

**SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE
STRATEGIC POLICY SCHEME 2024 – 2029**
Dublin City Council

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Outhouse
LGBTQ+ CENTRE

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About Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre

Outhouse is the cornerstone of support for the LGBTQ+ community. We provide a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ individuals to gather, connect, and find solace in a world that doesn't always understand or embrace them. We are the heartbeat of the queer community, offering vital services, including social spaces, mental health support, cultural events, and much more.

We are dedicated to supporting the people, spaces, and issues important to the LGBTQ+ communities. Our vision is a future where LGBTQ+ individuals are safe, seen, and celebrated.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for LGBTQ+ people by providing a safe space to find:

- **Connection** - discovering themselves, their people, place, and passions.
- **Community Support** - accessing information, programmes, and services.
- **Culture** - experiencing creativity, heritage, discovery, and fun.
- **Campaigns** - being part of a strong, credible, and trusted voice for LGBTQ+ communities.

We live by the values of Trust, Respect, Joy, Inclusion, and Impact. Our commitments to equity and intersectionality underpin our work.

LGBTQ+ Rights in Dublin Today

Ireland has made significant strides towards achieving greater equality and inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community through successful referendums, progressive legislation, and more inclusive public policies. These advancements reflect Ireland's commitment to creating a more equitable society. However, the LGBTQ+ community still confronts profound challenges and battles within our society. Despite remarkable progress, discrimination, harassment, and inequalities persist, casting long shadows over the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals. Mental health issues are prevalent, and the weight of isolation can be crushing. Poverty, homelessness, and substance misuse disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ individuals and significantly impact their day-to-day lives.

Positive policy developments include the publication of two national LGBTQ+ inclusion strategies. However, despite these strategies, government funding for LGBTQ+ organisations remains sporadic and inadequate to meet the

community's demand for services or the scale of resources needed to transform society. The lack of financial support and infrastructure investments significantly impacts organisations' abilities to provide essential services and support to our LGBTQ+ communities, holding back progress for the most vulnerable and marginalised.

Addressing these issues requires a sustained effort from Dublin City Council. Collaboration between LGBTQ+ organisations and statutory bodies is crucial to ensure meaningful and longstanding change and equity for LGBTQ+ people. The Council must focus on integrating LGBTQ+ voices and needs within its goals to effectively address the unique challenges faced by our community.

The riots that took place in Dublin on 23 November 2023 have had a chilling impact on the city's LGBTQ+ population. The rise of extremism targeting international protection applicants, people of colour, and LGBTQ+ individuals is deeply interconnected. These riots underscore the urgent need to address social deprivation and foster inclusion as a critical response to the growth of extremism within our communities. It is imperative to address the needs of those who have been left behind by the progress of the last two decades in our city. By doing so, we can undermine the fertile ground in which the far-right organises, ensuring that the most vulnerable residents are protected and included in our city. Addressing these social issues is essential to creating a Dublin where all individuals, regardless of their background, can feel safe, valued, and supported.

As we look to the future, it is clear that addressing the intersecting needs of the LGBTQ+ community requires a multi-dimensional approach. Dublin City Council has a significant role in developing and implementing inclusive strategies and fostering collaboration to build a more equitable, inclusive, and supportive society for everyone - that work begins by prioritising the creation of the Strategic Policy Committee with a dedicated Social Inclusion and Diversity remit.

Introduction

Dublin is a city celebrated for its diversity, where residents from a wide array of backgrounds, cultures, and identities contribute to its vibrancy. However, alongside this diversity comes the challenge of ensuring that all communities, particularly marginalised and vulnerable groups, are fully included in the city's social, economic, and political life. Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre strongly advocates for the establishment of a Social Inclusion and Diversity Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) within Dublin City Council. Such a committee is crucial to addressing the multifaceted issues of social inclusion, equity, and diversity, which are currently overlooked in the proposed SPC structure.

It is with disappointment that we note the absence of Social Inclusion, Equality, and Community Development from the proposed structure of the Strategic Policy Committees 2024-2029 as outlined by the Chief Executive. Despite the significant and ongoing challenges related to social inclusion and diversity in Dublin, these critical areas are not reflected in the current SPC framework. This omission represents a missed opportunity to address some of the most pressing social issues facing our city, and it is imperative that these areas be given the attention they deserve through the establishment of a dedicated SPC.

Rationale for a Social Inclusion and Diversity SPC

Addressing Systemic Exclusion:

Marginalised communities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, and others, often face systemic barriers in accessing services, participating in civic life, and securing economic opportunities. A dedicated SPC would ensure these issues are strategically addressed, fostering a city where all residents can thrive.

Holistic Policy Development:

Existing SPCs, while covering important areas such as housing, climate action, and economic development, do not explicitly focus on social inclusion or the specific needs of diverse communities. A Social Inclusion and Diversity SPC would fill this gap, enabling Dublin City Council to develop comprehensive, intersectional policies that consider the unique challenges faced by different groups.

Statutory Recognition and Accountability:

Unlike a working group, an SPC has statutory recognition, providing it with the

necessary resources, administrative support, and authority to influence policy at a strategic level. The SPC's public visibility and accountability, including the participation of elected representatives and relevant external stakeholders, ensure that social inclusion and diversity issues are prioritised and addressed with the seriousness they deserve.

Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, Dublin City Council, like all public bodies, is required to include an assessment of the human rights and equality issues relevant to its functions within its strategic plan. The Council must also outline the actions it is taking or proposes to take to address these issues.

Despite the significant challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalised groups in Dublin, the unique needs of these communities are not adequately referenced or planned for within the current SPC framework. To genuinely fulfil its public sector duty and human rights obligations, Dublin City Council must explicitly include and address the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals and other protected groups under equality legislation.

The proposed structure creates invisibility for marginalised people, with no specific reference to these communities. The exclusion of 'social inclusion', 'equality', or 'community development' from the remit of any SPC, let alone establishing a dedicated SPC for this purpose, raises significant concerns. Without explicitly including these policy areas, it is difficult to see how Dublin City Council fulfils its obligations under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. This Act mandates that public bodies assess and address human rights and equality issues relevant to their functions, which will not be achieved under the proposed framework.

By explicitly addressing the needs of the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalised groups within its strategic policy scheme, Dublin City Council can ensure a more comprehensive and equitable approach to human rights and equality, fulfilling its legal obligations and promoting a genuinely inclusive society.

Benefits of the Proposed SPC

Promoting Equity and Justice:

By focusing on social inclusion and diversity, the SPC would work to eliminate discrimination and promote equity across all facets of Dublin's society. This would contribute to a more just and inclusive city where every resident, regardless of background, has equal access to opportunities and resources.

Strengthening Community Cohesion:

The SPC would foster dialogue and cooperation among different communities, promoting understanding and cohesion. This is particularly important in a city like Dublin, where diverse cultural and social groups coexist. The SPC would serve as a platform for these groups to have their voices heard in the policymaking process.

Enhancing Dublin's Global Reputation:

Dublin is an increasingly global city, attracting residents, businesses, and tourists from around the world. A dedicated SPC on Social Inclusion and Diversity would enhance Dublin's reputation as a progressive, inclusive, and forward-thinking city, making it more attractive to global talent and investment.

Tackling Emerging Social Challenges:

As Dublin continues to grow and evolve, new social challenges will inevitably arise. The SPC would be well-positioned to respond proactively to these challenges, ensuring that Dublin remains a city where all residents can live with dignity and respect, regardless of their identity or background.

Conclusion

Establishing a Social Inclusion and Diversity Strategic Policy Committee within Dublin City Council is not only a matter of administrative necessity; it is a moral imperative. As an organisation deeply committed to advocating for the rights and wellbeing of the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalised groups, Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre strongly supports this initiative. We urge Dublin City Council to seize this opportunity to make a lasting impact on the lives of all its residents by ensuring that social inclusion and diversity are at the heart of its policy agenda.

Recommendations

- **Immediate Establishment:** Dublin City Council should prioritise the establishment of the Social Inclusion and Diversity SPC as part of its 2024-2029 Strategic Policy Scheme.
- **Broad Representation:** The SPC should include representation from a wide range of communities, including LGBTQ+, ethnic minorities, disability advocates, and other relevant groups to ensure diverse perspectives in policy formulation.
- **Strategic Mandate:** The SPC should have a clear mandate to develop, monitor, and review cross-cutting and intersectional policies that promote social inclusion and address systemic inequalities in all aspects of city life.

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