

***PPNs influencing local  
authority Strategic Policy  
Committees***

Brian Harvey

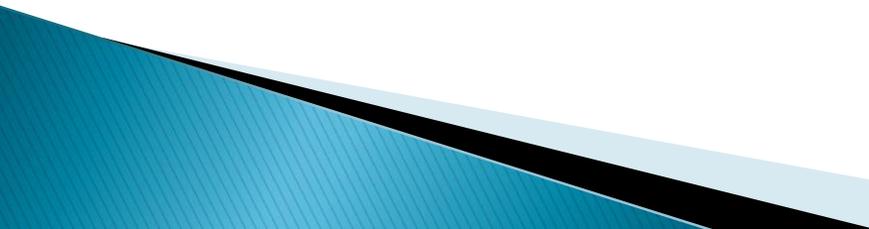
Kilkenny, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2023

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# Today

- ▶ How can PPN representatives more effectively influence their local authorities in general, their Strategic Policy Committee (SPCs) in particular?
  - What we say about PPNs also applies also to Traveller consultative bodies, Joint Policing Committees, LCDCs, homeless forums etc
- ▶ This is equally for new PPN representatives...and veterans

## **Notes, working method, ground rules etc**

- ▶ Networking is important today, so please sit beside/talk to people you do *not* know before
  - ▶ You will be asked to do tasks during session
  - ▶ Please turn off/make silent mobiles, computers etc
- 

# Format

- ▶ 1 Context [and first task]
- ▶ 2 What do we know about SPC experience?
  - [and second task]
- ▶ 3 What we can do about this
  - ▶ - Improve our information
  - ▶ - Extend our engagement
  - ▶ - Reform SPC meetings
- ▶ 4 Complaints
- ▶ 5 Summary
  - [and third task]

# 1 Our context...

- ▶ PPNs, SPCs part of process of local government reform 1990s to make more relevant, participative, efficient, during heroic period ‘civil society’, ‘social capital’, ‘social inclusion’ ideas, *Supporting voluntary activity* (2000)
- ▶ *Not* actively sought by local authorities, elected representatives themselves. They didn’t want them.
- ▶ Ireland *not* part of process of European democratization (1968): long term effect in public service recruitment
  - An unusually deferential view of authority, most acutely seen in austerity *We’re not the Irish, we’re the Greeks, we do not capitulate* (protestors chant, Athens, 2014, on Channel 4) (some exceptions e.g *Spectacle of defiance and hope*).

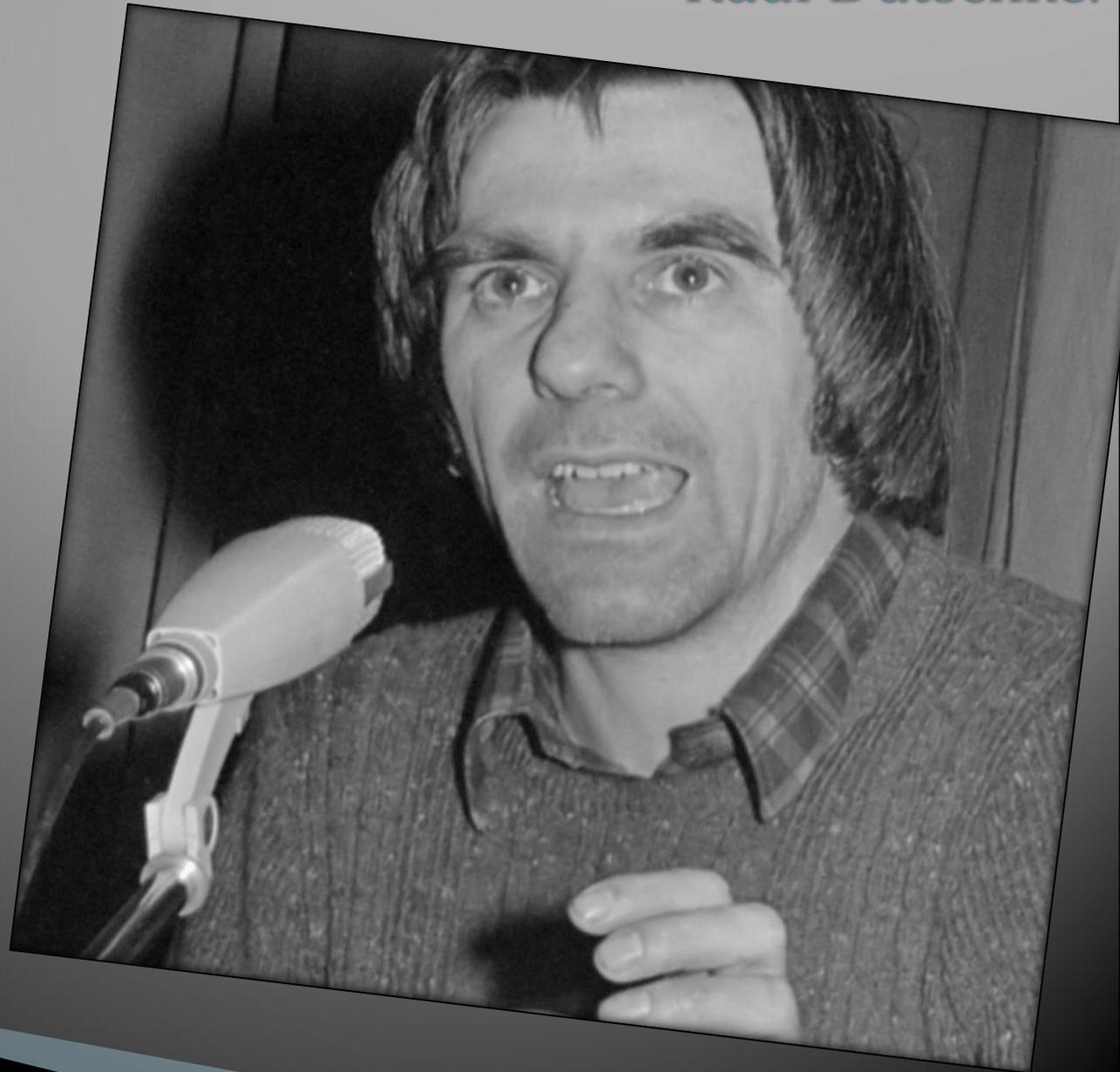
*'The long march through the institutions' (1967)*  
- Rudi Dutschke.

We need to claim  
high ground here,  
both on political  
principle and  
practice.

Remember:

*Once you change  
who decides the  
policy, you change  
the policy itself*

-Slovenian NGO  
Association



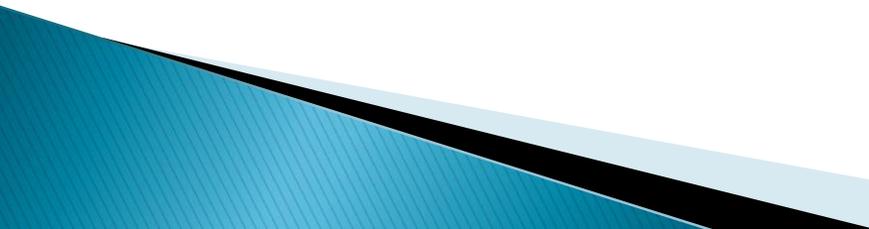
*'A strong civil society should play the primary role in a democracy' Iveta Radicova*

First, a reminder of why we are *(right)* there:

- It's our right, in a democracy;
- Participatory democracy an important *complement* not challenge to representative democracy.
- Local groups have right to be heard in decisions affecting them;
- Decisions in which a wide range of voices are heard will be better than those that are not; policies are better when a wide range of views, options, approaches considered;
- If we don't, worse decisions
- So we don't need to defend, apologize for our role.



# First task...

- ▶ What has been *your* experience of ‘long march through the institutions’:
    - Were you made welcome? Felt accepted?
    - Have you made progress?
      - Gains for those you represent?
- 

# 2 What do we know about SPCs?

## ADM study 2002 (1)

- ▶ Problems apparent from start, reflecting our isolation from European democratic mainstream?
  - ‘Not being treated seriously’, legitimacy questioned
  - Agenda determined in advance
  - Insufficient time for discussion, infrequent and short meetings
  - Timing convenience everyone except V&Cs
  - Slow, inadequate responses to representations
  - Councillors suspicious, ‘nursery’ fear (justified)
  - Little engagement outside meetings
  - Late circulation of agenda, heavy information
  - Questionable quality of administration
  - Insufficient communication with officials

# ADM study (2)

- ▶ Basic problem irony: limited opportunity for NGO intervention.
- ▶ Positive outcomes
  - Access to officials, councillors, other state agencies.
- Overall
  - Improved *access into* local authorities for voluntary and community organizations, but rules of engagement still highly controlled by local government. No change in *balance* of power
- Some examples of good practice (Cork)
  - Pre-meetings with Directors Community & Enterprise (ask for this?)
  - Provision of training, computer facilities (ask to be put 'on the system')
  - Put on civic list. V&Cs generally aren't, but important for informal meetings with councillors, officials, others. Ask! (Is anyone here on civic list?!). If not, why not? Find out who is.

# ADM study (3)

- ▶ NGO representatives did *not* challenge:
  - Standing orders
  - Lack of follow-up, recording issues
  - Irrelevant time-wasting presentations
  - Frequency and timing of meetings
  - Bad behaviour: late documentation, agendas arriving night before.
  - Decisions *between* meeting, decisions not even reaching meetings
  - Minutes: are they published? Where? When? Unapproved minutes?
  - Poor minuting of decisions
  - No instance of bad behaviour ever censured
- ▶ Few records of complaints mechanisms utilized
- ▶ Why not?
  - Deferential? Lack knowledge of rules and procedures? Fear?

# ADM (4) What we learned...

- ▶ Contrast between experienced professional managers and voluntary and community participants
- ▶ Different culture of meetings, doing business
- ▶ Language, initials/acronyms we don't know
- ▶ Most participants older *men* ('the suits'), familiar, confident using authority, procedure and negotiation, do not welcome disturbance to well-established ways of doing things.
- ▶ Imbalance of age, gender, experience, power, mono-ethnicity
- ▶ We are challenged to be smarter, more effective in doing so, called 'asymmetric engagement' (Joe Larragy). 'God is on not on the side of the big battalions, but the sharpest shots' (Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire)
- ▶ A start is for us to develop our own new vocabulary, like 'the long march through the institutions' and over...

# Problem of state-centrism (new word!)

- ▶ *Right: a Joint Policing Committee.*
- ▶ Visually evident here:  
important people sit  
higher up: round table?
- ▶ 4½ inch rule
- ▶ Who decides agenda?
- ▶ Standing orders?
- ▶ Other procedures?



# Post-ADM: problems *now*

- ▶ Not permitted to report back on meetings until minutes are ‘approved’ at next meeting three months later
- ▶ ‘In attendance’ at meetings, no right to speak
  - Justified by Standing Orders, which are ‘not for public circulation’
- ▶ Getting items on agenda
  - But they can disappear in council secretariat
  - ‘Bring it up under Any Other Business (AOB) – too late
  - Pre-scheduled presentations which waste time
- ▶ Lack of sense of ‘parity of esteem’
  - Experience of patronising attitudes
  - No access to computer system/network

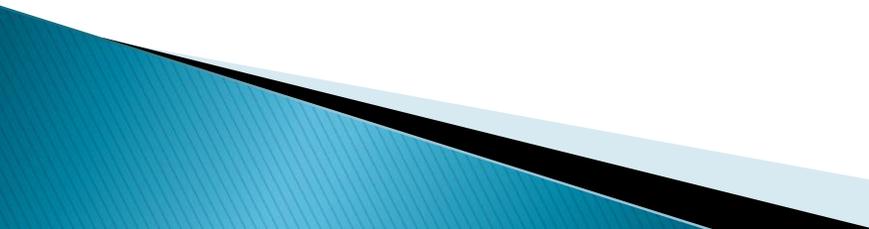
# Two examples recent problems

- ▶ Following campaign by V&C rep, SPC agreed to changing facilities in town.
- ▶ Nothing happened since.
- ▶ Told 'you got your commitment', it's over.
- ▶ What to do next?

Five months to get reply on response to homelessness, then proforma and inadequate answer

What to do next?

# Covid, zooming complications

- ▶ Virus changed things
    - Some LAs improved on-line communications, response to e-mails and phone, but not all did
    - Some responsive to requests for 1-to-1 zoom meetings
    - But others went into hiding...
    - Always more difficult when you don't/can't meet people in person
    - Zooming mean opportunities to meet officials around real meetings/conferences gone
    - As did informal meetings to engage with people 'in the corridors', adjacent offices
    - Need to reach a view on in-person, Zoom or hybrid.
- 

# Mazars review (DRCD, 2022) of PPNs critical of on-line

- Recorded higher attendance rates at online events than in person events.
- Brought out the best in PPNs supporting vulnerable members of their local communities.

Some of the challenges faced over the past two years as a result of the pandemic included:

- Transitioning to virtual working for all or most of PPN business. While this has led to increased participation for some stakeholders, it has resulted in barriers to participation for others where access to technology is difficult or not possible (due to lack of availability of technology or lack of skills to use the technology).
- Limited networking opportunities.
- Cancellation or postponement of planned meetings and events.
- Maintaining relationships with key stakeholders in a virtual environment where face-to-face meetings and networking opportunities were not possible.
- Maintaining visibility of the PPN within local communities in a virtual environment.
- Impacted the development of relationships without face-to-face meetings.
- Exacerbated difficulties in relation to connectivity in rural or larger geographical areas – 33% indicating poor internet connection meant some members could not be involved.
- Communication challenges where regular face to face meetings were not possible and alternative ways of keeping in contact with members were developed at short notice.

# Another problem area: linkage groups

- ▶ There are official statements on purpose e.g. handbook
  - On a 'on request' basis
  - Worth pursuing, facilitating 'long march' through additional institutions, esp where specific issues can be pursued
- ▶ Have not seen a dedicated evaluation
  - But operate in less than half local authorities (43%)
  - Confidence level in them low, less than half (42%)

# So: why is it so difficult?

## ▶ ‘Stockholm syndrome’

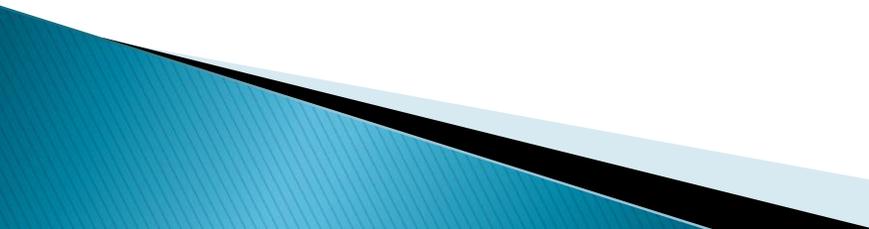
- ‘Wanting to be loved’, respected. Not wanting to upset ‘them’
- How many times do we hear ‘We have a great relationship with...’ from groups that are clearly totally frustrated?
- At what point does ‘good relationships’ become collusion with poor, bad, avoided, delayed decisions or being excluded from decisions?
- *We are not there to be nice, but get concrete gains for our constituency*

## ▶ Our deferential political culture

- We rarely *challenge* decisions, procedures, behaviour e.g.€700
- Low use of Freedom of Information, formal complaints systems, Ombudsman-type services, WRC, media
- We rarely consider root issues, e.g. role of manager/CEO, staff recruitment and qualifications (SDCC), training, attitudes
- And then document, publicize them. Do we write, talk about them? Get them into public domain? Newspapers? Journals? (over)

## ▶ Biggest challenge: *our own minds, attitudes*

## Second task...

- ▶ What has been *our* experience of SPC [LCDC, JPC etc] meetings?
  - ▶ Would you take away from/add to list of problems
  - ▶ If you tried to change things, what happened?
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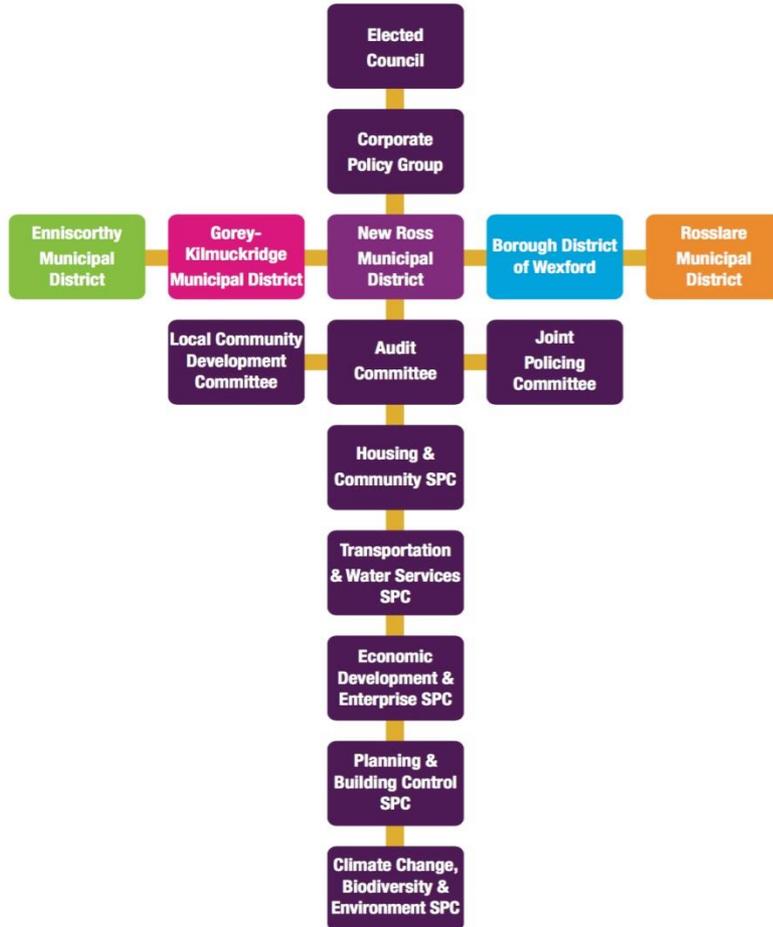
### 3 What we can we do about this

- ▶ Improve our information
  - ▶ Extend our engagement
  - ▶ Reform SPC meetings
  - ▶ Complain
- 

# Know our local authority (1)...

- ▶ Website
- ▶ [www.xyzcoco.ie](http://www.xyzcoco.ie)
- ▶ Email:  
firstname.lastname@  
xyzcoco.ie
- ▶ Institute of Public Administration *Yearbook*. This is a heavy hardback book, cost €98, order now for 2024 edition (Dec). Lists every organization in country and people therein. Expensive *and* worth it, will save wasted hours chasing wrong people. In all public libraries too.

# Organigrams?



Local Authorities
<p><b>Council Members (34)</b></p> <p><b>Cathaoirleach:</b> Ger Carthy</p> <p><b>Leas-Cathaoirleach:</b> Garry Laffan</p> <p><b>Wexford Borough Municipal District:</b> Leonard Kelly (NP) (Mayor), Tom Forde (SF) (Deputy Mayor), Maura Bell (Lab), John Hegarty (FG), David Hynes (NP), Garry Laffan (FF), George Lawlor (Lab)</p> <p><b>Enniscorthy Municipal District:</b> Kathleen Codd Nolan (FG) (Cathaoirleach), Barbara-Anne Murphy (FF) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Aidan Browne (FF), Cathal Byrne (FG), John O'Rourke (NP), Jackser Owens (NP)</p> <p><b>Gorey-Kilmuckridge Municipal District:</b> Joe Sullivan (FF) (Cathaoirleach), Oliver Walsh (FG) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Andrew Bolger (FF), Pip Breen (FF), Diarmuid Devereux (FG), Anthony Donohoe (FG), Mary Farrell (NP), Willie Kavanagh (FF), Donal Kenny (FF), Fionntan O'Suilleabhain (SF)</p> <p><b>New Ross Municipal District:</b> Michael Whelan (FF) (Cathaoirleach), Bridin Murphy (FG) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Pat Barden (NP), Anthony Connick (NP), John Fleming (FF), Michael Sheehan (FF)</p> <p><b>Rosslare Municipal District:</b> Frank Staples (FG) (Cathaoirleach), Lisa McDonald (FF) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Ger Carthy (NP), Jim Codd (A), Jim Moore (FG)</p> <p><b>Council Staff</b></p> <p><b>Chief Executive:</b> Tom Enright</p> <p><b>Directors of Services:</b></p> <p><b>Capital Development, HR and Corporate Services:</b> Amanda Byrne (Acting)</p> <p><b>Housing, Community, Libraries, Arts, Emergency Services and Environment:</b> Carolyne Godkin (Acting)</p> <p><b>Economic Development and Planning:</b> Tony Larkin</p> <p><b>Infrastructure (Roads and Water Services):</b> Eamonn Hore</p> <p><b>Head of Finance and ICT:</b> Annette O'Neill</p> <p><b>County Librarian:</b> Eileen Morrissey</p> <p><b>Senior Executive Officers:</b></p> <p><b>HR:</b> Patricia Foley (Acting)</p> <p><b>Community:</b> Paul L'Ettrange (Acting)</p> <p><b>Housing:</b> Niall McCabe (Acting)</p> <p><b>Planning:</b> Tom Banville</p> <p><b>Community Development/LED:</b> Elizabeth Hore</p> <p><b>County Secretary:</b> David Minogue</p> <p><b>Financial Accountant:</b> Lynda Lacey</p> <p><b>Management Accountant:</b> Seamus Begley</p> <p><b>Administrative Officers:</b></p> <p><b>HR:</b> Susan Doran (Acting)</p> <p><b>Finance:</b> Caroline Kennedy (Services Charges), Dympra Shanahan (Internal Audit)</p> <p><b>Environment:</b> Hugh Maguire</p> <p><b>Housing:</b> Michele Bridges Carley, Martina Donoghue</p> <p><b>Wexford Borough District:</b> Angela Laffan</p> <p><b>Enniscorthy Municipal District:</b> Ger Mackey</p> <p><b>Gorey-Kilmuckridge Municipal District:</b> Michael Drea</p> <p><b>New Ross Municipal District:</b> Michael McCormack</p> <p><b>Rosslare Municipal District:</b> Noirin Cummins</p> <p><b>Community:</b> Claude Clancy</p> <p><b>IS:</b> Fintan Kirwan (IS Project Leader), Rita Noonan (IS Project Leader), Pat Sweeney (IS Project Leader)</p> <p><b>Senior Enterprise Development Officer:</b> Breege Cosgrave</p> <p><b>LSP Coordinator:</b> Fran Ronan</p> <p><b>Economic Development:</b> Martina Furlong</p> <p><b>Property Management:</b> Anthony Bailey</p> <p><b>Roads:</b> Tony Nolan</p> <p><b>Water:</b> Dympra O'Connor</p> <p><b>Arts Officer:</b> Liz Burns</p> <p><b>Freedom of Information:</b> Anita McLoughlin</p> <p><b>Senior Staff Officers:</b> Billy Byrne, Cliona Connolly, Caroline Creane, J. J. Doherty, Jacqueline Eyd, Helen Mayne, Sean Kavanagh, Alice Kelly, Brian Kennedy, Philip Knight, Adrienne Larkin, Angela Lawless, Aine Linehan, Siobhan Lynn, Peadar McDonald, Helen Meehan, Kathleen Morris, Siobhan O'Neill, Ciara O'Reilly (Acting), Rosamunde Redmond, Liz Stanley, Michael Sweeney, Marie Thorpe</p>
<p><b>Senior Engineers:</b></p> <p><b>Environment:</b> Gerry Forde</p> <p><b>Roads:</b> Noel O'Driscoll</p> <p><b>Water Services:</b> Nicholas Rossiter (Acting)</p> <p><b>Special Projects:</b> Sinead Casey, Brian Galvin</p> <p><b>Senior Planner:</b> Diarmuid Houston (Planning and Development)</p> <p><b>Senior Executive Engineers:</b></p> <p><b>Roads:</b> Abraham Dunne (Acting), Tim Murphy</p> <p><b>Special Projects:</b> Joanne Kehoe, Sean Meyler</p> <p><b>Environment:</b> Rory O'Mahoney</p> <p><b>Planning:</b> Craig Innes</p> <p><b>Water Services:</b> Fionnuala Callery, James Whelan (Acting)</p> <p><b>Wexford Borough Municipal District:</b> Sean Kavanagh</p> <p><b>Enniscorthy Municipal District:</b> Tadhg O'Corcora</p> <p><b>New Ross Municipal District:</b> Dan McCartan</p> <p><b>Gorey Municipal District:</b> Neville Shaw</p> <p><b>Senior Executive Planners:</b> Deirdre Kearns, James Lavin</p> <p><b>Senior Executive Scientist:</b> Brendan Cooney</p> <p><b>Civil Defence Officer:</b> Peter O'Connor</p> <p><b>County Coroner - North:</b> Dr Sean Nixon</p> <p><b>Chief Fire Officer:</b> Ray Murphy (Acting)</p> <p><b>Senior Assistant Chief Fire Officer:</b> Colm McGrath (Acting)</p> <p><b>Archivist:</b> Grainne Doran</p> <p><b>Health and Safety Officer:</b> Amanda Richards</p> <p><b>Access Officer:</b> Caroline Horan</p> <p><b>IS Analysts/Developers:</b> Liam Buckley, Jane Duignan, Joan O'Connor, Siobhan Redmond</p> <p><b>IS Project Leader:</b> Frank Burke</p> <p><b>GIS Officer:</b> Mark Mitchell (Acting)</p> <p><b>Irish Officer:</b> Siobhan O'Treasaigh (G)</p>
<p><b>Wicklow County Council</b></p> <p><b>Comhairle Chontae Chill Mhantáin</b></p> <p>County Buildings, Wicklow A67 FW96 Tel: (0404) 20100, Fax: (0404) 67792 Website: www.wicklow.ie Twitter: @wicklowccoco</p> <p>General annual rate on valuation: 0.217 Council meetings: first Monday of each month (excluding August), provision is made for a special meeting bimonthly</p> <p><b>Council Members (32)</b></p> <p><b>Cathaoirleach:</b> Pat Kennedy</p> <p><b>Leas-Cathaoirleach:</b> Shay Cullen</p> <p><b>Arklow Municipal District:</b> Sylvester Bourke (FG) (Cathaoirleach), Miriam Murphy (Ind) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Tommy Annesley (FF), Pat Fitzgerald (Pat Kennedy (FF), Peir Leonard (Ind)</p> <p><b>Baitinglass Municipal District:</b> Patsy Glennon (FF) (Cathaoirleach), Avril Cronin (FG) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Vincent Blake (FG), John Mullen (FF), Gerry O'Neill (S Edward Timmins (FG)</p> <p><b>Bray Municipal District:</b> Anne Ferris (Lab) (Cathaoirleach), Aoife Flynn-Kennedy (FG) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Joe Bel (Ind), Melanie Corrigan (FG), Erika Doyle (Green), Grac McManus (SF), Dermot O'Brien (SF), Rory O'Connor (In</p> <p><b>Greystones Municipal District:</b> Derek Mitchell (FG) (Cathaoirleach), Lourda Scott (Green) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Mags Green (Ind), Tom Fortune (Ind), Jodie Neary (SD), Gerry Walsh (FF)</p> <p><b>Wicklow Municipal District:</b> John Snell (SF) (Cathaoirleach), Gail Dunne (FF) (Leas-Cathaoirleach), Shay Cullen (FG), Mary Kavanagh (Ind), Paul O'Brien (Lab), Irene Winters (FG)</p> <p><b>Strategic Policy Committees Cathaoirleach:</b></p> <p><b>Economic Development and Enterprise Support:</b> Fortune, Gerry Walsh</p> <p><b>Community, Cultural and Social Development:</b> Vli Blake, Gail Dunne</p> <p><b>Housing and Corporate Estate:</b> John Snell</p>

One County Council

IPA list, with the names

# Knowing our local authority (2)

- ▶ Involves following what county council does, publishes
    - People must take responsibility for this, sharing it
    - How often do we check county council website?
  - ▶ Make organigram/picture of key people ('crime wall')
    - Make, maintain mailing list of them. Really important task.
  - ▶ Essential to know council approach, point of view, perspective
  - ▶ Go to a county council meeting, press is best. Educational.
  - ▶ Useful for information, news, people, issues, attitudes, who are the 'big beasts', finding possible champions'
  - ▶ What's *not* there?!
    - Not everything is on website, some on p599
    - All public authorities must have up-to-date list of all documentation (FOIA, s8). Few do. Complain to Information Commissioner?
    - Some can be extremely out of date – but does anyone ever complain? Is there ever any feedback on site? To whom? Find out!
- ▶ *Two examples (over)...*

# Example 1: Information problems...

## Contact Community Development

### Contact Details

[community@wexfordcoco.ie](mailto:community@wexfordcoco.ie)

Wexford County Council,  
Community Development,  
Carricklawn,  
Wexford Town,  
Y35 WY93.

Telephone (053) 919 6550, 919 6559

How can we improve this page?

Contact Us

- ▶ First problem: lack of organigram of personnel and not stated on contact@ addresses
- ▶ IPA *Yearbook* does have this information
- ▶ Boland rule is that civil and public servants *must* identify themselves

# Example 2: Public Participation Network (PPN)

Wexford Public Participation Network (PPN)

[Home](#) [Informing](#) [Developing](#) [Representing](#) [Membership](#) [Contact Us](#)

## Contact Us

Name: \*

Email Address: \*

Subject: \*

Message: \*

Wexford PPN, Wexford County Hall, Carricklawn, Wexford, Y35 WY93

Direct Phone : 053-9196553

Email: [ppn@wexfordppn.ie](mailto:ppn@wexfordppn.ie)

▶ [www.wexfordppn.ie](http://www.wexfordppn.ie)

▶ Second problem: no readily available details of secretariat, reports, representations, so you need to ask

▶ Task: find out  
▶ BTW Screen shoot your 'Submit' (likewise with complaints, later)

▶ Autoreply?

# Knowing our local authority (3)

- ▶ Get key documentation
  - Electronic and paper
- ▶ Set up a system to:
  - Bookmark it, stay up to date (e.g. check it every week)
  - Share it with colleagues. Discipline and organization!
- ▶ Use it as a point of influence
  - Identify locations and people of influence
  - Use texts as instrument of accountability
  - Challenge texts which are insufficient, to get improved texts in future e.g. LECF
- ▶ Always be aware of what's *not* there
- ▶ You may also want them to improve information provision and dissemination . A good local authority will engage. Over.../

# Joint Policing Committee

## Joint Policing Committee (JPC).

The Joint Policing Committee (JPC) provide a dedicated forum to support consultation and cooperation on policing and crime issues between An Garda Síochána, elected representatives, local authority officials and the community and voluntary sectors.

### **Bye-Laws**

Bye-laws of Wexford County Council for the regulation and control of the consumption of intoxicating liquor within the jurisdiction of Wexford County Council.

View the Bye-Laws [here](#).

- Last minutes posted December 2019
- ▶ Last annual report posted 2016
- ▶ This is rarely challenged

# Knowing our local authority (4): getting documentation e.g. plans, minutes, consultations

- ▶ Local authorities typically have:
  - Annual reports, Budgets, CEO report
  - Economic & Community Investment Programme
  - County council incl. SPC minutes
  - County Development Plan (and local plans)
  - Service Delivery Plans
- ▶ In one local authority, the most up-to-date, comprehensive source is CEO monthly report
- ▶ You need to get these, read them, share them, find time for 'homework'

# Extend our engagement

- ▶ Ask to meet personally, one-to-one, councillors, officials
  - Irish political, administrative system strongly dependent on personal relationships, networking. *Again, go on civic list.*
- ▶ Write, phone, doorstep people, go to clinics.
- ▶ Who we are, what we do, what we need.
  - Conveying sense of professionalism, purposefulness, potential for cooperation
  - Always be courteous. Thank those who help (most people don't: you will surprise - and they will work even harder)
- ▶ Find out their work, pressures, what they can do for you. Listen to their perspective.
- ▶ Leave on page behind (over)

# One page

## 'One page man' says method is effective

THE TAOISEACH told the tribunal that he made no bones about running the Department of Industry and Commerce, when he was Minister, on the basis of a "single sheet".

Responding to Mr Adrian Hardiman SC, for the PD leader, Mr O'Malley, who suggested that the Taoiseach may

not have read a document relating to Export Credit Insurance because of its length, Mr Reynolds told counsel that he did not have to be sarcastic.

"I don't make any bones about it that I operated the Department on the basis of no long files, no long reports; put it on a single sheet. If I need more information I know where to get it." Mr Hardiman suggested that it was possible the job of Minister for Industry and Commerce was not one for a one-page man.

The Taoiseach replied that, as he carried it out, it would bear audit by anybody. He had been around a long time in business, and the one-sheet approach had got him though

# Get key documents



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

## Public Participation Networks Handbook



Dept. Rural, Community  
Development



Department of Rural & Community  
Development

## Structural Review of the Public Participation Network – Report

*Final Report issued March 2022*

**mazars**

Mazars review

# They are important because...

P3 enables PPN to have voice heard, key player in open, inclusive policy-making, 'full involvement' in SPCs

P84 Provision for dispute resolution and mediation (ever used?)

P86 National advisory group (ever contacted?)

P162 Reporting template

P187 Sample MOU PPN/county council (?)

Not enough time for discussion  
Being 'talked over' by councillors

Need councils to provide 'timely' information

P26 Barriers in on-line working

P26 Poor technical support

P30 Lack of council understanding

P31 Lack council transparency

P32 Need for councils to engage respectfully

PPN handbook

Mazars review

# This is what hand book says about rights of PPN reps at meetings

## *Rights of the Representative*

Given the commitment asked of the Representative, they of course should be entitled to expect certain rights. These rights are to:

- Have active engagement from the Linkage / Thematic Group, including timely responses to issues raised.
- Be heard and respected as a full and equal member at both the Linkage / Thematic Group and the Board or Committee, with an appreciation that they are a volunteer.
- Be supported by both Linkage / Thematic Group and Board or Committee members who respect the PPN and its contribution.
- In accordance with best practice, have access to an Agreed Outcome Statement or minute from meetings which can be circulated as soon as possible afterwards.
- Receive relevant training to allow them to feel confident to participate on the Board or Committee.
- Receive expenses from the Local Authority for attending Board or Committee meetings including any subgroups and relevant training provided by the Local Authority.
- In accordance with best practice have the Local Authority try to hold at least some meetings at a time and location which facilitates them.
- Receive an induction pack for the Board or Committee (and provided by the Board or Committee) on taking up appointment to include
  - Terms of reference
  - Standing orders /procedures
  - Meeting schedules, locations and times, agenda and documents to be read in advance (at least two weeks in advance, and more if possible) including
    - Contact details for all Board or Committee members (subject to GDPR)
    - Access to technical support where required
- Have meetings conducted in a way that facilitates participation, open discussion and transparent decision making.

# Example of potential allies...

- ▶ County Council meeting September 2021
- ▶ Councillors Hynes, Forde concerned, complained
- ▶ But no reference to voluntary and community (V&C) relationships

Wexford minutes Sep 2021 (page 8 of 10)

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brought before the Council for further consideration,

**12.4 Cllrs. D. Hynes, T. Forde,**

***"In the interest of local democracy, this Council calls for an urgent review of local authorities protocol regarding executive making decisions that disregard elected members, for instance in the area of GDPR where this council's heavy-handed approach is leading to serious concerns on the part of members. In view of the fact that it would seem that executive functions are superseding reserve functions, we move that the Chief Executive take immediate action to ensure fair play, and to avoid a breakdown in the relationship between the Executive and the Elected Members. In the interest of those who are elected to represent the people of Wexford"***

The Motion was proposed by Cllr. Hynes and seconded by Cllr. Forde,.

Many members contributed to the ensuing debate. Concerns identified included delayed response to telephone calls, lack of information flow between staff and the Members, and in some cases perceived poor quality of responses provided to the Members queries.

The Deputy Chief Executive and County Secretary expressed their disappointment to learn of the Members concerns and undertook to address the issues raised.

It was also agreed to convene a meeting of the Members Portal Working Group to consider the concerns identified in relation to the Portal and to report to the Council with proposals to resolve those concerns.

# PPNs and local elections 2024

- ▶ Be alert to candidates emerging
- ▶ Make early opportunity to meet, present case, build your allies ahead of everyone else
- ▶ They will remember
- ▶ Make arrangements to keep in contact
- ▶ ‘Book knowledge’ is important, but ‘personability’ even more



Laois Today

## Slowly and surely the 2024 Local Elections are coming into focus

By Steven Miller - 11th February 2023



Is it too soon? Too early to be looking ahead to the 2024 Local Elections? Last week when it was confirmed that [Marie Tuohy](#) is set to be co-opted to Laois County Council to fill the seat vacated on health grounds by her husband Noel, it was hard not to look ahead and wonder what the landscape will be like when the Local Elections take place in May 2024. In politics, there's always one eye on the next election. And unlike with a General Election, at local level there is always a degree of certainty. We know for sure when the next one will be on. Later this year the process will pick up pace. The parties will start 1,227 words conventions: names will be mentioned, confirmed, withdrawn. It will all

# Before reforming SPC [and other] meetings, why go at all?

- ▶ *Why* do you want to be there?
  - Change policy/practice/funding/priorities?
  - Change *behaviour*: stopping, starting, changing
  - Influence decisions
  - Access officials?
  - Improve accountability e.g. get reports published
  - An example: camera surveillance Traveller sites
- ▶ Where do you want to be in 1/3/5 years?
  - What would you like it to achieve by then?
- ▶ What specific impact can *I* make?
  - One specific, selected area to make a distinct impact
  - Who might support it – potential allies?

# Reform SPC meetings

## (1) Effective participation

- ▶ Knowledge procedure, functions, rules
- ▶ Mastery of own issues
- ▶ Read documentation (critically)
- ▶ Get there early; greet, introduce self to others
  - Act confidently, even if/particularly if you don't feel it
- ▶ *Don't* sit in group! 'diamond' the meeting (Nixon)
  - This is why shape of room and table matter
- ▶ Time
  - *After* process important too, checking things agreed are actually done.
  - Get to *all* meetings, on time and all of them. Formally complain if they are changed complain if you can't go.

# Reform SPC meetings

## (2) Make them effective

- ▶ Ask for *your* item on agenda – in advance
  - And early on
- ▶ Make sure you have chance to present
  - Colleagues to support
  - Specific things you want done
  - A decision to be reached
- ▶ Get agreement on who-does-what follow up
  - Noted and that progress is reported to you
- ▶ Make sure your contribution is properly minuted
  - If a presentation, that it is circulated
- ▶ Next, let's look at some actual meetings...

To Each Member of the SPC for Environment, Climate Action and Biodiversity

A Chara,

A meeting of the above Strategic Policy Committee (S.P.C.) will be held on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 2:30 p.m. and will be online via Zoom. You are requested to attend.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022. *(Attached)*
2. Matters arising.
3. Draft National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy - Statutory Consultation
4. Report on Research in Respect of the Re-municipalisation of Waste Services in Dublin City Council
5. Climate Action Plan Pre-consultation
6. Community Climate Action Fund Update
7. Date of Next Meeting - 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023
8. Correspondence
9. A.O.B.

- Multiple presentations by officials. These can take much time. Ask that they be circulated instead.

- What agenda items were tabled by PPN members?

- Occasional presentations by PPN interests e.g. Waterford bicycle users

- Correspondence? Under-used channel?

- Decisions? Outcomes?

- Views to be passed on?

- PPN views expressed?



To Each Member of the SPC for Transportation & Infrastructure

A Chara,

A meeting of the above Transportation & Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee (S.P.C.) will be held on **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 10.00 a.m.** and will be **online**– (*link in body of email*). You are requested to attend.

AGENDA

1. **Minutes of last meeting 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022 for approval.** *(Attached)*
2. **Matters arising/Updated.**
3. **Active Travel Update** *(M. Murphy, SE, Active Travel)*
4. **Review Dungarvan/Lismore Control of Parking Bye-laws.** *(Report Attached)* *(A. Jacob, AO)*
5. **Issues from PPN Members:**
  1. Proposed start date for the commencement of the bus park and ride system and the orbital routes as outlined in the WAMTP.
  2. Bus Connects consultation commencement date? Has a date been decided?
6. **Issues from SPC Members**

**Clr. Mary Roche: Motion from November Plenary Council Meeting – Deferred from December Meeting**  
*“That Waterford City and County Council will prepare a case for presentation to the Minister for Transport seeking the buyout or relocation of the toll on the Waterford City Bypass.” Reg. No. 233 – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022*

  - Access for Cheshire Homes residents.
  - Potential meeting with ESB re old pole removal.
  - Potential meeting with Bus Eireann regarding routes, reliability, and disability issues.
7. **Date of Next Meeting: 10.00 a.m. Friday May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023**
8. **A.O.B.**

Here, we  
have PPN  
issues (#5)  
Can be  
done.  
More?

Note, top: it  
*will be on-line*

Next: how to  
prepare...



## Public Participation Network Tipperary

- Environment Groups Network (Thematic)
- Quarterly Saturday morning meetings
- Council staff attend for Q&A and updates
- Always precedes SPC meeting by 2 or 3 weeks
- Member groups decide on what to feed into the next PPN Rep SPC agenda item
- Council staff can stay for networking
- PPN SPC reps (4) meet on Zoom meeting at least a week before the SPC meeting convenes to clarify PPN input
- Feedback at next quarterly meeting

Environment Groups  
Network  
(Thematic)

Quarterly  
Saturday  
morning  
meetings

Council staff  
attend for Q&A  
and updates

Always  
precedes  
SPC  
meeting by  
2 or 3 weeks

Member  
groups  
decide on  
what to  
feed into  
the next  
PPN Rep  
SPC agenda  
item.

Council  
staff can  
stay for  
networking.

PPN SPC reps  
meet on  
Zoom  
meeting at  
least a week  
before the  
SPC meeting  
convenes to  
clarify PPN  
input

Feedback at  
next quarterly  
meeting

# Recurrent issue: PPN reps reporting back

- All should have verbal/written/e-mail systems for reporting regularly to constituents
- Handbook template (right)
- You do not have to wait for formal approval and publication of minutes at next meeting three months later.
- You can issue your own account. Take control.

## Sample Representatives Reporting Template

{NAME} PPN Representatives Meeting Report Template

PPN Rep Name		Other Reps who fed into this Report (if applicable)
Committee Name		
Date of Meeting		

Agenda Item	Notes	Outcome/ Decisions Made	Actions Required - by Who & When

# Tipperary LCDC outcomes

But very brief  
Reflects V&C  
position?  
If not, ask it  
to be  
amended?  
Next:  
problems and  
solutions



Tipperary Local Community Development  
Committee,  
c/o Community & Economic Development Section,  
Tipperary County Council,  
Ballingarrane House,  
Cahir Road,  
Clonmel,  
Co. Tipperary.  
Tel: 0818 065000  
Email: [lcdc@tipperarycoco.ie](mailto:lcdc@tipperarycoco.ie)

24<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

Dear LCDC Member,

I set out below the Statement of Outcomes arising from the Tipperary LCDC meeting dated 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 for your attention:

<p><b><u>SICAP</u></b> Isabel gave a briefing on the bi-monthly report for STDC. In Michael Murrays absence Margo gave a briefing on the bi-monthly report for NTDC.</p>
<p><b><u>LEADER Programme</u></b>  <b><u>To note and approve LEADER project extensions</u></b> Members approved project extensions greater than six months duration and noted project extensions of less than six months  <b><u>Income and Expenditure Report</u></b> The March Income and Expenditure Report was noted and approved.</p>
<p><b><u>Quality of Life</u></b> Aine updated the Committee on the Healthy Ireland Fund Planning 2023-2025 Local Strategy and 2023 Action Plan. Stephanie updated on Healthy Communities Clonmel. Marie updated on the Ukrainian Health and Wellbeing Fund.</p>
<p><b><u>Community Recognition Fund Update</u></b> Marie gave an update on the Community Recognition Fund.</p>
<p><b><u>Community Support Fund</u></b> Marie gave an update on the Community Support Fund.</p>
<p><b><u>LCDC Annual Report 2022</u></b> Margo gave an update on the LCDC Annual Report 2022.</p>
<p><b><u>Correspondence, Submissions &amp; Consultations</u></b> Margo informed the meeting on Correspondence, submission and consultations.</p>
<p><b><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></b> Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April at 10.00 a.m. at Cabragh Wetlands Trust, Thurles.</p>
<p><i><b>Brian Beck</b></i> Tipperary LCDC - Chief Officer</p>

# Problems and solutions (1)

Shape of room,  
table

Get round table, free seating, cite examples elsewhere (WCC, DLR)

Non-availability  
minutes

Ask for unapproved minutes. Make and circulate your own.

In attendance, no  
right to speak

Wrong. Get standing order, handbook.

Items for agenda  
disappear

Don't approve agenda at start of meeting. Vote on it.

'Parity of esteem'

Name it. Press there? Meeting?

# Problems and solutions (2)

Unacceptable agenda

Propose running order be changed/amended. If no, call vote.

Minutes don't reflect decisions of last meeting

Propose amendments. If refused, call vote.

If chair always goes against you

Question impartiality, motion censure, ask for independent chair

'I'm only following standing orders'

Don't believe it! Get SOs. Handbook requires fairness.

Don't know people

Name markers!

# Problems and solutions(3)

'Have to delay item, council official not here'

No. (1) Ask why not? (2) Ask that meeting be *adjourned*, not *closed* till he is available and then resumed (in a week?).

Lengthy irrelevant presentations

Ask how was this agreed without consent?

Insist on circulation-only

Your views not in minutes

Ask they be formally recorded, don't approve minutes till so.

# Problems and solutions (4)

Blinded with statistics

No. Ask for details circulated on paper first. Why not provided earlier?

GDPR

No. Which section of GDPR?

Can't circulate minutes till approved

No, circulate unapproved minutes. Make, circulate, publish your own (it's not a criminal offence!).

Decisions made before meetings

Ask: why it could not wait?  
Why no off-line consultation first? Make formal objection, undermining SPC etc. Why no special meeting etc?

# (5) Problem of being ignored...

Representations made but not acknowledged or responded

Ask why not (discourtesy? inefficiency?). Ask for full explanation. Then bring through complaints machinery

Multi-month delay in responding to detailed representations, questions on housing, eventually an inadequate *pro forma* response

Challenge (1) delays (2) details point-by-point; ask for formal meetings; formal complaint. Most LAs have rules on delays. Document all.

# Councils and media

Do we identify brief, council correspondent on local newspaper, radio?

Do we follow local council in newspaper?

Do press attend SPC meetings? (why not?)

They will if there's a story.

Do we ask for features? (e.g right)

Slots on local radio?

Do V&C organizations attend councils/SPCs as accredited press? If you have a newsletter, you are press.

## Volunteers do battle with the welfare system

A Social  
Sort of Column

By Pdraig  
O'Morain

A 14-YEAR-OLD BOY knocked on Monica Cunningham's door. He was crying because he had been beaten up by two 18-year-olds. He was also being beaten up at home by his mother's boyfriend.

Ms Cunningham wasn't able to help the boy on that occasion. She didn't know what to do. But she made inquiries and persisted and a couple of weeks later got him a place in a boys' hostel in Dublin where he would no longer have to contend with the certainty of beatings at home and the danger of beatings outside it.

The point about Ms Cunningham is that she isn't a social worker and she isn't paid to help people. She is one of the eight unpaid volunteers who run Neilstown Welfare Rights in one of Dublin's newer "towns", running roughly from Ballyfermot to Clondalkin.

This small group provides as good an example as any of the remarkable amount of energy which some people put at the disposal of their communities for nothing. Twice, with the support of the voluntary Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC), they have brought social welfare cases to the High Court and won.

When the community welfare officers in Rowlagh Health Centre said this year that they were unable to cope with any new extra applications for the supplementary welfare allowance, Neilstown Welfare Rights sat in at the health centre for three days and four nights and an extra community welfare officer was appointed to the health centre.

When a widow came to them who was struggling to pay an undertaker £40 a month interest on a £2,000 funeral bill, they held a "do" and sold raffle tickets and raised £800 towards the bill.

"We have got so many thousands of pounds back from social welfare which people didn't know they were entitled to," according to volunteer, Sean Farrell. One man got £6,500 in back money from the Department with the organisation's help.

They have also kept several people out of jail for failure to obey court orders to repay loans or for being unable to pay fines imposed because they did not

have TV licences or for motoring offences. In an area with, according to volunteer Michael Dunne, a 75 per cent unemployment rate, this is far from being a rare occurrence and he talks of one woman who spent four days in Mountjoy because she could not afford a television licence.

What Neilstown Welfare Rights does in these cases is to petition the Minister for Justice to set aside the prison sentence which would otherwise be imposed for failure to pay the fine. The group is proud of its record of success in this area.

● Maria Flynn, Sean Farrell, Carmel Shanahan and Patricia Wilson, members of the Neilstown Welfare Rights Group. — (Photograph: Ray McManus)



The work done by these eight people is hard and sometimes stressful and, volunteer Phyllis Collins said, they make a point of trying to switch off instead of letting the problems get on them when they are going about their normal activities.

One ever-present problem is that of moneylending. There are "respectable" moneylenders who, according to the group, get around the legal restrictions on the annual interest charge by offering all loans for periods of a year and charging what they like. But when RTE asked

Neilstown Welfare Rights to find people to talk about the problem almost everybody turned them down.

"People are so dependent on moneylenders, especially around this time of year, that they are afraid in case the moneylender won't come near them again," volunteer Paddy Kelly said. "They are so dependent on the top-up loan."

And then there is the illegal moneylender "who is going to kick in the door and you are afraid to talk about it to anybody."

On children's allowance day, the group said, moneylenders drive women down to the post office in vans and give them their children's allowance books so that they can collect their money and give it direct to the moneylender.

With the legal moneylenders, Neilstown Welfare Rights can help by sending a notification to the lender seeking certain information to enable the borrower to work out a means of repayment. This takes the pressure off the borrower for a time at least.

The welfare rights group started

about six years ago with the help of the Catholic Social Service Conference, which is the social service agency of the Archdiocese of Dublin. The CSSC still helps with the expenses.

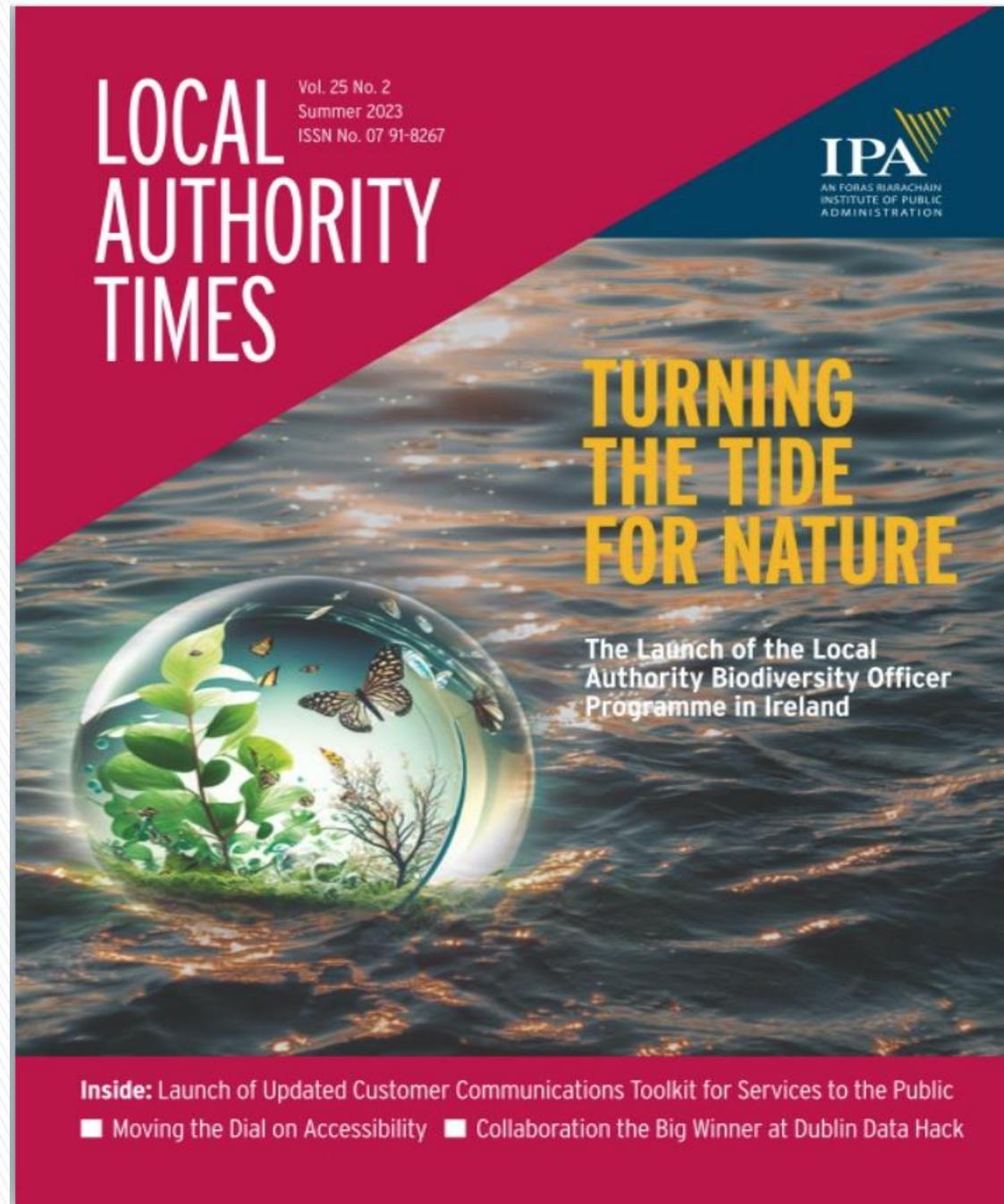
People ring Neilstown Welfare Rights with their problems, not only from all over Dublin but from all over Ireland. Their hours of opening, in a pre-fab opposite Neilstown Shopping Centre, are 2 pm to 4 pm on Mondays, 10 am to 1 pm on Wednesdays and 10 am to 1 pm on Fridays. They can be telephoned during these hours at 01-570849.

# Finally, do we tell story?

This goes out to all local authorities all round country. They read it.

Remember an editor's biggest headache: how to fill next issue? Articles welcomed.

Also, *Administration*, Journal of Institute of Public Administration.



# Case study (1) SPCs and homelessness

- ▶ Organizations working with homeless presented to full Dublin City council 1980s. Anyone can ask.
  - - Got good press; support from unlikely councillors
- ▶ 2016: two researchers invited to present report on homeless crisis to Fingal SPC November
- ▶ Their information, analysis, proposals welcomed by PPN reps, councillors, reinforced their position
- ▶ Local authority housing manager strenuously defended Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) as its *only* response to homelessness
- ▶ But PPN reps made no challenges, even though government had set down *multiple* responses
  - Local authority was not observing Housing Act, 1988
  - Problem: lack of knowledge base to challenge manager
  - PPN reps had no motions, proposals ready for meeting

# Case study (2): SPC and evictions

- ▶ Galway County Council adopted a new eviction policy, which increased risk of unjustified eviction of people with mental health issues (e.g. homeless people)
- ▶ Galway Simon Community assembled case for eviction policy to be human rights compliant, based on United Nations
  - i.e. fair notice, grounds presented, hearing, appeal, right to representation; if no, case conference social services
- ▶ Presented to SPC, with documentation
- ▶ Built coalition of support from other groups esp. Travellers
- ▶ Continuous briefing of councillors
  - Those hard to convince asked to at least not oppose proposals
- ▶ Took a long time...and worked. Clear proposal, textually supported, making it hard to say 'no'.

# Case study (3): Reluctant council

- ▶ Dundalk: long-standing problem of smog, especially affecting low-lying local authority estate.
- ▶ Government: can't designate it a smoke-free zone unless local authority agrees.
- ▶ Campaigners worked with doctors to document air pollution.
- ▶ Presented case at local authority. No! What problem? Air pollution monitors: we are 'within normal limits'.
- ▶ Campaigners found monitor: installed on top of church at top end of town. Council would not back down, have to admit it was wrong to install it there. Eventually persuaded to install second meter in local authority estate: shock readings. SFZ.
- ▶ Lessons. Get councillor(s) on side. Be clear what you want, know procedure. Document. Don't take no for answer, esp. technical answers. Ask obvious question: where is monitor? Nobody likes admitting being wrong. Bus ramps Cork similar case.

# Case study (4): Getting a meeting

- ▶ Group of scientists and astronomers spent a year writing polite letters asking for a meeting with officials to discuss light pollution which made astronomy impossible, but which could be abated by a series of practical measures which they outlined (e.g. downward facing lights replacing Rottweiler lights).
- ▶ Eventually asked written question:
  - Was he aware that this group of eminent scientists and astronomers had been trying to get a meeting for a year?
  - Was it normal and acceptable to treat responsible scientists in this way?
  - Would he now facilitate meeting between them and his officials?
- ▶ Meeting agreed within hours.

# Details, case studies in *Working for change*



**WORKING  
FOR  
CHANGE**

A guide to  
Influencing policy  
in Ireland

Brian Harvey



# 4 Complaints

- ▶ Disagreement over policy is not basis for complaint
  - But not following procedures, guidelines, failing to respond, denying information are
- ▶ First, there are specific systems for PPNs; local authorities but exhaust existing procedures, line-of-command first (*IPA Yearbook*); parties for councillors
- ▶ Administrative ‘maladministration’: Ombudsman
  - Slow, technical, but you will get their attention
- ▶ Documentation: Freedom of Information (FOI)
  - Slow, difficult process, hard to win, 3 stages (request – internal review – commissioner). You can publicize your complaint experiences (‘What are they hiding?’)

# Complaints...

- ▶ Before going on to complaints, has anyone here made a formal complaint...and what happened...?

**This is  
existing  
procedure for  
PPNs (see  
departmental  
handbook)  
Ever used?  
Ever went to  
DRCD?**

## **Dispute Resolution**

All disputes between the PPN and the Local Authority should be resolved locally in a manner which reflects the working relationship between the PPN and Local Authority and respects the independence of each.

Any dispute between the PPN and the Local Authority which cannot be resolved locally will be referred to mediation to be facilitated by an independent mediator. The mediator will be chosen by agreement between the Secretariat and the Local Authority. If no agreement can be reached in respect of a mediator, the Department of Rural and Community Development will appoint an independent mediator. This will also apply to the appointment of any replacement mediator where the original mediator is conflicted from acting or cannot act for any other reason. In the case of mediation, the Local Authority and PPN will each pay half of the mediation costs and associated expenses, i.e. the PPN will pay its share of mediation costs and expenses from within its own budget and the Local Authority will pay its share from within its own resources. The Local Authority cannot deduct this amount from its allocation to the PPN.

Where no agreement can be reached, the Department of Rural and Community Development will make a determination on the matter which will be binding on both the PPN and the Local Authority.

# Example of 'customer complaint' You can do both e.g. PONI

## My Online Services



[Home](#) [Privacy Statement](#) [Services](#)

### Make a Complaint

#### Your Details

First Name \*

Surname \*

Address (Please ensure you enter address if relevant to the specific complaint)

Eircode

- Not always top of the website ('customer charter'): you may have to search for it
- Staff seem unaware of procedures – not well known
- Difficult to get rulings
- Annual reports may publish some limited records of complaints
- Assumption: few complaints = maximum happiness.
- Not true. It can just mean that nobody knows how to use the system and it is unadvertised. A good authority will drive up complaints.

# One complaints procedure (Get it!)

## Wexford County Council.



### Customer Complaints Procedure. August, 2015.

#### **Introduction:**

The Ombudsman's Office expects that Public Bodies have well developed complaints handling procedures in place so that, where any faults are identified, a Public Body will move swiftly to make good its mistake and take the appropriate action to ensure that such mistakes do not recur.

Wexford County Council, as part of its commitment to customer service, shares this expectation and has established the following procedure to ensure that Customer Complaints are fully investigated to establish their validity and to process them effectively and consistently in order to reach a reasonable conclusion in the matter. It is also committed to carrying out remedial actions to avoid the reoccurrence of complaints.

#### **Complaints Flow Chart with Appendix:**

The procedure includes a Flow Chart and Appendix for ease of reference and guidance and are integral to this protocol.

#### **Complaints Types:**

Customer Complaints may relate to actions taken by staff or in respect of services adversely affecting a person. Customers may consider that such actions have been taken without proper authority, on irrelevant grounds or other reasons as set out in Section 4 of the Ombudsman's Act, 1980, or, where the person making the complaint believes the service or behaviour of staff is less than what that customer may expect.

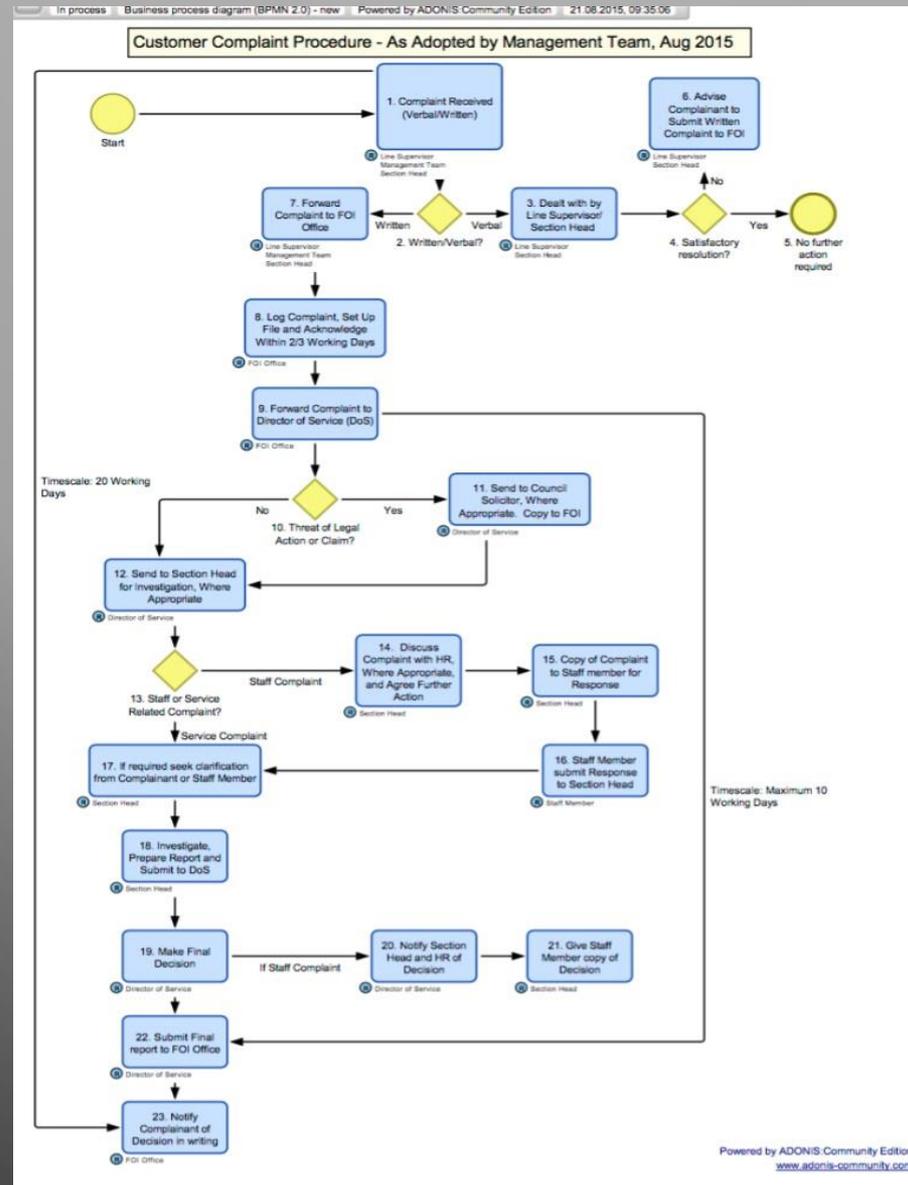
#### **Current Complaints Systems:**

This procedure is not a substitute for complaints and appeals procedures currently in place within the Council for cases such as charges, MARP etc. but should the Ombudsman's Office become involved in such cases that correspondence should be handled by the FOI Office.

#### **How Complaints are to be Handled:**

1. Verbal complaints made directly to Line Supervisors / Section Heads, whether about a staff member or service, should be handled at that level. If finalised to the satisfaction of all parties no further action is required.

If unresolved the complainant should be advised to submit a written complaint to the FOI Office setting



# One customer charter (get it too!)

## CUSTOMER CHARTER

Our Commitment to Our Customers:

*“To deliver an efficient, quality service to the people of County Wexford in an effective and caring manner”*

When dealing with customers, we will adhere to the following core values:

- Courtesy and consideration
- Equality, openness and impartiality
- Physical access to well-maintained facilities for all our customers
- Reasonable accommodations of language and disabilities
- Accountability
- Privacy and confidentiality (as permitted by law)
- Meaningful and open consultation and explanations
- Continuous monitoring and improvement of our services
- Staff trained to meet the needs of all of our customers
- Prompt responses to complaints, in line with our procedure

## CUSTOMER CODE OF CONDUCT

- Customers are expected to treat Council staff in a professional, courteous and civil manner during all dealings with them
- Customers are expected to provide full and accurate information, so that we can assess and meet your needs

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- Customers are expected to treat Council staff in a professional, courteous and civil manner during all dealings with them
- Customers are expected to provide full and accurate information, so that we can assess and meet your needs

The following behaviour is not acceptable from customers/members of the public:

- Disruptive behaviour
- Harassment of staff, customers/members of the public by use of abusive, racist, obscene or threatening language
- Use of violence or threat of violence towards staff, customers/members of the public
- Malicious damage to premises or theft of Wexford County Council's property
- The use of alcohol and illicit drugs whilst using Wexford County Council's facilities
- Smoking in public areas within Wexford County Council's facilities
- Personal property being left unattended whilst using Wexford County Council's facilities

We welcome feedback and suggestions about the service you receive. If you are dissatisfied with any service, please contact the Line Supervisor or Section Head of that service or email to:

[foioffice@wexfordcoco.ie](mailto:foioffice@wexfordcoco.ie)

Please observe this Customer Code of Conduct; where a breach of the Code takes place, the Council may take legal or other action or issue a barring order from our premises. CCTV may be used in some premises in order to ensure the protection of staff, customers/members of the public.

# Another avenue

## Contact a Councillor

District

Sort



### Barbara-Anne Murphy

**Party:** Fianna Fáil  
**Position:** Cathaoirleach, Wexford County Council  
**District:** Enniscorthy Municipal District  
**Phone:** 087 6736966 / 053 9377158  
**Email:** [bamurphy@wexfordmcc.ie](mailto:bamurphy@wexfordmcc.ie)  
**Address:** Ballinavocran, Bunclody, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford



### Anthony Connick

**Party:** Non Party  
**Position:** Leaschathaoirleach, Wexford County Council  
**District:** New Ross Municipal District  
**Phone:** 087 2338350  
**Email:** [anthony.connick@wexfordmcc.ie](mailto:anthony.connick@wexfordmcc.ie)  
**Address:** 3 Millbanks Grove, Rosbercon, New Ross, Co Wexford



### Pat Barden

**Party:** Non Party  
**Position:** Cathaoirleach, New Ross Municipal District  
**District:** New Ross Municipal District  
**Phone:** 086 2658175  
**Email:** [patrick.barden@wexfordmcc.ie](mailto:patrick.barden@wexfordmcc.ie)  
**Address:** Rathskillagh, Adamstown, Co Wexford



### Maura Bell

**Party:** Labour Party  
**District:** Borough District of Wexford  
**Phone:** 083 1563911  
**Email:** [maura.bell@wexfordmcc.ie](mailto:maura.bell@wexfordmcc.ie)  
**Address:** Rossmore, St John's Road, Wexford, Co Wexford



### Andrew Bolger

**Party:** Fianna Fáil  
**District:** Gorey-Kilmuckridge Municipal District  
**Phone:** 087 1713176

- Use county council system.
- Question chief executive
  - By letter
  - Formally at council meetings, 'send for a report' (over)
- Ask for opportunities for *you* to make presentations
- Motions for discussion, approval (over)
- Write letters for you
- Get you access to CEO, officials
- Advice and contacts
- Raise issues inside their parties
- Some will be interested to champion particular issues.

# Two examples councillor questions...

**Question to the Chief Executive**  
**Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**Council**

**Q.44 COUNCILLOR DAITHÍ DOOLAN**

**PLG** To ask the Chief Executive to confirm how much is owed to DCC in development levies and to outline in tabular form how much levies is owed to DCC for the years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and so far in 2023?

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPLY:**

Levies outstanding as at 18/04/23

2019	2,800,482
2020	5,986,522
2021	6,788,773
2022	24,595,756
2023	30,771,473

3 2 comments

Like

Comment

Share

Dublin has homeless crisis, but local authority has not collected €30m in development levies owed

was to look at mandatory wearing of face masks in care homes, people's lives issues but ... injury.

**Motion 4 from Councillor Pat Dunne, Tara Deacy, Carolyn Moore, Daithí Doolan, Daniel Ceitinn**

That this area committee is committed to the development of the Brickfield Park dressing rooms in line with the plans drafted by DCC and calls on Dublin City Council to prioritise it in the current Capital Programme of Work; we also call on Dublin City Council to consult with local residents through a Citizen Hub engagement and commence the Part 8 planning process as soon as possible.

Motion...

Motion on changing rooms...? Explanation lack of progress?

**Another councillor question, showing how councillors can get answers, technical details. Councils meet monthly, so this can speed things up. Have text ready for councillors to ask. Develop the skill!**

**DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL**  
**SOUTH CENTRAL AREA**  
**COMMITTEE**  
**19<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Q15 Councillor Daithí Doolan**

To ask the Director of Services for an update on progress made with maintenance issues in Davitt House, Drimnagh.

**Reply**

We have carried out 54 Conditional surveys of the 64 units.

We have begun looking at introducing Mechanical Ventilation in the units to date.

10 units have rejected the ventilation.

40 units have been complete.



# 5 Today: summary

- ▶ Effective SPC engagement depends on:
  - Working SPC *inside* + rest of county council *outside it*
  - *Asymmetric engagement*: being more effective than other side, sharper shots vs the big battalions (Voltaire)
  - Knowledge of county council, how works, procedures, people. Finding champions and allies among councillors, officials
  - ‘Book skills’: knowing, using key texts.
  - Meeting them: our person-to-person skills
  - Plan: what exactly we want changed. Our solutions, our ‘single page’ of who we are, what we want.
  - Changing *our* behaviour too: finding time for getting information, meeting officials, representatives.
  - Changing *our* mindset, attitude. Being prepared to complain, challenge.
  - *Our* agenda: long march through the institutions (Dutschke)

*Next, practical task...*

# Final task

- ▶ Work in groups, first appointing a note-taker or reporter for the key issues.
  - ▶ ***Plan a campaign what you would like to change in your SPC over next year and how you could do that.***
  - ▶ Reporter to share 5 key points with full meeting at end
  - ▶ Thank you.
- 