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Mr. Tom Doherty	South Dublin County Council
Cllr. Colm Gallagher	Local Authority Members Association
Cllr. Connie Hanniffy	General Council of County Councils
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Brollach

Le dara céad an rialtais áitiúil ag tosnú, táim an-choinsiasach den pháirt lárnach ríthábhachtach a imríonn an rialtas áitiúil i leas eacnamúil agus sóisialta ár bpobal. Ar an leibhéal náisiúnta, d'imir cur i bhfeidhm rathúil na n-aontaithe comhpháirtíochta idir na comhpháirtithe sóisialta páirt chinntitheach i rath eacnamúil agus i saibhriú sóisialta na hÉireann. Tá athruithe ag teacht ar an rialtas áitiúil chomh maith, agus tá sé mar phríomhaidhm ag an chlár athchóirithe rialtais áitiúil don chéad nua go mbeidh an daonláthas ionadaíochta agus an daonláthas rannpháirteach ag obair taobh le taobh.

Is é an rud ba chóir a bheith i gceist sa rialtas áitiúil ná an pobal áitiúil agus a gcuid ionadaithe tofa ag beartú a dtodhchaí féin as láimh a chéile. Tugann struchtúir Choistí na mBeartas Straitéiseach(CBS) deis do na hionadaithe tofa agus do leasanna earnála áitiúla araon páirt bhreise a ghlacadh i mbeartú an pholasaí, agus é sin le meon comhpháirtíochta agus ar mhaithe lena bpobal. Na seirbhísí atá le seachadadh agus le riarú, caithfear iad a phleanáil go straitéiseach, agus tugann na CBS ról neartaithe don chomhairleoir agus don phobal araon ina thaobh seo.

Fuarthas taithí luachmhar ó phróiséas na chéad CBS a bhunú agus tá ceachtanna, idir dhearfach agus diúltach, foghlamtha. Tá comhairlí nua ar an láthair anois i ndiaidh na dtoghchán áitiúil deireanach, agus thug an gá atá acu le CBS nua an deis dúinn chun na treoirlínte don phróiséas a athbhreithniú sa chaoi go ndéanfaí aon leasuithe ba ghá. Táim buíoch den mheitheal a thug tuairisc dom lena aghaidh seo, agus táim cinnte go gcuideoidh na treoirlínte leasaithe seo leis na húdaráis áitiúla agus iad ag cur feabhais ar phróiséas bunaithe agus feidhmithe na gCBS nua.

Is faoi na Bainisteoirí atá sé an próiséas a chur ar siúl anois, agus táim ag tnúth leis go mbeidh na CBS ar fud na tíre ag imirt tionchair dhearfaigh ar rialtas áitiúil éifeachtach agus nua aimseartha trína ról ceannródaitheach agus straitéiseach.

Nollaig Ó Díomasaigh

Nollaig Ó Díomasaigh T.D.,
Aire Comhshaoil agus Rialtais Áitiúil
Lúnasa, 1999

Foreword

As we enter the second century of local government, I am keenly aware of the central and crucial role that local government plays in the economic and social well being of our communities. At national level, the successful implementation of partnership agreements among the social partners have played a key role in Ireland's economic success and social enrichment. Local government is changing too and the co-working of representative democracy alongside participative democracy is a principal objective of the reform programme for local government into the next century.

Local government should be about local people and their elected representatives shaping their own future together. The Strategic Policy Committee structures afford both the elected representatives and local sectoral interests the opportunity to be more involved in policy formulation, in a spirit of partnership, for the benefit of their community. Services that are to be delivered and administered must be strategically planned and the SPCs give both the councillor and community a strengthened role in this regard.

The first SPC establishment process has yielded some valuable experience, and lessons, both good and bad, have been learned. New councils are now in place following the recent local elections and their requirement for new SPCs provided the opportunity to review the guidelines for the process with a view to making any necessary improvements. I am grateful to the working group which reported to me for this purpose and I am sure that these revised guidelines will be of considerable assistance to local authorities in improving the process of both establishment and operation of new SPCs.

It is now up to Managers to set the process in motion and I look forward to SPCs countrywide making a positive impact on effective and modern local government through their pioneering strategic role.

Noel Dempsey

Noel Dempsey T.D.,
Minister for the Environment and Local Government
August, 1999

Acronyms

CDB	City/County Development Board
CPG	Corporate Policy Group
CSG	County/City Strategy Group
DoELG	Department of the Environment and Local Government
MPC	Municipal Policy Committee
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
VFM	Value for Money

Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1.   Background

In an Action Programme for the Millennium, the Government set out its commitment to the restoration of real decision-making and power to local authorities and local people. An important step in this direction was the proposal to establish policy centred Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and Corporate Policy Groups (CPGs) within each City and County authority. This was paralleled with the recommendation for town Council representation on the SPCs and that consideration be given by Town Councils to the establishment of Municipal Policy Committees (MPCs). The County/City authorities established the SPC/CPG process during 1998, but the extent to which activities have been undertaken was generally limited due to a number of outstanding issues. Considerable experience has, however, been gleaned from the establishment process. In light of this experience and the fact that new SPCs are scheduled to be established following the local elections in June 1999, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government felt that it was opportune for a broadly based Working Group to consider any necessary revisions to the comprehensive Guidelines issued in November 1997 and to report to him accordingly. The Working Group consisted of representatives from the National Pillars of the Partnership Process, i.e. the Agricultural and Farming Organisations Pillar, the Business and Employers Pillar, the Community / Voluntary Pillar, the Trade Union Pillar, from the three Local Authority Representative Associations, i.e. the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland, the General Council of County Councils, the Local Authority Members' Association and from the County and City Managers' Association, the Institute of Public Administration as well as officials of the Department. The Department chaired the group. The secretariat was provided by the Institute of Public Administration.

1.2   SPCs - A New Departure

The introduction of SPCs represents a significant departure from the way local authority business has been conducted up to now. It calls for change by all involved. It makes available to Councillors, as the key players, a framework and opportunity to fulfil to a far greater extent their role as overall policy makers. It also develops opportunities for partnership with local interests. The elected representatives can be seen as having a similar role to that of a board of directors. The SPC system will provide them with a better focus and enhanced capacity for involvement in policy formulation, review and evaluation with inbuilt assistance of relevant sectoral interests and the support of a Director of Services. SPCs will prepare the groundwork for policies which will then be decided on by County or City Councils.

1.3   The success of the SPCs will be crucially dependent on the active involvement of Councillors and on a positive mindset from all involved – Councillors; sectoral representatives; County/City Managers; directors and staff - which is focused on the strategic role of SPCs. The work of the SPC chair and Director of Services will be of critical importance. The organisation of agendas, identification of strategic issues and supply of reports and necessary background or other material for consideration will also be crucial. Ultimately, though, much will depend on the input of members, both Councillors and others, in focusing on the strategic issues and in taking a strategic overview of the relevant policy area in the wider context.

1.4   Objectives and Structure of SPCs and the CPG

The SPCs will
- assist the Council in the formulation, development and review of policy;
- reflect the major functions or services of a local authority within the broader context;
- be tailored to the size, membership and administrative resources of a local authority but generally be four in number; and
- have at a minimum one third of their membership drawn from sectors relevant to the committees' work.

1.5   The Corporate Policy Group will

- comprise the Cathaoirleach/Mayor of the Council and the SPC chairs; and
- provide a forum for policy issues which transcend the remit of individual SPCs.

1.6   Application of these Guidelines

The objective of these Guidelines is to create a common general framework for the establishment and operation of SPCs and to assist and support local authorities in this task. However, subject to this general framework, the Guidelines allow a measure of discretion to local authorities in establishing an SPC structure which takes account of local circumstances and which best meets local needs.

1.7   Nonetheless, the establishment of similar SPC structures throughout the country will make the networks of SPC chairs more effective, as well as facilitating liaison arrangements with the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

1.8   Municipal Policy Committees

Municipal authorities should make provision for the establishment of Municipal Policy Committees (MPCs), particularly in the case of the larger towns. In addition, it will be important that structures be put in place to maximise co-ordination, co-operation and communication between the MPCs and the SPCs. In addition, representation of town local authorities is provided for in the SPC system. (See para 5.6).

Chapter 2   *Role of SPCs*

2.1   SPCs and the Council

The Council is and remains the decision making authority, and it is the task of the SPCs, as committees of the Council, to advise and assist the Council in its work. While it is the task of each SPC to assist the Council in the formulation and development of policy, the final policy decisions will rest ultimately with the full Council.   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, if the SPC system operates satisfactorily, much of the preliminary and background work, discussion and recommendation should be completed at SPC level for final consideration and ratification by the Council.

2.2   A Strategic Role

It is envisaged that SPCs will have a major role in assisting and advising the Council in relation to functions of a strategic statutory nature, i.e. policy to mirror the functions of a local authority, e.g. preparation of a development plan, waste management plan, water quality management plan etc. They will also have a function in other, non-statutory policy fields, such as urban and village renewal plans, policy related to the development of work programmes and the establishment of priorities for particular services; consideration of the needs of people with disabilities in the formulation and implementation of relevant policies; integration of sustainability principles to particular services, and in the strategic monitoring of local authority services. SPCs need to be involved from the preliminary phases of preparation of a policy and to assist in the setting of overall parameters, identification of issues to be addressed and approaches to be taken etc. In this way, SPC members can have a meaningful involvement in presenting to the full Council for decision the values and choices which are important elements of plan preparation.

2.3   SPCs and the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI)

In some local authorities, the SMI process has already facilitated the identification of objectives and preparation of strategies for individual services. In others, the SMI focus has been more on the authority as an organisation. SPCs can provide advice and assistance to the Council in the preparation of individual service plans and in setting out the related objectives, strategies, standards and performance indicators.   In this context too, particular policy issues can be identified for special consideration and in-depth examination by the SPCs. Such service plans could set out statements of overall policy, focus on best practice issues, identify particular issues to be addressed and approaches taken, review overall performance of programmes, set out the future strategic direction for the service, address VFM issues, effectiveness and efficiency etc. Responsibility for

staffing matters is not altered by these arrangements. More generally, the work of SPCs would take account of the Council's overall corporate policy and objectives, integrate with statutory plans where relevant, link realistically to financial resources and be responsive to sectoral consultation.

2.4   Consultation

In view of the important strategic role which SPCs will have in the development and review of policy, consultation with relevant sectors and interests should be an on-going part of the SPC process. This may be of additional significance where an SPC covers a number of services with limited opportunity for direct sectoral participation on the committee, or where it was not possible to accommodate fully the range of relevant interests. It will be a matter for the SPC, taking account of the range of interests already represented, to decide on the appropriate consultative arrangements, subject to whatever Guidelines might be issued by the Council.

2.5   Number of Meetings

Subject to law and to Standing Orders or any decisions which may be made by a Council, each SPC should be able to regulate its own business and proceedings (including the fixing of days and times of its meetings). In this context, an SPC should generally meet four times a year and more frequently if necessary. It is recommended that the Council of a local authority should meet once a year with the collective sectoral membership of the SPCs either at the request of the Council or of the SPCs.

2.6   Use of the Irish Language

Many Councils already promote the use of the Irish language in various facets of their work. This practice could be extended to SPCs. Bain úsáid as an teanga atá againn - as an obair a thagann an fhoghlaim.

Chapter 3 Corporate Policy Group

3.1   CPG - Structure

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) will comprise the Cathaoirleach of the authority as its chair together with the chairs of each of the SPCs. The CPG will link the work of the different SPCs, act as a sort of cabinet and provide a forum where policy positions affecting the whole Council can be agreed for submission to the full Council. It will be supported by the County/City Manager. The CPG should not act as conduit between the Council and the SPCs as this could cause the CPG to act as an additional bureaucratic layer or bottleneck and lead to unnecessary delays. The CPG should be represented at meetings of the Council by the Cathaoirleach.

3.2   CPG - Role

The CPG, like an SPC, is a committee of the Council. Its task is to advise and assist the Council, with full decision-making authority remaining with the Council. The Cathaoirleach will report to the full Council on the work of the CPG. In such context, it will be a matter for each Council, in co-operation with the manager, to determine the range of responsibilities and tasks of the CPG. The CPG should:

- 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;
- monitor the overall performance of a local authority ;
- deal with overall SMI issues, customer service, value for money, etc. (individual SPCs would deal with such issues in their work insofar as their particular service remit was concerned);
- play a key role in preparing the budget, replacing the estimate committees where these exist;
- 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;
- act on behalf of the SPCs in contributing to the strategic process which will be carried out at County/City Development Board level.

Chapter 4   SPC Framework

4.1   Relevant Factors

The factors to be taken into account in determining the overall framework of SPCs for a particular local authority will include:

- the total number of elected members on the Council;
- the range of sectoral and other interests including representation of town local authorities to be represented;
- the organisational arrangement of service groupings within the authority and the remit envisaged for each SPC;
- the need to ensure that the organisational and financial resources of the particular local authority are not over-stretched; and
- a fundamental review and rationalisation of existing meetings and committee structures and streamlining of procedures generally.

4.2   Number of SPCs

The number of SPCs in a local authority should be determined having taken the above factors into account. Where possible, taking account of resource implications, local authorities will normally have four SPCs. However, in the very largest authorities (Dublin City and County authorities and Cork County) individual local circumstances may perhaps warrant additional SPCs. It is accepted that it could be necessary for a Director of Services to serve two or more SPCs.

4.3   The adoption of this approach to the number of SPCs takes account of the desirability of allowing adequate opportunity for participation by Councillors and sectoral interests in the new system, of facilitating a reasonable spread of interests, and of providing opportunity for SPC members to develop experience and expertise in the work of their individual SPCs.

4.4   In deciding on the number of SPCs, Councils should avoid an exclusive focus on existing internal organisational structures. A limited number of committees catering for interrelated services and policy areas can often best facilitate the adoption of broad strategic approaches and ensure service delivery in a properly integrated and efficient manner.

4.5   SPC Remit and Configuration

The functions of local authorities are at present classified into eight programme groups. This classification was originally designed for accounting purposes and should not   dictate the precise structure of SPCs. It is now outdated as a reflection of the relative significance of local authority programmes and is at present under review.

4.6   It is the Government's aim to widen the sphere of influence of local government generally so that local authorities can provide a more effective focus for the overview of a range of public services delivered locally by the local authorities and other agencies. In this context, SPCs should have a reasonably broad remit. While the remit will be anchored in the main local government services, it should not operate in a restrictive way but in the context of the wider local picture taking account of related public services and agencies and of local needs and of circumstances generally, e.g. an environment SPC should have regard for transport issues and vice versa.

4.7   In line with the above, SPCs could be configured as follows:

(1)   economic development and planning policy;
(2)   environmental policy;
(3)   transportation and infrastructural policy;
(4)   housing policy, social and cultural development.

This type of configuration or some variation of it would assist local authorities in developing comprehensive broad-ranging policies for the development of their communities and of their areas. Given their scale of operations and resources and their statutory basis, local authorities play a pivotal role in underpinning and developing the local economy and community, and can act as a catalyst in the promotion of such development in combination with the various interests. Development effort is enhanced through working in partnership not only with other public sector agencies but with business, voluntary/community, trade union and other sectors; the proposed configuration facilitates this. This configuration, anchored in the main local government services, would facilitate networking and information exchange among SPC chairs and among Directors of Services and would facilitate linkage with Government departments and other State agencies. A configuration along these lines is therefore strongly recommended as a general guide for all local authorities. It is of course accepted that there might be some variations to take account of local circumstances.

4.8   In devising their SPC arrangements, local authorities will also need to have regard to key corporate objectives identified as part of their SMI process and reflected in their corporate plan, and, where necessary, to matching SPC structures and internal organisational arrangements in a way which supports the achievement of those objectives.

4.9   Area Committees

The SPC approach is designed to strengthen the policy development role of Councillors, and to improve policy formulation generally. A clear focus on significant policy and strategic issues is fundamental to the SPC concept. At the same time, there is clear need for an area/locality-based dimension to the delivery of services and for the purposes of local community and area development.

Many local authorities, particularly the larger ones, are decentralising their services to local electoral area level. The intention is that decisions about matters which are relevant to a specific area will as far as possible be made at area level. Area committees therefore will deal with matters relating to the operational delivery of local authority services. In addition, given the new role for local authorities in community development, as provided for in the Task Force Report on the Integration of the Local Government and Local Development Systems and its sequel Preparing the Ground, area committee membership expanded as follows should ideally become the vehicle for expressing the views of all strands locally –County/City Councillors, both as public representatives and as policy makers; Urban Councillors, groups active locally in the community/voluntary sector (including the wider community); and the local development agencies. This would point to area committees (as expanded for broader community development and for CDB related issues only) representing all these sectors. Area committees therefore will operate a dual structure, one made up of local elected representatives only, which addresses operational affairs of the Council and one made of those representatives plus the wider community to address community development matters /CDB issues. Such matters and issues will be conducted at separate meetings, rather than as additional items on a normal Council agenda of the traditional area committee.

4.10   The traditional area committees have particular value in removing minor and detailed operational issues from the full Council and so enable day to day operational and representational issues to be handled at a more appropriate level, as is already the practice in some local authorities. These include matters such as area related roads, housing and traffic; deputations on particular local issues, etc. Much will depend on local circumstances, and it would be inappropriate to be prescriptive about the establishment/operation of area committees, area-based offices or other suitable organisational arrangements to reflect the area/locality dimension of local government operations.

4.11   In their work, area committees may well identify local gaps and deficiencies in particular services which call for a more fundamental policy analysis and review. It will be important that any such policy issues which arise are fed back, through the full Council, to the relevant SPC for consideration.

4.12   Review of General Procedures and Committee Structures

The establishment of SPCs is predicated on a radical review and overhaul of existing local authority committees, which, in many cases, have evolved over a lengthy period in a fairly unplanned way. It is essential that local authority organisational resources are not over-stretched in supporting overly extensive committee structures if the considerable potential of the SPC system is to be realised. Clearly, the local government system would not be able to support a framework of strategic policy committees and area committees additional to the existing committee structure.

4.13   The SPC system should therefore facilitate the elimination of most other committees relating to specific functions of the local authority. Existing committees should accordingly be discontinued where possible to avoid overlap between the functions of an SPC and such committees. For example, an existing housing committee should be discontinued on the establishment of a housing policy, social and cultural development SPC. Similarly, an existing planning committee should be discontinued on the establishment of an economic development and planning policy SPC. Also, it is important that the opportunity presented by the review process associated with the introduction of SPCs is availed of fully and used to streamline and improve the procedures and operating methods of the Council generally. In some limited and exceptional instances a small number of specialist or ad hoc committees may be required either through particular local circumstance or through national policy. It is envisaged that local ad hoc committees would, by definition, have a limited lifespan. Similarly, it is expected that committees arising from national policy would occur only occasionally. Where such committees are, however, established, the local authorities may mirror the adopted SPC scheme in seeking representatives, if sectoral representation is deemed appropriate.

Chapter 5   The SPC Scheme

5.1   Preparation of Draft SPC and CPG Scheme

The Manager will, on the basis of these Guidelines and in consultation with a representative group of Councillors including the Cathaoirleach of the Council, prepare a draft scheme for the implementation of the SPC system. As part of this preparation of the draft scheme, feedback on the initial establishment process should be obtained from the sectoral interests involved and, perhaps, groups identified in the establishment of the first SPCs. The out-going sectoral representatives of the SPCs would provide a useful resource in this regard. The draft should, in particular, include the proposed number, policy configuration and functions of the SPCs, the numbers on each Committee and an outline framework for sectoral representation on the SPCs; provisional assignment of sector(s) to each SPC and the number of representatives from each sector for each SPC being specified. The draft scheme should also include proposals as to the means of selection of sectoral representatives by the sectors themselves (see paras 5.12 to 5.15). The public consultation process in the draft scheme will allow for organisations to comment on these proposals.

5.2   County/City Audit

A full audit of all relevant bodies in the county / city should be completed in parallel with, but separate from, the preparation of the draft scheme; in the larger cities where there is a multiplicity of local organisations, the audit should be as comprehensive as local circumstances allow.   (See Appendix 5)

5.3   Further Guidance

Further guidance on the process to be followed from the drafting of the scheme to the first meeting of SPCs is set out in Appendix 2. The structure of a possible draft scheme is set out in Appendix 3.

5.4   Sectoral Views

It is strongly recommended that at every appropriate opportunity, steps be taken to ensure that the views of the sectors as represented by the National Pillars of the partnership process and other more local interests be sought with a view to ensuring that the process be seen as inclusive, transparent and effective. Given this, the following factors, which are in no particular order of importance, must be considered in determining sectoral representation on and across each SPC:

•   the need to foster economic and social development generally;

•   a stated commitment to working towards gender balance and to encouraging as full as possible gender balance in representation from the sectors;

- the need to ensure a pro-active approach to having as many relevant sectors as possible across the SPC system;

- the need for balance between divergent interests;

- the need for a comprehensive audit of groups within the local authority area to facilitate the fullest possible consultation with each sector;

- the priority concerns of each sector and the appropriateness of the SPCs to these concerns;

- the relationship between the number of SPCs and the range of interests which can be represented;

- a commitment to the fostering of social inclusiveness and equality in line with the principles of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy;

- a commitment to having a pro-active information strategy to inform the public on the renewal of local government;

- the desirability of facilitating relevant organisations to be part of the nominating constituencies.

5.5   SPC Configuration

The following 6 sectors should, in general, be represented on at least one SPC in each local authority (See Appendix 4) :

Agriculture/Farming (Rural Authorities)
Environmental/Conservation/Culture
Development/Construction
Business/Commercial
Trade Union
Community/Voluntary/Disadvantaged

5.6   Town Local Authority Representation on SPCs

- Representation of town local authorities (boroughs, urban district Councils and town commissions) should be incorporated within the SPC system and included in the draft SPC scheme. The inclusion of the town local authorities will facilitate more comprehensive policy development and co-operation of town and county authorities within a more cohesive and structured framework.

- Each town local authority should accordingly be invited to nominate one of its members to represent town interest within the SPC framework. The town authority may select its nominee whether or not s/he is a member of the county council.

- Town Nominees will be additional to the SPC membership as set out in the Guidelines (see para 6.1). It will be a matter for the county council to decide which SPCs the nominees of the various towns in the county will be appointed to.

- Where the addition of a town nominee to a particular SPC would upset the relevant ratio (see para 6.1) between elected members and sectoral representatives, additional sectoral representatives should also be added.

5.7   Circulation of Draft Scheme

Following consideration by the Council, the draft scheme (as amended) should be forwarded for consideration to all known organisations and groups in the county / city and to the national partnership pillars. A notice to the effect that the Council has considered a draft scheme and has issued the draft scheme for consultation should be published in the local media. The advertisement should be of a size and form which is easily recognisable to the reader and in plain language which describes the role of the SPC, (see sample advertisement in Appendix 2). It is further recommended that all other media, including local radio, be used. Copies of the draft scheme should be circulated on request. Consideration might also be given to having copies available in public offices. A minimum period of one month and up to a maximum of six weeks will be allowed for the making of submissions on the draft. The local authority will, in so far as time and resources permit, organise on an area basis, a series of public information sessions to inform the public on SPCs generally and on the content of their draft scheme. Elected members will be invited to attend these meetings. The organisation of such activities would help to facilitate a wider public understanding of and contribution to the process of reform.

5.8   Receipt of submissions/ Adoption of Scheme

Following receipt of submissions on the draft scheme, the Manager, with the Cathaoirleach and the other representatives of the Council referred to in paragraph 5.1, will carefully consider the submissions and make any amendments to the draft scheme as deemed appropriate for submission to the Council. Such consideration will also have regard to the preferences indicated in the submissions as to identity with a particular sector and preferred SPC. The Council will then adopt the scheme with/without amendment for the implementation of the SPC system.   While every effort must be made to accommodate the views and preferences of organisations as to the assignment of

sectors to SPCs, and the number of representatives from each sector for each SPC, final designation of sectors and SPC places will rest with the local authorities. This is necessary to provide for situations where, for example too many sectors volunteer for the one particular SPC.

5.9 The Nomination Process

The nomination process for the agricultural / farming 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. (For these national pillar contacts under Partnership 2000, see Appendix 6). The environmental / conservation / culture and community / voluntary / disadvantaged sectors will be determined on the basis of a local nomination process (see para 5.13). Nominations including any changes in the nominations are the sole responsibility of the sectors.

5.10 Particular regard will be had to the nature of each particular sector. The local authority will provide sufficient time, (see paras. 5.12, 5.13 and 5.15), information and facilities to the sectors, if required, to enable the nomination of a representative(s). The draft scheme will reflect the authority's proposals to enable this to be put in place.

5.11 While a sector may be represented on more than one SPC, regard should be had, however, to ensure that each sector (apart from the agriculture / farming sector in the case of the more highly urbanised authorities (see Appendix 4)) is represented on at least one SPC in each local authority.

5.12 Receipt of Nominations From the National Pillars

On adoption of the scheme the local authority will now seek nominations to the SPCs. In the case of three of the National Pillars, (i.e. Business /Employers Pillar, Trade Union Pillar and Farming/Agricultural Pillar) under the national partnership process, the local authority will write to the contact persons enclosing the adopted scheme and seek the nominations of those pillars for their particular SPCs as outlined in the adopted scheme. The exact mechanism for selecting nominees would be left to the National Pillars; any issues pertaining to the nomination mechanism used by the National Pillars should be referred to the appropriate contact point. The selected members should, however, be representative of local organisations active in the respective county or city, because it is the local perspective of the respective pillars that the members would be expected to bring to the SPCs. Local authorities will allow one month to enable the selection process of the National Pillars.

5.13   Receipt of Nominations From Other Sectors

With regard to the community/ voluntary/ disadvantaged sector and the environment/ conservation/ cultural sectors, the local authority will write to each organisation which indicates a preference for these sectors, enclosing a copy of the adopted scheme and will facilitate these organisations to meet each other, if appropriate, to select their representatives for the SPCs as set out in the adopted scheme (see Para 5.8). Local authorities will allow one month for the selection of representatives from these two sectors.

5.14   Community Fora

The Task Force Report 'Preparing the Ground' (Chapter 5) sets out mechanisms by which representatives from the Community & Voluntary Sector will be nominated to the County / City Development Boards (CDBs). Essentially, these involve Community Fora, with the following clusters being suggested to facilitate nominations:

      i)   focus on disadvantage/etc.

      ii)   focus on cultural / sporting / recreational / residents association type work etc.

The Director of Community & Enterprise in the city / county local authorities would have the key role in organising the fora and facilitating representation.

5.15   In the event of the SPC nomination process and the establishment of the CDBs coinciding, there could be merit, if feasible, in local authorities using the Community Fora route in the nomination of SPC representatives from the Community & Voluntary Sector. At the same time, local authorities may wish to rely on the more general approach outlined above (see para 5.13) in arriving at such representation. It will be a matter for local authorities, having regard to local circumstances and the degree to which the timeframes for the establishment of the SPCs and the CDBs coincide, to choose the particular method of selection best suited to their situation.

5.16   Receipt of Nominations from Town Local Authorities

The County Council will seek nominations from town local authorities (see para 5.6).   The Council will allow one month for the selection of representatives from the town local authorities.

Chapter 6   *SPCs - The Participants*

6.1   General

Each SPC should have as a minimum a total membership of nine. This will enable a range of opinions and perspectives to be represented both from the elected members as well as from the sectoral groups. Particular care should be taken to avoid excessively large or unwieldy committees; this factor may need special consideration in the case of the very largest authorities.   Nonetheless some flexibility in the level of membership should be considered if particular local circumstances indicate the need for greater membership.

- Each SPC must have as a minimum one-third of the membership drawn from sectoral interests.
- SPCs should be constituted as soon as possible after a local election but not before full consultation and consideration of the procedure for the establishment as set out in these Guidelines.
- The chairs of the SPCs should be appointed by the full Council from among the Councillor appointees to the SPC, i.e. the chairs will be Council members.
- The SPC chairs should hold office for a minimum period of two years, which could be renewed by the Council. Subsequent chairs should be appointed from among the existing Councillor members of the SPC.
- Where the addition of a town local authority nominee would upset the general ratio between elected representatives and sectoral interests additional sectoral representatives should also be added. (See para 5.6).
- Full participation in meetings of the SPCs should be confined to the members of the SPC. Where policy matters of particular interest to other Councillors or local interest groups arise (e.g. proposals affecting a local area), the SPC could meet with those other Councillors or groups.
- It is desirable that sectoral nominees would retain membership of the SPC for the life of the Council. It would be open to each nominating sector to deselect its nominee, if felt necessary, and to notify the Council accordingly whereupon the person would cease to be a member. In such cases the relevant sector will nominate a new representative. Where a casual vacancy occurred it should likewise be filled by the relevant sector.
- A Director of Services will attend meetings and provide support to each SPC. The Director will, subject to the Manager's overall responsibility for staffing matters, work closely with the committee and be entitled to speak and participate at meetings.

6.2 Councillors

The following principles should be applied in relation to the involvement of Councillors in the SPC process.

- Every county/city Councillor should, as a matter of equity and good practice, have the opportunity to serve on an SPC. This will enable a Councillor to develop further expertise and experience of the particular service or services and to develop a degree of specialisation.

- Councillors may not be nominated to represent sectoral interests.

- SPC Membership for Councillors should be for the lifetime of the Council. A person ceasing to be a Councillor would automatically cease membership of the SPC.

- A Councillor should not serve on more than two SPCs insofar as possible, again for reasons of equity and good practice and workload.

- SPC Councillor membership should reflect the proportionality and the distribution of elected representation on the full Council. The Local Government (Reorganisation) Act, 1985 (section 27) was designed to allow for a basic element of proportionality in appointments to committees etc. However, many local authorities, even prior to that Act, operated and continue (as they are entitled under the Act) to operate their own local and more finely developed arrangements to ensure fair play for all concerned. It is, however, impossible to legislate fully for such good will and practice. Therefore, it is all the more important with the SPCs that all local authorities adopt and implement (and be clearly seen by the public to do so) an approach which ensures that the various political and other interests represented on the full Council are treated fairly, and equitably represented in the SPC system.

- The allocation of SPC chairs should also reflect equitably the spread of elected representation on the Council. The points made above as to good will and fair play are equally relevant here. However, where agreement in this regard is not possible, the group of SPC chairs to be appointed should technically be treated for appointment purposes as if it constituted a separate committee, to ensure an equitable spread of representation as SPC chairs.

6.3 Sectoral Representatives

There is a wide range of interests at national, regional and local level throughout the country. The involvement of such groups (see para 5.4) in the SPC structure will be a major resource to local government, will foster a higher degree of community relevance and local participation. It will provide new and different

streams of expertise and advice to the local authority. The number of SPCs to be established, their size and range of responsibilities, will have major implications for the number and range of interests which can be accommodated.

6.4   The following principles should be respected in the selection of groups and associations for a particular sector including those being facilitated by the National Pillars.

•   Groups/associations should be active within the area of the local authority and have a county wide impact or, at a minimum, a relevance in a locality or number of localities in the area.

•   Groups/associations should be open to new members, hold AGMs and regular meetings, and should be broadly representative and accountable.

•   Single interest groups may be considered, e.g. groups focused on the disabled or elderly. Groups formed around specific single local issues should not be considered for inclusion in the sectors.

•   Local Development Agencies represented at Strategy Group/ County/ City Development Board level should not be represented on an SPC. Clear communication between the SPCs and the Local Development Agencies should, however, be facilitated in order to keep both informed of their respective roles / activities. (See para 6.6).

6.5   Each sector should select its own nominee(s). The nomination of sectoral representatives is the sole responsibility of each particular sector. However, the authority may recommend that such nominee(s) have broad knowledge (or expertise) of a particular nature. Each sector will be asked to nominate the appropriate number of representatives as set out in the adopted scheme to the SPCs. The local authority will, in so far as time and resources permit, facilitate the process of nomination through the provision of facilitators and other resources as deemed necessary. While every effort will be made to accommodate preferences, final decisions will ultimately rest with the local authority, having regard to the likely degree of interest, the limited number of SPC places available and the need to have a balanced constituency for each SPC. An appropriate time frame to enable the nomination process should be provided. It is considered that one month should be sufficient in this regard.

6.6   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 SPCs work. This would be additional to sectoral representation. The County/City Development Boards will offer an opportunity for structured co-operation with the State and Local Development Agencies.

6.7   Expenses incurred by members

In general, any expenses arising for an SPC member would be met by the organisations the SPC member is representing. However, those SPC members whose expenses could not be met in that manner would be entitled to travel expenses for attendance at SPC meetings. In such circumstances, the expenses will be met by the local authority.

Chapter 7   Implementation Support Measures

7.1   Support Measures

Each sector should put in place appropriate measures to enable a structured feedback process between sectoral representatives and their nominating sectors.

7.2   Availability of Information

Where relevant and in the spirit of Freedom of Information, appropriate information should be made publicly available. This includes making available minutes and reports processed by the SPCs. In instances where documentation is of a confidential nature, this should be specifically identified as such. Any documentation not so identified will be regarded as available to the public in general and the sectors in particular.

7.3   Standing Orders and the regulating of meetings

Standing orders can be adopted by the Council following recommendation from each SPC and efforts should be made to reflect the various perspectives represented on the SPCs and the nature of the business. The Standing Orders could include provision for:

- the times, days and locations of meetings;
- the minimum terms of notice which should mirror those of the Council;
- the ordering of the Agenda;
- the provision to suspend Standing Orders;
- the right to speak and equality in making views known;
- the process associated with handling confidential material;
- provision for procedures to allow for review of previous committee business and recommendations.

7.4   Training Provision

The local authority should include in the draft scheme (see para. 5.1) provision for the enabling of on-going training of members of the SPC. This should include:

- workshops on policy to cover the various areas within the remit of the SPCs;
- briefings on the renewal of local government;
- briefings on the role and functions of local government;
- skills orientated training such as team building.

This may be facilitated through the Training Officers in each authority being allocated the role of addressing training needs identified through a consultative process with the Sectors generally and the SPC members specifically. The implementation of the *Report of the Working Group on a Training and Education Programme for Elected Members* will also be relevant in this regard.

7.5   Other Support Services

Beyond the foregoing introductory measures, a key element in supporting SPC members in their role will be the establishment of networks of SPC chairs and Directors of Services to meet on a periodic basis with officials of the Department of the Environment and Local Government as part of the developing partnership relationship between local authority, DoELG and other relevant agencies.

APPENDIX 1 *Summary of Central Features of the SPC System*

1. The role of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) and the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) is to formulate policy proposals, evaluate and report on policy implementation, for consideration and final decision by the full Council.

2. A focus on the SPCs' policy-making and strategic role is fundamental to the SPC concept. In their work, SPCs are not concerned with individual representational or operational issues.

3. The SPC system presents Councillors with a prime opportunity to become more involved in policy formulation. It provides a chance to review and optimise committee structures and related procedures, which demands a rationalisation of existing committees and standing procedures.

4. Each authority will have generally four SPCs, with the option of more in the very largest authorities, if warranted.

5. SPCs are to be chaired by one of the Council members.

6. SPCs are to have a minimum total membership of nine.

7. A minimum of one third of the members of each SPC are to be drawn from relevant sectoral interests; to provide relevant expertise and advice and allow for a range of inputs in the formulation of policy.

8. Relevant organisations for each sector will be identified as early as possible, parallel with the drafting of the scheme.

9. Each sector will select its own nominee(s).

10. The CPG is to comprise the Cathaoirleach of the local authority and the SPC chairs. It is to be chaired by the Cathaoirleach. It will be supported by the Manager.

11. Area committees can complement the SPC system. Local operational matters should be assigned to the area committees as the SPC system will not deal with local representational issues and operational issues.

APPENDIX 2 *Suggested process to be followed by a local authority*

1. The Manager, in consultation with a representative group of elected members and taking account of feedback obtained on the initial establishment process, to prepare a draft scheme (see para 5.1 of Guidelines).

2. The draft scheme to be forwarded to the Council for initial consideration, any amendment deemed necessary, and approval.

3. Advertise/Publicise the draft scheme.

4. The draft scheme to be circulated to the following and allow a month to six weeks for responses, if any:

   (i) the known organisations in the county/city as previously identified from the earlier process and from the ongoing audit;
   (ii) responses received to the public advertisements;
   (iii) the National Pillars of partnership 2000.

5. Council to consider submissions on the draft scheme.

6. Council to adopt scheme with / without amendment.

7. The local authority to write to the contact persons of the three National Pillars, as set out in Appendix 6, enclosing a copy of the adopted scheme and seeking nominations (see also para 5.12). Organisations seeking representation and whose nomination process falls under each of the 3 identified National Pillars in 5.12 should be forwarded to the relevant National Pillar for consideration in the context of its providing nominations to the local authority in line with the adopted scheme.

8. The local authority to write to organisations identified in the community/voluntary/disadvantaged sector and the environment /conservation/cultural sector enclosing a copy of the adopted scheme and seeking to facilitate their nomination of representatives in line with the adopted scheme. (See paras 5.13-5.15).

9. The local authority to write to town local authorities seeking nominations. (See para 5.16).

10.   The local authority to allow sectors one month for the receipt of nominations.

11.   Receive nominations for each of the six sectors.

12.   Advise Council of nominations from sectors to SPCs and Council to adopt the membership as put forward.

13.   First meetings of SPCs.

POSSIBLE SAMPLE FOR DRAFT ADVERTISEMENT

Name of County Council
"Mission"
'The Future of County X and You'

Short description of County, i.e. economic, social, cultural, environmental landscape. The county facing the challenges of the future. 'You' have a voice in this challenge.

Introduce Strategy Policy Committees.

'New structures are being created, in order to bring the knowledge and expertise of people working with social, economic, cultural and environmental bodies throughout the county, into the operations and strategies of X County Council' to work alongside the elected representatives in contributing to and developing Council policy in a spirit of partnership.

To facilitate this, X committees are being established, called Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs). The areas of activity which it is proposed will be covered by these committees include:

SPC 1   Heading
SPC 2   Heading
SPC 3   Heading
SPC 4   Heading

Membership of the SPCs will comprise of local elected members and representatives of the following sectors:

Agriculture / farming (where appropriate)
Environmental / conservation / cultural organisation
Development / construction
Business / commercial
Trade Union
Community / voluntary / disadvantaged groups

A scheme to enable the setting up of the Committees is now available in draft form. Submissions on the draft scheme are now being sought to be received by.......... (one month /6 weeks deadline). Information / briefings on the Council's proposals will take place as follows:

These will allow interested groups and organisations who may wish to be considered for membership to learn more about the SPC system and on how they might participate.

X County Council wants to work in partnership with you and your organisation. If you wish to do so, please contact us for further details as follows:

Name
Address
Telephone
E-Mail
Fax
Website

NAME OF COUNCIL

Registration forms for representation to nominating sectors for
Strategic Policy Committees

Name of applicant body: _____

Address: _____

Date of establishment: _____

State aims and purpose of your organisation:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

With which sector would you most readily identify your organisation (one only please)

Agriculture / farming

Environment / conservation / culture

Development / construction

Business / commercial

Trade Union

Community / voluntary / disadvantaged

Name and address of person to whom correspondence is to be sent:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____

How often does your organisation hold meetings?

Date of your last AGM: _____

State your total membership: _____

Names
of
Officers

Chairman: _____

Treasurer: _____

Secretary: _____

Please specify the type of Strategy Policy Committee on which your organisation seeks representation:

1st preference _____

2nd preference _____

Signed: _____
            (Secretary, Applicant Body)

- Please note that the above suggested registration form is for use in relation to local organisations identified in 4(i) and 4(ii) of this Appendix and is not relevant to three of the National Pillars (see para 5.9).

- While every effort will be made to accommodate preferences, final decisions will ultimately rest with the local authority, having regard to the likely degree of interest, the limited number of SPC places available and the need to have a balanced constituency for each SPC.

APPENDIX 3 *Suggested structure to a draft scheme*

1.   Introduction:
     The draft scheme should be introduced by referring to the background to the renewal of local government in Ireland, to the role of SPCs and the CPG generally and to their relationship in the development of local authority policies. It should also include a review of the existing SPC structures, how they have worked and any experiences gleaned from them.

2.   The present organisation of the Council:
     The scheme should outline the policy areas covered by the Council and its present service delivery mechanisms.

3.   The proposed framework -

     The draft scheme should provide for:

     •   the proposed nos. of SPCs and their configuration;
     •   the proposed remit envisaged for the SPCs;
     •   the provisional assignment of sectoral interests for each SPC;
     •   nos. of proposed elected representation on the SPCs;
     •   nos. of proposed sectoral representation on the SPCs;
     •   nos. of Town Local Authority Representation on the SPCs;
     •   the means of sectoral nomination i.e. to include the process at national pillar level and at local level;
     •   the chairmanship of SPCs;
     •   details on periods of appointment;
     •   principles applied in the appointment of councillors;
     •   principles applied in the appointment of sectoral representatives.

4.   Details on time for receipt of comments on the draft scheme.

5.   Details on the contacts of the three national partnership pillars that will be directly involved in the nomination process, i.e.
     The Farming and Agricultural Organisations Pillar
     The Business and Employers Organisations Pillar
     The Trade Union Pillar.

6.   The nomination form for registration of interest to participate in the selection process by local organisations (see Appendix 2).

APPENDIX 4 *Sectors for Representation on SPCs*

- ☐   Agriculture / farming
- ☐   Environmental / conservational / culture
- ☐   Development / construction
- ☐   Business / commercial
- ☐   Trade Union
- ☐   Community / voluntary / disadvantaged

Notes

- ☐   The local authorities will identify as many organisations as possible and every effort will be made to accommodate organisations within the sector of their choice based on their own objectives and priorities.

- ☐   Each sector (apart from agriculture/farming - see below) is to be represented on at least one SPC in each local authority.

- ☐   The agricultural/farming sector would not necessarily be represented on County Borough SPCs nor necessarily in highly urbanised County Council areas where agriculture is not a significant sector.

- ☐   Representation from three of the National Pillars, as recognised under Partnership 2000, i.e. the business and employers organisation pillar, the agricultural and farming organisations pillar and the trade union pillar will be arranged through the National Pillars. The selected members should, however, be representative of local organisations active in the respective County/City, because it is the local perspective of the respective pillar that the members would be expected to bring to the SPCs.

- ☐   The agriculture/farming sector should be represented on the SPCs arising from the implications of rural policy change at EU and national level and the spatial impact associated with this change.

- ☐   The business/commercial sector should be represented on the SPCs due to the relevance of much of local authority activity to this sector and to the level of local government resources generated from that sector.

- ☐   The environmental/conservational/cultural sector should be represented due to the fact that local authorities are primary instruments for the implementation of EU and national policy in the environment, conservation and cultural sectors.

☐ The development / construction sector should be represented due to the impact of physical planning policy on the sector and due to the need to relate long term infrastructural development for which local authorities have major responsibility to on-going developments and thinking in the sector.

☐ The trade union sector should be represented on the SPCs due to their long standing contribution to the national policy process and their extensive representation at local level.

☐ The community/voluntary/disadvantaged sector should be represented on the SPCs due to the need to recognise social inclusion and voluntarism as key to the long term development of communities.

APPENDIX 5   *Completing a County / City Audit*

A county / city audit can be undertaken through desk research initially and follow-up to responses to the advertisement seeking submissions on the draft scheme.

The key factor is to seek to identify all organisations operating at local level in the county / city that might wish to be involved or need to be aware of the process. This can be done as follows:

- ☐ reference to the organisations / bodies involved in, or identified by, the initial SPC process;
- ☐ reference to local directories including telephone books;
- ☐ reference to former SPC members to identify all known bodies within their operational environment;
- ☐ reference to the National Pillars in farming / agriculture, trade union, business and employers, community / voluntary sector to identify local contact points;
- ☐ reference to Comhar and An Taisce to identify local contact points for the environment;
- ☐ reference to the Arts Council / Officer to identify local cultural / arts contact points;
- ☐ reference to contacts available from other state agencies and Government Departments;
- ☐ any other contact points deemed appropriate.

The audit will be of assistance to County / City local authorities in identifying, as comprehensively as possible, all interested groups.

APPENDIX 6   National contact points for three of the Pillars of Partnership 2000 for the purpose of SPC Nominations (See Para. 5.9)

Business and Employers Pillar:

SPC Co-Ordinator
Business and Employers Pillar
c/o Chambers of Commerce of Ireland
22 Merrion Square
Dublin 2

Phone: 01-6612888
Fax: 01-6612811
E-Mail: spc@chambersireland.ie

Trade Union Pillar:

Esther Cockram
Local Development Officer
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
31/32 Parnell Square
Dublin 1

Phone: 01-8897777
Fax: 01-8872012
E-Mail: esther.cockram@ictu.ie

Farming Pillar:

Gerry Gunning
Farming Pillar
Irish Farm Centre
Bluebell
Dublin 12

Phone: 01-4500266
Fax: 01-45510431/4565146
E-Mail: postmaster@ifa.ie

APPENDIX 7   *Strategic Policy Committees: Your Questions Answered*

What is the role of SPCs ?

SPCs will provide policy centred committees which can harness the experience of relevant external bodies to renew and revitalise local government. They will also enhance the overall role of Councillors, by providing the platform for an input in the policy-formulation process at an early stage, for effective monitoring of existing policies, and for policy review.

Is it important for local government that SPCs succeed?

Yes. National partnership agreements and arrangements have proved successful in underpinning our national social and economic progress. We must replicate this ethos and practice at local level. As clear evidence of its ability to reach out and engage in a truly participative framework, local government has to fully utilise the opportunities connected with the SPC system. And it must clearly be seen to do so. This approach is the path to the future, particularly post-1999.

How many SPCs will there be?

That depends on the size of each county or city, and the structure of the local authority. In general, authorities might find four SPCs sufficient, for the very largest ones it might be useful to have more, if warranted.

Will existing Council committees remain as they are?

No. The introduction of the SPC system demands a radical overhaul and reduction of the number of committees, as well as streamlining of structures, operating methods, and proceedings in general. The underlying question in this should be: How would the reorganised Council stand up to unbiased outside scrutiny of the way it conducts its business in terms of efficiency and effectiveness?

How will the role of Councillors change?

Councillors will now, with the help of the SPC system, be able to actively influence the development stage of policies and plans etc., rather than just altering drafts already prepared. Their scope for input to, and impact on, their local authorities will accordingly increase. SPCs will prepare the groundwork for policies to be decided on by the County/City Councils.

Will each individual Councillor be represented on all the SPCs?

No. Insofar as possible, every Councillor should be represented on one or at most two SPCs. Indeed, utilising individual Councillors' specific strengths would result in a better overall effectiveness and more "job" satisfaction for all. Inherent in the system is a degree of specialisation along the lines of the individual SPCs.

What if an elected member wants to follow up a specific case on behalf of a constituent?

A question about a housing allocation, or repair, for example would definitely not be a matter for an SPC, since SPCs are concerned with overall strategic and policy-making questions. The Councillor might want to raise the case at the respective area committee or otherwise.

What is the role of the SPC chair?

The SPC chairperson will have an overall co-ordination role and responsibility for their respective SPCs. They will, with support from the Director of Services, organise the agendas, identify strategic issues and will arrange the supply of records and necessary background or other material for consideration.

The Chairpersons will also represent their SPCs at Council meetings. They, or the relevant Director of Services, would present any reports, queries and information on behalf of the SPC. In addition, the Chairpersons will represent their SPCs on the Corporate Policy Group, and on the national Networks. In addition they will have a key role on the County/City Development Board.

How can political balance be ensured?

The proportionality of elected members within the SPC framework should as far as possible reflect that which prevails in the full Council. The SPC chairs as a group will be appointed by the Council and should also represent the political balance of the entire Council. It is important that Councils are seen by the public to operate fairly and equitably.

What term of office will SPC members have?

All members of an individual SPC should be on that SPC for the lifetime of the Council. i.e. membership ceases with the outgoing Council. Following a local election a new scheme for the nomination of members must be adopted.

And the SPC chair's term of office?

The SPC chairs should be elected for a minimum period of two years. At the end of that period they can be re-elected. Alternatively, they would be succeeded by another Councillor serving on the same SPC.

How will the urbans fit into the SPC system?

The new Guidelines on SPCs state that each town (Borough, UDC or town Commission) will nominate one representative from among their elected members to sit on one of the SPCs. These nominees will bring the towns' perspective to the County SPCs, and their inclusion will facilitate closer linkage of town and county authorities at elected member level, reflecting the reality that no town is an island.

What about the Area Committees? Are they just smaller SPCs?

No, not at all. SPCs will focus on policy and strategic issues. Area committees give the SPC system an added dimension in that they provide a mechanism for addressing area or locality-based service delivery issues.

Should existing area offices be interlinked with the Area Committees?

A range of local authority services are already being delivered through area offices. Links between area committees and area offices should be developed wherever possible, for instance when opportunities for relocation or replacement of areas offices arise.

What is the position of Area Committees in relation to Council policies?

Area committees might, in their work, identify gaps in the overall design of a service, or other deficiencies. The Council could be alerted to these, and ask the relevant SPC to address the issue. In this way, the area committees can fulfil an additional function as "watchdogs", monitoring the actual delivery of local authority services.

Where do the sectoral representatives on the SPCs come from?

A minimum of one third of the members of each SPC are to be sectoral representatives. It will be a matter for the Council to decide which sector(s)

should be represented on which SPC(s). The six sectors named in the Guidelines are:

- Agriculture/ Farming (if applicable)
- Environmental/Conservation/Culture
- Development/Construction
- Business/Commercial
- Trade Union
- Community/Voluntary/Disadvantaged

How will the representatives of these sectors be selected?

According to the Guidelines the nomination process for the agriculture/farming sector will be facilitated by the farming and agriculture organisations pillar of the national partnership process. Likewise the development/construction sector and the business/commercial sector will be dealt with by the business and employers organisations pillar and the trade union sector by the trade union pillar. The other two sectors i.e. environment/conservation/culture and community / voluntary / disadvantaged sectors will be nominated by these sectors locally with facilitation by the local authority.

Is there any need to ensure a geographical spread of the sectoral appointees?

No. The sectoral appointees are meant to represent their sector's interests on the SPC to which they contribute, and for that, it should not be of much importance which part of the county they live in.

Besides, the organisations considered as suitable for the individual sectors should all have a county/city wide remit or mandate or operate in a number of localities. Single-issue groups should be avoided (see para 6.4 of the Guidelines).

What about gender balance on SPCs?

Within the limits of what is possible, the genders should be fairly represented on SPCs. Since each Councillor should have an opportunity to serve on SPCs, it follows that their gender balance would reflect that of the full Council. This should be borne in mind also for the selection of SPC chairs.

The sectors should also be asked to bear in mind the Government objective of achieving a 40% gender balance in the making of appointments, as well as a commitment to fostering social inclusiveness and equality, when selecting their representatives.

What about the relationship between Councillors and sectoral nominees?

Such nominees need to be accepted willingly and encouraged to play a full role in the SPC process.

Will Councillors be assisted to prepare for SPCs?

Yes, it is important that skills – and information – based courses are made available for elected members to support the introduction of the SPCs.

And training issues generally?

A programme of training and education is being put in place for elected members generally, in consultation with the elected members representative associations, Managers, and other interests.

Shouldn't sectoral representatives also receive training?

Such representatives should receive some form of briefing which focuses on policy issues related to their particular committee. They could also receive some form of induction or structured information concerning the functions and procedures of local authorities. Skills based training would also be useful.

Couldn't some training or education take place in the SPC groups?

Yes, and that would certainly contribute towards a good working atmosphere.

Should the networks of SPC chairs be used too?

These networks, which will bring together the chairpersons of comparable SPCs from all city and county local authorities, could become another channel for training and information. There will be structured contacts between the networks and the DoELG, intended to facilitate two-way communication.

What is the role of the Corporate Policy Group (CPG)?

If specific policies concern only one SPC, then they should be submitted directly to the full Council to prevent the CPG becoming clogged up, since it would not be able to deal with its core tasks. The CPG is meant to be a forum in which the SPC chairs and the authority's Cathaoirleach discuss overall policies, linking the work of the individual SPCs and agreeing on policy positions which will affect more than one SPC, before these are submitted to the full Council. The CPG could, for example, prepare the estimates, prepare agendas for Council meetings, or agree appointments of outside committees/boards for ratification by the full Council. The CPG will be supported by the County/City Manager.

Will there be changes in the relationships between officials, Councillors and sectoral representatives?

The SPC system offers opportunities for even better co-operation between officials and Councillors. And both officials and Councillors should benefit from the insights and experience the sectoral representatives bring with them; they in turn will gain better insight into complexity of local authority policy making.

APPENDIX 8

Submissions Received:

1. Adapt, Limerick
2. Aisling Group, Navan
3. Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland
4. An Taisce, Galway
5. An Taisce, Kerry
6. An Taisce, North Tipperary
7. Artists Association of Ireland
8. Ballina District Council of Trade Unions
9. Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce
10. Ballyhoura Development
11. Barrow-Nore-Suir Rural Development
12. Boyne Valley / Newgrange Environmental Protection League
13. Brookfield Community Development Group, Blackrock, Co. Dublin
14. Cahir Developments Association Ltd.
15. Chambers of Commerce of Ireland
16. Chartered Institute of Transport in Ireland
17. County/City Managers' Association
18. City of Galway VEC
19. Clare Earthwatch
20. Clare Haven House Project, Ennis
21. Clare Women's Network
22. Clonmel Chamber of Commerce
23. Co. Kildare Fáilte Ltd.
24. Combat Poverty Agency
25. Community Connections, Cavan
26. Community Development Network, Moyross, Limerick
27. Community Workers Co-Op
28. Community Workers Co-Op Mid West - Juan Carlos Azzopardi
29. Community Workers Co-Operative Mid West Region
30. Construction Industry Federation
31. Coolock Community Law Centre, Dublin
32. Cori Convent of Mercy, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal
33. Cork Council of Trade Unions
34. Data, Donegal Network, Irish Council of People with Disabilities
35. Dolphin House Community Development Association
36. Donal O Brolchain, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9
37. Donegal Community Workers Co-Op
38. Drogheda Community Services
39. Droichead Arts Centre

40.	Dublin City Centre Business Association
41.	Dun Laoghaire Genealogical Society
42.	Dundalk Access Group
43.	Eiri Corca Baiscinn, Kilkee
44.	Farrell Grant Sparks
45.	Fingal Alliance of Community Councils
46.	Flat Complex Forum, Rialto, Dublin 8
47.	Friends of Limerick Club
48.	Galway Chamber of Commerce
49.	Galway Council of Trade Unions
50.	Galway Cycling Campaign
51.	Galway Rural Development Company Ltd.
52.	Galway Travellers Support Group
53.	General Council of County Councils
54.	Heritage Towns of Ireland
55.	Impact Galway Branch
56.	Impact, Donegal Co. Co.
57.	Institute of Public Administration
58.	IRD South East Galway Ltd.
59.	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
60.	Irish Farmers Associations
61.	Irish Federation of Pike Angling Clubs
62.	Irish Hotels Federation
63.	Irish Wheelchair Association
64.	IWC South Dublin Branch
65.	Kells Development Association
66.	Kerry Chambers of Commerce and Business Organisations Representative Group
67.	Kerry Citizens Information Service
68.	Kildare Money Advice
69.	Kilkenny Council of Trade Unions
70.	Killarney Council of Trade Unions
71.	Local Authority Members Association
72.	Laois Community Network
73.	Larry Conlon, Bohernamore, Ardee, Co. Louth
74.	Library Association of Ireland
75.	Limerick Centre for the Unemployed
76.	Limerick Council of Trade Unions
77.	Little Sisters of the Assumption, Galway
78.	Longford Rural Development Association
79.	Louth County Network, Irish Council of People with Disabilities

80. Louth Local Government Project
81. MACNAS, Galway
82. Mayfield Integrated Community Development Project Ltd., Cork
83. Men's Hostel Waterford City
84. MJ Mayling, Killeshin Road, Carlow
85. Monkstown / Glenbrook / Passage West Amenity Association, Cork
86. Mountmellick Development Association
87. Moyross Partners, Limerick
88. Muintir na Tire
89. Naas Adult and Community Education
90. National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland
91. National Youth Council of Ireland
92. Navan Travellers Workshops Ltd.
93. North Leitrim Community Network
94. North Tipperary IFA
95. North Tipperary Tourism Forum
96. North Western Health Board
97. Oak Partnership, Edenderry
98. Obair Newmarket-on-Fergus Ltd.
99. Ormond Historical Society, Nenagh
100. Our Lady of Lourdes CSG, Greenfields Cross, Rosbrien, Limerick
101. Paul Partnership Limerick
102. Planet
103. Respond, Waterford
104. Rialto Community Drug Team, Dublin 8
105. Rialto Network, Dublin 8
106. Roscommon Heritage Group
107. Roscrea Community Development Council
108. Saint Vincent de Paul, Drogheda
109. Sean Kelly, Kylenaycona, Borrisokane
110. Shanty Educational Project, Brittas, Co. Dublin
111. Simon Community, Galway
112. SIPTU Cavan
113. SIPTU South East Branch
114. SIPTU, Laois
115. SIPTU, Local Authority Professional Officers Board
116. South Dublin Community Plant Forum
117. South Tipperary Arts Centre
118. Southside Partnership, Dun Laoghaire
119. St. Anne's Youth Centre, Chapel St., Sligo
120. The Arts Council

121.	Threshold
122.	Tipperary Leader Group
123.	Togher Community Group, Louth
124.	Tullamore Travellers Movement
125.	Val Cosgrave, Westbrook, Rathnew
126.	Waterford Council of Trade Unions
127.	Waterford Regional Youth Service
128.	Waterford Traveller Interest Constituency
129.	Whitechurch Network, Ballyboden, Dublin 16
130.	Wicklow Planning Alliance
131.	Wicklow Rural Partnership Ltd.
132.	Young Christian Workers

Submissions received from Local Authorities

County Councils:
Carlow
Cavan
Clare
Cork
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown
Fingal
Galway
Kerry
Kildare
Laois
Leitrim
Limerick
Longford
Louth
Meath
Offaly
South Dublin
Tipperary (NR)
Waterford
Westmeath
Wicklow

County Borough Councils:
Cork
Galway
Limerick
Waterford