

NOTICE OF EMERGENCY PLENARY MEETING (ONLINE) – 11.12.2025, 7-9pm

RE: Proposed Changes to Limerick City and County Council SPC Standing Orders.

Agenda:

To brief members on what has happened, gather information from across SPCs, agree the final wording of our response to the Council, and discuss the plan for escalation to the Mayor, CEO and DRCD.

I'm writing to update you on a serious issue that has arisen across the SPC structure and to outline the immediate steps we now need to take as a PPN.

On the 3rd of December an email was issued to Members of the Travel and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee setting out several new procedural restrictions, including:

- limiting members to one agenda item,
- prohibiting questions and motions from SPC members, and
- assigning the DOS and SPC Chair a gatekeeping role over what is allowed onto the agenda.

It is now clear that this is intended to apply across all SPCs. I have spoken with one of our representatives who received the email, and they have told me that councillors and PPN reps from other SPCs have also expressed strong concern and frustration about the changes. This confirms that the reaction is widespread across the SPC structures and not limited to one committee.

I have reviewed the June 2024 SPC Guidelines and the AILG/IPA induction training materials. None of the proposed restrictions are supported by national guidance, legislation, or the Limerick SPC Scheme. I have drafted a formal email to the Council outlining the concerns, seeking clarification, and requesting that the procedures be withdrawn pending proper consultation and the circulation of any adopted Standing Orders.

Email to LCCC on the 04.12.2025

Dear
Director of Service / Corporate Services
Limerick City and County Council

I am writing as Chair of Limerick PPN in relation to the email sent to SPC members on 3 December (screenshot attached) outlining a number of new procedures for SPC meetings. These proposed changes affect how agenda items may be submitted, whether questions or motions can be raised, and how items are filtered before appearing on an agenda. As these matters directly affect the ability of PPN representatives to participate in SPCs, I need to seek clarification before any such changes take effect.

Before discussing the individual issues raised, I want to note the framework we are all working within.

1. PPN-LCCC Memorandum of Understanding (2025)

The MOU agreed between Limerick PPN and the Council provides that PPN representatives may submit agenda items using the agreed template and that the Council will support full and meaningful participation by PPN reps on committees. The MOU also recognises that how a committee conducts its business has a major impact on the effectiveness of PPN representation.

2. Local Government Act 2001 – Section 48

Section 48 makes it clear that SPCs are intended to allow all members to contribute to policy at an early stage, assist in developing that policy, and review proposals from the executive. Any restrictions that prevent members from raising issues, asking questions, or putting forward suggestions would run against the purpose of SPCs as set out in the Act.

3. National SPC Guidelines (June 2024)

The updated national guidelines highlight the need for all SPC members to have a role in shaping agendas where possible. They also state that Standing Orders should be recommended by each SPC and formally adopted by the full Council, and that all SPC members should receive a copy of anything adopted. The guidelines do not contain limits on agenda submissions, nor prohibit questions or motions, nor assign the Director of Service or Chair a role in filtering submissions before they reach the committee.

4. Review of AILG/IPA SPC Induction Training

I have also reviewed the materials circulated as part of the 2024–2025 SPC Induction Training delivered by the AILG and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), including the SPC Induction slides, the responses to outstanding Q&A, and

the supplementary standing orders guidance. These documents do not support the restrictions outlined in the recent email. In fact, they emphasise that all SPC members should, as far as possible, be involved in drawing up the agenda; that PPN representatives are full members with the right to place items on the agenda; and that Standing Orders must guarantee equal participation and the right to speak. There is no reference in the training to bans on questions or motions, limits on agenda submissions, or agenda-filtering roles for the DOS or SPC Chair.

5. Standing Orders – Information Requested

The email references Standing Order 14. To understand the basis for the proposed changes, could the Council confirm the following:

- Have SPC members, including PPN representatives, received a copy of the current adopted SPC Standing Orders? If so, when were they circulated?
- Has Standing Order 14 been formally adopted by the full Council? If this is the case, could you provide the date of adoption and the relevant minute reference?
- Were the SPCs themselves consulted or asked to recommend Standing Orders, as required by the 2024 Guidelines?
- If Standing Order 14 has been updated at any point, could the amended text and date of amendment be provided?

In addition, I would appreciate clarification on the phrase “we have reviewed our Standing Orders” used in the email. It would be helpful to understand precisely who “we” refers to — whether the review was conducted by the SPCs themselves, the Corporate Policy Group, the full Council, or an internal administrative team. Given that the 2024 Guidelines require Standing Orders to be recommended by the SPCs and adopted by the Council, understanding who carried out this review is important for determining its standing.

With that context in place, I want to respond to the specific restrictions outlined.

Issue 1: Limiting members to one agenda item

There is no reference to such a limit in national or local policy documents. The 2024 Guidelines encourage broad participation in agenda-setting. The MOU also provides for PPN representatives to submit agenda items without setting numerical limits.

Issue 2: Prohibiting motions from SPC members

There is no provision in legislation, national guidelines, or the Limerick SPC Scheme that prevents SPC members from submitting motions. Motions are simply policy proposals, and SPCs exist to consider policy proposals at an early stage.

Issue 3: Prohibiting questions from SPC members

The ability to ask questions is essential for SPCs to monitor and review policy. Without

this, SPCs cannot realistically meet their statutory purpose. I can't find any legal or policy basis for such a prohibition.

Issue 4: Only one member item allowed for discussion per meeting

No such rule appears in national or local guidance. This restriction would significantly narrow the work of the committee.

Issue 5: DOS and Chair determining what is “policy-related”

Neither legislation nor national guidance gives the Director of Service or SPC Chair authority to filter agenda submissions. Their roles relate to supporting and chairing the committee, not controlling what members may put forward.

Issue 6: Standing Order 14

As Standing Orders have not been circulated to members, it is not possible to confirm whether Standing Order 14 relates to any of the above restrictions. Clarification and documentation are needed before it can be relied upon.

Issue 7: Claim that these changes arise from the June 2024 Guidelines

Having reviewed the June 2024 Guidelines carefully, I cannot find any instruction or recommendation that supports the restrictions described. The guidelines promote openness, participation, and early policy engagement.

Issue 8: Adoption of procedures

For any Standing Orders or procedural changes to apply, they must first be recommended by the SPCs and adopted by the full Council. There is no indication this process has taken place.

Given the seriousness of the issues raised and the impact they may have on all PPN representatives, the PPN Secretariat has called an emergency plenary meeting of all PPN SPC representatives so that everyone is fully informed and we can agree our next steps collectively. We will keep the Council updated following that discussion.

In view of the concerns outlined above, and in order to ensure compliance with Section 48 of the Local Government Act and the June 2024 SPC Guidelines, I am requesting that the proposed new procedures be withdrawn from implementation with immediate effect, pending:

1. circulation of the adopted SPC Standing Orders to all SPC members,
2. confirmation that these Standing Orders were formally adopted by the full Council following recommendation from each SPC, as required by national guidance, and
3. the establishment of a process whereby SPCs — including PPN representatives — can participate directly in the development, amendment, or review of any Standing Orders or procedural changes affecting the operation of the committees.

I would appreciate your response as soon as possible, as SPC representatives require clarity ahead of upcoming meetings.

Kind regards,

Response from LCCC Corporate 05.12.2025

Dear Mr Fitzgerald

I am writing in response to the PPN correspondence of the 4th and 5th of December.

I would like to bring to your attention the Standing Orders which are available online at <https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/your-council/strategic-policy-committees/overview-of-strategic-policy-committees>

Standing Order no. 14 refers to the submission of items for the agenda of SPCs of Limerick City and County Council which states that one item should be submitted.

Following on from the national training on SPCs it is intended that external facilitators will work with the individual SPCs in the new year to develop a proactive work plan for 2026.

I am happy to arrange to meet with you to discuss this further in advance of the Workshops.

At the **Emergency Plenary Meeting on the 12.12.2025** the matter was discussed, with updates given regarding communications with Corporate.

Regarding the Email sent to Members of the Travel and Transportation SPC on the 3rd of December. We have been advised that Corporate/ SPC Administration will not be implementing what was stated.

The extensive discussions with Corporate and SPC Administration over this week and have been given clarity on a number of matters received that resolved a number of matters.

It was noted that the quick and informed responses from Members that allowed the Secretariat and Administrator to have effective responses regarding to the Matter.

Mayor John Moran's support of the PPN Representation was noted.

- We have been advised that the initial email was sent prematurely, it was not intended to describe/ implement changes. It was a statement regarding their view of the letter of Standing orders. Their intention was to highlight the upcoming development of Workplans for SPC's – of which the PPN Representatives will have equal input. The Workplans were discussed.

The discussions with Corporate brought up some valuable information.

- Items/ Questions will and are accepted (where relevant to the activities/ policies linked to the SPC)
- Items for discussion are good route for our members when submitting.
- Workshops re: Developing SPC workplans is scheduled for early January.
- Stronger links with Corporate going forward. As well as with SPC Administration.

Stronger terms for the 2026 MOU were discussed, with the following language presented.

- **MOU proposed additions for 2026**

Proposed New Clause 1 — Full Membership

“PPN Representatives shall be treated as **full members** of any strategic policy, advisory, or decision-making committee to which they are nominated, in accordance with national guidance issued by DRCD.”

Proposed New Clause 2 — Rights to Participate

“PPN Representatives shall retain the right to **submit agenda items, questions, motions and proposals** to all committees in which the PPN holds representation.”

Proposed New Clause 3 — Standing Orders

“No changes to Standing Orders affecting PPN participation or representative rights shall be adopted **without prior consultation** with the PPN Secretariat.”

Email sent to Corporate Services following EGM- 12.12.2025

Dear Ciara,

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me earlier. I also appreciate your willingness to provide written responses to the formal questions agreed by the PPN plenary held on 11 December 2025. As discussed, we do not expect a response until after Christmas. I have cc'd Mayor John to keep him updated.

Below are the four questions the plenary is seeking formal clarification on:

- 1. Does the Council still stand over the email that was issued to SPC members on 3 December, or does the Council intend to revoke or withdraw that email?*
- 2. Who directed or authorised the issuing of that email, and at what level was the decision made?*
- 3. Is it correct that motions are not permitted on the Housing SPC, and if so, what is the basis for that restriction?*
- 4. Does the Council / Corporate Services commit to working directly with the PPN Secretariat and SPC representatives to improve the functioning, efficiency and collaborative approach of the SPC structures?*

We are grateful for your engagement on these issues and look forward to receiving the written responses when available.

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Patrick Fitzgerald
