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Front-Runner Socio- Economic Committees – Operating Guidelines and Terms of Reference

July 2013

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1. Introduction

Local Government Reform

The Final Report of the Alignment Steering Group was approved by Government together with 'Putting People First' – Action Programme for Effective Local Government, on 16th October 2012. These set out a range of reforms aimed at improving the delivery of services for the citizen, achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness and enhancing the role of local government in local and community development.

Overall 'Putting People First' represents a significant change in government policy in relation to local government and seeks to place local government as

the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level – leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably.¹

The vision and focus underpinning the Government's decision is to achieve a more joined-up approach to service delivery at local level, with responsibility for what is being done – and being spent – in the area of local and community development devolved to local level. This will be underpinned by new local governance arrangements that will seek to enhance involvement by citizens and communities in the design, implementation and targeting of services. In this vein, the Alignment Steering Group considered that utilisation of a Community-led Local Development methodology across a broader range of local development programmes could be a means for improving citizen and community engagement with those programmes.

A carefully measured transition and retention of services will be important. The reforms represent a level of structural and procedural change. At a local level, the new arrangements will see change in the co-ordination, governance, planning and oversight of local and community development programming. This change will be pursued at national level through a renewed cross-government approach and the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Group, and will be supported by a programme of change management and capacity building for relevant stakeholders.

¹ Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government 2012

Socio-Economic Committees and Local Government Reform

A key element of the reform agenda, and a significant change at local level, is the establishment of Socio-Economic Committees (SECs) within each local authority area. SECs will be formed as public-private partnerships of socio-economic interests and will comprise representatives of local authorities and other State agencies, local and community interests, civil society and economic and social partners. Over time, it is proposed that SECs will be vested with responsibility for the co-ordination, governance, planning and oversight of all publicly funded local and community development interventions at local level. The aim is to bring greater co-ordination on an area-basis to publicly-funded programmes and to oversee administration efficiencies across the local development landscape, while drawing on the capacity of local government and the experience, perspective and expertise of local and community actors in the relevant local authority area in programme delivery.

Front-Runner Socio-Economic Committees – A Learning Phase

As a first step in the introduction of SECs, ‘front-runner’ SECs will be established in up to 10 local authority areas. The purpose of the ‘front-runners’ is to explore and trial approaches to SEC operation over a six-month period and to capture learning from the front-runners to inform the full roll-out of SECs across all local authority areas from late 2013.

These guidelines will inform the development and work of the front-runner SECs, with front-runners providing important learning for the full roll-out of SECs later in the year. The learning objectives from this phase of the ‘alignment process’ are detailed in Chapter 7 of the *Front-Runner Socio-Economic Committees – Operating Guidelines and Terms of Reference*. In this regard, a key focus of consideration for front-runner SECs will be the operating guidelines and front-runners will be required to comment and advise on the development of these guidelines as the front-runner phase progresses.

Front-Runner Socio-Economic Committees – Areas of Focus

As engagement across government progresses in late 2013, SECs will be tasked with a broad range of responsibilities, including programme related responsibilities for a broad range of local and community development programmes. The extent of these programme responsibilities will be clarified over time through the Inter-Departmental process and with the relevant parent government departments and agencies. However, SEC programme related activities will be limited during the front-runner phase, with the programme co-ordination, governance, planning and oversight responsibility expected to commence in early 2014 following the full roll-out of SECs and the enactment of the new Local Government Bill.

During the front-runner phase, SECs will focus on specific activities identified by DECLG and the Alignment Working Group. The primary areas of focus will be establishing/selecting membership of SECs; collaborative and co-ordinated working arrangements; mapping local development services; and commencing the development of the Local and Community Plan. Other areas of focus may be identified, with the agreement of DECLG and the Alignment Working Group as the front-runner process develops.

2. Background to Socio-Economic Committee

Introduction

In line with the Alignment Steering Group recommendations, SECs will be established in each local authority area. They will be public-private partnerships of socio-economic interests comprising representatives of local authorities, other local State agencies, local and community interests, civil society and economic and social partners.

Generally, SEC operations will be territorially aligned with city/county local authority boundaries; however, regard will be had to population and territorial coverage and it may be appropriate to establish more than one SEC in a local authority administrative area. Statutory provision for the establishment of SECs in all local authority areas will be made in primary legislation. Detailed arrangements, including the number of SECs in local authority administrative areas, will be provided for in secondary legislation i.e. Ministerial order.

SECs will have responsibility for the co-ordination, governance, planning and oversight of all publicly funded local and community development interventions at local level. They will be responsible for developing 5-year County/City Local and Community Plans and bringing together, on an area basis, the range of local and community development spending from a range of different programmes and structures – accordingly, it is intended, over time, for oversight responsibility for the management and contractual disbursement of local and community development funds to delivery bodies such as local development companies, and the matching of resources to locally identified priorities to be vested in the SEC.

Alignment Steering Group Recommendation

The Alignment Steering Group recommended that:

A Socio-Economic Committee (SEC) should be established by each county and city council. The SEC should have responsibility for planning and oversight of local and community development programmes and should be established on a statutory basis. It should be responsible for developing the County/City Local and Community Plan.

The SEC's statutory status will underpin its role and authority in local and community development planning and oversight. It should have a tightly defined membership with executive support led by the County Manager/Director of Community and Enterprise. It is the view of the Steering Group that, to be effective, the SEC should comprise no more than 15 members, representing the local authority, local and community interests and appropriate State agencies.

The Group also concludes that the SEC is a more appropriate mechanism to deliver on the County/City Local and Community Plan than the CDBs as currently structured and mandated. The level and method of engagement by State agencies with SECs and local development companies should be determined in due course by the IDG. This may include scope for the SEC to engage with statutory and non-statutory actors as the need arises. The other functions of the CDBs, outside of the local and community development arena, are a matter for consideration in the context of the further reform of local government, including the government decision in February 2012 to establish 'Local Enterprise Offices' as 'one-stop-shops' in each county/city council, combining the functions of the City/County Enterprise Boards with the councils' business support functions.

Rationale for the Socio-Economic Committee

There is a range of different funding programmes, actions and structures that are implemented on an area basis. However, there is a need for area-based co-ordination of such funding. Apart from situations where a suite of programmes might be delivered by a single local development body, such as local development companies, local services can frequently be delivered on a 'silo basis', with vertical reporting lines for local actions to central funding Departments and agencies. The OECD has commented that

[s]potting key priorities for future development is not easy when there are a plethora of local actors working on different strategies and in different partnerships at local level. At a time when public budgets are becoming increasingly tight such fragmentation is no longer acceptable. As governments reduce spending in order to pay off their deficits it will be important to make public policy more efficient, through reducing duplication and better aligning activities locally.²

² Putting in Place Jobs that Last, OECD 2010

3. Guiding Principles

The work of the SEC should be guided by the following general principles:

- a developmental 'bottom-up' approach is a key feature of local and community development – meaningful community participation in identifying priorities and solutions, shaping local initiatives and a vision for those communities is important and should be open to the broadest possible range of interests;
- the democratic mandate of the local elected members on the SEC, or on any SEC sub-structures, should be recognised and respected;
- the experience and contribution brought by all SEC members should be recognised and respected;
- local government will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably;
- a clear focus on social inclusion – marginalised communities, and the marginalised within communities, should be afforded opportunities to participate in local decision-making arrangements/processes and have the power to influence and shape local decisions;
- the promotion of enterprise and employment development, and training and education to support this, is an essential element in supporting sustainable communities and building their capacity;
- the strengths and experiences of all local actors, working in partnership and collaboration, and the harnessing of existing local and community development infrastructure, are key to ensuring the beneficial, effective and efficient use of resources for citizens and communities;
- the integration of sustainable development considerations into policy development and implementation is crucial in developing, supporting and maintaining vibrant communities;
- voluntary activity and active citizenship will be pursued as vital elements of flourishing communities; and
- there should be a clear focus on making the best use of available resources and achieving value-for-money.

4. Terms of reference and functions of Socio-Economic Committee

Within the parameters and terms of reference set at national level, the roles and functions of SECs may vary from one local authority administrative area to another. The extent to which roles and functions might vary between local authorities will depend on the strategic and operational needs of those areas.

Terms of Reference

Within its local authority administrative area and, if appropriate, on a regional basis in collaboration with other SECs, the SEC shall:

- have primary responsibility for co-ordination, governance, planning and oversight of local development spend, whether that spend is delivered by local authorities or on behalf of the State by other local development agencies and structures;
- bring a more coherent approach to the implementation of local and community development programmes and interventions, seeking to ensure an integrated approach to local community, enterprise and local development services between providers and delivery structures;
- drive meaningful citizen and community engagement in the scoping, planning, delivery and evaluation of local and community development programmes;
- ensure a more efficient administration of local and community programmes and delivery structures, the appropriate matching of resources to priorities and the achievement of value-for-money in the delivery and governance of programmes and the management of local delivery arrangements; and
- explore and pursue opportunities for additional funding resources for the area, whether Exchequer, EU, private or other sources.

Functions

The SEC will be responsible for the strategic co-ordination, governance, planning and oversight of the range of local development actions, as agreed by central funding Departments/agencies, within the relevant local authority area. At the same time, SECs will recognise and respect the important role that other organisations and agencies play in economic and social development. They will seek to ensure that strong partnerships are maintained with these organisations to ensure collaboration and reduce duplication of effort and resources. In this regard, the functions of the SEC will be to:

- develop a City/County Local and Community Plan encompassing the broad range of local and community development programmes and interventions within the local authority area;
- identify needs, and prioritise and allocate resources to address those needs;
- ensure that all publicly funded local and community development programmes and policies accord with the City/County Local Development Plan;
- review the City/County Local Development Plan on an on-going basis and adjust according to outcomes, needs arising and availability of resources;
- identify, highlight and, where possible, seek to address instances of overlap and duplication of local services and ensure that relevant interventions are targeted appropriately;
- identify gaps in service provision and seek to fill those gaps in accordance with the strategic direction set out in the City/County Local and Community Plan;
- engage with the full range of local service providers, acting as forum for the exchange of information and a catalyst for co-operation and collaboration between local support and development agencies to bring a co-ordinated approach to the full range of local and community development interventions at local level;
- consider mechanisms that could be developed for:
 - securing joined-up delivery of services at local level; and
 - providing feedback on local programme implementation for the purpose of influencing national policy development and resource allocation.

Performance of functions

The SEC will have regard to the following considerations when performing its functions:

- funding and other resources that are available, or might become available in the future, and the need to make the most beneficial, effective and efficient use of such resources;
- the need to co-operate with and co-ordinate its activities with other publicly funded agencies or bodies operating within or for the benefit of its geographical area of responsibility, particularly where the activities of those agencies or bodies affect, or are likely to affect, its activities;
- the need to consult with those other publicly funded agencies or bodies in the performance of its functions;

- the need for good quality consultation with stakeholders, including citizens, businesses and social partners;
- the need for appropriate participatory channels for all interested parties;
- Government policies and objectives and any policy direction given by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government or other Government Minister which may either affect or relate to its activities;
- the need to promote sustainable development and incorporate sustainable development considerations into all decision-making processes;
- the need to promote social inclusion; and
- the need to promote economic development.

Sub-Committee/Task Group Arrangements

SECs may consider it appropriate to establish committees, task-groups or other sub-structures to effectively carry out their functions. The use of such approaches is primarily a matter for local determination by each SEC. The members may delegate their powers to committees or sub-groups consisting of such member(s) or other such persons they think fit. However, in considering the need for such committees and structures, regard should be had to the following:

- sub-structures should be kept to a minimum in order to avoid excessive administration and meeting fatigue;
- sub-structures should have clear remits and tasks in order to avoid duplication of effort – the establishment of ad hoc groups that are task-specific and wound-up once the task is completed is encouraged; and
- input or representation from community and voluntary groups or sector specific organisations should be facilitated.

Engagement with local agencies and delivery bodies

In pursuit of a collaborative approach and coherent response to local priorities, the need to bring local actors together in partnership will be important. SECs will be the primary structures at local level to secure this and it will be a key focus of SECs to develop and support mechanisms that secure a joined-up approach to service delivery. SECs should identify those actors, organisations, programmes and activities with whom a collaborative, partnership, co-ordinated or shared approach would be locally beneficial. They should identify how such approaches can be advanced and pursue them on a partnership basis.

5. Membership of the Socio-Economic Committee

In line with the recommendations of the Alignment Steering Group and best international practice, the SEC should have a tightly defined membership. The number of SEC members should not exceed 15, except where a strong case can be made to meet particular local circumstances. A tighter membership can often result in a more effective and efficient structure and, accordingly, a target of between 10-12 members is recommended in most cases; however, the number of members on the SEC is a matter for local determination.

Competencies/Skills/Abilities of Members

In the first instance the City/County Manager will be responsible for establishing the front-runner SECs in consultation with principal local stakeholders, such as local development companies, Community and Voluntary Fora, and community sector representatives – thereafter, it will be a matter for the SEC to determine and agree the membership on an on-going basis in accordance with the guidelines. As a collective, members should be drawn from a broad range of people with a variety of relevant experience and insights and with the competencies, skills and abilities required to effectively discharge the functions of the SEC. Accordingly, regard should be had for the need to ensure:

- a balance of persons with significant expertise and participation in one or more of the following areas: local, urban and rural development, social inclusion, community development, equality issues and sustainable development issues;
- a balance of persons with significant expertise and experience in one or more of the following fields: business, trade unions, financial management, social/economic policy and appraisal of strategic plans/grant applications; and
- an appropriate geographical spread covering both urban and rural communities and the different municipal districts.

It is important for the effective operation of the SEC, that representatives have sufficient time available to discharge all relevant functions, including preparation for, attendance at, and participation in all applicable meetings.

Selection of SEC Members

The arrangements for nominating members to the SEC is generally a matter for local determination by the nominating bodies, etc. In the first instance, the City/County Manager in consultation with principal local stakeholders, and thereafter the SEC members, will consider

and identify those interests, bodies, organisations or individuals from whom nominations to the SEC should be sought.

The nomination of representatives to the SEC will be determined largely by the procedures agreed with the relevant sectors or specific interest groups. In addition to the representational requirements outlined above, the filling of SEC members should be progressed generally in line with the guidance below.

As far as possible, SECs should aim for a minimum membership of 40% men and 40% women respectively.

Local Government

The Local Government sector will be represented by local authority elected members and the City/County Manager and/or his nominee(s). The elected members will be nominated by the Council from among the members of the City/County Corporate Policy Group but should, in any event, include the chair of the Enterprise and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee.

At least one of the Local Government representatives will be an elected member – the City/County Manager (or his/her nominee) will also be a member. The balance of representation as between elected members and officials, as well as the overall number of Local Government representatives, will be determined by the City/County Manager in consultation with the Cathaoirleach and the Council.

In determining the number of Local Government representatives, regard should be had to:

- the overall number of public representatives to ensure an appropriate public-private representational balance – a maximum of seven in a 15-member SEC;
- the need to ensure that relevant private interests are represented on the SEC;
- the minimum number of State agency representatives required – two; and
- the need to ensure an appropriate balance between Local Government representation and having sufficient seats on the SEC for the State agencies that need to be accommodated.

State Agencies

The State agencies represented on the SEC will be determined in the first instance by the City/County Manager in consultation with principal local stakeholders. The minimum number of State agency representatives will be two, however, regard should be had to the need of the particular city/county area in this regard.

Local Development Sector

The local development sector will have a minimum of one member drawn from the local development companies in the city/county area. Where there is one local development company in the local authority administrative area, that company shall nominate a representative to the SEC. Where there is more than one local development company, and the number of companies is greater than the seats available to the local development sector, the City/County manager, in consultation with the local development companies, should put appropriate arrangements in place for agreeing representation for the companies concerned.

The local development company representative should be a Board member or a nominee of the Board, such as the Chief Executive Officer; the local development company representative may not be a local authority member or State agency representative.

The need for additional local development sector members will be determined in the first instance by the City/County Manager and then subsequently by the SEC in accordance with local need and priorities. Participation by local development bodies in the City/Council area, which are not represented on the SEC, may be facilitated through sub-structures of the SEC or other appropriate mechanisms that seek to secure participation by those bodies.

Social, Economic and Community Interests

In general, the process for seeking nominations to represent social, economic and community interests is a matter for local determination by the City/County Manager in consultation with the principal local stakeholders. In seeking and accepting nominations, regard should be had to the following:

- the need for an appropriate representational balance across the broad range of interests in the City/County; and
- the focus of the SEC on sustainable social and economic development, and the need for members representing both socially excluded/marginalised communities and business/employers interests.

The new local governance arrangements envisage greater involvement for citizens and communities in decision-making processes that affect them. It is important, therefore, that community interests and the community and voluntary sector are adequately and effectively represented at SEC level. Community and voluntary representatives should be drawn from the Community and Voluntary Fora. In the first instance, the number of representatives from the sector is a matter for local determination by the City/County Manager in consultation with principal local stakeholders; thereafter, it will be a matter for the determination of the SEC. Notwithstanding this, however, the number of representatives should be no less than two. Suitable arrangements should be agreed at local level to ensure that the selected community and voluntary nominees are representative of the broad range of community interests, representing to the greatest extent possible youth, marginalised, disadvantaged, unemployed, persons with disabilities, older persons; etc.

Within the nominating arrangements of the Community and Voluntary Fora, the selection of representatives should be guided by the following principles:

- representation should be from community and voluntary organisations, and representatives should have a clear mandate from their nominating organisations;
- appropriate arrangements should be in place locally to facilitate feedback from representatives to their nominating organisations;
- nominating community organisations should have a proven track record of community activity/development and participation; and
- the need to ensure all interests and areas of the City/County are adequately represented.

Local authorities will be tasked with strengthening and reinvigorating the Community and Voluntary Fora, where this is necessary, and ensuring that community interests and the community and voluntary sector are effectively represented on the SECs. [Note: Meaningful engagement and consultation by elected members with citizens and communities is a stated aim of Putting People First and it proposes that engagement with citizens and local communities should be primarily at municipal district level].

Chairperson

The Chairperson of the SEC will be selected by majority decision from among the members of the SEC. The Chairperson will be appointed for a maximum period of three years, whereupon

s/he shall retire as Chairperson. A member may not serve two consecutive terms as Chairperson.

Representation

The SEC will comprise a range of public and non-public (“private”) socio-economic partners drawn from the relevant local authority administrative area. The exact membership of the SEC will be determined locally within broad guidelines set out in this document. The membership should be constituted so as to ensure an appropriate representational balance between public and private interests, while also facilitating an appropriate mix across the broad range of actors across the territory. Given the need for representational balance, membership of the SEC should be drawn as follows (based on a SEC of 15 members):

<u>Sector Represented</u>	<u>Public/Private</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Nominated</u>
Local Government	Public	Min 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominated from Corporate Policy Group • Local Authority Manager or Manager’s Nominee
State Agencies	Public	Min 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected by Local Authority Manager in consultation with relevant stakeholders
Local and Community Development	Private	Min 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominated through agreed local arrangements
Social, Economic and Community Interests	Private	Min 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominated by selected representative body

Based on a 15 person SEC:

- the maximum number of public sector representatives will be **seven**; and
- the minimum number of private representatives will be **eight**.

With limited exceptions (outlined below), the representatives of each sector will be determined locally. However, the following table outlines possible sectoral representatives.

<u>Sector Represented</u>	<u>Public/Private</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Members</u>
Local Government	Public	Min 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected LA members City/County Manager or Nominee(s)
State Agencies	Public	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Combined Max of 7 from Local Government & State Agencies (where SEC has 15 members) </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Service Executive An Garda Síochána SOLAS Education and Training Boards Third Level Institutions Dept. of Social Protection Teagasc Regional tourism organisations Údarás na Gaeltachta
Local and Community Development	Private	Min 1 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Combined Min of 8 from Local & Community Development and Social, Economic and Community interests (where SEC has 15 members) </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Development Company Family Resource Centres Inter-Agency Groups and Committees
Social, Economic and Community interests	Private	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Combined Min of 8 from Local & Community Development and Social, Economic and Community interests (where SEC has 15 members) </div>	Organisations or individuals representing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers/Business interests Agriculture and Farming interests Community and Voluntary sector Environmental interests Trade Unions Specific interest groups, such those representing youth issues, women's issues, disability issues, socially excluded or marginalised members of society, etc. Community activists

Rotation of Members

Each member shall serve a three-year term, serving a minimum three-year term in the first instance to allow for the rotation of members to commence at the third AGM. Rotation of members shall commence with one-fifth of the members retiring at the third AGM; thereafter, one-fifth of the members will retire automatically at every Annual General Meeting of the SEC. The order of retirement is determined by the length of office or, where this is equal, by random selection unless otherwise agreed.

Retiring members will be eligible for re-nomination and appointment. However, no member will be entitled to serve on the SEC for more than two consecutive terms.

Upon retirement, the member should be replaced from within the sector s/he represented on SEC. If a member retires and is not eligible for reappointment, the City/County Manager shall make the necessary arrangements for that member to be replaced, as may be appropriate for the sector represented.

Elected member representatives will be ex officio members of the SEC by virtue of their positions on the City/County Corporate Policy Group. Similarly, the City/County Manager (or his/her nominee) will be an ex officio member by virtue of the position held. For practical purposes, the normal requirements vis-à-vis a minimum term will not apply to the elected members or the City/County Manager (or his/her nominee) who will cease to be members of the SEC when they cease to hold their respective positions.

Nominating bodies are free to deselect their representatives if circumstances require this.

Notwithstanding the above, there should be a regular review of the membership to account for changing SEC objectives – provision should be made for the ‘standing-down’ of members, where this is appropriate e.g. where the strategic need for members has been satisfied or new members are required to meet a specific strategic need or members are not attending on a regular basis.

The balance of representation should be retained throughout the replacement/rotation process.

6. Administrative Support for Socio-Economic Committee

Establishment of Socio-Economic Committees

The City/County Manager will be responsible for establishing the Socio-Economic Committee in the relevant local authority administrative area, both in terms of its establishment in the first instance and its effective operation thereafter. In establishing the SEC, the City/County Manager will:

- arrange for the membership of the SEC to be filled/rotated;
- ensure that all relevant sectors are adequately represented;
- ensure that there is an appropriate representational balance within and between the public and private sectors; and
- ensure that members have the necessary competencies and skills to effectively discharge their responsibilities as SEC members, arranging for appropriate capacity building and skills development as required;

Secretariat Support

Administrative or secretariat support shall be provided to the SEC by the local authority or by any other function/office within the local authority which is considered appropriate by the City/County Manager. These supports shall include all necessary functions to ensure the efficient operation of the SEC, such as but not limited to:

- arrange for meetings of the SEC to be convened;
- provide or arrange for the provision of accommodation for the holding of meetings;
- making necessary preparations for SEC meetings, including drafting and circulating meeting agendas, taking, drafting and circulating meeting minutes, and generating or circulating SEC notices and other documentation;
- preparation of policy/position papers, etc.; and
- other logistical, organisational and support activities.

Meetings

Generally the frequency, timing and location of meetings is a matter for decision by the Chair of the SEC. However, the following guidance should be considered in determining such matters:

- the SEC should meet at a minimum of 6 times per calendar year;

- meetings should be convened in the relevant local authority office, unless otherwise agreed by the members – a policy of rotating locations can be considered, especially where this creates opportunities for localised community engagement by the SEC;
- meeting arrangements (e.g. place, date and time) should be notified to members no less than 10 working days in advance of the meeting;
- notification of a meeting should include an agenda listing the business of the SEC;
- a quorum for a meeting is 50% of the members (rounded up) – where a quorum cannot be achieved, the meeting should be postponed and rescheduled; and
- minutes of a meeting should be drawn-up by the Secretariat.

Minutes

Minutes should be taken of all meetings of the SEC. The minutes should include:

- date, time and place of the meeting;
- names of the members present at the meeting;
- conflicts of interest notified to the meeting and particulars of the steps taken;
- particulars of all decisions/votes taken at the meeting; and
- other matters considered appropriate.

Minutes of meeting should be:

- submitted for agreement at the next meeting;
- when agreed, published on the website of the relevant county or city council; and
- provided to any person applying for them.

The secretariat should make appropriate arrangements for retaining the minutes.

Maintenance of Records

The local authority will be responsible for maintaining all official records relating to the management and operation of the SEC.

General

In general, any expenses arising for a SEC member should be met by the organisation the member is representing.

However, those SEC members whose expenses cannot be met in this manner, will be entitled to travel expenses for attendance at SEC meetings and these expenses will be met by the local authority. The City/County Manager will determine the persons whose expenses should be met in this manner.

7. Learning from Front-runner Socio-Economic Committees

The purpose of the front-runner phase is to explore and trial approaches to specific areas of focus, identifying learning from the different approaches and sharing that learning with a view to informing the full-roll of SECs. A number of key areas of focus have been identified for SECs during the front-runner phase, including:

- establishing/selecting the membership of SECs;
- collaborative and co-ordinated working across the range of actors locally;
- mapping of local services; and
- the Local and Community Plan.

In progressing these areas, front-runner areas will be required to identify and share learning gained, in the first instance with other front-runner areas and, secondly, with the Alignment Working Group, to support the establishment of SECs across the remaining local authority areas. The front-runner areas will be supported in this process by DECLG and the Alignment Working Group. The *Front-runner Socio Economic Committees – Operating Guidelines and Terms of Reference* will provide a practical resource for the establishment and management of front-runners. Facilitated workshops will support exploration and trialling of various approaches, identification of learning points, sharing that learning and incorporating it, where appropriate, into the operating guidelines and the approaches of the SECs, both in the front-runner phase and in the longer term. Learning from the front-runner phase will also be considered by the Inter-Departmental Group in respect of its role in “*driving and overseeing the development and management of a comprehensive change management programme for both the local government and local development sectors*”³.

Learning Points

The main learning outputs expected from the front-runner phase are as follows:

Establishing SECs

- optimum approaches for identifying and selecting members across the various interest groups, in particular the process for identifying members from Social, Economic and Community Interests;
- the interest groups that should make up the various representative groupings;
- how the appropriate balance between representation of the various interest groups and the requirement for a maximum of 15 SEC members can be achieved;

³ Final Report of the Local Government/Local Development Alignment Steering Group, DECLG 2012

- challenges arising from the need to strike this balance;
- the range of interests that should be accommodated;
- if a membership of 15 is practical given the range of interests that should be accommodated;
- consideration of the range of sub-structures required and their relationship to the SEC;
- the transition from CDB and other structures.

Local and Community Plan

- how helpful (or otherwise) are the planning guidelines in developing the Local and Community Plan;
- concept and practice of developing a plan to encompass the full breadth of local development activities –
 - how challenging is the process?
 - was it realisable/achievable?
 - what is the optimum timescale for completing the process?
- extent to which collaboration by SEC partners influenced the process;
- how was the planning process implemented across the SEC partners;
- optimum collaborative approaches used in developing the plan;
- relationship to other planning/co-ordinating structures;
- extent to which community engagement underpinned the development of the plan;
- optimum community engagement/consultative processes;
- consideration of approaches to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes and impacts;
- structures required to effectively carry out the planning process;
- extent to which resources/funding/programmes available to the plan should be known at the time of the planning process.

Mapping Local Services

- extent of knowledge among the SEC members as to the range of services delivered locally;
- extent to which SECs know how to obtain information required and the extent to which it was:
 - readily available; and/or
 - made available;
- the potential for sharing data;
- the tools/mechanisms required to facilitate sharing of data;

- approaches used to identify what is delivered locally;
- how additional resources can be explored and pursued.

Regional Dimension

- best approaches to achieve, co-ordinated, regionalised engagements for planning and sharing learning;
- how can regionalised approaches be implemented.

Characteristics of Local Areas

- extent to which characteristics of the local area influenced the membership, work and focus of the SEC –
 - population
 - urban/rural
 - level of deprivation
 - economic challenges
 - unemployment
 - infrastructure
- appropriate area of coverage for SECs –
 - the need (or otherwise) for multiple SECs in a single local authority area;
 - impact of non-coterminous State agency boundaries.

Citizen and Community Engagement

- consideration of what has worked well to date;
- testing new approaches to citizen and community engagement;
- how best can the inclusion of key interests be ensured;
- what feed-back mechanisms are most effective.

Engagement with State agencies

- challenges in securing State agency participation and how these were addressed, including possible models to secure participation by using varying levels in organisations;
- the basis on which State agencies were selected;
- how the balance between the need for State agency participation and requirement for tight SEC membership was achieved;

- challenges arising from the need to strike a balance between State agency participation and requirement for tight SEC membership;
- extent to which State agency representatives have the authority/autonomy to take decisions locally;
- relationship between SEC and Local Enterprise Offices – how processes, structures and programmes can be streamlined for optimum results.

General

- how learning from CDB operation can be used to support the work of SECs;
- effective methods for communicating SEC activities;
- usefulness of *Front Runner Operating Guidelines*;
- aspects of *Front Runner Operating Guidelines* that need to be developed further.

Reporting on Learning

Learning will be captured over the duration of the front-runner phase which is expected to run to December 2013.

In the first instance, the learning will be gathered through facilitated workshops organised by DECLG. Secondly, learning will be captured on an on-going basis through direct engagements between DECLG and the front-runner SECs. Thirdly, towards the end of the front-runner phase, front-runners will be required to submit a report to DECLG outlining learning captured over the period.

The facilitated sessions will help SECs identify, document and share learning gathered as their work progresses. They will provide a forum through which best practice/successful approaches can be shared among the front-runners and where challenges/difficulties encountered by the front-runners can be discussed and collective solutions developed. The facilitated sessions will also support front-runners in the preparation of the final report outlining the learning outcomes to DECLG at the end of the front-runner phase.

A process for gathering, assessing and applying the learning gained will be developed and milestones associated with the learning objectives will be set to provide a focus and structure to the process. Learning milestones will be set following the roll-out of the first facilitated workshop in July 2013.

The learning outputs from the front-runners will be evaluated by the Alignment Working Group and the Inter-Departmental Group, with best practice and proven approaches from across the range of front-runners informing the development of the final SEC Operating Guidelines and Terms of Reference and the full roll-out of SECs from late 2013.

8. Decisions of the Socio-Economic Committee

Decisions of the Socio-Economic Committee

All decisions of the SEC shall be reached by consensus of the SEC members. Regard should be had in decision making processes for an appropriate representational balance between public and non-public interests.

Transparent Procedures

SECs shall prepare and maintain non-discriminatory and transparent decision-making procedures. Such procedures should allow for the possibility of appeal against decisions. Procedures should also provide for decisions by written procedure.

Conflicts of Interest

Given the SEC will be responsible for managing and disbursing public monies, there is a need for transparency in all dealings involving the members and the decisions of the SEC. From time to time members may find that personal, family or business interests may touch upon SEC functions. In this context, it is important that comprehensive procedures are established to deal with any potential or actual conflicts of interests that might arise. A process for dealing with such cases is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Upon appointment, each member will provide the City/County Manager with details of all interests, including employment and business interests and community involvement that might involve a conflict of interest or might materially influence a member in relation to the performance of his or her functions as a member of the SEC. A register of members interests will be maintained by the local authority.

Each member should declare at the relevant meeting of the SEC any interest they have in:

- an application for funding or other support for decision by the SEC;
- any initiative taken by the SEC;
- any contract [service level agreement] or proposed contract that the member, or a person connected with the member may be directly or indirectly involved; or
- any matter from which the member, or anyone connected with the member, might benefit directly or indirectly from as a member of the SEC.

Where a conflict of interest is declared by a member, that member will leave the meeting and will not be entitled to vote on the matter in which they have an interest. Upon returning to the

meeting the member will be notified of the decision by the Chair and no further discussion will take place.

Ethics in Public Office

SECs shall comply with the requirements of the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 & 2001. It is intended to prescribe SECs as public bodies under the Acts.

9. City/County Local and Community Plan

It is a stated intention of Putting People First that a “5-year City/County Local and Community Plan encompassing all State funded local and community development interventions, should be developed for each [local authority] city/county area”. This Local and Community Plan will be prepared by Socio-Economic Committees, which will be established within each local authority area with responsibility for co-ordination, governance, planning and oversight of local and community development interventions locally. In developing and delivering on the Plan, SECs will need to strike an appropriate balance between the primacy of the Plan on the one hand and the requirements of funding Departments around programme implementation on the other.

Objectives

The following are possible objectives for the *Local and Community Plan* subject to the consideration of the planning sub-group:

- To establish a strategic vision for the development of the relevant area, encompassing the sustainable social, community and economic development of the area in order to enhance the quality of life of citizens and communities;
- To detail the impacts/outcomes required to achieve the vision;
- To identify the priorities to be addressed and the strategy required to address those priorities;
- To plan and deliver services to citizens using a lifecycle approach;
- To outline the resources available and how they will contribute to addressing the priorities;
- To identify the values underpinning the implementation of the vision;
- To provide a clear context for the development of actions and operational plans by those tasked with the implementation of projects and programmes and a strategic framework against which operational plans and programmes can be assessed. Such operational plans could include the following:
 - City and County Development Plans and Strategies;
 - Economic development plans of the Local Enterprise Offices;
 - Local Development Strategies under the Rural Development Programme process;

- Local and Community Development Programme Plans;
 - Local Sport Partnership Programmes;
 - Training and education programmes related to employment and enterprise development; and
 - Community development programmes;
 - Active citizenship/volunteering plans/programmes; and
 - Employment activation programmes/plans.
- To establish a monitoring and evaluation framework which provides a basis for the assessment of impacts/outcomes and the extent to which they are being achieved.

[Output from the considerations of the Planning Sub-Group will complete this section]

10. Citizen and Community Engagement

[Within the overall recommendations of Putting People First, research is underway on best approaches on community engagement and consultation - this section will be completed as this work progresses and is completed.]

General

Formal structures should be established to facilitate citizen and community engagement with the SEC and any committees or sub-structures established by the SEC. These structures should:

- provide a means for securing engagement and consultation with citizens and communities;
- publicise decisions of the SEC and inform citizens and communities of future plans of the SEC;
- provide a mechanism for informing citizens and communities of performance and the impact of actions undertaken by or under the oversight of the SEC;
- be established on a municipal district basis; and
- provide a mechanism whereby citizens and communities can make recommendations to the SEC and seek explanations where the policies and actions of the SEC are at variance with those recommendations.

11. Co-ordination of Functions with Local Enterprise Offices

[Internal consideration on the relationship between LEOs, the economic SPC and SECs is on-going with Local Government Division and Community Division programme sections. This section will be completed when these considerations are finalised.]

Local Enterprise Offices

In April 2012 the Government approved the restructuring of City/County Enterprise Boards and existing micro enterprise support structures with the creation of new Local Enterprise Offices, within local authorities, for the purpose of ensuring a co-ordinated and cohesive development of micro enterprise for Ireland which contributes to economic growth and job creation.

LEOs will serve as first-stop-shops to provide support and services to start, grow and develop micro business in each local authority administrative area. They will be established in local authority offices and will incorporate the City/County Enterprise Board functions with the relevant elements of the Economic Development Units/Business Support Units of the local authorities.

The services provided by LEOs will include business information and advisory services, enterprise support services, entrepreneurship support services, and local enterprise infrastructure development services. LEOs will provide information in relation to State supports for small and micro businesses and will deliver quality access to a number of national and local programmes focused on new business start-ups and micro-business in a pro-business environment. The LEO model will ensure that micro enterprise service delivery will continue to have significant local input, within a national micro-enterprise policy framework.

Local Authorities and Economic Development

Local authorities will be given a stronger remit in local economic and enterprise development. In addition to the role of LEOs within each local authority area, Putting People First envisages that local authorities will be the primary local governance vehicle responsible for economic development and job creation locally. In this regard, local authorities will continue to promote/support economic activity, investment and job creation; ensure that their mainstream functions and services (e.g. planning, infrastructure, environment, rating, etc.) generally support enterprise and economic development; provide strategic leadership, co-ordination and mobilisation of efforts of relevant organisations in respect of the administrative area; and promote labour activation measures.

Socio-Economic Committees and Economic Development

SECs will also be the means through which a broad range of economic, employment and enterprise supports will be channelled into local authority areas. These supports will range from employment activation measures; to community development supports to increase people's work readiness and employment prospects; and to local development micro-enterprise supports aimed at ensuring the sustainable development of rural areas. Although LEOs and local authorities will have primary responsibility for promoting economic activity and delivering micro-enterprise supports at local level, the various local and community development economic and enterprise supports will be co-ordinated by SECs, but in a manner that ensures stronger co-ordination of publicly funded supports.

Co-ordination of Economic and Enterprise Supports

There is a need to ensure the effective co-ordination of all publicly funded economic and enterprise supports, a streamlining of the various structures delivering such supports at local level and procedures for sharing information and preventing overlap and duplication. Accordingly, arrangements will be put in place to ensure full co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration between the relevant policy-making and decision-making structures. Such arrangements will seek to secure complementarity between the micro-enterprise supports provided through LEOs, the economic and enterprise development remit of local authorities generally, and the micro-enterprise supports delivered by local action groups through LEADER and/or other Community-led local development methodologies.

Streamlined Application and Evaluation Procedures

For the benefit of customers, entrepreneurs, applicants, etc., and to reduce the incidence of grant shopping across publicly funded programmes, streamlined arrangements should be put in place in respect of enterprise applications, evaluations and assessments. For example, consideration should be given to:

- common application processes or clearing mechanism for all enterprise/economic development related grant applications;
- shared evaluation/assessment processes/committees for all enterprise/economic development applications e.g. the LEO Evaluations and Approvals Committee;
- appropriate demarcation protocols in relation to publicly funded enterprise/economic development supports;
- consistent rates of aid and grant amounts for similar activities across the different funding programmes; and

- potential to provide enterprises, entrepreneurs and other applicants with ICT driven solutions that can facilitate a co-ordinated approach to accessing funding and other supports.

Planning Processes

Arrangements should be put in place to ensure consistency in the development of local authority Economic Development Plans and the SEC City/County Local and Community Plans. In turn these should take their lead from national and regional level economic plans, noting that it is proposed that the new Regional Assemblies will have responsibility for adopting and implementing Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. These arrangements should include procedures for cross-consultation and input between the different planning processes whereby:

- the SEC is consulted by the Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development for input into the local authority Economic Development Plan; and
- the Strategic Policy Committee is consulted by the SEC for input into any economic and enterprise related elements of the City/County Local and Community Plan.