



Submission on the South Dublin County Council Draft Scheme for the establishment of CPG and SPCs

From the Environmental Pillar

15th August 2014

The Environmental Pillar, a coalition of 28 National Environmental Organisations and a national Social Partner, welcomes the opportunity to participate in this consultation, and hopes that our constructive comments will be helpful in striking the right balance of expertise amongst the 'other sectors' across the proposed SPCs.

The Role of Strategic Policy Committees

Reflecting the above, the following paragraphs on page 2 should be amended as follows:

*Each SPC's work shall take account of the Council's overall corporate policy objectives, **the underlying principles of sustainability**, statutory plans including regional spatial and economic strategies where relevant and take a realistic view of financial resources and capacity. Any recommendations must also reflect the outcome of any external consultation.*

*The work of the SPC's will be agreed and prioritised on an annual basis by the CPG in the first instance and ultimately by the council. The annual work programme will be informed by tri lateral consultations between the council members, **the PPN, other sectoral interests and the chief executive.***

SPC Membership

The overarching driver of policy creation in the county must be for sustainable development. This requires the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations in all aspects of decision-making.¹

It is in this context that the Government Guidelines (LG07 2014) on the development of SPCs makes the following statement:

Specific consideration should be given to inclusion of the Environment Sector on the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise in view of the expertise available within the sector in relation to sustainable development.

¹ Our Sustainable Future – A framework for sustainable development in Ireland - http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/SustainableDevelopment/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload_30452,en.pdf



We would suggest that as the PPN is the body now designated to act as the main vehicle for the public to engage with the local authority², that its three electoral colleges should be well represented on the SPCs as they carry forward their agreed “vision for the well-being of their community for this and future generations”³ The inclusion of the IIT (Institute of Technology Tallaght?), and the ETB (the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB, Tallaght?) rather than the PPN representatives or those of the Social Partners is contrary to the SPC Guidelines, and ignores their important role in representing the wider community. Their inclusion would seem a contradiction to this statements on pages 24 & 25 of the Guidelines on the establishment of SPCs (LG07 2014)

Local Development Agencies represented at Strategy Group/ LCDC level should 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. (See paragraph 6.4).

6.4. State Agencies / Local Development Agencies

State and Local Development Agencies should not be included as nominating bodies to the sectors and should not be represented on an SPC. However, sectors may nominate persons from a local development agency to sit on an SPC. Consideration should be given by SPCs and the Council to inviting officials from such agencies and others, operating in the local authority’s area to attend, and participate in SPC meetings where such would be beneficial in providing input and expertise in matters of direct relevance to the SPC’s work. See also paragraph 3.8 above.

If it is felt necessary to include representatives of these institutions then this should be additional to the one third other sector representation provided for in the guidelines.

There is no reason why the number of other sector representatives could not be greater, given the flexibility outlined in (LG07 2014) 6.1.

Nonetheless some flexibility in the level of membership should be considered if particular local circumstances indicate the need for greater membership.

To this end we suggest the arrangement of places on the SPCs to be as illustrated below.

² Circular Letter CVSP2/2014: p1. With effect from 1 June 2014, where community representation is to be provided on appropriate committees of the Local Authority, such as SPCs/LCDCs etc., it must be sourced through the PPN.

³ Circular Letter CVSP2/2014: p16. As noted already, the County/City Plenary and the Municipal District Plenary of the PPN will commence their work by going through a process to set out what they consider necessary to promote well-being for present and future generations.



This gives 10 seats to the economic sectors, 9 to the Community/Social inclusion and 3 to environment. This achieves a somewhat better balance in terms of sustainable development and its three pillars than the Draft Scheme.

Sector	Economic Development Enterprise & Tourism	Land Use Transportation & Planning	Arts Culture Heritage & Libraries	Environment, Public Realm & Climate Change	Housing	Social & Community	Totals
South Dublin City Council	8	6	6	6	8	6	40
Farmers				1			1
Development /Construction		1			1		2
Business / Commercial	1		1	1		1	4
Trade Union	1				1	1	3
Community / Voluntary	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Social Inclusion			1		1	1	3
Environment/ Conservation	1	1		1			3
Institutions	?		?				?x2
Total	12+?	9	9+?	10	12	10	62+??

The Interim Arrangements:

In the same way as the other national Social Partners have nominating rights, in the absence of the PPNs, the Environmental Pillar as a national Social Partner retains its right to nominate representatives from the local environmental community to the environment sector seats on the SPCs. It does so on an interim basis until the PPN is up and running. This right given by national government cannot be handed to any other body.

In this context we note the unfortunate absence of one layer of participatory democracy in South County Dublin. The Metropolitan District PPNs which would provide for a greater cohesion within, and connectivity between, the communities in this diverse county have yet to be established. We hope that this is a situation that will be remedied asap.



Operation

There are four additional items that we feel should be included in the operational TOR for the scheme.

- All members of the SPC should be able to add relevant items to the agenda, with the draft agenda being agreed at the start of every meeting.
- Recommendations from an SPC to the Council may, where a consensus isn't possible, include a minority report or statement. This will give the Council the benefit of the full range of expertise and opinion.
- Training for all SPC members is essential to enable each SPC to fulfil its role. This should include training in conflict resolution, and out of office hours
- The timing and location of meetings should be arranged by agreement amongst the committee members to facilitate maximum participation and proximity to public transport.

This latter is particularly relevant to those potentially valuable contributors with full time jobs that would preclude them from attending office hours meetings.

Please note that the application form lacks any address/email/phone number for interested persons

Thank you for your attention. We do hope that you find our comments helpful. And we hope that you are able to agree with the logic of incorporating the three pillars of sustainability, social, environmental and economic into all decision-making and policy development

Kind Regards

Michael Ewing

Coordinator

The Environmental Pillar

Environmental Pillar members: An Taisce. Bat Conservation Ireland, BirdWatch Ireland. CELT - Centre for Ecological Living and Training. Coast Watch. Coomhola Salmon Trust. Crann. ECO UNESCO. Feasta. Forest Friends. Friends of the Earth. Global Action Plan Ireland, Gluaiseacht. Good Energies Alliance Ireland, Hedge Laying Association of Ireland. Irish Doctors Environment Association. Irish Natural Forestry Foundation. Irish Peatland Conservation Council. Irish Seal Sanctuary. Irish Seed Saver Association. Irish Whale and Dolphin Group. Irish Wildlife Trust. The Native Woodland Trust. The Organic Centre. Sonairte. Sustainable Ireland Cooperative. VOICE. Zero Waste Alliance Ireland

The continuing success of human society and social systems depends fundamentally on the preservation of the overall productivity, health and long term sustainability of the ecosystems and environmental services that underpin and supply many of the most basic components of human welfare such as healthy soils, clean water, clean air, stable climate and a healthy biodiversity.