



**Fingal
Public
Participation
Network**

Submission: Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme

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Context	<p>Setup as a result of Local Government reform in 2014, Fingal 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 Fingal. The PPN is managed by voluntary Secretariat which reports to PPN members through the Plenary.</p> <p>Fingal PPN has 796 member organisations. These members are based across Fingal. The PPN is the prescribed body to nominate community, environment and social inclusion representation onto various Council structures, including the SPCs.</p>

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The PPN welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the new Strategic Policy Scheme.
- 1.2 The PPN is committed to providing high quality community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental representation on Fingal County Council Strategic Policy Committees.
- 1.3 The PPN is committed to providing on-going support to PPN Representatives who sit on Fingal County Council Structures. This includes on-going training, a PPN Representatives Forum, the servicing and development of PPN Linkage Groups, policy development, and so on.
- 1.4 The PPN wishes to highlight the Linkage Group structures that are in place to support PPN Representatives on Council structures. Linkage Groups are Thematic Networks of Community Groups who meet 5 times per year. Linkage Groups are representative of the geographical spread and diverse community of Fingal. Linkage Groups nominate and provide a mandate to PPN Representatives on policy issues that relevant to the structure they sit on. Each Linkage Group is facilitated by volunteers who are independent members of the PPN. The PPN currently has 5 Linkage Groups:
 - 1.4.1 Arts, Community, Heritage and Sports
 - 1.4.2 Climate Change, Environment and Water
 - 1.4.3 Community Safety, Crime and Policing
 - 1.4.4 Housing, Planning and Transport
 - 1.4.5 Social Inclusion, Rural Development, Youth and Enterprise
- 1.5 PPN Representatives and their Linkage Groups regularly report back to the wider PPN membership through PPN Plenary meetings, e-newsletters and the PPN Secretariat.
- 1.6 The PPNs recommendations for the Draft SPC are laid out in the following sections 2 to 6 and Appendix 1.

2. Lobbying Act 2015 / Transparency Code

- 2.1** The PPN strongly recommends including a section on the Lobbying Act 2015 / Transparency Code in the new SPC Scheme. Many Local Authorities across Ireland include this as standard, such as:
- 2.1.1** Wicklow, Meath, Cork City, Galway City, Kilkenny, Roscommon and Clare.
- 2.2** The Draft Scheme can be strengthened in this area as follows, detailed proposals for each of these points are available in Appendix 1 of this document:
- 2.2.1** To declare in the Draft Scheme that it is the intention that the SPC's would operate in compliance with the Transparency Requirements of the Lobbying Act 2015;
- 2.2.2** To detail what is required in order for the SPC's to operate in compliance with the Transparency Code;
- 2.2.3** To outline the responsibilities of each SPC Chairperson in relation to operating in compliance with the Transparency Code; and
- 2.2.4** To include "Briefing on the requirements of the Transparency Code" in the list of on-going training to be provided for the members of the SPC's.
- 2.3** These proposed changes to the Draft Scheme, as detailed in Appendix 1, would be of immense benefit to all of the external membership of the SPC's including the PPN members in providing clarity in the operation of the SPC's. They would also demonstrate that Fingal County Council is to the forefront in operating to Best Principles in relation to the Transparency requirements of the Lobbying Act 2015.

3. CPG / SPC Operational Framework

- 3.1** In relation to Point 1 under the CPG SPC Operational Framework on page 6, the PPN recommends providing more detail in relation to the submissions procedure for requesting matters to be included in the Annual Policy Programmes for SPCs. It is suggested the following would be included:
- 3.1.1** Identify the person responsible for seeking submissions (i.e. The Mayor/Chair/Director will seek submissions from...).
 - 3.1.2** Provide a time frame (i.e. Submissions will be sought in quarter 4 each year. The submission period will be for a minimum of 4 weeks to provide members with reasonable time to collate a submission.).
 - 3.1.3** Provide a report on Submissions (i.e. The CPG will agree a report all SPC members on the submissions received, the agreed matters for inclusion, and priority of issues to be explored.).
- 3.2** In relation to Point 7 under the CPG SPC Operational Framework on page 7, the PPN recommends that the progress reports that are provided to both the CPG and full Council on the Annual Policy Programme, are also circulated to all SPC members and their nominating bodies. **This is crucial to nominating bodies in supporting their participation in the SPC structures.**

4. Structure of the Strategic Policy Committees

- 4.1** Community Development, Heritage, Culture and Creativity
- 4.1.1** The PPN is concerned 'Sports' is not identified within the remit of any SPC, and recommends this for inclusion in this SPC.
 - 4.1.2** The PPN recommends 'Public Participation' or 'Citizen Engagement' is included in the remit of this SPC, given the local authorities responsibility for supporting Comhairle na nÓg, Age Friendly, the PPN and other participatory structures for Citizens.
- 4.2** Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development
- 4.2.1** The PPN recommends 'Town and Village Renewal' is included under the remit of this SPC.
- 4.3** Overlap in Transport
- 4.3.1** The SPC scheme could be clearer on the division of the Transport and Strategic Transport remit of each of the two remaining SPCs.

5. Membership of the Strategic Policy Committees

5.1 The PPN broadly welcomes the allocation of 13 seats across the 6 SPCs. The requests the following changes:

- 5.1.1** Move the Environment seat currently allocated to Housing, to Community.
- 5.1.2** Change the PPN Environment Seat in the Economic Development SPC to be a Social Inclusion Seat in the same SPC.
- 5.1.3** The table below provides a breakdown of the 3 PPN Pillars with the changes requested above reflected. (Note 'Environment Pillar' in the SPC Scheme is the PPN Environment Pillar. 'PPN' in the SPC Scheme refers to the Community and Social Inclusion Pillars. It may be clearer to readers to split these into 3 distinct columns.

Committee	PPN Environment	PPN Community	PPN Social Inclusion	Total PPN
Climate Action, Biodiversity and the Environment	1	1	0	2
Community Development, Heritage Culture and Creativity.	1	1	1	3
Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development	0	1	1	2
Housing	0	1	1	2
Planning and Strategic Transport and Infrastructure Development	1	1	0	2
Transport & Infrastructure Management	1	1	0	2
Total	4	6	3	13

6. Training Provision

6.1 The PPN recommends the addition of a Training Provision section in the draft SPC scheme. A similar provision can be seen the South Dublin County Council SPC Scheme. The PPN recommends this provision should include appropriate training on:

- 6.1.1** Induction to SPCs, including terms of reference and the processes and procedures of the SPCs.
- 6.1.2** Briefings on relevant policy, including the reform of Local Government
- 6.1.3** Workshops on the policy remit of SPCs
- 6.1.4** Briefing on the requirements of the Transparency Code

6.2 The PPN feels that this provision is an enabling measure to best support all members of the SPC in fulfilling their respective roles and will result in quality outcomes for Fingal County Council and SPC members.

Appendix 1

This Appendix is detailed proposals in relation to Section 2, subsection 2.2. A Guideline is provided by the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO) Information Notice Strategic Policy Committees, Advisory Groups and the Regulation of Lobbying (Available here:

<https://www.lobbying.ie/help-resources/guidance-notes/strategic-policy-committees-advisory-groups-and-the-regulation-of-lobbying/>).

2.2.1 To declare, as an objective, that it is the intention that the SPC's would operate in compliance with the Transparency Requirements of the Lobbying Act 2015

The above declaration would immediately clarify for all of the members of the SPC's that adhering to the Transparency Code should be regarded as the norm; it would raise awareness in relation to the Transparency Code and remove any uncertainty in relation to the operation of the SPC in this regard.

2.2.2 To explain what is required in order for the SPC's to operate in compliance with the Transparency Code

Fingal PPN suggest that the Draft SPC Scheme should to include the Appendix from the Guideline referenced above as follows:

“Relevant groups must meet the criteria specified in the Transparency Code in order to be regarded as a “relevant body” (as defined in the Act) and to avail of the exemption set out in section 5(5)(n) of the Act.

Information must be published on the public body's website setting out the following:

- *Name of Chairperson together with details of his or her employing organisation;*
- *Names of Members together with details of their employing organisation*
- *Whether any non-public servant members were previously designated public officials;*
- *Terms of reference of the group;*
- *Agenda of each meeting;*
- *Minutes of each meeting;*
- *Expected timeframe for the group to conclude its work;*
- *Reporting arrangements.*

This information should be in a prominent place on the website of public bodies and should be easily accessible”.

2.2.3 To detail the responsibilities of the SPC Chairperson in relation to operating in

compliance with the Transparency Code

The guideline referenced above also includes the following paragraph in their Appendix:

“In addition the Chairperson of the Group is responsible for overseeing and conducting the work of the Group in a manner which ensures that the Group operates in a manner fully in accordance with its terms of reference and in the public interest. The Chairperson will include with the final or annual report of the Group a statement confirming its compliance with the Transparency Code”.

Fingal PPN proposes that this paragraph also be included in the SPC Scheme Appendix so that the Chairpersons of the SPC's are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the implementation of the Transparency Code.

2.2.4 To include “Briefing on the requirements of the Transparency Code” in the list of on-going training to be provided for the members of the SPC's

The inclusion of a module on the Transparency Code as it applies to SPC's if they are to comply with the Lobbying Act 2015 will be of benefit to all external members of the SPC's.