of the year.
- The Chairperson and the relevant Director of Services should meet well in advance of the SPC meeting to clarify the agenda for the forthcoming meeting and to agree on objectives.
- Meetings shall be conducted in an informal but efficient manner at venues and times to be decided in advance by the committee.

- A Director of Services will attend meetings and provide support for the SPC. A key contact person other than the Director of Services will be identified to deal with SPC matters.
- Each SPC shall have a multi-annual work programme linked to the local authority Corporate Plan, which should target policy/plan developments and include for such reviews as are considered appropriate.
- The CPG shall decide the work programmes of the SPCs and recommend issues to be considered by the SPCs.
- Documentation and agendas should be issued well in advance of scheduled meetings. Ideally documentation should be circulated two weeks in advance of meetings. Agenda and minutes should be circulated to SPC members, other councillors and to the Town Councils.
- External nominees should be familiar with the subject area of their committees.
- Where a SPC has agreed on a policy recommendation, the Chairperson of the SPC or his/her nominee, shall present the recommendation to full Council.
- The outcome of the Council's considerations of the SPCs' recommendations should likewise be reported back to the SPCs.
- Similar communication arrangements should apply in relation to matters of relevance to the County Development Board and Town Council and Sectoral Representatives should also report to their relevant bodies.

### **Councillors**

- Each Member of North Tipperary County Council shall have an opportunity to serve on a SPC. Representation on the SPCs should reflect the proportionality and the distribution of the elected representation on the full Council.
- Each Councillor should not serve on more than two SPCs for reasons of equity, good practice and workload.
- SPC Membership for Councillors should be for the lifetime of the Council. A person ceasing to be a Member of the Council shall automatically cease membership of the SPC.
- Councillors may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.
- The Chairpersons of the SPCs shall be appointed by the Council for a minimum period of 3 years.

### **Sectoral Representatives**

- Sectoral Representatives for the SPCs will be drawn from the following sectors:
  - Agriculture/Farming
  - Environment/Conservation/Heritage
  - Development/Construction
  - Business/Commercial
  - Trade Union
  - Community/Voluntary/Disadvantaged/Culture
- The nominations of representatives of Business and Employers (including Development/Construction), Trade Unions, Farming and Environmental Pillars will

be facilitated in accordance with national arrangements set out in Appendix I to Circular LG 12/09.

- The nomination process for the Community/Voluntary/Disadvantaged will be determined on the basis of the local nomination process and will be facilitated by the Council.
- It is desirable that Sectoral nominees should retain membership of the SPC for the life of the Council. It is open to each nominating sector to deselect its nominee, if considered necessary, and to notify the Council accordingly, whereupon, the person would cease to be a member of the SPC. In such cases, the relevant sector shall nominate a new representative.
- Each Sector should select its own nominee.
- State and Local Development Agencies should not be included as nominating bodies to the sectors and should not be represented on an SPC.
- Nominations from the Sectors should, in so far as is possible, reflect an appropriate gender balance in line with Government policy.
- Arrangements will be put in place to pay modest travel expenses.

### **Ethical Framework**

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).

### **Implementation of support measures**

Training will be provided for the Members of the SPCs.

**SPCs will be constituted on the basis as set out in Appendix 1 to this scheme.**

## APPENDIX 1

### Strategic Policy Committees – Remit

| <b>Strategic Policy Committee</b>                          | <b>Policy Areas</b>   |
|--|---|
| Transportation, Roads and Water Services                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roads and Transport</li><li>• Road Safety</li><li>• Water and Waste Water</li><li>• Rural Water</li></ul>   |
| Environmental and Emergency Services                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Environmental Protection</li><li>• Waste Management</li><li>• Fire Protection</li><li>• Civil Defence</li><li>• Control of Animals</li><li>• Consumer Protection</li><li>• Water Safety</li><li>• Building Control</li></ul>  |
| Housing Services   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing</li><li>• Social Integration</li></ul>  |
| Planning & Development and Community & Enterprise Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Planning Policy</li><li>• Development Control</li><li>• Town/Village Renewal</li><li>• Sustainable Development</li><li>• Community Development</li><li>• Economic Development</li><li>• Arts</li><li>• Tourism</li><li>• Culture</li><li>• Heritage Policy.</li></ul> |

## Strategic Policy Committees - Membership

Each Member of North Tipperary County Council will have a seat on one S.P.C. In addition each of the 4 electoral areas will select one additional Councillor for the Planning and Development and Community and Enterprise SPC. (Total representation from the County Council being 25)

The Town Councils of Nenagh, Templemore and Thurles will each have a seat on one S.P.C. and should also select one additional Member for the fourth S.P.C. (total representation from the Town Councils being 4).

|  |                       |                   |  |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Planning & Development and Community & Enterprise Services | 10 County Councillors | 1 Town Councillor | <u>10 Members from External Sectors:-</u><br>Agriculture/Farming (1)<br>Business/Commercial (2)<br>Environment/Conservation/ Heritage (2)<br>Community/<br>Voluntary/Disadvantaged/Culture (5) |
| Environmental and Emergency Services                       | 5 County Councillors  | 1 Town Councillor | <u>5 Members from External Sectors:-</u><br>Agricultural/Farming (1)<br>Environment, Conservation, Heritage (2)<br>Community/ Voluntary/Disadvantaged (1)<br>Business/Commercial (1)           |
| Transportation, Roads and Water Services                   | 5 County Councillors  | 1 Town Councillor | <u>5 Members from External Sectors:-</u><br>Agriculture/Farming (1)<br>Development/Construction (1)<br>Business/Commercial (1)<br>Community, Voluntary, Disadvantaged (1)<br>Trade Unions (1)  |
| Housing Services   | 5 County Councillors  | 1 Town Councillor | <u>5 Members from External Sectors:-</u><br>Agriculture/Farming (1)<br>Development/Construction (1)<br>Business/Commercial (1)<br>Community, Voluntary, Disadvantaged (2)                      |

## Appendix 2.

## Nomination Process

The nomination process for the External Sectors is specified below. All the specified contact points will be invited to submit their nominee(s) to the Strategic Policy Committees by the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009. If any of the designated contact points fails to nominate their representative(s) by this deadline, North Tipperary County Council will draw lots from the bodies approved for the specific external sector to decide on the nominee from that sector. North Tipperary County Council will approve the new members of the Strategic Policy Committees at its September meeting which is due to be held on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2009.

### Nomination Process By Local Bodies

The North Tipperary Community and Voluntary Association is the nominating body for the community and voluntary sector representatives in North Tipperary. The Association is the nominating body onto the Strategic Policy Committees for the following sectors/interests:

- Community
- Voluntary
- Disadvantaged
- Culture

### Nomination Process by National Pillars

As laid down in the Strategic Policy Committee Guidelines, representation from the National Pillars will be arranged as follows:

- Farming Pillar – Agricultural/Farming
- Business and Employers Pillar – Development, Construction, Business, Commercial
- Trade Union Pillar – Trade Union.
- Environmental Pillar – Environment/Conservation/Heritage

The designated national contact points for the purpose of the SPC nominations process are:

- Farming Pillar: Mr Gerry Gunning, Farming Pillar, Irish Farmer's Association, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12 (tel: 01-4500266; e mail: [gerrygunning@ifa.ie](mailto:gerrygunning@ifa.ie))
- Business and Employers Pillar: Mr. John Hickey, Business and Employers Pillar, Chambers Ireland, 17 Merrion Square, Dublin 2 (tel: 01-4004300; e mail: [john.hickey@chambers.ie](mailto:john.hickey@chambers.ie))
- Trade Union Pillar: Mr. Fergus Whelan, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Head Office, 31/32 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 (tel: 01-8897777; e mail: [fergus.whelan@ictu.ie](mailto:fergus.whelan@ictu.ie)).
- Environment Pillar: Mr. Michael Ewing, Environmental Pillar – Social Partnership Coordinator, Knockvicar, Boyle, Co. Roscommon (tel: 071-9667373; e mail: [michael@ien.ie](mailto:michael@ien.ie))